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The Sapphire Club

Serenity's Dream

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Serenity's Dream

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Book Blurb

When Serenity Damrill is unjustly accused of murder, the only place she can think to hide is with her estranged husband, Lucien, at The Sapphire Club, a place where every sexual fantasy can be fulfilled. Hiding the truth, she returns after a ten year absence, ready to submit completely to her husband.

Lucien, owner of the club, though skeptical of his wife's sudden reappearance in his life, is willing to take her at her word, and he institutes an erotic regimen that Serenity quickly begins to crave. Lucien's sexual prowess is beyond her wildest dreams and soon they fall into a frenzied, erotic life.

All is going well, until Serenity's accuser spots her at a Cyprian's Ball.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to Clint, my real life hero. Your love and unfailing encouragement are the reasons I wrote *Serenity's Dream* in the first place.

Chapter One

A somewhat disheveled Lucien Damrill entered the sanctified environs of his library, a well-outfitted cave for the bear he was becoming. It being Thursday, he'd just finished his usual session with Lady Amelie Foxworth, an insatiable beast of a woman who could be thrashed bloody, fucked insensible, and still beg for more. A more jaded woman he'd never met, and he'd seen it all. He was tired and feeling rather beastly himself.

With a compelling need for the burn of his favorite libation, he walked directly to the rosewood sideboard and poured himself a generous measure of his finest French brandy. He turned to make his way to his desk and stopped in his tracks.

Before him, on a red and gold striped Hepplewhite chair, sat someone whom he'd thought—nay, prayed—never to see again.

"How in bloody hell did you get in here?"

"Why, dear, is that any way to speak to your dearly beloved wife?"

Lucien cringed at the thought. "Our marriage is simply an aberration. You are no more my wife than this glass is." He held up his cut-glass snifter with the figure of a nude woman as the stem.

"It may surprise you to learn I have returned and wish to make up for all the years I have neglected you."

Lucien affected a laugh, remembering how his beloved wife, the former Serenity Malin, had met him at the altar, stiffly consummated their union, and promptly hied herself off to the country, where she'd resided uninterrupted for the last ten years.

"Serenity, dear, I have not felt neglected in the least. You really shouldn't have troubled yourself with thoughts of my welfare, for I have given yours less thought than I would give a stranger's. But wait, we are strangers, are we not?"

Serenity straightened her spine and lifted her quivering chin ever so slightly. Knowing his wife wasn't given to dramatic displays, he realized he'd struck a chord.

He would also have been blind had he not noticed that in ten years his wife had

matured into a rather lovely woman. Her chestnut hair was stylishly coiffed, with curls framing her heart-shaped face and tendrils flowing from the loose knot at the back of her head. Her breasts were nearly overflowing her bodice, tempting Lucien to release them from their bonds and bury his face between them. He dismissed his licentious thoughts, remembering who this woman was and why he held not a single pleasant thought concerning her.

"I *am* serious, Lucien. I wish to be a real wife to you. That's why I have come back."

He felt her icy blue eyes follow him as he paced the room. "It would have nothing to do with the fact I am now wealthy, and you wish to relieve me of some of *that* wealth?"

"How can you say such things? You have always provided for my needs and I could ask for no more."

"Then why are you really here?"

"I have heard things about you and they . . . intrigue me."

Lucien laughed again. "Nothing about me ever intrigued you before. Why now?"

"Oh, but you are wrong, my dear. You have always fascinated me, but just recently I learned about the club and what you do here."

"The club? You have come back because of the club? Serenity, I have owned the Sapphire Club for five years and you have just heard of it? I must see to it my man of business does a better job of spreading the word." He was more suspect than ever since the club wasn't news, unless of course, one had been living under a rock for five years.

"I was attending a house party in Yorkshire and overheard some gentlemen talking. They said some very provocative things, and I was fascinated, to say the least."

"Provocative, you say. Such as?"

"Well, it would seem they were under the impression you 'blister arses and fuck 'em insensible.' That's an exact quote."

Lucien chuckled at hearing his prim and proper wife cursing like a gob in a sleazy tavern. "Yes, that's what I do, among other things, and I have a very *satisfying* life

doing so. I fail to see how that would be impetus for you to return to hearth and home."

"Well, when I learned of such things, I found I was curious. If you would perform such services for others, would you offer the same to me?"

"You wish to have your lily-white derriere paddled? My dear, pardon my foray down the path of skepticism, but as I recall, you had no interest in baring your body for me, a slight omission on your part when you accepted my marriage proposal, as I recall."

"I will admit I was willful."

That earned her a loud snort.

"I was wrong and I am willing to admit it. Many years have passed between then and now. I have changed. Then to hear you were so, ah, adventuresome, I simply couldn't believe what I had heard."

Feeling his deuced body betraying him as he spoke, Lucien continued to pace, albeit somewhat less comfortably. "I have created a place where people can come to fulfill their sexual fantasies. As you can see, I have done well, *by myself*, I might add. Why would I want to have you around my neck, when I worked so hard to forget I even had a wife?"

"I wish to be treated like one of your clients, Lucien. I wish to submit to you completely. I desire to be all you would wish in a wife. I have much to make up for."

"What has brought about this change of heart? You must admit it is suspect."

"I have been lonely. When I heard you owned a club where people could go to see their fantasies become reality, I realized I have needs and wish to have them fulfilled. Who better to do that than my own husband?"

"You have needs, Serenity? I suspect you found your own *fulfillment* elsewhere in the time we have been apart."

"Have you, Lucien?"

"I'm a man, what would you think?" He waved his arm and sloshed some of his precious brandy onto the red, cream, and blue Aubusson carpet.

"I have never begrudged you. I know I've not been a true wife to you, but I wish

to change, if you will let me."

"So what you are telling me is you wish to be a wife to me in exchange for having your fantasies become realities?"

"Yes, dear. I believe you would find I am willing to do anything you ask. I have thought long and hard about this, and I find the more I think of it, the more I wish I'd never left you."

"This would have nothing to do with wanting children would it, because I have no interest in such things."

"No, Lucien, I am past my childbearing years; I was thirty on my last birthday. I gave up that dream about the same time I walked away from you and our marriage. I wish to come back and be a part of the life you have established for yourself."

Lucien's head was pounding from the long hours he'd put in at the club and most particularly from the conversation he was having with his wife. Traitorously, his cock had heard every word, too, damn it.

It was most unexpected she should suddenly appear, here, at the Sapphire Club. Somehow he'd never imagined that would happen.

When he'd married Serenity, she was twenty and he ten years older. He was the fourth son of a viscount, and she, the rather plain daughter of a baron who owned the neighboring estate in Nottinghamshire. Though they had known each other for years, their age difference had precluded any more than a nodding acquaintance at country assemblies and the occasional dinner.

Lucien had gone off into the navy at twenty, and when he returned nearly eight years later, Serenity had grown into an even plainer young woman. Her mousy brown hair and unremarkable features had been overshadowed only by her less than outgoing demeanor.

However, The Right Honorable Lord and Lady Dalton had placed Serenity in his path at every turn. She had a pleasant enough nature, seeming biddable and quite enamored of him. Lucien had been encouraged by his family, so rather than fight the Fates, he'd asked for the lady's hand and his suit, not surprisingly, was accepted poste-

haste. The banns were called and within a month, they were ensnared in the parson's noose.

"I imagine you'd prefer a part of my *wealth* than be a part of my *life*."

"Lucien, don't be cruel. I understand you don't trust me, but I swear to you, I am telling you the truth. I only wish to be your wife in every sense and I ask you allow me to demonstrate my sincerity."

"Fine, if that's what you wish. Show me your sincerity by pulling up your dress and chemise and bending over the chaise."

Serenity's eyes widened and Lucien bit back a satisfied grin. However, she did get up and she bent herself decorously over the thickly padded rolled arm of a Biedermeier chaise.

"You say you have never done this before?" Lucien asked with a doubtful laugh in his voice. "You did that with such dash."

"I did it, Lucien, now get on with it."

"Are you sure? I have many years to make up for and I certainly wouldn't want you saying I have neglected my husbandly duties."

Serenity let out an exasperated sigh. "Lucien, please, before someone comes in."

"All those layers won't do, madam."

"Well, I certainly did not expect to have to submit to this straight away."

Lucien still had the matter of her pink silk lacy drawers to deal with. "Whoever invented these things ought to be castrated." To show his dissatisfaction, he grabbed them in both hands and ripped the seam apart, revealing her creamy white cheeks.

He antagonized her further by rubbing his large hand over the tender globes, dipping the side of his hand into the crease between them.

She responded with "Oh, my," but then Lucien would have sworn she poked her bottom up for more.

Without warning, he slapped her ass, the sound reporting off the walls

"Ouch!"

"Did you or did you not tell me to spank you?"

"Well, yes, but"

"But, what? That, my dear, was the beginning of a spanking. There are many more where that came from, and I do declare it will be my pleasure to 'blister your arse.'" His tone was deliberately mocking.

"All right then, can you just get on with it?"

"It seems to me you said to just get on with it on our wedding night."

Lucien struck her again, on the other cheek, leaving a handprint almost as vivid as the first. As he alternated between his two targets, Serenity yelped and howled as though she were, well, being spanked. Though not particularly proud of what he was feeling, Lucien rather enjoyed spanking her. But, he justified it by the fact she'd left him, prick in hand, the day after the wedding, to be a country matron instead of a city wife.

"This, my dear, is what you have to look forward to should you remain in St. John's Wood. I will see to it you have a spanking at least once a day and I will make it hurt. Is this what you want, Serenity, to have your arse spanked by my hand and any other implement I might decide to use?"

Serenity had dissolved into a flood of tears, her bottom as red as a cherry. "Please stop!"

Lucien did as she so loudly demanded. She remained bent over the sofa, crying.

"Get up," he said.

She did as he said but didn't look him in the eye. Tears stained her cheeks with silver streaks. He handed her his monogrammed linen handkerchief. "Here, blow your nose and sit down."

"She did, gingerly. She placed her hands in her lap and her head remained bowed.

"Do you still want to submit to my discipline, Serenity? Do you want me to spank you every day?"

"I think so," she said, her voice rattling.

"I must know, before I consent to anything. The only way I will accept you back in my life is if you submit as you have said you would. I have lived ten years without

you and I can go on for the rest of my days."

She hesitated, but finally she spoke. "I want what those gentlemen spoke about. I am ready to assume my wifely duties."

"Oh, make no mistake, madam, should I decide to have you be a wife to me, you will indeed assume your duties – all of them."

He tried to sound menacing, because he didn't want her thinking the path to marital reconciliation would be an easy one. Since she'd left, she'd sent her constant complaints through his man of business. She'd complained about everything, including the condition of the country home, the food, the servants, and the fact he wouldn't allow her a trip to London until she was ready to return to her marital duties. Each time he'd given her the choice, she'd promptly refused, and there it was – they'd not seen each other since the day after their wedding.

"What say you now?"

"I wish to be your wife, Lucien, in every way you wish me to be."

"Well, I must say I am shocked – and somewhat flattered – that after that little sampling, you still wish to return to my bed."

Serenity looked up and gave him a demur smile. "Yes, I do, completely."

"Fine, then. Let me show you to your chamber. It seems to me it is now time to fuck you insensible."

Chapter Two

As Serenity followed Lucien through a hidden wall panel in the library and up to his residence, she grew anxious for what would come next. She hadn't realized how much she missed the intimacy between lovers.

Lucien's voice pierced through her reverie. "I had access to the third floor from the two bottom floors blocked, so my residence would remain private. The only way to enter the third floor is by a staircase accessed through a wall panel found in the library and on the second floor in a sitting room that's not used."

"Who knows of the wall panels?"

"Just a few people, including the servants, and now you."

"It is very clever," she exclaimed as they entered the hallway on the upper floor.

"Your rooms are this way."

He showed her to what would be the suite of rooms adjoining his own. "I will have these prepared in the morning. For tonight, you will stay in a guest room down the hall."

"This is beautiful, Lucien. You have done quite well for yourself."

"Yes, I suppose I have. Tomorrow I shall give you a tour of the residence and the club." He grabbed her hand and nearly dragged her through the connecting door to his overlarge, very masculine bedchamber. "I believe we have some unfinished business to take care of, do we not?"

Serenity's mind had been assaulted since her surreptitious entrée into the mansion. She'd entered through the kitchen and wended her way to the entrance hall. When the elderly butler had safely dozed off, she entered the library, the only room with massive closed double doors, and waited for Lucien to enter. She'd heard myriad sounds, howls, moans, grunts and laughter, along with beautiful chamber music. Her imagination had run amok with thoughts of what could possibly be behind those sounds.

Her loins had reacted with moisture and clenching the likes of which she'd rarely experienced. Her curiosity was at its peak, especially about her husband.

He'd changed since she'd last seen him. His coal black hair was now liberally dosed with silver, something she found surprisingly appealing. She'd always loved the idea he was ten years older. "*Our age difference makes me feel very safe,*" she'd told him when they courted.

She remembered he was handsome, so much so she constantly questioned his willingness to marry her. She was plain in those days, and dressed more like a country mouse than a gentle born lady. In the intervening years, she'd immersed herself in country society, and she felt she'd blossomed.

His bedchamber smelled of bergamot and shaving soap with telltale signs of leather and beeswax. It was enormous, with a fitting four-poster bed on a dais, along the longest wall.

"Oh, Lucien, this is beautiful."

"You can thank Campion, here, if you like it. He saw to everything. Campion, old man, this is my wife, Serenity."

"Mrs. Damrill, I am pleased to make your acquaintance." The bewigged older man bowed appropriately, lifting an eyebrow at his master.

"Thank you, Mr. Campion. It's nice to meet you, as well."

"You may retire, Campion."

"As you wish, sir. Madam." Campion sketched another jaunty bow and left through the dressing room door, leaving husband and wife alone with a large, imposing bed in their midst.

"Mr. Campion did not seem surprised you would bring a woman up here," she stated matter-of-factly.

Lucien smiled with amusement. "He's just 'Campion', and he most certainly was surprised. I can't believe you didn't notice. Why he was positively flabbergasted. I have never brought anyone up here before." He grinned playfully.

"Really? You've allowed no one, not even your mistresses?"

"My *mistresses* have never come here at all. What do you take me for, a complete rogue?"

"I take you for a man who has been shamefully neglected by the woman charged with his care."

"Yes, well, I would agree with that assessment, and I do believe you should start making it up to me this very moment. Why don't you remove your clothing and then you can remove mine as well."

Lucien crossed the room and sat in a comfortable red and gold damask-covered chair. After removing his black kid evening shoes and white stockings, he crossed his long, elegant legs, one over the other, and simply watched as Serenity struggled with

her clothing.

"You might at least help," she said, but was completely ignored.

She wriggled and squirmed, thinking she wasn't showing her innate elegance and grace for this, her first sexual encounter with her husband since their wedding night. *What was I thinking when I left?*

She finally slipped the dress down over her shoulders and into a puddle at her feet. Had he always been so handsome? Had he always been so tall? *What will he look like naked?*

When she stood in front of him, wearing only her diaphanous chemise, he stood up. He'd had to bite back laughter as she wormed her way out of her clothing, something he'd wager she'd never had to do for herself.

She's changed, he thought pleasantly. She'd always been so plain, so unexceptional. But now, she was . . . well . . . pretty. Certainly no raving beauty, but with her stylish hair and clothing, and a certain graceful quality she'd not heretofore possessed, she was indeed quite attractive. Her curves were more womanly now, and she smelled of lavender and something vaguely citrusy. Through the silk, he saw her dusky, aroused nipples. Lord, he could not wait to fill his hands with her breasts.

He stepped forward and walked around her, skimming her rounded shoulders, running the backs of his fingers down one arm. He lingered behind her, plucking emerald hairpins and casually dropping them to the floor. He leaned in to kiss the back of her neck, brushing her tumbled hair aside. The soft silk of her chemise shifted under his touch as he explored her spine and firmly cupped her buttocks.

"I like a firm bottom, Serenity." He flicked a swat, startling her. "Do you like it when I touch you here?"

"Yes," she muttered as his fingers worked her chemise into the crease between her cheeks.

"That's very good, because I do too."

He untied one ribbon at her shoulder and continued walking around her. She

had her eyes closed. He could hear a hitch in her breathing every time his fingers caressed her skin. *Good, be on guard; be leery.* "Open your eyes and watch as I suckle your breast. Have you ever had your breast suckled, my dear?"

"Oh, yes," she confessed, but he didn't pursue it.

"Do you like it?" He circled his tongue around her distended nipple.

Her head lolled back on her shoulders and he stopped sucking.

"Open your eyes." He plucked the other ribbon and the pink silk floated to the floor. Serenity stood before him unashamedly naked, her brown curly hair all but shielding her small, though adequate, breasts from his view. She opened her silver-blue eyes. He dipped his hand into her feminine curls and discovered the truth; she was dripping with desire.

"What is this, my dear? Are you anxious for our coupling?"

Her voice creaked with an unintelligible answer.

"Tell me what you want, Serenity."

"I want you," she admitted.

"How do you want me? I seem to recall a time when you wanted nothing to do with my 'nasty male activities'. What has changed? I dare say the activities may have gotten nastier."

"I was young then. I have learned"

"Ah, ha, I believe you have given yourself away more than once since our happy reunion. Tell me what you want, plainly, so I can understand."

"To begin with, I want to see you."

"Well here I am." He flung his arms out at his sides.

"No, I want to see you n-n—"

"Naked. Is that what you are trying to say, my little shy wife?"

"Yes, Lucien, I want to see you naked."

"Well, then, please, do the honors."

He put himself into her shaking hands. She removed his black tailcoat and silver-embroidered waistcoat, folding them and placing them over the back of a chair. His

cravat and shirt came next. Her breath hitched perceptibly when she reached for the buttons on the placard of his black trousers. She kept her gaze fixed upon his eyes as her tiny fingers slipped each button from its mooring until she released the last one. With her thumbs, she slid the exquisitely tailored linen down over his slim hips and hard, muscled thighs, past his knees and to the floor, not taking her eyes off the pulsing bulge beneath his small clothes.

"These must go." She untied them and slid them to his hips, revealing his cock in all its aroused glory.

"You have never seen me. You did not avail yourself of the privilege as we made love in the dark on our wedding night."

"It is evident it was my loss."

Being the man he was, Lucien fairly gloated. He was quite proud of his appendage, as though he'd designed it himself. He grabbed it and stroked it provocatively.

Serenity arched a chestnut eyebrow and smiled, but said nothing. She raised a hand and then shied away.

"Go ahead; touch me."

She touched the bulbous head and then wrapped her delicate fingers around him. Slowly, her hand slid down the blue-veined shaft and up again. She dallied at the crown, trailing her fingernail around the flared ridge. Lucien hissed, his knees threatening to turn to water, but he managed to hold his ground. Silvery fluid dripped from the tiny eye, attracting her attention.

"What is this?" she asked flirtatiously as she ran her thumb through it.

"It lets you know I am ready to fuck you insensible."

She chuckled. He lifted her into his arms and carried her to the bed.

He was like any man faced with a naked woman. He wanted to fuck her, and it really didn't matter who or what she was. A lady having a notch and being willing were the only two criteria by which most men conducted their lives. *A stiff cock has no conscience.*

He crawled predatorily onto the bed after her. He straddled her legs as she lay propped upon the crisp white pillows. He lowered his head and took her nipple in his mouth and ravished it. He tugged with his teeth, eliciting deep hissing sounds from Serenity. He licked and suckled until her nipples were distended and surely aching. He savagely thrust two fingers into her quim, pumping her with a power that was foreign even to him.

He felt suddenly angry and set upon. This woman had no right in his life or in his bed and yet he'd invited her, instead of chucking her out like so much rubbish. *Maybe I'm not as jaded as I thought*, he speculated, knowing with certainty he was playing with her much like a barn cat would tease a mouse.

"Do you like my fingers fucking you?"

"I don't know." She huffed.

"Well then, what about this?" With a forceful motion, he hilted his cock inside of her before she knew what he was about.

"Lucien, please, you will hurt me if you keep on so."

He'd no wish to hurt her; he merely wanted to show her what she'd been missing. What she gave up when she left him for no reason other than a refusal to fulfill her wifely duties. She would understand what those duties entailed before he let her go again, he vowed.

He slowed his pace and the ferocity with which he'd initially taken her. He took her hands in his and stretched them over her head. With slow, steady strokes, he rode her. He undulated his hips, moving with an elegant grace honed during years of practiced seduction.

Serenity's breathing became shallow as she shifted her body to meet his. "Oh, yes, faster, Lucien, harder."

With a sense of masculine pride, Lucien began deep, plunging strokes. In his need to bury himself inside her as fully as possible, his hips met hers; the sound of flesh on flesh joined their grunts and moans. His bollocks spanked her arse noisily.

"This is what it could have been like, Serenity. He punctuated each thrust with

one just a bit harder. "Do you like this, *wife*?"

Her eyes closed and her head lolled side-to-side on the pillow. "Yes."

He withdrew, and her eyes flew open.

"Roll over."

She did. With his arm under her, he pulled her up so she was on her knees, with her bum in the air and her head resting on the pillow.

"Hold the bedstead."

She put her hands around the ornate metal.

Lucien retrieved a bottle from the drawer in the bedside table. When he was again positioned between Serenity's legs, he nudged them wider. He then applied some of the lavender-scented oil to the tiny pink pucker and rubbed until his finger slid into her arse. She inhaled sharply but held fast.

"It will burn for a moment." He began to wiggle his finger, and then drew it out and back in again, over and over. Serenity moaned seductively. He wanted to plunge into her arse with all that was in him, and he would, but not tonight. He must take every opportunity to prepare her.

"Do you like my fingers fucking your arse?" he whispered.

"Oh, my God, yes, Lucien."

"Would you like my cock inside you like this?"

"Yes, please."

"Soon, soon." He added another finger and continued fucking her arse as he thrust his cock into her quim.

"Oh, my God, Lucien, yes." The feeling of fullness was heavenly. She couldn't imagine how his cock would fit in her arse, but she was willing to try if it felt anything close to what he was doing to her now.

As he thrust his cock inside her cunny, she gasped. He was a very large man, and she felt like he was going to fill her to bursting. He wasn't particularly gentle, but then she no longer wished him to be. She would take his retribution because she deserved it.

She'd learned much in ten years, not the least of which was what she'd given up because of fear. She was no longer afraid, at least not of him, and she would prove it to him.

Her hips began to join his rhythm. She repeatedly impaled herself on his cock and his fingers as he flexed his hips against her bottom with increasing intensity. With his free hand, he found her clit and with barely a touch, he sent her into a shower of light and color. She bucked under him, but he stayed with her, pleasuring her until she could stand no more.

He pumped with more speed, and with a shout that could have alerted Bow Street, he pulled out of her. She felt his warm seed spray across her back.

He gasped for air and slumped beside her. She'd melted into the counterpane, too weak to hold herself up any longer. She wanted desperately to nestle into him, but despite the fact he lay beside her, his massive chest heaving and one arm thrown across his eyes, she felt a huge distance between them. He looked like he'd already shut her out.

Moments later, as she was still collecting herself, he got off the bed. He retrieved a wet cloth from the washstand and proceeded to cleanse his drying seed from her back.

"Thank you," she whispered.

"Come, I have a wrapper you can wear. I'll escort you to your room."

Serenity's heart sank. She'd hoped he would allow her to stay with him all night. This was going to be a long road, but she'd no choice. She had to make this work, for she'd nowhere else to go.

Chapter Three

After bidding Serenity a blessed sleep, he returned to his chamber, where he paced for much of the night. He'd been led astray by his cock before and he wasn't about to allow it to happen again. She'd grown into a rather nice looking woman, his

little wife. The problem was just that, she was his wife, with all the requisite bad memories. Granted, it wasn't as though he'd ever loved her or she him, but it had been rather humiliating when he bedded her and then she left for Nottinghamshire. It took a great deal of explaining, and he took even more ribbing from Prentice Hyde and his other friends, about his ability to keep a woman in his bed for more than one night.

Now, he'd many possibilities before him and his immediate inclination was to send her back from whence she came and then he could go back to his life the way he'd crafted it.

Alas, he knew he wouldn't do that, no matter how much contemplation to which he committed himself. His hands itched to spank her, now she was of a mind to allow such. He would mold her into the wife he wished her to be. He'd already begun the process, and he was quite sure Serenity wouldn't be happy about what was to come.

* * * * *

"Good morning, Mrs. Damrill. I am Marjorie. Mr. Damrill has asked me to take care of you."

"Good morning, Marjorie."

"I have ordered a bath and when we are finished here, Mr. Damrill wishes to see you."

Several minutes later, two young footmen delivered her bath, and she was able to relax in delicious rosewater- scented luxury. As she soaked, she couldn't help but ponder how thoughtful it was Lucien would have ordered such for her. While she bathed, Marjorie busied herself by setting out clothing.

When the water grew tepid, Marjorie helped her from the tub and dried her. "Please, Mrs. Damrill, go lie on the bed and spread your legs wide for me."

"I beg your pardon."

"I have instructions from Mr. Damrill. I must shave you, as your husband does not like feminine hair."

Serenity did not move. She had suffered many humiliations in her life, but what Lucien was suggesting at the hands of her new lady's maid was beyond the pale. There were many things she needed to learn about her husband, but a shaved mons wasn't something she could have ever guessed he'd desire.

"Mrs. Damrill, shall I tell Mr. Damrill you don't wish to proceed with his instructions?"

"No, why would you think that?"

"It just appears you don't wish for me to shave you as he instructed."

Embarrassed, Serenity trudged to the bed. When positioned as Marjorie had requested, her feminine mound was soaped and with a deft hand, Marjorie expertly shaved her smooth.

"Please, roll to your stomach and hold your cheeks open for me, Mrs. Damrill." With hesitation but no argument, she did as the lady's maid bid. Her buttocks and the area between her cheeks were relieved of any trace of the fine hair usually found there. When Marjorie finished, she opened a bottle of scented oil and applied some to the puckered hole and cheeks of Serenity's bottom.

Marjorie helped Serenity dress and fixed her hair in a simple knot with several tendrils framing her face.

"Mr. Damrill shall be in as soon as I tell him you are ready. I shall have breakfast brought in. Good day, Mrs. Damrill."

* * * * *

"Good morning, Serenity." Lucien entered her room without knocking.

"Good morning," she grumbled.

"Are you not pleased with Marjorie?"

Damn him, he sounded so amused. "I am not pleased with you, Lucien. I was humiliated."

"You can always go back to the country and grow it back. If you stay here, I wish

your feminine hair to be gone." He walked with graceful fluidity across the room to the chairs before the fireplace. He sank into one, crossing his long legs.

"I can have a carriage prepared within the hour. You could be back in Nottinghamshire in just a couple of days, if you push on hard."

The thought of going back to Nottinghamshire send a frisson of fear down her spine. She would never go back there. She only prayed news of her precipitous departure had not reached the wrong ears. Her only solace was no one would suspect she would return to Lucien.

"No, I don't wish to return to Nottinghamshire. I told you, I wish to be your wife." She nodded in concession. He'd always been difficult and had obviously not changed.

There was a knock on the door.

"That would be breakfast," he said.

Serenity opened the door and several servants brought in trays of coddled eggs, bacon, freshly baked bread, and a variety of fruit as well as pots of delicious smelling coffee. Hampton, Lucien's butler, organized everything on a table in front of the fireplace and Lucien nodded dismissal.

"Let me serve you, my dear," he said as he reached for a plate.

"Thank you, would you like me to pour?"

Serenity sensed Lucien had something to say, yet he sat with a quirky smile on his face.

"What is it, Lucien?"

"Why, in fact, are you here?" His face was calm; his steely gray eyes told no tales.

"I told you. It was time I became your wife."

"You have never given any indication of even the slightest bit of affection toward me. You have always had money to spend as you wished. What benefit is there to assuming your wifely duties after all this time?"

Serenity felt her heartbeat increase as she struggled to be calm. If she gave herself away, he would send her back and no amount of pleading would stop him.

"I've missed you," she lied.

Lucien gave a humorless laugh. "You've missed me? How touching. A lie, to be sure, but touching nonetheless."

Serenity's face flushed, as it often did when she was caught telling an untruth. She straightened her back, pulled a haughty face, and said, "I told you, I wish to be your wife. Now, if you cannot find it in your heart to believe me, then I feel the difficulty lies with you and not me."

"Fine, if you won't tell me I shall have to take you at your word, won't I?"

Serenity nodded.

"Well, then, tell me this. Who has been kissing your breasts in my absence?"

"Lucien! Must you be so crass?"

"Yes, and I demand an answer."

She placed her hands under her legs to keep them from shaking. This line of questioning was getting too close to the real reason she was in London.

"Ten years is a very long time, Lucien. Can you tell me of all the women with whom you have been and all they have done to you?"

"I can," he said with nary a flinch.

"Well, I cannot." She'd decided she would rather he think her a whore than for him to learn the truth.

"What are you hiding, Serenity? I dare say I don't know you well, but I do know women. You are nervous, as though you are carrying a huge secret. Are you in some kind of trouble? Let me help you."

Damn his eyes, she thought. Why did he have to be so kind and perceptive? No, she wouldn't succumb to his charm.

"I am simply tired. You kept me up quite late and then this morning, you inflicted Marjorie upon me. I am rather fragmented at the moment."

"I see. Well then I shall leave you to try to pull yourself together." He unfolded himself from the chair and gave her a stiff bow. "Until later."

She didn't look in his direction and only knew he'd gone when she heard the

door click closed. When she was sure she was alone, she allowed her tears to flow. Oh, she'd cried oceans full of tears since that day in Italy and she feared there would be many more to cry. She was deceiving Lucien and she hated herself for it, even more than she hated being tied to him. They had never loved one another and their marriage had done nothing for either of them but shackled them in a union that could never be severed.

A knock at the door brought footmen to clear away the remnants of breakfast. She retreated to her dressing room while they were there. She would be moving soon into the suite reserved for the lady of the house. She rather liked the room she was in, but she knew she must move lest questions be asked as to why she resisted being so close to Lucien, especially since she professed a wish to repair the breach in their marriage.

Oh, this was becoming much too complicated. She returned to her bed and lay down. Her last thought was of the flaxen-haired young man in Italy and then of his cold, dead eyes. Even closing *her* eyes couldn't keep that last image of him from her memory. *It wasn't my fault*, she'd screamed hundreds of times. *It couldn't be my fault*.

* * * * *

Lucien sat at his desk, taking care of some club business, but his mind was two stories above. He would never trust Serenity, especially since she didn't trust him enough to tell him the truth. In his line of work, it was an advantage to be able to read people, and he'd become an expert. She was defensive, nervous, and evasive. The only time she'd allowed herself to be truthful with him was when he was pounding into her and forcing out every bit of emotion.

A knock on the door drew him out of his thoughts.

"Yes."

Hampton entered in his usual quiet manner. "Sir, the Marquess of Wycroft wishes to see you."

Lucien's disposition brightened immediately. "Well, send him in, Hampton."

"Very good, sir," the old butler said as he bowed and left the room.

Within moments, Prentice Hyde breezed into the library, a breath of fresh air in any circle.

"Prentice, old boy, so good to see you. When did you return from the continent?" Lucien came around his large, rosewood desk and extended his hand to his long-time friend.

"Not two weeks past and it seems like I was gone forever, instead of just six months."

Lucien motioned for Prentice to take a seat, perching himself on the edge of the desk. "Didn't enjoy the beautiful buxom chit you took with you?"

"It's the last time I take your advice. Her stamina lasted about as long as it took to tour Rome. She couldn't take an arse-whipping worth a damn."

"She did seem rather timid, but I thought you were grooming her nicely."

"I really think she has eyes for *you*, old man."

"We had our time, but, well, no matter now."

"So tell me what you have been doing in my absence? How is the club?"

"All is well here. Membership has increased, and we have more private clients. I also have a wife."

"You got married? Whenever did that happen?"

"About ten years ago, but she's just returned to the fold."

"You've been married all this time? How did I not know this?"

"I have never considered myself married, so I never made an issue of it."

"So she has returned. Are you happy about it?"

"More confused. I know she is hiding something, but she won't tell me what it is."

"How long have we known each other, Lucien? I cannot credit I had no inkling you were leg-shackled."

"Move on, Prentice."

"How will it affect your private clients? Does Mrs. Damrill know you fuck the female clients after you put them through their paces?"

"No, she does not, but it's immaterial. My life won't change, and she will learn to live with it. We have led separate lives up until now, and I dare say I find no reason to change."

"Lady Foxworth shall be happy to hear that, I'm sure. She rather favors your legendary cock."

Lucien laughed. "Just so. And yours too, as I recall, does she not?"

Prentice smiled knowingly. "Lady Foxworth was a lusty one, to be sure. I look forward to meeting the esteemed Mrs. Damrill, though I simply cannot imagine you married. How could you be faithful to any one woman?"

"The beauty of it is that I don't have to be. She has not been pristine in her behavior, and after ten years, I truly thought she would sooner ask for a divorce than show up on my doorstep offering her arse for my pleasure."

"Oh, so she shares the same interest in sport?"

"Newly minted, according to her. Says she heard about the club and me at a house party in Yorkshire. It seemed to tickle her fancy, and she thought she'd come and renew our acquaintance."

"Can she take it? I mean, did you blister her good?"

"I warmed her up, but I'm giving her a real one this afternoon. If she is to really be my wife, her arse is mine, and I shall make good use of it."

Prentice laughed. "I've missed you, Lucien. I never thought there was anyone who was as devoted to domination and submission as I was, until I met you. Others play at it, but we, well, we are more demanding, are we not?"

"Yes, we are, my old friend. Will you be coming 'round tonight? There are a couple of new clients you might wish to help me out with."

"Oh, yes, I shall be here. I have months of frustration to work off. My mistress is nice to fuck, but she is a bit out of practice since my departure."

"Bring her with you. We can always use another courtesan around here."

"I am thinking of turning her loose anyway, so it might be the perfect place for her to find another protector. I shall see what she says."

Prentice pulled his tall, lanky frame into a standing position.

"Come early tonight, and we shall have dinner before we get to work." Lucien opened the door and led Prentice toward the front entry.

"I shall, but only if I get to meet the illustrious Mrs. Damrill."

"I suppose you will. I plan to show her around and get her acclimated to our activities. It should be interesting."

"Not for the faint of heart, to be sure."

"We shall see how much heart she has."

Lucien walked to the portico and watched his friend board his shiny black carriage, replete with two bewigged, liveried footmen and an ancient coachman. He was still watching as the carriage rumbled down the oak-lined drive and finally back onto the road into London.

Inspired to converse further with his wife, Lucien went in search of her. The thought of seeing her was neither pleasant nor abhorrent, which didn't bode well for the happy reunion Serenity so profoundly insisted upon. But one thing remained unchanged. She would indeed submit to him.

Chapter Four

Lucien found Serenity and asked that she accompany him on a tour of the club.

"As you know, the third floor is dedicated to the private residence. The residence is equipped with its own kitchen, dining room, morning room, a number of private rooms and of course several drawing rooms. We have several bedchambers, which can be used for guests, though I have not used them in years. Hampton and Marjorie are the only servants I share with the club, because they are the most trusted. Marjorie has been exclusively with the club until now, but she will also serve as your lady's maid."

They made their way down the hidden stairway to the library. "I use the library

as my office as well as a place where I greet callers. There are offices off the library, which are usually occupied by the club's management staff, financial officer, and security people, when they are not monitoring the goings on." He shared with her how much he enjoyed the dark wood paneling in the room, the rich masculine smells of leather, brandy, and smoke. The floor was covered with a collection of Turkish rugs, all with prominent colors of red, blue, and gold. The furniture reflected the same colors, all groupings very comfortable looking. "I had it masculinized when I first bought the estate."

As they walked around the large room, Lucien pointed out the plasterwork frieze, which depicted hunting scenes, completely incongruous with the artwork crowding the walls. Without exception, the paintings consisted of some form of erotic scene – bare breasts and bottoms as well as some very enticing male sexual organs in their full, aroused glory.

The walls themselves were done in crimson silk wallpaper, rather plain, but a wonderful background for the gilded frames and rich, dark bookcases.

"Your furniture is quite surprising."

"Really? I hadn't noticed. But then again, I am the person who selected it."

"What is this?" she asked, standing near a padded bench.

"That, my dear, is a spanking bench."

Serenity's eyes widened. "A spanking bench?"

"Yes, a person is laid on their stomach, their legs are spread wide, and they are spanked. They can be restrained or not, depending upon the situation and their willingness."

"You take spankings quite seriously, do you not?"

"Indeed I do, as do those who enjoy them. You would be amazed to learn what a thrill it is to be spanked as a part of sexual activity."

"Yes, well, I have an idea, given what you did to me yesterday."

"No, my dear, that was nothing, believe me."

"Nothing? My bottom is still smarting."

"It shall be smarting regularly if I have any say in the matter. Keeping it so is as necessary to my life as the air I breathe."

"Have you ever been spanked?"

Lucien's face colored perceptibly. "Yes, I have."

"Who spanked you?"

"I don't believe you need to know."

"Oh." She fell silent.

Lucien smiled, seemingly pleased she ended her questioning. Apparently, he wasn't ready to share *that* much of his life with her in such an intimate fashion.

"The club has many members, from nearly every social class. If they can afford the membership fee, they are welcome. My staff is made up of people I have known for years, many from my military days. We very rarely have any trouble and certainly have none that can't be dispensed with in short order."

As they left the library, he escorted her to a very large, elegant drawing room, just to the left of the heavy walnut front door. "This room is for general socializing. On any given evening, there are one hundred people or more in this room, all preening and flirting. However, no sexual activities are conducted in here. This is for socializing and setting up assignations."

The room was pleasant, with many blue and gold striped damask sofas and chairs. There was a rosewood and gilt pianoforte, around which people could gather for entertainment of a tamer nature.

Flowers graced every table surface, and large, licentious paintings hung on the yellow-silk papered walls, depicting sexual acts of every possible ilk. When Serenity became curious about a rather large area set off to the side, Lucien explained it was manned by no less than three liveried footmen, and it was where libations of every imaginable description could be obtained. The room was pleasant, with a faint smell of flowers and lemon oil.

Along with large fireplaces on the two longest walls, all the walls had many large empty niches. "It is quite odd you don't have sculptures or vases to fill the niches."

"I do, but only at night."

"Why are they not present all the time?"

"Human beings find it difficult to pose around the clock." His tone hinted at amusement.

"You have people posing in the niches?"

"Yes. They are generally nude."

Serenity's face grew warm. "I should like to see that."

"You shall, that and so much more."

Across the entrance hall, was another set of rooms, which Lucien referred to as public rooms. "The goings-on in these 'scene rooms' are for public consumption. Each room has a theme – for instance, this particular one is where someone can play out a pirate fantasy." Beside her stood the hull of a small ship, yardarm and all. The mast had round metal eyes attached, with ropes strung through them. "The damsel in distress is tied to the mast, and you can guess how the rest goes."

Serenity wondered if she would ever have the nerve to watch such things.

The next room was a gaudy affair, set up as a place where an orgy could take place. There were plush cushions in a variety of jeweled colors strewn on the floor. Curtains hung from the high ceiling, creating several smaller areas. Many people could participate. "Partners are interchangeable here. Often times, there are as many as fifteen gentlemen in here with up to thirty women. It can get very raucous, but everyone seems to leave quite satisfied."

"I had never imagined such a place as this existed."

"Nearly every conceivable manner of sexual activity is sanctioned, and there will always be men and women who wish to indulge. I don't allow perversions such as abuse of children, but adults are welcome to let their imaginations run wild, so long as everyone participating consents. Most of our members are very well-connected, titled men and woman, as you shall see with time."

He had piqued her curiosity, for she couldn't conceive of stiff-rumped nobles participating in activities such as Lucien had described.

"The rest of the rooms on this floor are along the same lines. We have a room where men can chase a 'maid', and several rooms can be fitted with chains and bars to suit the member. There are any number of costumes stored in two of the rooms, so our clients can be as daring as they might wish."

The walls of each room had numerous paintings of an erotic nature hung on them, usually representing something similar to the theme of the room. All depicted spanking or other harsher discipline.

"Come, I shall take you to the second floor." She followed him up the wide, black marble staircase. "This is for the more serious-minded of our members. We call the rooms here the 'pleasure emporiums.'"

He led her to the right at the second floor landing, taking a long hallway carpeted in plush, blood red Aubusson. The cream-colored walls held more paintings of erotic scenes, some from India, which, as Lucien explained, were acquired during his several visits. The scenes depicted floggings, spankings, and sex acts in anything but conventional positions. Sculptures sat on ornately carved Indian tables, also depicting sexual positions, some between partners of the same gender.

"Oh, my goodness." Serenity looked at a particularly provocative white marble piece-- a man bent forward at the waist with another standing behind him with an erect penis.

Lucien laughed. "Some men prefer to be buggered, and others prefer to do the buggering."

She met his knowing eyes. "I have much to learn, do I not?"

He draped a casual arm over her shoulders. "Oh, yes. And I relish the opportunity to teach you."

His arm traveled to her waist, making it easier for him to shuffle her along to the first room. "All rooms in this hallway are used by those people who wish to partake of some sort of punishment and domination. Each room is fitted with a large bed, often used for ménage. They all have fixtures for chains and bars, which can be hung from the high ceiling. There is a dresser that holds every imaginable implement, from soft leather

straps gathered with a wooden handle, to bullwhips, tawse, and pizzles."

Serenity tested the paddles and floggers against the palm of her hand. "Would you use any of these on me?"

Lucien's succinct answer was, "Yes, if you wish."

Heat pooled in her center. She had to take a moment to calm herself. She could hardly believe her life had taken the turn it had and could provide her with her most heart-felt longings. She never dreamed she could talk to Lucien about her need for spankings and sexual domination. There was only one person who'd known that about her — only dear Winsor.

Serenity looked about at several more pieces of rather strange furniture, contraptions obviously designed for the restraint of the person to be punished, though some had no restraints at all. It amazed her how Lucien's club catered to people much like her, who craved something more.

"We also have rooms for same-sex games and for people who love and prefer themselves to anyone else. It is as varied here as are the people who frequent the club."

Serenity was amazed at Lucien's acuity. He seemed to sense the sexual and emotional needs of others and saw to it that the Sapphire Club catered to those needs.

"Come, I have one more room to show you." He led her to the opposite hallway and into a cavernous room she supposed had been, at one time, a ballroom. It was fashioned with large Corinthian columns draped with colorful silks partitioning the perimeter into cozy 'rooms', each furnished with a bench she now knew was used for spanking. In the center of the room, there stood a large fountain. There was a pool, in which stood a tall, slim column upon which sat a massive bowl. Water poured over the sides of the bowl and back into the pool.

There were niches around the room, with some spectacular plasterwork around the ceiling and under the impressive white stone railing of the gallery that hung high above. Several rooms were found just off the gallery, which Serenity realized must be used for assignations.

"This room is called 'The Gates of Heaven and Hell'. Here, most any sort of

activity can be found. There are many who enjoy, nay, *need* the lash to be harshly applied and enjoy it being done for all to see. It is all here. These are great favorites of the membership. Costumes are worn, depending upon the fantasy of the participants. We have Roman tableaux here where everyone usually dresses in togas. It is very interesting and seems to please the members as well as the guests."

Serenity was quite still while Lucien spoke. He had her complete, rapt attention as he described many of the tableaux. It was thrilling to think all this was happening in the home she now occupied. As she walked around the room, she questioned him as to the specifics of each of the things she'd seen. She found herself terribly aroused. It was only two in the afternoon. Sadly, her spanking wasn't scheduled for two more hours, and there was no guarantee Lucien would fuck her afterwards.

* * * * *

Serenity was beside herself by the time she returned to her chamber. She desperately needed release. Everything Lucien had shown her had caused a longing deep within her loins. She craved the feel of the strap; even his hand would be better than this sense of loss she'd been living with since Winsor's death.

Winsor had been the man who had playfully introduced her to spanking. He surprised her the first time he took her over his knee and spanked her hard. After that, they had always made a game of it, similar to the kinds of things that Lucien had spoken of, except in the privacy of her home. Winsor had possessed a firm hand and could wield a strap that made her backside burn for days. She longed for it again, and she would have to convince Lucien to apply it liberally.

Lucien had told her to go to a room at the end of the hallway on the third floor. She'd thought about delaying her arrival, knowing Lucien was notoriously impatient. He was always on time and deplored having to wait for others. However, on this auspicious occasion, her first real spanking by him, she thought to be on time.

She knocked on the door and was excited to hear him say, "Come in." His voice

seemed masterful, quite different from when he'd conducted the tour.

Serenity entered the room, shut and locked the door. She stood still, not knowing exactly what to do next. A moment later, Lucien spoke.

"Is there a particular reason why you believe you should be spanked, Serenity?"

At first she had no idea what to say. Then she realized honesty was what he wished for. "I need it as surely as I need my next breath."

He was seated in an overstuffed chair, looking quite comfortable. Serenity could smell his cologne from across the room. She could feel the sensual pull he possessed now, one that had been missing years before. He'd changed, and she was beginning to like the difference.

"I shall know what has happened in your life to bring about your return. Make no mistake, if I am to be your husband, I shall know all."

"I wouldn't presume to keep secrets from you."

"Bend over the side of the bed."

Serenity's heart began to pound, her pulse thrumming, the muscles of her quim keeping time. She bent over the bed and waited for his further commands. He lifted her ice-blue skirts to her waist. She wasn't wearing drawers. He spread her legs wide, leaving her slightly off balance and provocatively open to him.

He'd laid a leather strap on the bed, and when she bent over, she couldn't miss seeing it. Her mouth watered as she looked at the worn leather and imagined how it was going to feel lashed across her buttocks. The earthy smell of the strap caused moisture to collect at her core, and a feeling of sheer ecstasy flooded her body.

Lucien's large hand skimmed across the surface of her now barely sore cheeks. "Oh, yes, we are going to redden these up nicely this afternoon," he drawled. He dragged the strap across where his hand had just gone, sliding the edge along the valley between the cheeks.

Serenity wiggled and moaned.

"You want this, don't you?" he asked, teasing her a moment longer.

"Oh, yes."

"You mustn't come until I give you permission."

Serenity nodded, all the time doubting she would be able to heed his admonishment.

He skimmed his hand over her bottom one more time, and then the strap came crashing down upon her. She groaned and closed her eyes.

"Yes," she said with satisfaction, as though she'd waited for that moment all her life. "Again, please, again."

Lucien wasted no time as he judiciously applied the lashes, first to one cheek and then the other. Serenity was in awe of his ability to apply it just as she needed it done. The strikes jolted through her, sparks of pleasurable pain shooting down her legs and up her torso. She was captivated by the sound of leather as it struck her; the feeling of her burning skin was nearly orgasmic. Even the tiny grunts Lucien emitted as he brandished the strap thrilled her to her core. At this point, if her circumstances weren't so tenuous, she might have considered being a real wife to Lucien.

"Lucien!" She gasped. "I cannot last."

"You must."

Serenity gritted her teeth and took the last strikes with relish. She hated to have it end, but she needed release immediately.

Chapter Five

"I must come, Lucien," she begged, but he wasn't so inclined.

"You must hold on as I have something else in mind."

Lucien walked to the same chair he'd been sitting in when she arrived. It was a patterned brocade affair that looked as though one could simply disappear in its comfort. He sat down and sprawled, his legs widely spread. "Come here."

Serenity stood on wobbly legs and walked to stand in front of him.

"Kneel and attend me."

She loosed his buttons and released his rampant erection. She took him in her

mouth expertly. Lucien marveled at the skills she'd learned over the last ten years.

With unexpected talent, she used her velvety hot mouth to explore his cock, her tongue not missing even one sensitive spot. She laved the underside of the head; the tiny, sensitive nerves responded with shards of glorious pleasure.

He laced his fingers in her hair, ravaging the carefully styled locks as he became lost in the joy that was Serenity's mouth. She was persistent, even when he tried to pull her up.

She gave him a muffled *no* and continued to stroke him until his lower body came off the chair, and he began to pound into her. She was apparently prepared, because she handled it with aplomb as he exploded in her mouth, shooting his hot seed down her throat.

As he slumped back into the chair, Serenity continued to suckle him, taking all he had to give.

"One good turn deserves another," she said with a wink.

Lucien could barely recognize this woman, and if he were truthful with himself, he was happy for that fact. He hadn't particularly liked the woman he'd married, but this woman, this new version was someone he wouldn't mind having in his bedchamber.

Lucien began to undress his wife, all the while marveling at the change in her. "That was extraordinary."

"Lucien, I cannot wait much longer."

He could see in her lust-glazed eyes she spoke the truth.

"Your wish is my command." When he'd finished removing her clothing, he led her to the bed. He had his hands all over her, until she pushed one to her mons.

"Is this what you want?" he asked as he circled her clit with his deft thumb. That was all it took before Serenity lost herself to the bliss she'd been craving.

"Yes," she hissed through her teeth. Her mind felt as though it had exploded. Spasms racked her body, and nothing else existed but that moment.

Once her breath was restored, she chuckled. "I needed that."

"You certainly seemed to." Lucien fondled her breast, teasing the hard, distended nipple with his thumb. He kissed her neck and wasted no time taking a nipple in his mouth, sending delicious sensations of pleasure to Serenity's quim.

"Oh, Lucien." She moaned as he continued to suckle, tugging with his teeth until she thought she could stand no more.

He dipped his hand down, rubbing her silky smooth mound. "Marjorie will see to it you have no hair here, ever. I prefer you to be smooth and open to my sight whenever I choose to see you."

She nodded, afraid to do much more, lest he cease his expert fondling. Two fingers dipped into her, delivering her to heaven, and he hadn't even entered her yet.

Lucien's long, elegant fingers moved in and out, his clever thumb having again taken control of her sensitive clitoris. He slowly circled, creating a veil of sensual delight. The scent of her musk permeated the room, intoxicating her.

"Let go again for me."

She would never tire of this feeling. Her body felt light. It was difficult to concentrate. She was warm, like she was experiencing a slow boil.

His voice was deep and comforting. "That's it, sweeting. Let go."

And so she did. The pleasure tore through her, slow and easy at first then with an intensity she'd rarely experienced. The orgasm seemed to reach every part of her, inside and out, until she felt on fire.

She became aware of the low rumble of Lucien's voice, encouraging her to let go, to take all he gave her.

As she returned to sensibility, she saw Lucien watching her. His eyes looked dark and feral, as though he wished to devour her.

"Are orgasms always so . . . dramatic with you?" she asked, still trying to catch her breath.

"If I am doing my part correctly, they certainly will be." As he spoke, he worked her again. It was a mere moment, and she was lost again, her body writhing, arching off

the bed, trying to get closer to his hand. "I shall recreate you as a creature of the flesh."

He rolled her over onto her stomach, urging her to her knees. He moved a pillow under her stomach. "Raise your arms above your head and don't move them."

She did as she was told, feeling languorous in the aftermath of her powerful sexual releases.

Lucien removed his clothes and joined her once again on the bed. With her bottom propped high, he could admire his work. He wouldn't pretend to himself the crimson coloring wasn't to his liking. It appeared his little wife had learned some interesting lessons in the years they had been apart.

As he rubbed her arse she moaned. "Does it hurt much?"

"Yes, it does, you brute."

He popped her lightly. "Now, now, I believe you asked for it."

"I certainly did. And you know how to deliver, do you not?"

"So I've been told."

"I rather fancy the burning cheeks."

"That's very good, because we've not even gotten started. I have wonderful plans for this arse. Now, spread your legs wide for me." In doing so, her cheeks separated, exposing her completely. It was indeed a veritable playground of delights.

He slid a finger down between her cheeks and stopped to tease her anus. He was surprised she reacted by moving back toward him. He opened the drawer in the bedside table and retrieving a bottle of oil. He poured some of the liquid over the delicate pink pucker and rubbed gently before slipping a finger within the muscled confines. Serenity groaned and again wriggled back toward him. He took her silent encouragement and delved deeper. Her tiny muscles gave way to his intrusion, until the entire length of his finger was fully seated. She moaned with satisfaction and began to move.

"Do you like this, Serenity?" he asked, marveling at the discovery.

"Oh my good lord, yes. It is divine."

He slipped in another finger to join the first, working them back and forth, in and out, to Serenity's obvious delight. With his other hand, he again worked her clitoris, until she came in a thunder of screams and shouts. The waves of ecstasy kept crashing over her, her reaction to his ministrations seemingly never ending. He continued, until she obviously could take no more. Before she came back to herself, he entered her, leaving his two fingers buried deep in her arse.

As he was reputed to do, he rode her to insensibility. She redefined moaning, mewling like a kitten and roaring like a lioness in heat. He liked his women vocal. There was no room for the shy, retiring type of woman in his bed. Serenity did not resemble her name in the least.

He pumped her hard, using his expertise to hold his own orgasm back. With slow, forceful strides, he rode her, prolonging the blissful torture. When he could hold back no more, he encouraged her to her release once again, his fingers and cock doing what they did best. The muscles in his neck tensed and pulsed, bulging as he strained. His thighs tensed and quivered. Lucien came to a crashing climax, Serenity's shouts mixed with his, one indistinguishable from the other in exquisite agony.

Finally, he collapsed beside her, pulling her close to his side. She nestled against his heaving chest, gasping for breath.

"You again reacted quite favorably when I fucked your arse with my fingers."

"It was wonderful."

"The next step, with some preparation, would be me entering you with a glass or marble phallus, which will be bigger than my fingers. Would you like that?"

"I believe I would."

"I must warn you — it can be painful. But with preparation and relaxation, it could be quite pleasant. Now, sleep. The morrow brings new delights, and you must be rested."

Lucien couldn't remove the smile from his face. His wife had pleased him immensely with her willingness in his bed — a far cry from his single experience with her. She'd taken his punishment with aplomb, and the intercourse that followed was

like nothing he'd ever experienced. He vowed her precious little bottom would always remain crimson and would ache just a bit. It pleased him to take on the task.

But a cold chill of something unidentifiable slithered down his spine. Her sudden reappearance in his life did not jibe with what he'd always known of her. She was pragmatic to the core. It appeared to be rather impulsive on her part to simply appear unannounced in his library — now, after her ten year, rather apathetic absence — and state she wished to be his wife.

You cannot trust her, old boy, he told himself. All is not as it appears.

* * * * *

When Serenity woke the next morning, she found a note on her pillow from Lucien. It said he looked forward to meeting with her when she was ready.

She laid back on the pillows, reflecting upon the night just passed and all the wonderful experiences her husband had introduced to her. Late in the evening, he'd left her to her own devices, presumably to attend to his business downstairs. Her sleep had been interrupted by haunting dreams that lingered in the morning light.

It was inevitable, she supposed, that her former life would rear its ugly head. It was only a matter of time before the Earl of Chetwood found her. He knew her as Serenity Malin, but her greatest fear was that he would come to London and find her. If that happened, the lout would destroy her and possibly Lucien in the process.

Being with her husband again had stirred feelings within her that had not been there when they said their vows. It had been a typical marriage of convenience, and though she'd found him attractive, he'd also frightened her, with his large, powerful body and uncontrolled passion on their wedding night. He'd devoured her with a ferocity she'd not expected nor welcomed. It wasn't until years later that she'd learned his behavior was perfectly normal and did not deserve her desertion.

She'd heard mention of Lucien while in Yorkshire, when several men were discussing the Sapphire Club, speaking quite specifically about how Lucien spanked

women upon their request. Of course, the conversation was punctuated with descriptions of sexual fantasies as well, which had further heightened her interest.

She laid abed now, thinking about that particular evening and how she'd hidden herself in an alcove in the library, surrounded by a heavy drapery. She'd been reading, and as the sun began to set, she'd fallen asleep in the cozy window seat. The gentlemen came in after a raucous day of riding and rabbit hunting, ready for libation and talk of a carnal nature. They began discussing a particular woman, Lady Foxworth.

"Yeah, Damrill thrashes her arse and then fucks her until her caterwauling can be heard throughout the building."

Serenity had become positively orgasmic. She couldn't believe she wasn't the only one who had those desires. Having had all her fondest sexual dreams spoken of as though people indulged in them regularly, simply thrilled her. She'd long felt she was sick in some way, never having known anyone who dreamed of spankings as she herself was wont to do.

She remembered that even as a child, she would attempt to spank herself, relishing the feeling of bending over her bed or the arm of a chair and striking her bottom with a hairbrush. However, as she'd grown older, she began to feel sexual warmth when she had thought of being bent forward, her arse bared and having it paddled or strapped or caned.

Meeting Winsor had been a fortuitous accident and one for which she'd always been most grateful. In the early days of her country exile, she'd rarely attended the assemblies, but at the urging of her servants, she'd indeed accepted an invitation. It was there, at the estate of the aged Earl of Chetwood, that she'd met his son and heir.

Winsor Thorndyke was young, handsome, almost too much so, and possessed a verve for life she'd never seen. He'd loved horses and women, being a notorious libertine. He quickly proposed marriage to her. When she confessed to already being married, he asked her to be his mistress. His eyes and his convincing manner of speech mesmerized her, and she accepted whatever he asked of her. The only stipulation she'd ever placed upon their relationship was he that he never reveal the true nature of their

relationship in public.

Her introspection was interrupted by Marjorie's knock on her door.

"Madam, I have come to help you ready yourself for the day."

Serenity rolled her eyes to the sky, ready to submit herself to whatever new humiliations Lucien might have sent Marjorie to perform.

* * * * *

Serenity entered the morning room as the ormolu clock struck ten.

"Good morning, Serenity."

Lucien wore a pleasant smile, and thoughts of his extraordinary body turned her mind to mush. With his curly black hair flecked liberally with silver, a face like a Greek god, and his finely honed masculinity, he made her long to submit to him completely. It would be wonderful to be under his protection. He could give her what she wanted. He could protect her from the situation she'd gotten herself into with the new Earl of Chetwood.

But lying to him had left her bereft. And for all they would share, she knew they would never have that extra something she so desperately wanted — love. It too had lain dormant, lost in apathy and lassitude. Love would never be. For now, she would content herself with having her sexual needs satisfied and with satisfying his.

"I trust you can occupy yourself," he said matter-of-factly. "I shall be out for much of the day. Your suite is prepared and Marjorie will help you to get settled."

"I look forward to it," she said, still lost in thoughts of her deception.

"Until later, then." He bowed to her, and the heels of his Hessians clicked loudly on the parquet flooring as he exited the morning room.

Until later. Guilt shrouded her, making her feel like the wretch she knew she was.

She dismissed her desolate feelings, and soon all she could think about was having Lucien's hands upon her body and how much she looked forward to their next encounter. Moisture pooled between her legs, and her body nearly swooned with the

excitement of it. His deep, rich voice, encouraging her to take more while he played with her sexually, was all she could ever want. Unbeknownst to her, she'd married a man who was sensuality personified.

A footman came into the room and began removing the serving dishes. She realized she'd allowed her tea to grow cold, signaling an end to her meal. She'd no idea what she would do to occupy her time over the next few hours, but she desperately needed to be alone lest the telltale signs of arousal become evident to all who saw her.

Chapter Six

Business had called Lucien away early that morning, but he returned to their residence a little before three. What a difference a few days in Serenity's presence had made. He'd found himself with a fierce need to see her.

He found her in a room she was in the process of adopting as her sitting room. He greeted her pleasantly with a kiss to the cheek.

She startled at his touch, and she worried her poor hands.

"Is there anything amiss, my dear?"

"Nothing a nice tumble with you wouldn't cure."

Lucien smiled, pleased with her frankness. "Well, to be propositioned by my wife is a welcome surprise."

"Yes, I've thought of little but your cock since you left me this morning."

"Oh, so it is my appendage you have pined for and not me, with all my infinite charm?"

Serenity smiled, bowing her head, her cheeks flushed.

"I vow it is your infinite charm and your cock that have me in the state I am in. I demand recompense for the agony you have caused by leaving me alone."

"Soon enough, my pet, but now you must go to your chamber. Marjorie is waiting for you there. She will prepare you for your spanking." His hand cupped her bottom and squeezed. "I won't be as gentle today, so you should prepare yourself," he

whispered. He took her hand and placed in on the bulge that was making his breeches tighter than they should have been. "Now, go along. There is much preparation to be made."

* * * * *

Indeed, Marjorie was waiting for her with a bath prepared, scented with rose water and steaming pleasantly. Marjorie helped Serenity disrobe.

"I shall bathe you, Mrs. Damrill. You need to simply relax."

The bath was heavenly. While the maid's ablutions cleansed her body, Serenity tried to calm her mind. She was overanxious for her rendezvous with her husband. Her body craved what he offered. She needed it. His hand was sure but without malice. She wanted to feel his hands and the lash upon her, teaching her with each stroke to be submissive to his and only his wishes and commands. Her eyes closed, and she allowed herself to doze until the water grew tepid. Marjorie urged her out of the water and dried her.

"Please, we must hurry, ma'am."

Serenity donned the simple light blue muslin Marjorie had chosen for her. There were no stays or chemise. Her wet hair was brushed and fashioned into a braid, which was then pinned into a knot on top of her head.

When Marjorie finished, she bid Serenity a good afternoon and left her alone. Her cunny thrummed, her arse tingled. Whatever Lucien had in mind for her, she was ready.

She slipped from her chamber and made her way to the room down the hall. Her feet fairly flew over the soft carpeting.

Serenity knocked on Lucien's door and heard him bid her enter. When she opened the door, she found the room dimly lit. Candlelight from the sconces danced on the sunshine-yellow walls in strange, slow shadows. The large, tastefully appointed space included a sitting area in front of the white marble fireplace and a large bed with

an iron bedstead. Simple, crisp white bedding lay neatly in place.

Lucien sat ramrod straight in the middle of the room, his shirtsleeves rolled up to his elbows and one leg crossed over the other. His large, muscled arms and broad shoulders looked formidable, breathtaking. Her legs became weak, and she had an intense wish to run to him.

His eyes fixed on her with a dark, enigmatic gaze. "From this moment on, you are completely under my control. You shall be happy when I am happy. Your spankings will teach you about yourself and your sexuality. They will make it possible for you to surrender your body to me completely. You will do anything for me because I ask it of you. When you learn to relax into whatever pain I impose, and allow your body to live for that pain and the subsequent pleasure, you shall truly discover who you are. You shall be able to derive exquisite pleasure out of our life together. I shall instruct you along the way, teaching you things about yourself you have no idea of at the moment."

Her tears fell freely; small whimpers became convulsive sobs.

Lucien approached her, helping her to undress, slowly, sensually, stopping to caress and fondle her at his will. Then he circled her, looking her up and down, touching as he walked.

"You have a beautiful body. I like your firm, high breasts and slim hips. Your nipples are delectable." He licked first one then the other.

Serenity moaned and dropped her head back. He teased her nipples with his fingers until she screamed for mercy.

"Your bottom is firm, yet supple, perfect for what I most enjoy doing to it. What a lovely red color." He skimmed his hand over her warm cheeks.

As she stood naked before him, devoid of any of her usual coverings, she felt much like a vulnerable child. Though as fraught with need as she ever could remember, she kept her hands folded in front of her, in an attempt to cover her shaved mons.

"Serenity, this session won't be an easy one. It will involve more than a spanking."

He led her to a strange looking bench. The thickly padded top was curved into a crescent shape, upon which she was to lie on her stomach. When she was in place, Lucien restrained her wrists and ankles in a spread-eagle position and secured her waist with a supple strip of leather. He didn't speak again but went about his work.

Lucien spanked her with his hand. He took his time, swiping from the tender round underside. Her buttocks burned with each strike. Serenity gave a low, approving moan each time he touched her, her heart beating a grateful tattoo.

"You are pinking nicely," he observed as he walked to a walnut armoire. Once opened, it displayed numerous implements used in spankings and punishments as well as the erotic games she assumed went on at the Sapphire Club.

He showed her a riding crop and flicked it lightly across her already reddened cheeks, not inflicting pain, but continuing her warm up. He was light-handed, almost playful.

He explored her cheeks and the small anal pucker. Her mind reeled with the sensations. As he teased her, she raised her bottom. "You want attention there, I see."

"Oh, yes, please."

He walked to the armoire and opened a drawer. She was unable to see what it was he took out, for he put whatever it was behind his back. She heard the familiar sound of a cover being unscrewed from a container and then felt his finger at her anus, rubbing cream around the pucker. Then he delved in, slowly, wiggling his finger. Soon he added another finger and began to pump her, driving her mad with the burning sensation, which, as her body adjusted, soon became pleasurable. She moaned loudly, at which point he removed his fingers altogether.

The void was unbearable. Within a moment, she felt something cold at her rear entrance. "Relax, my dear, and it will go in better. I am preparing you. You must relax."

He flicked her bottom with the riding crop in admonishment. She attempted to concentrate on releasing those tight muscles as he requested. He was pressing at the entrance with the object, which was considerably larger in circumference than even his two fingers. She felt the intense burn as it slipped past the pucker and rested just inside.

"That's it. Now allow your body to accustom itself to the size."

"What is it?"

"It is a phallus. I shall have you hold it inside you during your spankings as I desire. It and the lash will aid you in focusing on your arse and on nothing else."

His hand patted her gently. Soon he was pushing the phallus in deeper. She groaned and cried out, but he did not heed her. He was gentle, but firmly pushed the phallus to the hilt, filling her with pain and pleasure.

"Soon I will have my cock in your arse."

She felt the thickness of the marble prick and her muscles contracting around it. There was a strong urge to expel it, but as she involuntarily tried, he kept his hand firmly on the end.

"You must hold it for me. Keep it in place, until I take it out. Submit to it, Serenity." His voice was like a warm blanket.

Her buttocks quaked with the strain, but soon she did indeed relax, absorbing the pain into her body. She learned the pain lessened as she resisted the urge to fight. Soon she settled into the phallus's presence, rather enjoying the feeling of fullness.

Without warning, he gave her a swat with the crop, followed by several more. They stung, but did not hurt as she expected. "Very good, my dear," he said in a deep, resonating tone. She smiled tearfully, pleased at what she'd endured.

She felt a wooden object upon her and braced for what was to come. He started lightly, eliciting gasps and a cry from her with each strike.

"Breathe deeply, exhale upon impact." He continued and increased the severity.

Her buttocks burned, sending licks of flame throughout her body with each strike. He paused in between strikes and slipped his hand between her legs. Her clitoris ached for his touch, which he provided. He circled and evoked shudders from Serenity, then smacked her again.

"You're wet."

"Mmm," she moaned.

Her cries left her shaken. He allowed her to voice the pain and pleasure she was

feeling.

"Scream if you must," he told her.

The pain exploded, riding her nerve endings to distraction. Her concentration focused on the throbbing of her hindquarters and on the man delivering such delicious pain.

"Your bottom is a beautiful deep crimson," he whispered into her ear, his warm breath somehow comforting.

She panted as he changed implements. To finish this spanking, he used his hand once again, slapping lighter and lighter, patting and fondling. Serenity sobbed, shrieked, and howled. Lucien spoke soothing words as he tapped the phallus and fingered her cleft. Her body was very aware of his touch, which she wanted, and so much more.

Serenity felt emotions she'd no idea she was capable of feeling. Elation, joy, satisfaction. Lucien released her restraints and helped her up. He carried her to the bed and put her on his lap. Her buttocks stung and burned gloriously against the linen fabric of his breeches. He held her and encouraged her to cry until she had nothing left.

"You will understand your tears are good. Your true submission will come when you approach me and ask to be spanked. When you select the method and desire the thrashing, then I shall know you have given yourself and surrendered yourself to my will. I am looking for righteous submission from you."

Serenity sniffled and snuggled closer to Lucien's chest. He patted her like she was a favored child. His fingers absently tapped the phallus. He toyed with her clit, raising her sexual tension to an unbearable level.

"Oh, please," she pled.

"What is it you want?"

"I think you know."

"No, I don't. Clairvoyance is not one of my many talents." Lucien continued to tease her, inserting two fingers inside her sheath, arousing her, all the while resisting her entreaties.

"I need you. Please. I need"

He set her down on the floor and stood. "Bend over the side of the bed."

When she was in position, he took hold of the phallus and began to fuck her with it, bringing it to the point of withdrawal and then pushing back in, simulating the act she so desperately wished him to perform. He manipulated her clit, sending fire shooting through her limbs until she came, her screams of pleasure reverberating off the yellow silk-covered walls.

"I want your cock in my arse," Serenity cried.

He continued to fuck her with the phallus, but resisted her plea.

"Not yet. Here, let me ease you."

With his finger circling her clitoris, he brought her to climax again, ultimately leaving her exhausted. Then he opened the placket of his breeches and positioned his body behind her. Immediately, she moved toward him, attempting to coax him into entering her anally.

"Lucien, I want you in my arse. Please."

"I know, my dear, but you are not ready for that. I am larger than this phallus, and I must prepare you. Soon, I promise."

"I need you."

He easily slid into her warm, moist cleft and began stroking.

"Oh, my God, yes, yes."

She moaned when he began stroking her with the phallus in the same rhythm. She tensed, balancing on her toes as the pleasure consumed her once again. His strokes became deeper, harder, more punctuated as he abandoned the phallus, and his release came upon him. Seconds later, Serenity's muscles tightened around his cock, and she lost herself in yet another glorious orgasm.

* * * * *

Serenity had lain in Lucien's arms for some time, ruminating upon what had just

transpired between them. The spanking had been glorious, almost religious. With each slap of the paddle or his hand, she felt a part of her heart being given over to him. It was an amazing feeling, one she'd never experienced, even with Winsor.

She suddenly felt a tremendous feeling of loss as Lucien carefully removed the phallus. She groaned her disapproval, but for naught, as he'd already taken himself off the bed. He went to the washstand and began to cleanse the marble.

"When will I be ready?" she asked.

"Only when I determine you are and not a moment before."

"Ready? I am ready."

"My dear, I say you are not."

"But, the feel of the phallus was amazing. It did not hurt after the first few minutes."

"It is not as large as I am, Serenity. I need to prepare you gradually for my cock."

She gave him a mock pout. "I shall defer to your judgment."

"Yes, you shall. In all things." He winked at her playfully. "Would you like to join me in the club this evening?"

"What would I do there?"

"Much as I do, I suppose. I greet and make sure things are going as they should. We could look into some of the public rooms, and you could get an idea of the things I have told you about. I can introduce you to the members, as well."

Serenity thought about how her life had changed so dramatically, from a rather rural existence in Nottinghamshire to one steeped in eroticism. With barely a thought, she knew she wished to join Lucien, that evening and every one that followed. "Yes, I would very much like to join you."

"Good," he said with a smile. He came back to bed and held her for nearly an hour. They talked of her experience under his paddle and of the club and what she might expect. She marveled at his intelligence and wondered how she'd survived the last ten years, when there had been Lucien Damrill somewhere in the world, waiting for her to come back into his life. She only wished she'd come back now for more than his

protection and to use his home as a refuge against the ravings of Martyn Thorndyke, the Earl of Chetwood.

She wouldn't think of that now. She would much rather turn her thoughts to the man who was presently teasing her nipple with his finger.

"What are you smiling about, little one? I should think you'd be too sore to smile."

"I rather enjoy the soreness."

"That's a very nice revelation, because I suspect you shall be sore quite a bit."

"I certainly hope so, for you promised as much."

They laughed together, a peaceful, knowing laugh that said more than words could.

* * * * *

The large reception room held no less than one hundred people, all seeking the erotic thrills of the flesh. Lucien did not leave Serenity's side, or was it the other way around? She certainly had no wish to be left adrift in this sea of iniquity. She was already sure her sore bottom had been pinched several times.

"Mighty fine specimen, Damrill." A much foxed Lord Meyer-Smythe stepped out of the crowd and shouted to be heard over the clamor. "Does she enjoy your games?"

"Stubble it, my lord," Lucien answered. "Isn't there a young lord you wish to bugger?"

The man's mottled face instantly turned as bright a red as Serenity's bottom. "Fair, 'nuf," he slurred and disappeared into the mass of bodies, his powdered wig ridiculously askew.

Serenity looked up at Lucien. "Do you mean . . . ?"

"He has been known to favor the well-formed footmen on his estate, yes. He will soon be in one of the rooms across the hall with a pretty young man or two. You may watch if you like, he loves an audience."

It was Serenity's turn to blush, for she did indeed want to watch. She'd come to recognize a perverse part of herself, and she was determined not to shy away from it. No one knew her in London, and she intended to use her anonymity to her advantage. The very idea of teas and balls and pretended deference to those who would sooner eat her alive as look at her, made her stomach roil. She savored the idea of helping her husband run his club. After all, it did have its benefits.

"What is this I hear about you being married? Please tell me you will still meet with me, Luce dear. I could never allow anyone else to do what you do." The shockingly intimate voice came out of nowhere and seemed to startle Lucien.

"Lady Foxworth, how nice to see you this evening." Lucien gave a crisp bow. "I shall meet you at eleven, as usual. Marjorie will be waiting for you."

"Thank God. I am in desperate need of your attentions." The woman gave Serenity a coy smile before departing with a sarcastic, "It is nice to meet you, Mrs. Damrill."

Serenity nodded and then looked at her husband questioningly.

Lucien took her arm and wove their way back to the library.

"Where are we going?"

"It is time I explained more about my role here at the club."

Lucien led her into the library and poured her a glass of wine and himself a brandy. He had no earthly idea why he felt the need to explain, but he knew he must.

"Lady Foxworth is a member of the club who comes to me personally for her punishments. We have a standing appointment on Thursday nights at eleven."

Serenity took the wineglass from his hand. "Are sexual relations involved?"

"Yes."

Serenity's breath hitched. "Oh." Disappointment dripped from her lips.

"This is my work. Lady Foxworth and her kind pay a bloody fortune to have their backsides blistered raw and then fucked until they cannot walk. Please don't feign jealousy, it is not becoming, given our situation."

"Of course I am not jealous. You may conduct your life as you always have."

"I am glad you see it that way."

"I believe I suddenly have a headache and wish to retire for the evening." She went to the panel in the wall and disappeared behind it, leaving Lucien, glass in hand, wondering for the first time if he'd made a drastic miscalculation.

Chapter Seven

Serenity managed to reach her bedchamber before she burst into tears. The last few days had been wonderful, and now bloody reality had crept into her world. It had unsettled her that Lucien had been so frank about Lady Foxworth. She wondered how many others he serviced, though she knew she'd no right whatsoever to care. She'd burst into his life and proposed an arrangement, much the same kind as the Foxworth woman had with him, save for marriage. She'd not counted on her own weakness. She'd been so sure she could return to him and never develop an attachment. It was obvious she'd underestimated him.

She felt like a criminal as it was, given Chetwood's accusations. Her emotions were becoming too involved with respect to Lucien, and it could only lead to trouble for both of them. Her only hope was to make sure Lucien never learned why she'd really returned. If he ever knew the truth, he would hate her for certain.

Why should she care if he thrashed Lady Foxworth or anyone else? She was getting from him what she desperately wanted – and what she needed – and he'd never promised her anything more. Lucien wasn't her property. He'd lived a great many years without her, and it appeared he wished to go on in that vein indefinitely.

She had no idea how she was to spend the rest of the evening, but she knew for certain she wasn't going to rejoin her husband.

* * * * *

Lucien fumed at Serenity's impertinence. He refused to allow anyone to dictate how he lived his life. He wouldn't allow her to impose any type of attachment. He would thrash that evil jealousy out of her, indeed he would.

Lucien knew he'd too much anger in him at the moment, which wouldn't bode well for Lady Foxworth. He would try to temper it, but he did not see much hope. Lady Amelie Foxworth was a widow who had been coming to the Sapphire Club since its inception. She and her husband had been members together, and they had enjoyed the sensual games. When he died suddenly of the ague some two years past, Amelie was lost. She'd truly loved his lordship. Out of concern and courtesy, Lucien had called upon her ladyship during her mourning and in a moment of weakness, had consented to continue where Lord Foxworth had left off. The lady enjoyed some of the rather severe games, and Lucien wouldn't trust the administration to anyone else. There was always a quick fuck afterwards, but neither had become emotionally engaged and never would. Amelie was more interested in the games than in him.

"Mr. Damrill," Hampton interrupted, "Lady Foxworth is waiting in the usual room."

"Thank you, Hampton. I shall join her presently."

"Very good, sir."

Lucien took a moment to gather his wits. He couldn't go to her ladyship ready to tear someone's head off. Their games required his complete attention, lest harm be done. He finished his brandy and took on the role of Master. Serenity and her childishness would have to wait. This was business.

He straightened his waistcoat, buttoned his tailcoat, and left the room.

* * * * *

Haynes stood just outside the door to the room where Lady Foxworth waited. He held a mask, part of the lady's fantasy.

"Her name is Annie Fox. She has been a recalcitrant prisoner at Newgate and

needs to be taught a lesson. You, of course, are the warder whom she has abused and spat upon. You'd warned her previously but she'd not listened, and now you have to take her in hand."

Lady Foxworth had always been quite creative in her fantasies.

"I see, very good, Hampton." With a deep breath, Lucien walked into the room.

His boots sounded heavily upon the black marble-tiled floor. There, in the center of the room, stood a large device known as "the Block" — a large square box that opened in the middle. A pillory was attached to the front. Lady Foxworth's legs were already closed and locked in the box, and her arms and head were secured through the holes in the pillory, rendering her entirely immobile.

Her skirts, plain, prison-like garb, were tucked up into the neck, leaving her bottom fully exposed, revealing marks left from years of punishment.

"So, Annie, it's come to this, 'as it?" Lucien started. "Hadn't ya been warned your type of disobedience wouldn't be tolerated 'ere?"

'Annie' nodded, wide-eyed with fear.

"Well, since this is ya first time under the lash, I may go easy on ya, but ya will remember this, I can guarantee."

"Please sir, I won't do it again, please, have mercy on a poor girl. I was jus' tryin' to get a better meal."

"But we have rules at Newgate, Annie. Suckin' off prisoners is against the rules and ain't gonna get 'cha a better meal no how. Frankly, ya shoulda come ta me, and we mighta worked somethin' out."

"I'm sorry sir, I shall next time. Please sir."

"No, you been askin' for this for a long time, Annie."

She began to cry, all part of the game, as Lucien went to the cabinet that held the tools he would use to punish the lady. She was a seasoned devotee of spanking and punishment, and Lucien suspected she had her servants whip her in between their sessions because she was almost insatiable. He picked up a cane to start. He remembered them well from his years at school. The lady liked to warm up with them.

There were no more words spoken. Lucien went to work. The cane swished through the air, delivering the twenty lashes he gave her, left red streaks across her buttocks, but barely evoked a sigh from her ladyship. Lucien knew she wouldn't be finished until she was screaming for mercy. Next he chose a leather flogger. With no mercy whatsoever, Lucien let fly, and he did get some reaction this time. 'Annie' pushed her buttocks out to receive the blows. As he continued, she began to vocalize their receipt. A guttural *yes* and a loud moan, which sounded more like a prelude to an orgasm, were part of her usual verbiage. She knew the game and would never beg for more, but there were ways around that rule. Lucien was quite attuned to his private clients' needs. She was not at all done if she was poking her bottom out.

With twenty lashes from the flogger, he moved along to the tawse. "Ya don't seem to be gettin' the message, Annie. It's the bench for ya."

"Oh, no sir, not the bench. I've heard about that. No, please."

"Ten more lashes for beggin'. Ya know the rules."

Lucien lowered the lady's skirt and signaled for the footman to come forth and get her out of the Block and strap her to the bench. Every room had a footman in attendance at all times, for the protection of the members as well as the club. They were a burly lot, unlike the footmen who served tea, and would never let anyone go beyond the bounds of their purpose at the club. These were sex games only, not punishment in any real sense of the word.

As Annie was being situated, Lucien's mind drifted to his wife. He wondered what she was doing and had a fleeting thought about *her* being strapped to the bench. Then he had an intense urge to just make love to her. Nothing else, just take her as he hadn't before.

"She is secured, sir."

"Very good, Haynes."

The bench was simply that, but at one end there was a pillory. A client would lie flat on their stomach and be restrained at the ankles and waist. Their head and arms would be put into the stocks and they too would be secured. Their posterior would be

bared for punishment.

Lady Foxworth particularly liked the bench, so it was incorporated into each session. The woman had an incredible pain threshold; something had always made Lucien wonder about her and her true story. However, he would never second-guess a member of the club. Their pleasure was his livelihood.

He'd chosen the tawse, a Scottish implement made of hard leather with two splits making three distinct tails. It was a rather nasty bit of business, but her ladyship always requested it.

"Ah right, Annie. Ya don' seem to be getting' the message, so mayhap ma tawse will help ya to unnerstan."

Annie cried out an almost sincere "no" before Lucien applied the tool to her backside. Her already burning cheeks quivered under the blow, and her ladyship expelled an involuntary guttural sound.

"Now, I think we might be onta sumpin," Lucien said, using his best lowly warder accent. Five blows were all the lady could stand from a tawse at any given time. The last ten were given with a leather strap, as always. These were the ten Lucien added on, but in reality, it was all a part of the agreed upon total.

These lashes were given in quick succession, not giving the lady time to catch a breath in between. She usually counted them aloud tearfully. When she started counting, Lucien knew she'd reached the end.

Lady Foxworth wanted him to draw blood, which the tawse and cane usually did. This night was no exception. Lucien rang for one of the maids to come in and take care of the wounds as Haynes released the restraints.

Lucien retreated to the corner while the servants tended to her ladyship. He dismissed them both when their work was done, leaving him alone with Lady Foxworth. "Amelie, I can provide you with someone else to complete your scene, but I am sorry I cannot participate tonight."

"Why?" she asked casually. "Is it your wife?"

"I have not explained things fully to her, and until I do, I feel I should refrain."

"I see. Well, what about that delectable Haynes? I have long wanted to dally with him."

"You wish to dally with my footman?" Lucien lifted a black eyebrow. "For shame, my lady."

"Who is to know? He is as handsome as the devil, and if he has a cock anything like yours, I won't mind your desertion. You gave my arse a real going over. I'll feel this for days." She rubbed her stinging flesh and smiled widely. "I do appreciate a master at work, and you, my lovely Luce, are a master."

"Lucien, Amelie. You know I detest your pet name."

"All right, all right, Lucien. Now, get Haynes in here, because I intend to suck him dry, if you have no objection."

Lucien found Haynes just outside the door. He explained to the footman what the situation was. The young man of seven and twenty had no objection to servicing the lovely Lady Foxworth, much to Lucien's relief.

"I will see you next week, my lady," Lucien said as he kissed her hand and bolted for the door. He was intent on seducing his wife.

* * * * *

Lucien entered her bedchamber quietly through the connecting door. However, there was no need to be so careful, for Serenity was wide-awake. She reclined on a gold settee in front of the fireplace, sipping what Lucien assumed was Madeira. She looked up when the door opened, but quickly turned her head when she saw it was him.

"It is part of my obligation to the club, Serenity."

"I realize that, Lucien. I am sorry I made such a fuss. Are you through?"

"Yes, I am, for now."

"I see. Is Lady Foxworth *satisfied*?"

"As we speak, she is being fucked brainless by Haynes. She will be more than satisfied quite soon."

"Haynes, the footman?"

"The same."

"Does that often happen here?"

"I requested it happen tonight, and neither Haynes nor her ladyship objected."

"Why did you do such a thing? If it was because of me, you should have gone ahead."

Lucien walked toward her with purpose. Looming over her, he took her hand and lifted her from the settee, drawing her into his arms. He lowered his head and kissed her as a lover would.

Tonight he wanted to seek comfort in wife's arms. She hadn't any particular fondness for him, or him for her, but they shared a home and a bed, and at this moment, he wanted what was available to him. He wanted a normal sexual encounter with his wife.

Serenity was dressed in a diaphanous white silk night rail. It made her look ever so innocent and appealing. Her brown hair was plaited and hung down her back. She smelled of roses and musk, the universal scent of mating.

"I want you, wife," Lucien growled as he hungrily took her mouth again.

Serenity melted against him as he hoisted her into his arms and carried her to the large bed, its four posts draped in warm, welcoming dark green velvet, trimmed in gold fringe. The counterpane matched, giving the bed a sumptuous look and feel. The covers were turned down, allowing Lucien to deposit his wife on the crisp, clean white sheets. She looked positively virginal.

He joined her on the bed and kissed her once again, claiming her mouth with no intention of being gentle. He probed her mouth with his tongue, devouring her as his hands drifted to her breasts, her nipples firm in her own arousal. She responded in kind, her tongue sensually swirling around his, her hands skimming over his clothed body.

Lucien's mouth found one of those nipples, and he suckled her through her gown. He held the breast to his mouth and fed on her as though in desperation. Not

neglecting the other, he did the same there, her squeals of excitement spurring him on. He took the gown in both hands and ripped it straight down the front, baring her to his sight. He went back to his mammary feast, determined she would be raw when he finished.

Her hands glided up and down his back. In a frenzy she unbuttoned his waistcoat. "I want to feel your skin." Her delicate fingers traced his set square jaw and the slight wrinkles around his eyes.

Lucien's body moved lower on hers. He kissed the flat plane of her stomach, her navel, her bare mons. He admired her, sliding his thumbs into her feminine folds, splitting her.

She lifted her bottom and whispered, "Oh, yes."

Dipping his head, he licked her. She jumped at his touch.

"Shh." His tongue lashed out over her distended clit. Her legs came over his shoulders, seemingly of their own volition. She snuggled in tight to him. Lucien growled his approval as he lapped at her, reveling in her moans of delight. As his hands cupped her warm bottom she writhed beneath him. He held on tightly, pleasuring her as he suspected no man had ever done before, and laid claim to what was his with complete abandon.

He sucked her clit into his mouth, drawing on it until she tensed, her heels digging into his back. She expelled a needy whimper; her body shook. Her climax seemed bone shattering, her cries loud, reverberating off the walls. She trembled, her legs holding him to the task. He continued to suckle her until she placed her hand on his cheek and pled for him to stop. He laughed, a rumbling deep in his chest. He'd scored a victory, and it felt wonderful.

He crept up the length of her body, capturing her mouth once again. "Do you taste yourself on my lips, Serenity? You are delicious."

She nodded and licked his lips hungrily. At this moment, he felt as though he could devour her or die in the attempt. His dark eyes watched her as she accepted his punishing kiss. Then he got off the bed and began to disrobe, his intense gaze never

leaving her.

Chapter Eight

Serenity watched as Lucien stepped off the bed and began to remove his clothing. Her breath hitched as he discarded his neckcloth, and his shirt fell open, revealing his strong neck and a hint of dark, wiry hair. Her throat jolted as she swallowed hard, his gaze discomposing her. His strong arms made short work of his waistcoat, and in one languid motion, his shirt was gone as well, revealing his beautiful broad chest. On a whim, she lifted her leg and placed her foot against his belly.

He stood in his exquisitely tight fawn breeches, his erection outlined prominently. Lucien jutted his hips forward and cupped himself. "Do you want this?"

Serenity could only nod, mesmerized by this crudity.

"Come and get it."

She crawled to the edge of the bed and reached for him. Her shaking palm touched him, and she felt the pulse of his throbbing erection as she undid the buttons. She released the last button from its mooring and lowered his breeches over his hips, revealing his magnificent nakedness.

Serenity's knees grew weak, forcing her to seek the steadying strength of the bedstead. Her quim wept as she trembled with anticipation at seeing his body. She wanted to again experience his virility, his sheer masculinity.

"You are beautiful," she said as she admired his glorious cock. It jutted straight up from the nest of curly, black hair at the juncture of his legs. Serenity had never suspected the sizes of men's cocks varied. Winsor's had been adequate, but Lucien's was exquisite. Its girth was frightening. It was possessed of large purple veins. Lucien took himself in hand and stroked, a sexually intoxicated look upon his face.

"Do you want this?" he asked again, in a deep, sensual rumble.

Serenity's tongue jutted out of her mouth as she licked her lips. "Oh, yes."

"Lie down."

She did as she was told. He had something in his hand, and without saying a word, he inserted it deep inside her. "It is a sponge steeped in brandy, to prevent my seed from taking hold."

Serenity nodded and smiled. "Thank you."

Lucien crawled back onto the bed, kissing her all over, lingering nowhere for very long. Serenity's hands were all over him, reveling in the feel of his wiry hair and the velvety texture of his heated skin. She touched his cock, earning a loud, approving groan.

He entered her with a slow glide that teased them both. He had powerful control over himself, something he'd learned many years before in India. He could fuck for hours and never release his seed. He wished to do that tonight, for he was intent on making love to his wife, though he knew there was no love involved. It was pure lust, but that was enough to give them a night they would never forget.

Serenity raised her hips, but when she did, he backed away.

"You are much too impatient," he whispered in her ear. "We must work on that." He squeezed her punished buttock, showing her that he was in control.

"Please, Lucien."

He inched in a bit farther, not giving her nearly what she wanted. He rocked and teased, trying to keep her from moving. He would do this his way.

Another inch and her eyes rolled back in her head, the pleasure on her face unmistakable. Without warning, he fully seated himself with a groan. Then he began to move, withdrawing completely, gliding back into her, over and over again, his arousal kissing her womb.

Her muscles clenched in welcome. He closed his eyes. "You feel so amazing."

"I want you, Lucien. Your cock feels like it is splitting me in two, and I love it."

As he developed a rhythm, slow and then fast, she responded by meeting him stroke for stroke, her hips rising and falling in time with his. He placed both of his hands on her face, and her lusty gaze penetrated his very soul. He encouraged her to

break with her body and go with him on this magical journey. Just as his hard mouth touched pliant lips, she shattered, shouting her pleasure without regard for who might hear. The tension of her body encouraged his own voracious physical hunger to overtake him.

Waves of delight washed over him. She writhed beneath him and dug her fingernails into his skin, seeking something that seemed to elude her. Together they rode it out, amid their shouts of joy and completion. A powerful, crashing release took him and left him shaken. His aftershocks were as powerful as any he'd ever had, and he found himself weakened by the emotion that accompanied them.

"Never before," he whispered. "Never before."

In the following silence, Lucien realized, despite what his mind was telling him about Serenity, that he needed her. And his cock had rarely led him astray.

* * * * *

They lay quietly in each other's arms for a long time. Serenity didn't want to move lest the spell be broken.

Lucien moved first, just slightly. "Are you sleeping?"

"No." She hadn't wanted to, for she was thinking, marveling at the wonderful sexual connection they had achieved. Though this man was a stranger to her, she realized she wished to know him better. She wanted to understand what made him who he was.

"We need to talk," he said, his voice rich and deep.

"Yes," she agreed, knowing what was coming though wishing to keep it at bay.

Lucien rolled over and propped himself on one elbow. With his other hand, he lifted her chin, which she'd lowered to avoid his eyes.

"Look at me."

She did as he asked. "Did you really expect to come back and find I had waited with bated breath for you all these years?"

"No."

"Then what was that little display this evening?"

"I am sorry, Lucien, truly I am."

"I should have explained to you more about my role here."

"Please do. I wish to understand."

"I have private clients, such as Lady Foxworth. They come to me for a variety of reasons. She comes every Thursday for a punishment session. I have never asked her why, and she has never told me. The harsher I am with her, the more she craves. She is insatiable. Afterwards, she requires a good fucking, and she isn't particularly interested in who does it."

"Do you fuck her?"

"I have more times than not."

"But you didn't tonight. Why?"

"I wanted to set things right with you first. I need to make you understand the way of it."

Serenity's smile in itself apologized for her earlier behavior. "I don't know what came over me. I would like to ask something of you."

"Oh?"

"I would like to become a member of the club. You could teach me and I could participate in some of the activities. Would you mind that?"

Lucien's jaw visibly clenched. He jumped out of bed and began pacing.

"Absolutely not, I won't allow it. I cannot do what I must do and worry about you at the same time."

"Why would you worry about me?"

"Serenity, this is a sex club. Things get out of hand here sometimes. We serve drinks, and men tend to get more aggressive when they are foxed."

"But you have footmen in attendance, you said so yourself."

"I won't have you subjected to our members' more unsavory tendencies."

"What if I decide I wish to participate in the same types of things you do?"

"My answer is no. If you wish to be at my side while we are in the club, fine, but I won't have you wandering about alone."

She pouted, but his final word was law. She wouldn't argue further, at least for now.

"Please, come back to bed. I don't wish to argue about this. I rather enjoyed your attentions."

Lucien smiled lustily and dove back into bed. There were many hours left to this night.

* * * * *

The following Thursday, when Lucien met with Lady Foxworth, Serenity sat in the corner of the room and watched. It was an amazing experience, but far too harsh for her tastes. She noted Lucien seemed dispassionate as he put Lady Foxworth through the various stages of her thrashing. The woman, who wasn't young, was amazing in that she took so much punishment and never seemed to feel a thing. She'd cried, but there'd been no tears.

Serenity had carefully asked questions about the lady and learned she was lonely since the death of her husband and regularly came to the club on nights not devoted to her sessions with Lucien. Often she joined couples in their lovemaking or other games.

"She is always welcome," Lucien had told Serenity. "After all, she is a proponent of the perverse."

She'd told Lucien many times, "I don't give a witch's tit whether the *ton* approves of my activities or not. Many of those who would condemn me are also members, and I make it my business to be abreast of all their propensities as well, should their vicious tongues decide to wag."

Lady Foxworth was voluptuous, her pendulous breasts often getting in the way as she lay on her stomach. Her ample hips and bottom had in all likelihood been shapelier in her more youthful days. As the lady was being prepared for this night's session, she

chattered on about her dearly departed husband. "Yes, my good Lord Foxworth knew how to deliver a good thrashing. Since his death, Luce is the only man I trust to give me what I need."

Now, as Serenity watched the woman endure what Lucien doled out, she found herself in awe.

"Harder, Luce," Lady Foxworth cried, offering her reddened arse for punishment. "Yes, now that's how my Horace would have done it."

Afterward, the lady required a few minutes to bask in the afterglow of what Lucien had wrought. As he tended to the implements he'd used, she moaned, all the while smiling as a woman well satisfied.

"I believe I wish for the services of that delicious young man, Haynes, is it? He can certainly make an old girl sing, Luce. You should consider making him one of your regular . . . providers. With a cock such as his, it should be a crime to conceal it beneath your livery."

Serenity rather wished Lucien would do the honors. The thought that she might watch him with another was beyond imagining, despite the pangs of jealousy.

Chapter Nine

Serenity sat at her dressing table, brushing out her hair, when the door opened. Lucien stood at the threshold in shirtsleeves and breeches. He'd removed his coat and waistcoat in his chamber before coming to hers. He had his arms behind his back and a look on his face she couldn't define. He simply stood in the doorway, the candlelight wrapping him in a golden glow, only partly in shadow.

As she looked at him, her heart began to beat a rapid tattoo. His large frame, nearly six feet four inches, made her heart race. With his large arms and broad, muscular shoulders, he looked more like someone who regularly worked in the fields than the owner of a gentleman's club. He had the strong legs of a horseman, a defined chest, flat stomach and Patrician features, the very definition of handsome. His steel

gray eyes, set within the finely chiseled lines of his face, turned to charcoal when he was aroused.

"I believe you should prepare yourself, madam." Lucien's tone sounded neither playful nor angry. Masterful. It certainly did not invite argument.

Serenity sat stock-still. She had no idea what he wished her to do.

"Well."

"I am not sure what you want me to do, sir."

"You should be." He walked toward her with purpose. Before she knew it he had her on her feet and heading toward the bed. With no ceremony at all, he sat down and placed her over his knees. He flipped her night rail up over her head and struck her bottom with his hand. Methodically he struck first one cheek then the other. She reacted at first with surprise and then inward delight.

As she squealed with each blow, she reveled in the stinging strikes she received. He showed no mercy, and she wanted none. He'd situated her comfortably upon his strong knees, securing her with one strong arm as he spanked her with his other hand.

Suddenly, he stood her up and turned her to face him. "Do you understand what I mean by preparing yourself now?" She shook her head and slightly shrugged.

"You don't listen when I speak, do you? You must have forgotten, which means you need a reminder."

"Yes, sir."

"When I walk into your chamber at night, I expect you shall be sans clothing of any kind. I don't appreciate having to fumble with all manner of frippery. I expect you shall be ready for me, in whatever manner I wish it. Your arse is to be available to me; is that clear?"

"Yes, sir." Moisture began trickling down her leg, her private parts weeping with joy.

"Well?" He waved his arm in an upward motion.

She shucked out of her night rail in a matter of seconds. She stood nude in front of Lucien, relishing his lustful perusal of her body. He stood and turned her back to

him. With his cool hands, he rubbed her reddened bottom, pinching the reddest spots, sending shocks of pleasurable pain to her quim. Desire made her delirious.

Lucien dipped a hand into her folds and exclaimed, "You are dripping wet."

She was also in dire need. The spanking had brought her over the edge and with his hand so near to where she needed him to be, her body thrummed for want of satisfaction.

Lucien began to walk toward the door. "Good night," he said as he crossed the room.

"Where are you going?"

"I believe I shall go back to the club."

"Excuse me, sir, but I cannot believe you would leave me in this condition."

"And what condition would that be?"

"I need you."

"Well, in that case, you should have been ready for me when I came to you."

He walked through the door, closing it behind him. Serenity stood where he'd left her, stunned and duly punished. Though desire for release still burned inside her, she smiled broadly. As she tucked herself between the sheets, she thought about her husband and her marriage and how happy she was to have braved the embarrassment of approaching Lucien. She rubbed a hand across the burning cheeks of her arse and vowed there would be many nights she wouldn't be ready for him. She liked his method of instruction and found a bit of recalcitrance was definitely to her advantage.

* * * * *

Lucien smiled widely as he sat in the library, hard as granite yet somehow satisfied. He'd never dreamed he would be able to indulge in the kind of sex play he'd fallen into with his own wife. She had the sweetest arse, though the creaminess of it wouldn't be apparent any time soon. His palm fit nicely over those cheeks. He'd taken a chance, given her penchant for such a thing, and just brought himself to her chamber,

knowing full well she wouldn't have been prepared. He'd told her he would be working quite late. However, he wanted her to reach the point of anticipating his wants and needs.

Later, he would join her, after she fell asleep. Until then, she would have to stew in her own juices. He smiled at his mental pun, rather pleased with how well his marriage was going. He was completely himself. He could speak with her as though she were one of his male friends. Bad language didn't seem to bother her, but more, frankness of expression was paramount. His sexual satisfaction had reached new heights, which he found strange, given his vast experience.

Lucien drank a glass of brandy and then another. His cock ached; his body felt tense. He hadn't gone nearly as far with her as he wanted to this night. She was a walking invitation to depravity. Her body begged for his attention – sucking, fucking, spanking and teasing. He'd have to be very careful not to become emotionally involved. That wasn't part of the bargain and something he definitely intended to avoid at all costs. He'd accepted being leg-shackled, but heart-shackled was something he refused to abide. It left men foolish and unguarded. He needed release, and somehow taking himself in hand held no appeal. As he entered her chamber, the moonlight shone brightly across the Turkish carpet. He smiled, thinking how he'd gotten used to Serenity's preference to sleep with the draperies open. He saw her silhouette in the bed, facing away from him. Just as he reached the side of the bed, she rolled over.

"Please help me," she said.

"With what do you need help?"

"I need you."

"Tell me exactly what you wish for me to do."

"I need release, Lucien, please."

Lucien stood in silence. He'd instructed her, and she'd not answered as he wished.

"Don't make me repeat myself."

"I want you inside me, sir."

More silence. He pushed her, he knew, but she would want him to.

"I want you to fuck me," she finally cried.

Lucien went to the bed and removed his clothing. His watchful eyes locked onto hers, conveying that he wanted her as much as she did him. He covered her naked body with his own. He indulged himself in her breasts, suckling until she moaned in response. His hand found her clitoris, circling ever so slowly, until she arched and came apart in shouts of abandon. He rather enjoyed the look on her face as she came, eyes closed, body tense, and with seemingly no sense as to how loud she screamed her pleasure. It was one of the marvels of femininity that would forever mystify and enchant him.

"Now, please, sir, now," she whimpered.

In one fluid purposeful motion, he sank himself deeply within her warmth. She greeted him with approving sensual moans, and her body bucked to meet his. He stroked, teasing her while spiraling her closer to the edge. He rather enjoyed watching her struggle for release and then snatching it away, albeit temporarily. She grumbled so prettily when he grabbed paradise from her grasp.

Lucien dipped to her mouth, claiming it with a frightening fierceness. This was simply sex, or so he told himself. He would not become enamored of his wife; it simply felt nice to have someone in his bed, and he truly did enjoy having Serenity.

He unsheathed himself, and she growled in disappointment. She arched her back, bringing herself closer to him.

"You want this, don't you, my pet?" he asked.

"Yes, oh, please."

He slammed into her and stroked with a savage intensity. The veins in his neck bulged, and his brow furrowed as all his concentration focused on bringing them to a mutual orgasm that would rock their souls. She whimpered and made little keening sounds, which only made his own need greater. As he felt her body seize his cock, her heat searing him, she screamed.

"Yes, love, tell me how much you love my cock inside you."

"I . . . love . . . it" Her body tensed, and Lucien knew she came close to release.

"Do you like this?" He moved faster until, in a frenzy, he slammed into her, losing himself as his shouts rent the air.

He fell to her side, spent.

"Oh, my God," she said.

"Yes."

* * * * *

They dozed for awhile, enjoying the closeness of afterglow. As they lay together, Serenity's mind raced with questions about those intriguing bits of fact she'd hesitated to ask about until she knew him better. Though in many ways he remained an enigma, he would forever be so if she didn't ask that which she wished to know most fervently.

"How long have you been interested in the mastery of a woman's will?" she whispered.

"I suppose since my school days, but I hadn't dared acknowledge it. By a fortuitous accident I heard about Madame Rosemount and what her establishment offered. I was truly amazed when I went there and found many of the men – and even women – with whom I socialized favored the eroticism derived from spanking."

"When you went there, what did you favor?"

"You are a curious sort, are you not?"

"Sir, I have had years to cultivate my curiosity."

Lucien chuckled. "Well, let me see. You know how I appreciate a nicely reddened bottom."

"Yes, I have come to appreciate that much myself, but what else. I know there must be more."

Lucien gave her an appreciative smile that could have denoted the type of affection one conveys upon a kindred spirit, if it hadn't been Lucien who had smiled

thusly. "At Madame Rosemount's, I found devices and restraints. My method became much the same as the one I use now, with you. I don't believe in harming someone for sexual gratification. That's a rule I have for my club. Everyone must submit willingly. No one is ever forced, no matter how involved the game."

"I am relieved to know that," Serenity said. "Is there more than what we have already done?"

"Are you suffering from boredom already, Mrs. Damrill?"

"Not in the least, just a severe case of curiosity."

"Well, then, yes, there is more, much more, depending upon what you might be interested in."

"Will you ever demonstrate it to me at the club?"

"I suppose I could give you an idea of what I am talking about?"

Her face flushed brightly, but she forged ahead. "I would like to see all you have told me about."

"Mrs. Damrill, your curiosity could become outlandishly decadent if you don't learn to rein it in."

"You have piqued my need to know more, sir."

Lucien laughed heartily. "In that regard, I don't believe that much needed doing. You act as though you have done this before and were starving for it, much like our Lady Foxworth."

Serenity flushed, turning her head to prevent Lucien seeing any telltale signs of the truth in her eyes. "I told you, I have repressed the need for years. It was simply a fortuitous accident that I heard about you and the club."

"I say, you have taken to your spankings with greater verve than I would have expected."

"I rather enjoy them and the attention my husband pays to my bottom. There are other things I wish to experience as well. I wish to see other things."

"Have you a desire to view others doing what we have done?"

"I suppose I am of a mind to do that and maybe more. As I say, I have a curious

mind. Have you done such, I mean . . . watched?"

Lucien's eyes narrowed and darkened, giving him an ominous countenance. He seemed to retreat within himself briefly but Serenity saw he recovered his composure. He held back, refrained from saying something. She feared he might never open up to her, *especially* to her, whom he looked upon only as a sex partner and not as a real wife.

"Of course, but that's different. I am a man."

"You most certainly are, and such a virile one, at that." She chuckled, trying to make light of the question that seemed to disturb him. Her hand grasped his growing cock, evidence that she hadn't totally lost him to his thoughts. "What would you like me to do about this?"

With a swift movement, Lucien rolled atop her and plunged into her again. It was as traditional a coupling as they'd had, though no less fraught with the passion that always simmered between them. With abandon, they made love, with no enhancements other than their mutual need for satiation.

They finally slept, at last sated.

Chapter Ten

When Serenity woke the next morning, Lucien was gone. She realized she was disappointed, though she'd expected nothing more. She would never capture his heart as she'd captured his full sexual attention, the insatiable beast. To say he pleased her with that aspect of their relationship would be an understatement of massive proportions. She knew he had much more to teach her. He would test her limits of endurance for pain and pleasure through the process.

She lay on her back, nude and happy. She rather enjoyed sleeping naked, a freedom she'd never experienced. She allowed her hand to travel under the bed sheet, first touching her raw, well-suckled breasts, which felt swollen from Lucien's aggressive attentions. He'd spent seemingly hours sucking, tugging and nipping them. Even as they had their conversation, he idly tugged on them, lightly twisting and pinching. She

relished the discomfort.

Slowly, she brought her hand over her stomach and lower, until she touched her swollen folds. She closed her eyes and meandered over her core, locating her clitoris. At the merest touch, she became unbelievably aroused, once again. She certainly had been thoroughly rogered the night before, but there it was. He had indeed turned her into a creature of the flesh.

She tossed off the bedclothes, raised her legs, and spread her thighs wide. Her hand went to work, circling with increased pressure that precious little bit of flesh that produced such a marvelous reaction in her. Warmth began to build, a tingling; she bit her bottom lip, her head lolled from side to side, her eyes still closed. Her tongue jutted in and out of her mouth as the warmth grew to heat and spread up her legs, over her quim and on to the rest of her body, until all she knew was fire, light and color, sparks of pure, unadulterated bliss. She continued to circle until she could stand it no longer, removing her hand. A smile covered her relaxed face. Peacefully, she rested against the pillows, sated once again, albeit temporarily.

"Now, that's something I shall never be able to forgive. It was exceedingly rude of you to proceed without me, to say nothing of it being strictly against the rules." His voice wasn't playful, but not grave either.

Serenity's eyes flew open, but she was much too stunned to speak. She stared at him, flushed from more than her recent orgasm. Lucien walked slowly, predatorily to the bed and sat down. He put one arm over her body and leaned low over her mouth.

"Anyone could have come in here and discovered you. There are servants all over the house at this time of day."

"I confess I hadn't given it a thought."

"Did you enjoy yourself, Mrs. Damrill?"

She experienced renewed embarrassment. Why must he insist on discussing this, she wondered, wishing, for the first time, he would go away.

"Well, I am waiting for an answer. Did you enjoy yourself without me?"

His strident tone told her he wanted an answer and not a flippant reply. "Yes, sir,

I did."

"How much did you enjoy yourself, Mrs. Damrill? More than when I am seeing to your pleasure?"

"No, sir, I did not. I couldn't enjoy myself nearly as much without you."

"I am not sure I believe you. It seemed to me you were in rapture." He became quite serious, and it began to test her resolve. She hadn't feared him prior to this, but the look he wore brooked no argument.

She tried to diffuse the situation before he became angry.

"Honestly, Lucien, not as much as when I am with you."

Lucien smiled slightly. "That's exactly the answer I would expect." With no further discussion, he rolled her over onto her stomach. Her bottom still felt sore, and he rubbed his hands over his handiwork, pinching slightly in places that had been particularly attended to. He gave her a harsh smack before he menacingly whispered in her ear, "What do you think I should do about this, Mrs. Damrill?"

"I don't know, sir." Her heart began pounding in her chest, for she knew well what he had in mind. But he totally surprised her.

"Be prepared to accompany me this evening at eight o'clock."

* * * * *

Lucien had been at the club all day, not returning to their rooms until almost time for dinner. When Serenity went to the hallway just before eight, Lucien appeared dressed in his finely tailored evening clothes. Serenity felt her breath hitch as she gazed upon her husband, a man of tall stature and fine figure. The tight-fitting trousers highlighted his masculine attributes, dispensing with the need to gather shirttails to make a man look more endowed than nature had intended.

"Good evening, Mrs. Damrill." Lucien bowed deeply.

"Good evening, sir. I have missed you today."

"Really, I was sure you could manage any situation without me."

"That's not so, sir, nor would I wish to do so."

"I would dispute that, my dear, and with some thought, you might wish to rethink your statement." Letting the statement drift on the air, Lucien took Serenity by the arm and guided her to the wall panel and down to the club.

Serenity's heart began beating uncomfortably. "Sir, may I speak to you?"

He totally ignored her imploration.

When they reached the first floor, he took her by the arm, guiding her from the library and down the hallway. With his hand on the door handle to one of the public rooms, he informed her, "We shall sit and watch for as long as you wish."

"Really, Lucien, we don't have to do this."

"Oh, I believe we do. Come."

She stood riveted to the floor, her feet heavy and her heart pounding.

"Serenity, I said come."

She stepped into the room just as she heard the crack of a bullwhip and the plaintive moan of a man. When her eyes adjusted to the scant light, she saw a woman dressed in a silk wrapper with nothing on underneath. She had a long whip in her hand and faced a man standing with his front against a wooden contraption that looked similar to a ladder. His legs were restrained wide apart, his waist tied down as well. His arms hugged the device and were tied together with wide leather straps. A naked woman knelt beneath the ladder, manipulating the man's very erect cock and bpllocks, while the other woman steadily thrashed his back and bottom with the whip.

The man's head lolled forward then side to side as she crisscrossed his buttocks and back with red stripes.

"That's the Duke of Thornhill," Lucien whispered into Serenity's ear. "He enjoys a good thrash at least three times a week. Then he will fuck the two of them for hours. Tomorrow, he will be arguing the Corn Bill in the House of Lords."

Serenity appeared shocked that such an important gentleman would submit to such treatment. "Why do you suppose he does this?" she asked with incredulity.

"Well, why do you?"

"Oh, I see."

Lucien guided her out of the room. "I want you to see everything I told you about. This is a very discreet establishment, as you might realize, given that Thornhill is an intimate of Prinny. You shall see there is much more here than what you can imagine. After we have seen everything, I intend to take care of that little infraction of the rules. Your precious little bottom shall be blistered by the time I finish with you tonight."

They visited rooms where women were being caned or whipped by men and vice versa. But Serenity took the greatest interest in the room in which the participants indulged in anal sex, not only with a man's penis but with various implements.

Serenity moaned a bit when she witnessed the gentleman insert the liberally lubricated phallus into the woman's anus. She fidgeted uncomfortably. Lucien reached under her dress and her face grew warming, knowing he'd find her moist. She grabbed Lucien's hand and squeezed hard. Thank the good lord he appeared to understand her message, for he led her from the room.

* * * * *

Lucien escorted her to the third floor. There didn't seem to be anyone else about; the servants had evidently retired for the evening. He used a key to open the last door on the right. Inside, candles glowed, and a roaring fire crackled in the grate. The nicely appointed room gave the impression of a woman's bedchamber, done in shades of pink and green. A very large bed stood in the center of the room, surrounded by draperies in dark green. Around the room stood a washstand, several chairs upholstered in green and rose, a padded bench, and a few other pieces of furniture, for which Serenity had no names.

"What is this, sir?" she asked.

"This is where you will receive some further education. You shall discover more about yourself in the next few hours than you have ever known. Trust me, Serenity.

You shall never forget this night."

Serenity found it difficult to contain her excitement or the increasing moisture between her thighs. Lucien had spoken to her in seductive tones, the promise of unknown pleasures implicit in his voice.

"You shall do as I say, Serenity, from this moment on. You shall be allowed to leave only when I give you permission."

Serenity nodded, realizing he sought her acquiescence to her own punishment. A genuine punishment, this time.

"You understand I have rules, and you are expected to abide by them. Bringing yourself to orgasm without my permission is against the rules. You are well aware of this, are you not?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, her head bowed.

Without another word, Lucien began to untie the laces of Serenity's dress. It wasn't done seductively, rather much as a lady's maid might aid her mistress in such a task. Lucien wasn't about seduction this night. "You have disappointed me, and I shall show you how much."

He guided her to a wooden apparatus that looked like a table with two steps for kneeling. He positioned her with her knees on the pads, which spread her legs wide, the rest of her body leaning forward. Her upper body splayed on the table, a bolster beneath her stomach, which positioned her buttocks high. There were no restraints.

"You are to stay perfectly still. You can scream to your heart's content, but moving will only garner more lashes."

Serenity began to shake uncontrollably. She'd never been really *punished* before.

Lucien kept talking to her, which frightened her even more. The daily spankings had always been conducted in relative silence, usually followed by loving touches. This one promised to be harsher and with no such finish.

He moved about at the armoire, laying out implements and other items he would use on her.

"I am sorry, Lucien. I promise not to pleasure myself again."

"You are sorry you were caught. You admitted you enjoyed yourself, did you not?"

She simply nodded, unable to refute him.

"Since I've already warmed you with your daily spanking, I shall proceed." He placed a hand firmly on the small of her back and whacked her with a cane.

Her body convulsed. She steadfastly held onto the underside of the table, wanting only to follow his instructions. Several more strikes, and a sense of desperation wormed its way into her mind. Her arse burned like fire. She howled and danced but he held her firmly, his aim exact, each lash teasing the already aching wounds.

"Rules are meant to be adhered to, madam. I feel I must keep you under constant surveillance so you will do as I say."

Lucien picked up a strap that he intended to use on her, but sparingly. Her bottom was already quite red. However, he decided in lieu of the strap, he would do something that would have a more lasting effect on her.

He rang for Marjorie. When the maid came to the door, he spoke quietly to her, and she left. Lucien did not speak to Serenity in Marjorie's absence, which he knew would only serve to heighten his wife's apprehension about what he would do next.

In a few minutes, Marjorie returned. Then Lucien spoke.

"Serenity, I want you to stay very still while Marjorie does what I have asked her to do."

Serenity had been quietly weeping. With Marjorie in the room to witness her shame, Serenity burst into tears.

Marjorie put the metal device in place around Serenity's waist and laced it between the cheeks of her bottom. A loud click sounded as metal slid into place.

Then Lucien said, "Thank you Marjorie, you may go."

With a curtsy, Marjorie left the room, the only indication of her departure being the quiet click of the door.

"You may stand now, Serenity."

On wobbly legs, she did just that. She looked down and gasped. "Oh, my lord, Lucien, you have placed me in a chastity belt."

"Yes, I have, and you shall wear it until I tell you otherwise."

She tugged to no avail.

"I hold the key. It will come off when I feel you can be trusted to keep your hands to yourself."

"That's what I was doing," she answered flippantly, causing a laugh to rumble in his chest.

"Without my permission," he reminded her.

"You were not there, and I needed"

"You will need it much more before it comes off."

"We won't be able to"

"*You* won't be able to." He left his statement drifting in the air. He did have his clients, after all. "You shall be punished again for this indiscretion at the time the belt comes off, just as a reminder. Now, we must go back to the club. I expect you to be dressed and ready to accompany me downstairs in less than an hour."

He left the room with her standing, naked and smarting badly. She wouldn't forget this caning, but would endure dozens more, if he would only unlock this chastity belt. If he reacted this way for something as innocuous as pleasuring herself, what would he do when he found out her secret? Her mind couldn't comprehend the depth of her troubles.

Chapter Eleven

Lucien felt rather pleased with himself. Seeing Serenity bring herself to orgasm had given him an erection that still ached. However, he did not want her to pleasure herself. He wanted her to ask *him* for her pleasure. He would continue to spank her with the strap, though he wondered if it were really a punishment, as she seemed to

enjoy it. He would tease her until she could no longer bear the desire.

He looked forward to relieving her at some future date. She would come begging for release in a few days, and he would deny her the first time, maybe even the second. His cock stirred at the thought of how on fire she would be when the belt came off. He would be too, if he did nothing about it till then. However, he'd not fucked a client since Serenity's arrival and realized he wasn't inclined to do so.

As he readied himself for the night at the club, he tried to assess his feelings for Serenity. The simplest thing would be to have no feelings for her at all, but that wasn't the case. She invaded his thoughts at times when he needed his full concentration. She stole sleep from him as he recalled things she'd said or done and how they had pleased him. Now, he would have the image of her pleasuring herself with a peaceful look upon her face, legs wantonly spread wide, her hairless quim swollen and red from her attentions. It was one of the most beautifully erotic sights he'd ever seen in his life. He would have her repeat that one day for his own pleasure. However, he wouldn't allow her to repeat it on her own.

* * * * *

A week to the day later, Lucien decided enough was enough. He would orchestrate the moment when Serenity would beg for the removal of the chastity belt. She'd been obstinately resisting his attempts to bring her to the point of begging – she had fortitude, damn it.

Every night, they had been downstairs. She'd observed every decadent game the club had to offer. She'd been with him when he serviced his clients, though he'd not brought himself to the point of taking his own pleasure with them. It wasn't that he didn't need to, but he frankly had no will to do so.

Lucien quit the club early and took his wife to the room on the third floor where most of her spankings had been administered. He'd spanked her twice each day, including this one. He knew she was sore. She'd told him many times she rather liked

the feeling of her gown brushing against her red bottom.

From the start, Lucien had been intent upon showing Serenity that pain and pleasure are closely connected. Tonight, he would remove the chastity belt, which she'd borne with not a little impatience. She'd been in a foul disposition the last few days, causing her mouth to overrule her brain. She'd received several lickings for her petulance.

But now, he would show her the very height of pleasure along with the desperation to please. Before the sun came up again over London, Serenity would be begging to pleasure Lucien in any fashion he demanded. She would be brought to the edge of her endurance.

Lucien had thought of this for years, with no real prayer of his fondest dream coming to fruition. He sensed more in his wife than even she could fathom, and the time had come for him to see if what he thought he perceived was truly the case. Tonight he would find out if she were a true devotee of erotic bed play, or if she were simply a curious bystander.

* * * * *

Marjorie helped Serenity to remove her clothing, sans her chemise, before she left the two of them alone. Serenity had no notion of what Lucien intended, but assumed she was due another spanking. She'd enjoyed her two daily spankings, though they had made her ever more aware of her sexual need. Lucien had not touched her in any provocative way, not even rubbing her sore bottom as she always wanted him to do, but her desire for his touch had now become uncontrollable.

He walked to a comfortable upholstered chair near the windows and motioned with his arm. "Come."

Gingerly, Serenity moved toward him, until she stood before him.

"Bend over the arm of the chair," he said.

She complied without thought. Soon she felt his hands on the back of the chastity

belt and heard the key slide into the lock. With a simple turn of his wrist, she was released from her prison. Excitement coursed through her. She stood and wished to hug him, but he moved away.

A small table next to the chair held an amber-colored bottle. "Bend over the arm of the chair again, Serenity. Put your head in the seat and spread your legs wide."

Lucien took the amber-colored bottle off the table and opened it. He poured a liberal amount of the liquid into one hand, while his other caressed the cheeks of her arse. She purred.

He ran a finger down the seam between her cheeks, lubricating with the oil as he rubbed the tiny pink pucker. He inserted one long, slender finger into her and stilled, allowing her to adjust to his initial infringement.

"Relax," he encouraged.

She followed his instruction, and her muscles released their tension. He began to move his finger back and forth, and Serenity moaned softly. With his free hand, he rubbed her cheeks. Slowly he removed his finger and inserted two. She started a bit, but soon adjusted. He moved them in and out as he'd done before, separating them in an effort to stretch the tight muscle.

Lucien opened a drawer in the small table and removed a marble phallus. "Look, Serenity."

She lifted her head and looked at what he held in his hand.

"I am going to insert this in your arse. It is larger than the other one. You will hold it there until I remove it. Is that what you wish me to do?"

"Oh, yes."

He removed his fingers, causing her to involuntarily grumble, "No."

He smacked her buttock hard. "I am in control here. Understood?"

"Yes, sir."

He lubricated the phallus and brought the head to her anus. "I want you to push back, Serenity. Yes that's it, just like that. I want you to impale yourself on it."

When the head broke through the tight pucker, Serenity sucked in a breath. "It

burns."

"Yes, I know it does, but that feeling won't last. Simply relax and allow it to do its work."

He rubbed her gently, encouraging her muscles to relax and accept the phallus, which wasn't nearly as large as his cock, but would serve the purpose as intended.

"When you are ready, continue to push," Lucien said, to which Serenity immediately responded with a gentle but steady pressure against the phallus and his hand. "That's it."

Slowly, Serenity's arse accepted the eight-inch phallus to the hilt. The base flared out slightly, which would make it easier for Serenity to hold it in place. Lucien left her in position and went to the washstand to clean his hands. Serenity fidgeted, dancing from one leg to the other.

"Do you have a problem?" Lucien asked in a monotone that belied his concern.

"No, sir."

Lucien admired his brave little wife. He knew of no woman, other than an experienced whore, who would endure what he'd already put her through and be desirous of more, should he wish it. Her pleasure became even more important to him at that moment.

He returned to the chair. "Stand up slowly."

When Serenity was on her feet, he gave her a moment to adjust. "How do you feel?"

"Full."

Lucien smiled.

"It actually feels rather marvelous. It doesn't hurt any longer."

"Good. Now, do you see that bench over there?"

"Yes, sir."

"I wish for you to walk over there."

Unquestioningly, Serenity did as he bid.

"Serenity, this is a punishment bench. You will bend over the padded top, and your arms and legs will be fastened to the bench."

Serenity studied the strange looking contraption. A thick pad covered the top. Her arse would be high and readily available for Lucien to use as he would. Her trust in him touched his soul, something he felt threatened by.

"Fine." He spoke gruffly, trying to suppress the tenderness he was feeling. He felt between her legs, knowing how aroused she must be. "Do you know why you are being punished?"

"Because I brought myself to orgasm without your permission."

"That's correct."

He bent her over the bench. Her splendid buttocks, still blushed from his previous punishment, rose high in the air. The phallus remained in place, and the sight made Lucien's cock stir. He'd long engaged in anal sex play with the women he hired to partner him, but he'd never had the courage to seek such an indulgence from any woman who had caught his fancy. Serenity's request for such had shocked and titillated him. Tonight would be a new experience for each of them.

When he had Serenity's arms and legs restrained, he took hold of the phallus and stroked it back and forth, withdrawing it and thrusting it back in past the tight muscles, again letting it rest deep within her. He began to rub her buttocks, gently and then with increasing pressure. "Do you like the feel of the phallus in your arse, Serenity?"

"Yes, sir, I do very much."

"Did you like the stroking?"

"Yes, sir."

He bent low to her ear. "That's very good, because I shall fuck you hard and rough when I am finished strapping you. Would you like that?"

Serenity lay across the punishment bench, as Lucien had called it, and reveled in the feeling of being restrained with the wide leather straps he'd just finished attaching to the legs of the bench. The thick leather padding cradled her belly comfortably. The

bands around her wrists hands held her firmly, without digging into her flesh. It was certainly an odd position, as she was nearly folded in half, but it thrilled her all the same.

The things she'd seen in the club had shocked her. They had also caused desires to rise in her that she would need satisfied soon. She feared Lucien would extend this sensual agony as long as he possibly could, the penalty she would pay for her bit of self-indulgence a week ago.

He touched the phallus imbedded deeply within her bottom. She felt exquisitely full and having him move it, back and forth, as he would his cock, felt unbelievably erotic. The thought made her quim weep, and she prayed Lucien would satisfy her before long.

"Do you like the feel of the phallus in your arse, Serenity?" he asked, his voice low and heated.

She could only answer with the absolute truth. "It is wonderful."

"Good," he said.

Serenity smiled inwardly, realizing his approval was fast becoming all-important to her. The promise of his cock in her arse would soon be a reality. Seeing it happening in the club had thrilled her beyond comprehension. Many of the things she'd seen had had that effect on her.

"*When I am finished strapping you.*" Those words fell upon her like a benediction. She craved the strap, desired it above all things. In the hands of her husband, she knew she would find what she wanted and needed most.

She wished to repeat that experience often and would tell him so, but she craved the feel of the strap on her flanks, the initial burning and smarting of the leather against her skin. She needed it as she needed the air she breathed.

Lucien stood across the room at a dresser. She couldn't see what he was doing, but she wished he would hurry. He'd left her with so many promises for this night, and she wished to have each one fulfilled as she knew only he could fulfill them. He came toward her, but had his hand behind his back. The anticipation was overwhelming.

Without warning, his hand made contact with her right cheek. Relief flooded through her. Then the left cheek received the same treatment, then two more to each cheek, in rapid succession. Serenity kept her eyes closed, which allowed her to devote all her attention to her arse. She wished to fully experience each blow, later on being able to replay them, lest this never be repeated.

"Now, Serenity, I wish you to see what implement I have chosen for you." Serenity opened her eyes and stared at a piece of leather about two feet long with a wooden handle attached to one end. It looked to be possibly a half-inch thick

"Is this the kind of strap you had in mind, Serenity?"

"Yes, sir." Tears rimmed her eyes, hopefully conveying her overwhelming gratitude.

"We must have a way of you letting me know if you have had enough. Simply say 'stop', and I shall do so immediately. This is for you, my dear. You have requested this, and I am happy to oblige. Until you say 'stop', I shall continue. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir. Please, strap me."

"Feel free to express yourself as you must. We are alone here. Let the feelings build, but don't come. Do you understand?"

Serenity simply nodded, the anticipation getting the better of her.

Lucien first teased, running the strap over her warmed skin. It felt cool and menacing. Suddenly, the strike came, causing her to close her eyes. She made an incoherent sound in response, but managed to barely move. Lucien followed it with two more in a row, each covering both cheeks at once. Then he rubbed her and repeated the process over and over. She was in thrall. She'd passed through the first painful strikes and enjoyed the combination of forceful attention and tender ministrations. She'd felt the building of several orgasms but had suppressed them, intending to heed Lucien's warning.

Her capacity for endurance surprised her, but as much as she wanted what she knew was coming next, she dreaded the cession of the strapping. As it continued, she began to verbalize at each blow, joyful tears streaming down her face. Finally, she

decided to cry 'stop,' and Lucien, true to his word, stopped in mid-swing.

Immediately, he rubbed her bright red posterior and then surprised her by kissing the redness. "You are a brave girl, Serenity."

His praise meant everything to her. Her heart swelled with pride at her accomplishment.

He released her from the restraints. "Stay there. I wish to fuck you just as you are."

Serenity nodded, grateful she did not have to move. She knew her legs wouldn't support her weight at that moment. She heard the rustling of fabric. She could only imagine Lucien disrobing. She rested her eyes until she felt his hand on the phallus. He stroked her again with it, twisting slightly as he thrust it in and out, over and over. His other hand touched her mons, causing her to wiggle toward the touch, hoping to be rewarded with the climax she so desperately needed.

He didn't allow his touch to linger. She couldn't hide the disappointment.

Lucien chuckled. "You are getting ahead of yourself, my dear. You won't come until I say you can, remember?"

"Yes, sir, but please . . ."

"Please what? Do you want me, Serenity? Tell me what you want."

"I want you, sir."

"How do you want me?"

"I want you in my . . ."

"Say it, Serenity."

Heat pooled between her legs. "I want your cock in my arse, please, sir. Please."

Lucien patted her bottom affectionately. "You shall be rewarded, my dear."

Lucien pulled the phallus from her body, inserted two fingers and then three in its place. He poured oil over her anus and worked it inside her with his fingers.

Serenity moaned with each movement, her body rising to meet his touch. "Oh, that's so good."

Lucien took his time, relaxing and calming her, making her aware only of him

and his hands.

Serenity lay comfortably on the punishment bench, concentrating on Lucien, who stood behind her. His hands busily worked her anus, amazing her with how wonderful it felt.

He slid his fingers in and out, while he rubbed her bottom and spoke soft, encouraging words. "That's the way, my dear. I'm proud of you. How are you feeling?"

"Wonderful"

She panted as his fingers fucked her arse, stretching her in preparation for his cock. "Now, sir, please, I want you inside me. Please." She so desperately wanted this.

"All right, sweeting, now you must relax. If you do, it will go easier."

"I am doing my best, but I am anxious."

"I know, but we must take it slowly. I don't want to hurt you."

"You never would," she murmured, almost to herself.

He rubbed his hands down her back and onto her buttocks. Then he put the head of his cock at her entrance. She moaned loudly and pushed her bottom back for closer contact.

"Open for me, Serenity." He brought her hands back and placed them on her buttocks. "That's it, dear. Hold yourself open for me." Holding her hips in his hands, he pushed the lubricated head of his cock through the tight pucker and held fast as she absorbed the shock of his much larger penis.

Serenity sucked in a deep breath and tensed.

"No, you must relax. It will hurt more if you tense your muscles." He kneaded her buttocks as he slowly pushed forward. "That's it. Take nice deep breaths. I won't do anything you don't expect."

She was soothed by his voice, low, sensual, and drawling. "Is it supposed to burn so?" She wanted to stop but refused to give up. Thoughts raced around her head. Elation, pain, and the promise of pleasure battled for her attention.

"It does, I know, but it shall ease, I promise, just as it did with the phallus."

Serenity nodded and continued to breathe deeply. As the burning eased, she felt

an intense fullness and a pressure she'd never experienced, even with the phalluses. As she forced herself into a state of calm, she began to push back into him.

"That's it. You determine how I move."

Being careful, she steadily moved into him, sucking air through her teeth but not letting anything deter her. Inch by delicious inch, he sank into her, until she felt his wiry pubic hair abrade her raw arse.

He leaned forward and kissed her back. "That was amazing, my dear. How are you feeling?"

"I feel quite full, and it is glorious. Please, please move."

Lucien began to stroke slowly forward and then pull back, just leaving the head inside her. His graceful glides forward and back made her delirious as he hilted himself again and again.

Serenity groaned in ecstasy, "Oh, yes, Lucien, yes."

Lucien reached between her legs and found her clitoris. With deft fingers, he circled her precious nub. "Come for me, my girl. Come loudly. Let me know how much you like this."

"Lucien!" A tide of warmth washed over her, sending her over a precipice as never before.

Lucien held fast. She writhed and bucked against him, but he continued to move in and out until her body eased. The tiny muscles of her arse tightened about his needy member, urging him to join her. His pace increased, and he slammed into her over and over, stroking himself with the help of her clinging grasp. The bench creaked under the strain. Only then did he allow himself to release his seed deep inside her bottom, and he rode her in a sexual frenzy. When he'd jerked and bucked his last, he collapsed upon her, holding her tightly and whispering soothing words of praise.

"Oh, Lucien."

"Are you well?"

"Oh, my yes."

Lucien lifted himself from atop her and stood. He reached for her, raising her to her feet, and led her to the bed. He settled her gently, solicitous of her discomfort. He got into the bed beside her and held her close. "You are amazing," he told her. "Simply amazing."

Chapter Twelve

In the ballroom, aptly named 'The Gates of Heaven and Hell', one could always find something interesting to see or do. The perimeter of the room held smaller alcoves curtained off with filmy, gossamer-thin fabric hung from the enormous Corinthian columns. The spaces contained plush cushions, mattresses, and chaises. The occupants of the spaces could request any apparatus and implements they desired for their particular tableau.

In the middle of the room, the fountain flowed over three nude women standing in the large pool, arms upraised as if they held the fountain aloft. They did not move from their appointed positions, making their delectable, creamy bottoms provocatively available to the revelers. Serenity had to wonder how they managed to hold their pose for so long, and could only marvel at their fortitude.

The fountain was surrounded by a large metal circle, which was suspended from the two-story dome. Hundreds of candles sat along the metal railing, illuminating the fountain and women with a golden glow. It was a stunning representation.

Music wafted over the assemblage from the gallery, where comfortable seats enabled viewers to look upon the entire room. All participants wore togas or nothing at all. As Lucien had promised, human sculptures filled the large niches in the wall, all aroused, some tending to themselves, others to their partners.

As Lucien and Serenity entered the room, Lady Foxworth, on the arm of Prentice Hyde, approached Lucien, causing Serenity to tense at the sight of the woman.

"Luce, darling, I have our room reserved. Prentice here has agreed to join us. I had nearly given up hope you would even *come* this evening." She winked and laughed

at her attempted pun.

Serenity huffed loudly, showing her displeasure.

Lucien smiled. "I am sorry, Amelie, but we are not participating tonight. Though I have no doubt Prentice will fulfill your every need."

Turning her attention to Serenity, Amelie said with vinegar in her voice, "You have quite ruined my fun, Mrs. Damrill."

"I am so sorry, my lady." Serenity's words came out sounding far less than sincere.

Lucien raised an eyebrow and shrugged at her ladyship. "I am sure you will find an eager replacement. If not Prentice, then perhaps Haynes wouldn't mind taking my part. Enjoy yourselves." He placed his hand on the small of Serenity's back and guided her away from the pouting Lady Foxworth.

He guided her through the room, greeting those present, explaining again and again that he would not be participating, since this was Serenity's first tableau night, and they were simply to observe.

"We should make our way to the gallery," Lucien whispered. "The fun shall be starting soon."

Serenity nodded and followed him to the stairs leading to their seats for the evening. The white stone gallery bulged with patrons, as usual on most tableau nights. New members had to be sponsored by current ones, and the tableaux were often their first introduction to the club's activities.

The strains of Beethoven wafted over the room, while the scent of roses permeated the senses. Those milling about were busily pinching arses of the willing young women and indiscriminately touching the cocks of the nude males in the niches as well as those of the members still trying to find a tableau.

The Sapphire Club boasted a membership of society, gentry and trade, all well-heeled and of varied sexual appetites. Lucien accepted members from all classes, feeling that when naked, most people look relatively alike. Each member paid a steep annual membership fee, which secured the discretion of all members who might observe the

goings-on. To Lucien's knowledge, not a single club secret had ever been made public.

"Oh, my, Lucien, is that Lady Croft?" Serenity looked down upon the depravity unfolding below them.

"Why, yes it is. Why do you ask?"

"Is it true she once caught the eye of Lord Byron?"

"So I have heard, but then she was one of many. She has become the mistress of Lord Argyll, and they are both members of the club. He particularly enjoys the tableaux, especially when they are joined by Lady Foxworth."

Serenity's eyes went wide with amusement.

Hampton, Lucien's humorless aged butler, walked to the center of the room and began to speak. He set down a litany of rules and finished with " . . . and let the games begin." The room erupted into organized chaos. It appeared rather magnificent, really, what with partners going to their various rooms and immediately getting into their prearranged positions.

Serenity gaped as she saw aging Lord Beaton with a young woman half his age. His rotund belly jiggled as he rutted his very willing partner.

"The sight of his lordship au natural is more than should be borne." Serenity laughed.

Beaton good-naturedly spanked the young woman's posterior as she good-naturedly howled as though in actual pain. Beaton retreated into a world of his own.

Serenity gestured toward an alcove where a young man was being ordered to kneel. "What are they going to do with him?"

"His two partners, Lord and Lady Wexler, will torment him, restrain him, paddle him, and then while the young man takes Lady Wexler, his lordship will take the young man."

"Truly?" Serenity asked, unable to keep the incredulity from her voice.

"Yes, truly." Lucien laughed.

Below, Lady Wexler swatted the young man's cock with a leather strap, ordering him to keep it erect and waiting. She put him in her mouth as his lordship fingered the

man's bottom. Clearly, Wexler's only interest was in how quickly he could bury his cock in the young man's arse.

Serenity's gaze found Lady Foxworth and her partners for the evening. Lady Croft's limbs had been bound to a bedstead with red silk ties, and Lord Argyll was between her legs, lapping at her like a cat to cream. Lady Foxworth was perched just above Lady Croft's face and was receiving much the same treatment from Lady Croft. Prentice's rather impressive cock was in Lady Foxworth's mouth, and all seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely.

The crack of a strap filled the air, and Lucien nudged Serenity's arm. "Look at Mr. Davies over there."

"Why, his poor buttocks are purple! Who is the woman dealing the blows?"

"Oh, that would be Mrs. Davies. She has quite a swing, does she not?"

"I would say so, judging from the coloring of his arse."

Lucien leaned over and asked, so only she could hear, "How is the color of *your* arse?"

"I am not sure, but I wouldn't be adverse to you checking to see if it is to your liking."

"I shall most certainly look into it, but first, come with me."

He grabbed her hand and fairly dragged her out of the gallery and into an unoccupied room.

"There is something I wish you to wear for the rest of the evening." With that he removed a piece of silk from his pocket. The silk concealed something, which Lucien placed in Serenity's hand.

"What is this?"

"Unwrap it and see."

She did as he bid and uncovered a large glass phallus.

"Oh, my, this looks like it could be you."

Lucien smiled wickedly. "It was modeled after my own. I had it made just for you."

She ringed his neck with her arms and kissed him. Judging by the look on his face, she'd taken him completely by surprise, but he recovered quickly, wrapped his large arms around her waist and deepened the kiss.

His hands slid to her bottom, and as he squeezed her arse, he whispered, "Lift your skirts and bend over the bed."

Serenity complied eagerly. He took a vile of oil from his pocket and lubricated the enormous phallus and her anus. "We'll take this slowly. I have thought of little else but having this inside you tonight and only the two of us knowing it is there."

As his deft fingers stretched her tight muscles, she smiled, craving the feeling of him in her. "This is a wonderful gift. I know I shall love it."

"And I shall enjoy knowing your arse is stretching in anticipation of my cock."

Serenity loved Lucien's way of speaking plainly, crudely, in fact, and making it sound seductive. More and more of her thoughts and feelings engaged in his direction, and in her weaker moments she pretended the same applied to him, with respect to her. Their sexual life had blossomed into a vast spectrum of games and serious lovemaking. She wished for more of him, his touch, his discipline, his cock.

"That's it, dear, relax into it. Oh, yes, you are doing well." His whisper-soft words washed over her, encouraging her to greater heights of fulfillment. "There, Serenity, you have taken all of me." He chuckled. "Are you well?"

"Oh, yes." She took a deep breath as her body adjusted to the fullness.

Lucien's hand rubbed across her bottom. "It is not the color I like to see. It would appear I have been neglecting you."

"Please, then, kindly remedy the situation."

"Your wish is my command, my dear."

Lucien walked to the armoire in the room and removed a strap similar to Serenity's favorite.

"How many would you like, sweeting?"

She wiggled her bottom in anticipation. "Oh, I believe twenty would be just what I need."

"Well, my dear, I shall gladly deliver."

With no further ado, Lucien got down to business.

By the time he lashed her for the last time, she could barely breathe. "Lucien, I need to come."

He patted her bottom and reached under her until he found her clit, which he circled expertly. It took but a moment, and she came, drenching his hand with her fluid.

He kissed her upturned cheeks and then said, "We must get back."

He helped her straighten herself and then escorted her back to the gallery. "Hold it in for me, dear, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, as long as you promise to replace it later."

He winked at her, and she squeezed on the phallus, thinking of what it would be like when they were once again alone.

* * * * *

The tableaux had been wonderful, inspiring Lucien to bring Serenity to even greater heights when they returned to their rooms shortly before the sun rose over London. In a flurry of legs and arms, he fucked her arse until neither could speak. The excitement he'd engendered by her earlier strapping and the insertion of "Little Lucien" had fueled their sexual encounter like tinder to flame. Her orgasms were numerous and powerful. Though his weren't as numerous, the ferocity with which he came outshone any experience in their brief marriage.

They had collapsed into a heap and fallen immediately asleep, remaining abed for much of the day, not rising until nearly dinnertime. When they did slant their eyes open, it was to make love again and again, seemingly unable to get enough of each other.

"You are insatiable," Lucien said, huffing as he rolled off her for the third time in an hour.

"Me? I beg your pardon, sir, but I've done nothing but lie here. I'm minding my

own business, when suddenly I feel something nudging at my legs, spreading them wide. Did I ask for that? I think not!"

"You certainly did not turn me away though, did you? Insatiable, I say. I am only here to service your needs. My poor cock shall never be the same." He held his limp appendage in his palm.

Serenity smiled. "Well, now I have one that never deflates. It could be I don't need you any longer."

"Not bloody likely, madam." And he rolled her over onto her belly for a playful spanking. "I owe you two because you slept through them today."

"Yes, I certainly did. Punish me, please."

He complied with her request, though he honestly hadn't the heart for it. He rather enjoyed the playfulness they had had for the last day or so. He knew it was fleeting, but it was a new sensation, and he would nurture it while it lasted.

* * * * *

Lucien sat in White's smoke-filled reading room thinking of how dangerous his relationship with his wife had become. She'd not disappointed him in any way – quite the contrary. He was in grave danger of developing a *tendre* for her, something he'd promised himself he would never do.

He'd strapped her, spanked her, paddled her, and taken her arse with abandon, and she'd responded with an eagerness for more. She was the mistress of his household, beloved by all who knew her, all but Lucien himself.

They had been invited to the Hillhaven Cyprian Ball that very evening. Lord Hillhaven, a club member, held the ball once a year. It afforded Lucien an opportunity to socialize with the Quality in London, outside of his own club. His membership always rose significantly after one of the balls. Lucien and Serenity had attended several dinners and soirees over the last several months, and he'd enjoyed having her on his arm; her radiant beauty had outshone all the other ladies. He was as proud of her as he

could be. If one must be married, Serenity certainly was the woman he would choose.

With a smile, he requested vellum, quill, and ink. He penned a note to his wife and had it delivered. He would test her again tonight.

* * * * *

Serenity sat alone in her sitting room on the third floor when Marjorie delivered the missive.

Serenity,

Prepare yourself for my arrival this evening before dinner.

Lucien

Flashes of excitement went through her. She knew well what he meant by 'prepare yourself'.

Not long afterward, she luxuriated in a lavender-scented bath until the water became tepid, then cool. Her body had been well used since her first night with Lucien. The twice-daily spankings — be it over his knee using his hand or restrained, stretched over one of the various punishment benches available on the premises — had left her pleasantly reddened and sore. In all likelihood, she would be receiving what Lucien called 'her thrashing' this very evening, given that he wished her prepared for him before dinner.

'Prepared' meant she was to be naked when Lucien entered her room. It could be any time, but he promised a worse punishment if she wasn't as he wished. She oftentimes disobeyed and thoroughly enjoyed the reaction. She also needed to be shaved, as she'd stretched the limits and not allowed Marjorie to do it for three days.

Serenity lounged on the chaise in front of the fireplace, trying to strike an enticing pose. As she tried to position herself alluringly, Lucien entered her chamber without knocking. She smiled at him, while his face looked grave.

"Is something amiss, Lucien?"

"You look lovely, my dear. I have a nice little accessory for you to wear to the ball

tonight. Would you kindly go bend over the side of the bed?"

"Of course, as you wish."

With as much dignity as she could muster, she walked to the bed and bent herself over. Lucien followed. With her arse at his disposal, he rubbed his hand over her cheeks and gave her a good squeeze. "I shall have to do something about the paleness of these."

In reality, she knew they were a deep pink, but she always played along when he expressed dissatisfaction.

"As is your pleasure, sir."

"Oh, it certainly will be. However, for now, I have a little gift for you."

"You are being very mysterious."

The next thing Serenity knew, Lucien inserted something into her anus, then something else. He repeated this three more times, each entry a bit larger than the last. He gave her an abrupt smack on her right cheek and helped her stand.

"What have you filled me with?"

"You have no need to know. You are to keep them in until I remove them later."

"You wish me to have them inserted during the ball?"

"That's precisely what I expect. Now dress, and I shall meet you downstairs."

Lucien departed, leaving Serenity in a quandary, wondering about the short string hanging from her anus.

Chapter Thirteen

When Serenity descended the staircase from the second floor to the entrance hall, Lucien had to swallow back a gasp. The many gowns he'd so generously purchased for her had long since arrived, but he'd not seen all of them, including the beauty she wore this evening—cream silk embroidered with roses in varying shades of pink and red, with a hint of green for the leaves and green trim around the short sleeves and neckline. The dress hugged her supple curves beautifully, and the bandeau she wore boasted a

large pink feather, making her appear at least twelve inches taller than usual. Bouncy curls framed her heart-shaped face, which looked to be made of the finest porcelain.

She wore simple diamond jewelry, a lovely necklace and earbobs.

"My dear, you look lovely this evening." For once, he didn't look at her with simple carnality on his mind, though to be fair, that was never far from his thoughts. Instead, he looked at her as a man would admire a beautiful woman. It had been an age since he'd done such a thing, and it pleased him the woman he so revered would likely be admired a hundred times over by the men at the ball. Her beauty alone would garner her attention.

"Thank you, Lucien; you look especially handsome tonight, yourself." His black-and-white, well-tailored evening attire always earned him her effusive compliments.

With a jaunty bow, he acknowledged her words, offered his arm, and they headed off to the Hillhaven Cyprian's Ball.

* * * * *

She'd never enjoyed all the fuss made over the attire needed for such events and frankly saw no point in them. Her opinion of such things could have been colored by the fact her parents had forced her to attend one such ball where she met her future husband. Her father had orchestrated the entire courtship, throwing them into each other's company at every turn.

Though she'd dearly loved her parents, she knew now she'd always held her unfortunate marriage against them and in some small measure did still. She'd not been prepared to marry and Lucien had frightened her, which was the only emotion she'd had concerning him.

This night, she would much rather be at the club and later, in her bedchamber with Lucien. She'd just arrived at Hillhaven House, and her face already hurt from smiling like some sort of besotted idiot. Curtsying hurt her knees, and she saw little purpose in it, in any case — she'd seen half these people naked, and they knew it.

"Dear, I would like to introduce you to the Duke of Thornhill, Your Grace, my wife, Serenity."

The duke bowed over her hand and bestowed it with a kiss. Serenity bit the inside of her cheek to keep from giggling, as his grace had been one of the first people she'd seen at the club. "I have heard of your views on the Corn Bill, Your Grace."

"It is very nice to meet you, Mrs. Damrill. Not many women would care about my views on such matters; I trust you are not one of them."

"I think you would find me in accord with many of your views, Your Grace."

Lucien chuckled softly.

"Damrill, I trust we shall be seeing each other. Enjoy the evening." The duke left them, taking with him a beautiful young woman who he hadn't bothered to introduce, but who Serenity recognized as the same woman who had been thrashing Thornhill when she first saw him.

"Yes, my dear, she is his mistress."

"Oh, really. You must keep me informed of these things."

The evening took on a whole new meaning for Serenity. Suddenly, she felt much more comfortable. She rather enjoyed the company of the people at the club, and looking around, she saw a great many members.

She felt Lucien's arm tense even before she heard the greeting.

"Damrill, I should have expected to see you here."

"Yes, Simon, I should have expected to see you here as well. How many of your mistresses are here, and do they know about each other?"

"Very humorous. I am still waiting for a membership to your club."

"Hell hasn't frozen over quite yet, Simon."

Simon placed his hand over his heart in mock offense. "My money is as good as the next man's."

"I've never wanted anything from you, as you know full well." Lucien's jaw tightened, and the vein in his temple pulsed. His body seemed on guard for an assault.

Serenity placed her free hand on Lucien's arm and gently patted, conveying her

support. Though she'd no clue with whom her husband was conversing, she did understand he wished he wasn't.

"Just so. Aren't you going to introduce me to your companion?"

"No, I am not." Lucien ground his teeth and steered Serenity away. Her hand remained upon his sleeve, patting in a soothing manner.

"Who was that, Lucien?"

"Viscount Westerhouse, my brother. Did you not recognize him?"

Serenity's mouth formed a perfect O, and she'd difficulty shutting it. "I had no idea. He has changed considerably in ten years. You still don't get along, I take it."

"No, we don't, and I don't wish to talk about him or the rest of that band of wastrels." His jaw looked tense enough to break, and his body wasn't in its usual languid posture. "Come, shall we dance?"

As Lucien led her to the dance floor, she realized she'd not known he could dance. He committed himself completely to the quadrille and executed the steps flawlessly. Serenity marveled over all the things she still had to learn about him.

The evening proceeded rather well. Serenity danced with Lucien, particularly enjoying the waltzes. She adored being in his arms, even if only for a simple dance. He seemed to be back to his usual self, smiling at his acquaintances, garnering the goodwill of those who might not yet be members of the Sapphire Club.

Lucien never left Serenity's side, which pleased her immensely. He introduced her to everyone, and included her in conversation. She enjoyed speaking with the same people who, come tomorrow, would be draped over a punishment bench or chained to metal bars suspended from the ceiling, howling in agonized pleasure.

They extended many invitations to the club and talked until their jaws ached. The hour grew late, and Serenity needed no reminder of whatever it was Lucien had inserted in her bottom before they left home. The little tail hanging from her anus had brushed against her cheeks with every step she took, intriguing her more and more.

When Lucien asked her if she wanted to go home, excitement dashed through her. "I thought you would never ask."

They had nearly reached the front door of the Hillhaven Mayfair mansion when Serenity heard her name.

"Serenity, dear, can it possibly be you?"

A chill slid icily down her back.

Lucien stopped her with a hand to her arm. "My dear, I believe someone is trying to garner your attention."

"It is fine, Lucien, let us go."

Before she could encourage his ignorance of her pursuer, the man placed an impertinent bulky hand upon her shoulder.

"Serenity Malin, is that you?"

Serenity's heart fell to her feet, beating so fast she thought she must be dying. Her body heated until she felt faint. Her knees wobbled, and she felt herself list toward Lucien, leaning upon him for support.

Lucien stepped forward. "I am sorry sir, but you seem to have me at a disadvantage."

"Beg pardon, sir, I am Martyn Thorndyke, the Earl of Chetwood. I come from Nottinghamshire and am acquainted with your lovely companion."

"Acquainted, you say. Well, it is nice to meet you, Chetwood. I was just taking my wife home. It appears she is feeling a bit faint."

Chetwood looked Serenity over with a critical eye. "Your wife? Yes, she does appear to be rather overset." His eyes met Serenity's, giving her a fear like none she'd ever experienced, not even that night in Italy.

"If you will excuse us, Chetwood, I must get her home."

"But of course. May I call in a day or so to check on your well being?"

"Of course you may," Lucien answered over his shoulder as he escorted Serenity out the door.

As their carriage made its way through the black London night toward Westminster, Serenity felt her entire life ebb away. Her greatest fear had finally been realized.

Lucien sat with his back to the horses while Serenity faced him in the opposite seat. The dim carriage light bounced shadows in the small compartment. She needed time to think. With careful thought, she knew she could explain to Lucien about Winsor. Martyn wouldn't have come to London unless he'd tracked her here. He'd never been one for Society, as he was a simple country gentleman, happy to rule his little fiefdom in Nottinghamshire.

"How does your bottom feel?" Lucien asked in his deep, resonating tone.

"Fine," she answered distractedly.

"Good. Are you all right?"

"Yes, why would you ask?"

"You are acting strangely."

"I am fine, just tired."

Without saying another word, Lucien began to unbutton the placard of his black trousers. He sprawled, his legs wide apart on either side of Serenity's. He kept his eyes on hers as he grasped his rampant erection and began to stroke. It was a crude gesture, but she wasn't about to let him be disappointed. Not now.

Her tongue peeped out as she licked her bottom lip, all thought of Martyn Thorndyke temporarily banished from her mind – and, she hoped, from Lucien's.

"How rude of you to start without me." She came off the seat and onto her knees in front of him. Her dainty hands plucked his own away from his cock, and in one fluid movement, she took him into her mouth. She relaxed her jaw and began to move up and down, her hand stroking in the same rhythm. Lucien rested his head against the squabs, his eyes closed as Serenity laved him. One hand came up, and he laced his fingers into her hair. He loosely held her in place, lest she think of leaving him. He felt her need to please him. As he felt his climax building, his hand tensed in her hair.

She increased her momentum, eliciting groans of satisfaction from deep within him. He growled and raised his bottom off the seat as she relaxed her throat muscles and took him in fully. He began to stroke with her, unable to remain motionless.

"I'm coming," he murmured in warning, just a moment before his warm, salty seed splashed against the back of her throat.

She groaned her approval as she took all he had to give her.

She licked him clean. He pulled her onto his lap and held her tightly against his chest. Silently he petted her, his cock already reacting to her close proximity.

They remained that way until they stopped in front of their home. He lifted her from his lap and repaired his clothing just as the footman opened the carriage door.

Serenity seemed to have no interest in the club tonight, which had gone on operating even as they took the night off. When he took her by the hand and led her through the library and directly to their rooms, he sensed her relief.

Once they reached his room, Lucien silently undressed Serenity and then himself. He felt crazed . . . with his want to touch her and be touched by her, and with another emotion. One he did not yet wish to face.

He backed Serenity up until her legs met the bed and she fell back. And then he fell on her like a mad man, made love to her body with his hands, eyes, and mouth. He suckled her breasts until she pled for him to take her, but he didn't. He licked and kissed every inch of her before lingering at her quim. He savaged her with his tongue and teeth, nibbling and licking until she cried out with her desire for him.

As he pleased her with his mouth, he slipped the beads from her bottom, slowly, one at a time. Breathless, she responded with animalistic sounds of satisfaction, adding to Lucien's already painful erection. When the last bead slid out, he plunged two fingers into her and then three. She groaned and offered herself to him. He wished to take her brutally but reminded himself who she was before he did something he would later regret. He also wished to spank her hard and without quarter, but refrained for fear he would do her harm.

His emotions raging, Lucien suddenly got up and walked away from her.

"What is wrong, Lucien? What did I do?"

"Nothing." He walked to the window and stared out.

"Please talk to me."

"I cannot." He wanted to hurt someone, and he didn't want it to be Serenity.

Lucien was unaccustomed to feelings he couldn't explain. He was a man who unapologetically indulged in the carnal pleasures of life. Since he married Serenity, he'd fucked more women than he cared to count and had done so with the full sanction of his wife, if only by virtue of her abandonment. After considerable time had passed and he realized she'd no interest in returning to him, he'd assumed she'd found someone else to whom she was better suited.

Tonight, he'd met that person, and he was consumed with the need to tear the man apart

Serenity's reaction to the earl told Lucien they were more than just nodding acquaintances. His blood boiled with jealousy. He tried to contain it because he'd no right to feel this way, but something had hold of him, something irrational that he could not control.

"What is it?" Serenity implored.

Through gritted teeth, Lucien finally spoke in measured tones. "Who is Martyn Thorndyke to you?"

"He is just someone I met in Nottinghamshire."

"Is he the man who has suckled your breasts?"

"No! He is no one to me."

"He seemed quite determined to garner your attention. He apparently thinks you are more to him than a mere acquaintance."

"Please, Lucien, think no more of him. He is not important to me, nor should he be to you."

Lucien wasn't convinced. Rage consumed him with each passing minute. He grabbed her arms, holding her tightly. "I don't want another man ever to touch you, do you hear me? You are my wife, and I won't have that man or anyone else touching what is mine and mine alone."

Serenity's eyes grew watery, her stance fearful. "I understand," she whispered. "But you have it wrong. He is nothing to me."

"He'd better not be, Serenity." He let her go and stormed to his bedchamber.

* * * * *

Serenity felt her life come to an abrupt end. Lucien would surely find out what she'd done, and at the very least he would chuck her out without a second thought. At the most, he could watch her hang.

She paced, cried and inwardly screamed, trying to figure out what she should do about Martyn. He hated her, making his behavior at the Cyprian's ball all the more confusing. He'd given Lucien the impression they had been friends, which couldn't be farther from the truth.

Worry kept her awake much of the night. She realized how important her life with Lucien had become and did not want anything to destroy it. She'd thought of going to Lucien with the full explanation about Winsor and Italy, but doubted he would believe her. The tale wasn't something of which she was proud.

She could confront Martyn, but had no idea where he was lodged. Nor did she relish time alone with him. He could be a surly man even when his mood was of an abiding nature, so she'd have little hope of civility if she found herself alone with him now. He was but a year younger than she, and she'd always thought him pleasant enough to look at, as long as he did not open his mouth. She'd heard rumors in Nottinghamshire that when he inherited, he became overly full of himself, driving long-time staff to seek employment elsewhere.

Serenity thought of Winsor and his almost feminine ways. He'd been so gentle and not the least bit confrontational. People tended to take advantage of him, but he enjoyed making people happy. The only time he'd been the least bit masterful was when he spanked her, but it had been nothing like what Lucien gave her. Still, dear Winsor had showed her a part of herself she'd had no idea existed, and then he died. Certainly, she'd not been in love with him, but she liked him tremendously and hadn't wished to be apart from him and his adventurous spirit.

What am I to do? She lamented, afraid with her entire being that there wasn't a thing she *could* do. She could pack her bags and flee, but then she would just be compounding her already deplorable behavior in Italy. She had to find a way to tell Lucien and make him believe she wasn't at fault.

With that in mind, she rested, albeit fitfully.

* * * * *

Lucien spent much of the next morning in his library, attending to business. His mind kept drifting back to Chetwood's hand on his wife's shoulder, a familiarity that went beyond the pale. The man had acted like he had a right to touch her thusly, leading Lucien to believe it had not been the first time.

He hated the feeling in the pit of his stomach. He'd denied to himself any feelings other than those of a carnal nature existed between him and Serenity, but now with this rage, he knew he swam in dangerous waters.

He returned to Serenity's bedchamber in time to deliver her afternoon spanking. He placed her over his knee and half-heartedly spanked her with his hand. He didn't talk to her, tease her, or touch her sexually. He simply gave her twenty innocuous pats.

As he left her chamber, he spoke over his shoulder. "I have to go to the club. Please don't wait up for me."

Chapter Fourteen

Lucien slipped into his bed as the sky turned from the black of night to the gradated pink and gray of early morning. Exhausted, he simply wanted the oblivion of sleep. As he settled against the pillow, Serenity's small hand touched his back.

He rolled over to face her and was shocked by what he saw. "What is wrong?" She had tears streaming down her cheeks.

"I have been worried about you. You seem so unhappy, and I know it has to do

with me."

"Please, Serenity, I'm tired."

She allowed her hands to continue playing indiscriminately across his body. She touched his nipples until they became hard little pebbles. She leaned over him and licked him, earning her an approving moan. She traced her hand over the flat plane of his stomach, coming to rest just above the patch of wiry hair from which sprang his rampant arousal. She teased him, stroking and then moving away. She cupped his bollocks, squeezing slightly. She rolled them around in her hand, causing him to tense beneath her touch.

"Careful, love."

"Roll over," she whispered, already helping him to his stomach.

She began to rub his neck, shoulders and back. "Let me ease your tension." Then she went lower, paying great attention to his buttocks. She kneaded each in turn, and Lucien tensed beneath her hands.

"Relax, dear." She kissed him hungrily, nipping at his bottom.

He growled but eased a bit. As his eyes drifted closed, she delved into the seam between his cheeks. He stiffened but didn't protest as she touched his anus.

"Do you like this?"

"I am not sure," he said, though his buttocks rose to meet her finger.

"Would you like me to continue?"

He didn't answer.

She leaned over and took a bottle of oil from the bedside table. She poured some and rubbed it into the pink muscle and slipped her finger within the tight confines. His bottom rose off the bed, meeting her finger as it delved deeper into him.

"Yes." He pushed up into her hand.

She stroked deep and then nearly withdrew. She encouraged him to his knees, and he complied willingly.

She took his cock in hand and duplicated the stroking rhythm she'd established in his arse. Lucien let her have control as she brought him to climax. She worked him

relentlessly until he collapsed, then whispered in his ear, "Rest now, love."

* * * * *

They slept until late in the afternoon, enfolded in each other's arms. When Lucien awoke, he vacated the bed before Serenity awoke. He retreated to his library, where he searched his tortured mind for answers. He had no idea how he would face her. Given his tormented thoughts about Martyn Thorndyke and overall exhaustion, his defenses had been totally depleted, and she'd done things to him he never should have allowed. He could kick himself for this lapse in judgment. It was the kind of intimacy he should never have shared with Serenity. He didn't love her or she him.

Within the confines of the Sapphire Club, he'd been well sought after. No one gave a deuce about him being the fourth son. He had a reputation, surely derived from his expertise at wielding a strap, and of course, his cock. He rather liked being known as a practiced lover of women. He'd also been known to never engage his heart, ever.

He had no idea how to approach his current situation, all the while knowing he would have to, and soon. Could he go on with her daily spankings? Would his life ever be as it had been before she burst back into it?

No, he knew it wouldn't, but he decided he would continue as though nothing had ever happened. It was the only way he could face her. He would have to see to it she didn't touch him as she'd so boldly done. To be sure, had he not been so tired, it never would have happened. But the more serious problem was that he'd indeed enjoyed the experience.

Her only intent had been for him to receive pleasure. She'd been completely unselfish, and it should have touched his heart in some way, but instead it further angered him. *Who had taught her to act so? Had the whole thing been a little trick she enacted with Chetwood to stir his anger?*

In the midst of his considerable quandary, Hampton had entered the library. "Sir Sir!"

"What the hell are you shouting about, Hampton?"

"I have been standing here for five minutes, trying to garner your attention. You have a visitor."

"Who would be calling at this hour?" He looked at the walnut clock on his desk, a gift from his father upon Lucien's entrance to Eton, and realized it was well within proper calling hours.

"The Earl of Chetwood, sir. Says he's come to inquire as to Mrs. Damrill's health."

Lucien's heart began to beat more rapidly. "Chetwood, eh? Send him in."

The butler gave a stiff bow, and within moments, Chetwood entered the library, looking well rested and smug.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Damrill. I do hope I am not interrupting your business day. I simply came to inquire as to Serenity's well-being."

"Not interrupting a thing, Chetwood. Please come in and have a seat." Lucien directed him to a stiff wooden chair beside the desk, not feeling particularly inclined to make the man comfortable.

Lucien watched as his wife's former lover sauntered over to the chair and sat regally, as though on a throne. Lucien smothered a laugh. He'd always abhorred how the high-born pranced about, even when in the company of those equally as privileged. Lucien was just as well born as this popinjay, though the man probably had no idea of Lucien's circumstance.

"*My wife* is doing well. She had a bit too much excitement last evening, is all."

"Well, I am happy to know she is well. She looked as though she'd seen a ghost, and I must confess, with good reason."

Lucien gritted his teeth at Chetwood's nerve. "What are you insinuating, Chetwood? I would tread lightly."

"She looked as though I were the last person she thought to see, and I'm sure I am, since she left Nottinghamshire so precipitously with nary a word to me or anyone else. It took me a frightfully long time to track her to London, as she never divulged the innocuous little fact that she was married."

Lucien tried to appear calm. "What are you saying, Chetwood? Why would it matter to you or anyone else where my wife should travel and to whom she might be married?"

"I say, Damrill, you are becoming overset. Please, allow me to explain. Obviously, Serenity has not told you of her relationship with my brother."

Lucien said nothing, merely tried to keep his hands from throttling the man. The earl's continued use of Serenity's Christian name – as though this man didn't feel inclined to accord her the respect she deserved – had gotten under his skin.

"Serenity had a long-standing relationship with my older brother, Winsor. We, his family, thought highly of her, thinking her a good match. Of course, we had no idea she'd already taken vows. I am sure Winsor didn't know of it, either. Nonetheless, nearly a year ago, they traveled to Italy for an extended visit. His letters to me conveyed the usual descriptions of their adventures – trips to Rome, tours of the ruins – you know, the usual things one enjoys in such a beautiful country.

"Then six months ago, I received word my brother had been found dead in Florence, naked, the victim of some nefarious act. I made my way to Italy immediately, wishing to comfort Serenity and investigate as to who would possibly murder my brother. Upon my arrival, I was informed my brother had been alone. The people at the hotel informed me 'Contessa Chetwood' had left Italy several weeks before, having been seen last on the same day my brother died."

Lucien leapt to his feet. "Just what are you suggesting?"

"I'm *suggesting* nothing, Mr. Damrill. I'm telling you quite plainly that your wife is under suspicion for the murder of my brother. I have come to London to see her arrested."

"What the bloody hell are you talking about? My wife could never murder anyone. Didn't the Italian authorities explain to you how your brother died?"

"They most certainly did, sir, and it is all very suspicious. A man of seven and twenty does not simply die in bed. The very thought of it is absurd."

"You say my wife was fond of your brother."

"Yes, by all outward appearances."

"Well, then, why would you assume she is responsible for your brother's death?"

"Because she left with nary a word to anyone. Winsor's body was found the next afternoon by the maid who went to clean the room. From what I understand, the poor girl became nearly catatonic at the discovery."

Lucien felt his fragile control slip away. So this was why she'd come. He'd nearly let himself forget her strange arrival — he'd wanted to forget — but he could no longer avoid the truth. Serenity had appeared at his doorstep so unexpectedly because she'd needed a place to hide. It had nothing at all to do with her desire to reconcile with him or to make a go of their marriage. It had more to do with saving her hide, while dragging him into the fray. How could he have been so gullible?

"What is it you want, Chetwood?"

"I want her to stand responsible for my brother's death."

"You don't know if she is responsible or not, do you?"

"I most certainly do."

"Do you have anything more substantial than a brother's grief?"

Chetwood stood, his face becoming mottled with anger. "Why would she run away if she wasn't responsible? The Italian authorities wanted to question her, but she wasn't there. It looked suspicious to them, and it damn well looks suspicious to me. When I returned to Nottinghamshire and called upon her, she refused to see me or to answer questions. Then she simply disappeared, just like she did from Italy."

"I am sorry for your brother's death, Chetwood, but I fail to see how you hold my wife responsible. Were there any wounds found on your brother's body to indicate someone had harmed him?"

"No, but there are ways of killing a man without leaving any signs of the deed."

Lucien knew the earl was correct on that matter, but he also knew his wife. She wasn't capable of harming anyone, let alone someone she felt a fondness for. There was more to this, and he needed to get to the bottom of it.

"Please, Chetwood, allow me to question my wife, and I promise you I shall

inform you of every word she has to say on the matter. She is the only one, apparently, who knows exactly what happened to precipitate her hasty departure from that hotel room."

"I agree that's certainly the case, but I won't let this fade away, Damrill. I give you two days to discuss this with your wife. I shall return at that time."

Chetwood rose and stomped out of the room, leaving Lucien with myriad thoughts. Emotion had no place at this moment, though he knew he would have to quell his rampant anger before seeing Serenity.

The first thing he did was to send a missive to Prentice. The second was to take a rather large gulp of brandy and then another. Though he tried to affect calm, he knew Marjorie sensed his anger when she answered his summons. And it was nearly time for Serenity's spanking.

* * * * *

Serenity stretched as she woke, savoring the advancement in her marriage to Lucien. She knew he saw red when it came to Martyn, and eventually, she would have to explain the entire situation to him. But she hoped she might distract him as she had last night. She rolled over, a smile on her face as she contemplated the most pleasurable way to distract him, when Marjorie entered the room without knocking.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Damrill. Your husband has summoned you immediately. Please hurry, he is angry and does not wish to be kept waiting. 'Be prepared', he said."

Her heart began to pound. He was angry. Her bottom began to tingle for she knew her bottom would suffer. She did pray he would temper his anger before picking up the implement.

Chapter Fifteen

He'd selected her favorite strap, conceding that much to her. He couldn't bring

himself to speak, lest he betray his emotions. He would get this session over with and then he could leave her presence.

"Stop, Lucien, please."

Her cry cut through his mindlessness. She fought the restraints on the spanking bench and had begun crying fiercely.

"Please, Lucien, *stop!*"

He'd lifted the strap in midair when he finally heard her and staggered away from the bench, not at all himself.

"I said 'stop' several times, Lucien. You hurt me. Let me up, now."

He had, indeed, for the first time, lost control. He looked down at her, stunned and mortified at the condition of her bottom. It was deeply bruised and he'd broken the skin in several places. He released the restraints and stood her up. Her knees threatened to buckle, and she whimpered loudly as she searched for her night rail.

He couldn't let her leave the room in her condition. He didn't want the servants thinking he'd purposely done her damage. "Please, I am sorry. Please."

"You said to say 'stop' and you would. But you didn't."

Lucien paced the room. "I am sorry, Serenity. I should have never done this."

She put the night rail over her head and stalked up to face him. "What the hell were you thinking?" She trembled visibly, and tears streamed down her face.

Instead of turning his back to her, he stood fast. "I have things on my mind and should have never conducted this session."

"I'm bleeding, Lucien. You promised you would never do that to me."

He took her by the arms and brought her close to his chest. "I am sorry. Let me get Marjorie to treat your bottom."

"No, I don't want her to see me like this." She marched to the door, checked the hallway, and ran to their bedchamber, leaving Lucien alone with his thoughts and his guilt.

* * * * *

Serenity spent the evening questioning her own judgment and wondering if she should continue on with Lucien. He'd spanked her in anger, something they had agreed would never happen.

She'd rung for Marjorie and asked for an unguent, which the maid cheerfully delivered. Serenity applied the greasy balm to her injuries but was still quite uncomfortable several hours later.

How could he do such a thing? She needed to calm herself and think this through. Decisions needed to be made. She didn't feel safe in his hands any longer, something she'd never thought would happen. He'd breached her trust. Where was she to go from here?

There was a light knock on the door but she remained silent. She had no desire to see anyone, especially Lucien. There was nothing he could say or do to make this right.

The door opened but it was Marjorie. "Mr. Damrill wishes to see you in the punishment room, ma'am."

Serenity began to shake uncontrollably. Beads of perspiration formed on her forehead and ran down her back, stinging her open wounds. "Please tell Mr. Damrill I decline his invitation."

"Are you sure, ma'am?"

"More than sure."

"As you wish, Mrs. Damrill." The door closed quietly.

"The unmitigated nerve of that man," she shouted, not the least bit concerned who might hear her tirade. "He wants to do this all over again. Not in this lifetime."

She began to cry again, wailing uncontrollably. She threw herself on the bed and sobbed into the pillow for what seemed like hours. The fire in the grate turned to embers, and the candles sputtered and eventually guttered. She ached horribly, and the unguent had not sufficiently mitigated the burning and stinging of her posterior. She would never be able to sleep in this condition but she'd no idea how to get relief. Any affection she'd begun to develop for her husband vanished in a firestorm of anger and

recriminations.

The thought of leaving entered her mind unbidden. It seemed like the natural course to take. She knew she would have to put distance between them before he did this again and refused to heed her signal to stop.

At the thought of leaving she began to cry again. She had nowhere to go. Martyn had found her, and it was only a matter of time before he would tell Lucien everything, though most of it was nothing more than a Banbury tale.

Suddenly, her mind cleared, and she knew the source of Lucien's anger. Martyn must have called and told Lucien his version of what had happened in Italy. Good lord. Lucien was angry because he'd found out his wife was being accused of murder.

* * * * *

Prentice found Lucien in the library, drowning his sorrows in brandy and self-recrimination. "I received your summons, old chap; what is so urgent?"

Lucien looked up forlornly. His shirt hung loose and wrinkled and his hair must have looked as though he'd just come from bed. The fact that Campion had not shaved him certainly did not help his appearance, making him feel like a late-night reveler at his own club.

"My God, Lucien, what is it? You look as though you have lost everything. Please don't say the club is closing."

Lucien belched out his disgust at Prentice's assumption. "It's not the club, you fool, it's her. I should never have trusted her again."

"Am I to deduce we are talking about the inimitable Mrs. Damrill?"

"Yes, we are."

"That's the exact reason that I have never credited the holy state of matrimony with anything more than it being a sudden and distinct lapse in a man's good judgment. Pray, what has she done to cause this total destruction of your sensibilities?"

"How does having committed murder strike you?"

"Murder? Good lord, Lucien, you must be joking. That little slip of a woman would never do harm to an insect, let alone a human being."

"Well, that's apparently not what the Italian authorities have to say."

"Italian authorities? What do they have to do with this?"

Lucien went on to explain to his friend about the trip Serenity and her lover had taken and the fatal outcome for the very dead Earl of Chetwood. A humorous aside reared its ugly head when he thought it was indeed the wrong Chetwood who had been found dead, suddenly realizing along with everything else, he'd taken a rather murderous dislike to Martyn Thorndyke.

Prentice did not seem the least bit alarmed or empathetic about Lucien's plight. "What is it you wish me to do, Lucien?"

"Do you know anyone in authority in Florence who might be able to tell us what actually happened?"

"Of course I do. I know everyone. A good friend of mine, Arturo Mosca is an Italian equivalent of one of our Runners."

"Prentice, I need answers as quickly as possible. I need to know if the Italians are looking for my wife. If she is a suspect in a murder. I don't credit Chetwood's story fully, as he is a grieving brother, but she did abscond before his body was found."

"Have you talked to her about any of this?"

"No."

"We really should get her story before I send Arturo in a direction he might not need to go."

"I suspect you're right. However, she is rather angry with me at the moment."

"What did you do to her?"

Lucien lifted his eyes, allowing Prentice to read what was written there.

"You didn't harm her, did you?"

Lucien nodded. He could never admit to such a breach of trust to anyone but Prentice. "I should have never conducted her last spanking, when I'd only just learned all this. I hurt her, Prentice."

"Well, arses heal. You can make up for it, but if you want me to help you with this, we need to speak to her, and then I shall be on my way."

"What do you mean, on your way?"

"I shall leave for Florence at daybreak. Ships leave for Italy every day, and I shall be on one and back here before you have the chance to miss me. Now, summon your charming wife."

Lucien chuckled with little enthusiasm. He rang for Hampton, who in turn sent Haynes to escort Serenity to the library. He did not particularly relish seeing her, but this discussion was necessary. He knew in his heart she was incapable of harming a soul, but she most certainly had some explaining to do.

* * * * *

As her explanation swirled in her head, there came a knock at the door. Upon answering it, she saw it was Haynes.

"Mr. Damrill wishes to see you in the library, ma'am. He says it is urgent."

"Tell him I don't wish to see him." She attempted to close the door, but Haynes stopped it with his foot.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but he said I should carry you if you did not agree." Haynes' handsome face flushed.

"Very well." She stomped out of the room and down the hidden staircase. By the time she reached the library, she'd worked herself up into a fine semblance of fortified anger. She had her reasons why she shouldn't be made to heel every time he summoned. She was his wife, not a servant. How degrading to have a footman tell her she would be carried if she refused to meet with her husband. Her fury simmered to overflowing only to be stopped short upon entering the room.

Lucien sat slumped behind his desk. He looked as though he himself had been beaten. Dark circles etched the skin beneath his eyes, and he didn't appear to be in possession of enough strength to even lift his head. His friend, Prentice Hyde, stood in

front of the fireplace, looking as dapper as a man had a right to be, a charming smile upon his bronzed face.

She approached carefully. "What is wrong, Lucien? Has someone died?"

Lucien's head swung in her direction, and he jumped from his chair. Prentice stepped into the breach. Serenity stood stock-still, waiting for whatever came next.

"Yes, my dear, it would seem someone has most certainly died. Do you know anything of the death of one Winsor Thorndyke, the late Earl of Chetwood?"

Serenity felt the blood drain from her face, and the muscles in her body turn to mush. She melted onto the floor, though she maintained consciousness.

Prentice knelt by her side, lifting her head. "My dear, are you unwell?"

"It's as I thought. He knows."

"Yes, my dear, he does, and he wishes to hear your side of things. Please, compose yourself and impart all you know of this dreadful situation."

"Yes, *wife*, please enlighten us as to your part in dispatching young Chetwood to his maker."

Several moments passed as Serenity got to her feet and arranged herself on the chair beside Lucien's desk. She tried to affect a regal demeanor, but inside she was dying by bits.

"Lucien, you cannot even remotely believe me capable of harming anyone, can you?"

"I don't know, frankly, given what you have done to me."

Tears scorched her cheeks as they fell freely. She'd been wrong to come to London, she knew that now. She brought her hands to her face and sobbed uncontrollably.

"Mrs. Damrill, who was Winsor Thorndyke to you?" Prentice asked matter-of-factly.

After several moments, Serenity gathered her thoughts and began to speak quietly. "Winsor was a dear man who loved me, unlike my lawfully wedded husband." She allowed her bitterness to wash over her words. He and I went to Italy, and he died

there."

Lucien grumbled in exasperation. "You know what we want to know. Now tell us."

Resigned to the inevitable, she took a deep breath. "I woke early that morning. We'd had a very late night."

Lucien interrupted with a loud snort and a rude laugh.

She ignored him and trudged on. "We'd had a late night, and I had no wish to disturb him. I bathed and dressed and broke my fast on the terrace. We had a beautiful view, and I always enjoyed spending time outside." She stopped, realizing she'd revealed a part of her life she'd never wanted Lucien to know.

"Go on."

"I spent several hours reading and enjoying the breeze, but as early afternoon approached, I became restless and wanted Winsor to escort me to the Uffuzi Gallery. We had spoken of going there for weeks, and I wished to see it. I went to the bed and attempted to wake him, but he did not respond. I felt his head, and he was cold." She began to cry, remembering the terror she felt at the macabre discovery.

"He was dead," she whispered. "He was dead."

"Do you believe he was dead when you rose that morning?" Prentice asked with a detached tone.

"Yes I do, because he had been in the same position as when I awoke."

"You never heard anything or felt anything out of the ordinary?"

Serenity shook her bowed head, tears coming in earnest. "I did not harm him in any way, you must believe me."

Ignoring her entreaty, Prentice forged on. "Why did you not inform the authorities of his death, Mrs. Damrill?"

"I was afraid. We were not married. We had lied to the hotel, calling ourselves the Earl and Countess of Chetwood. I did not wish to humiliate Winsor or myself, for surely the truth would have been revealed."

"Yes, it would have been, in fact it was as soon as Martyn Thorndyke appeared in

Florence. Are you aware he has accused you of murdering his brother?"

"Yes, I am. He said as much in Nottinghamshire." She looked at Lucien. "That's why I came here," she confessed, shame sending her into a new bout of convulsive tears.

Lucien stirred but left the interrogation to Prentice.

"What happened after you decided not to contact the authorities?"

"I paced and paced, trying to determine what I should do. There was nothing I could do for Winsor, but I wanted to extricate myself from the situation and leave him with some form of dignity. To be found unmarried and sharing a suite with a married woman would have tarnished his reputation, and would have been a horrible way for people to remember him."

"Please, focus, Mrs. Damrill. What happened next?"

"I decided I needed to get back to England as quickly as possible, so I packed but a few of my things, so as not to attract attention, and I made my way by carriage, alone, to Rome. From there I boarded a ship for England. When I arrived in Nottinghamshire, I again took up residence at the estate and never mentioned my trip to Italy to anyone."

"Certainly your servants knew."

"Yes, but I thought they could be trusted. I have to assume now that I was wrong."

"It does appear to be the case, does it not? Chetwood wasted no time in making his way to London, and he knew where to find you."

Serenity looked at Lucien, whose face was sadness personified.

"Is there anything else you can tell me that might make my trip to Italy a bit more lucrative?"

After thinking for several moments, she simply said, "No."

"Lucien, for what my opinion may be worth, I believe her. Her reaction may have been misguided, but it seems a logical thing for a woman in her position to do. I believe we shall find that the Italian authorities have closed this case, and Chetwood is simply a grieving brother out to avenge his sibling." He looked at her briefly, then back at

Lucien.

Lucien nodded. "Yes, move on. That's exactly what needs to be done."

Chapter Sixteen

Serenity barely survived the angry encounter with Lucien and the horrible interrogation to which Prentice Hyde had subjected her, but over the next six weeks, she came to realize that Lucien's prophetic words meant more than just the ramblings of an angry man.

While she'd come to see Lucien had meant her no harm, he continued to treat her with nothing less than disdain. She'd tried to avoid sharing meals with him by eating in her bedchamber or not eating at all. There had been no spanking sessions or lovemaking. Serenity was always asleep whenever Lucien finally returned to their rooms, and she never went to the club anymore.

It was as awkward a situation as she'd ever been involved in. She hated it. She could only hope when Prentice returned, he would have news that would clear her of any suspicion. He'd made her feel better about the situation, but then Lucien's reaction had set off an ever-increasing wave of insecurities. If her own husband did not believe her, she would surely be lost.

* * * * *

The summons came at nearly three in the afternoon on a rather warm summer day in late June. She'd been sitting in the garden, enjoying the fragrance of roses, foxglove, and marigolds. The butterflies darted about, much more carefree than Serenity felt. It had been a peaceful afternoon but with Hampton's uncharacteristic nervousness, any resolve to which she'd tentatively held evaporated like so much steam.

Breathlessly, Hampton ran to her, nearly shouting. "Mrs. Damrill, you are to go

to the library at once. Please don't dawdle, Mr. Damrill said. The Marquess is back from Italy."

Hampton had been positively effusive, which set Serenity's heart to pounding. At least with Prentice gone, she had hope. Now that he was back, her courage left her, causing her knees to sag. She trembled as though she were in fact on her way to the gallows. Tears seared her eyes.

"Come along, ma'am." Hampton smiled and offered his arm.

She gladly took it, for she knew she wouldn't be able to manage on her own.

Walking into the library was singly the most difficult thing she'd ever done, other than leaving Winsor to be found by strangers. The thought occurred this might be the very last independent act of her life.

Lucien sat behind his desk, dressed in a dark blue tailcoat, silver waistcoat, and snowy cravat. His black hair seemed even more populated with silver, but Serenity thought briefly that since she hadn't seen him but in passing for several weeks, it could be her imagination.

Prentice Hyde, the extraordinarily handsome Marquess of Wycroft, stood in the middle of the room, dressed in gray tailcoat and trousers with a black waistcoat embroidered with silver threads. He looked more bronzed than she'd ever seen him, but his face gave nothing away as to what he'd learned on his journey to Italy. Another gentleman stood quite near Prentice, and as she looked more closely, she saw Martyn Thorndyke seated on the chair beside Lucien's desk.

She'd read of the Inquisition, and these staring faces made her feel like one of the condemned. Tears fell unbidden down her cheeks.

Prentice broke the gloomy spell that hung over the room and spoke first. "Mrs. Damrill, it is so nice to see you again." He took her trembling hand and kissed her fingers, then slipped his arm around her waist and escorted her to a comfortable red and gold striped chair. She sat, and he spoke again.

"Mrs. Damrill, I would like to introduce you to my friend, Signor Arturo Mosca from Florence. He was kind enough to accompany me back to England so the matter of

Winsor Thorndyke's death can be settled, once and for all."

"Mrs. Damrill, it is my pleasure to make your acquaintance." Signor Mosca bowed slightly and spoke in flawless English.

"Likewise." Serenity feared she spoke directly to her future gaoler.

"Arturo had investigated the former Earl of Chetwood's death, and well, Arturo, please tell my friends what you've concluded."

Mosca was a short, affable, well-fed man of an age with Lucien, stylishly dressed though balding rather prematurely. Serenity feared his smile belied the horrible news he would soon impart. Terror consumed her until she thought she might wretch.

"My friends, I have indeed determined the death of the earl was of a natural origin. According to the doctors I have consulted, the earl died of problems related to his heart. His body was examined, and without going into too much detail in deference to the lady, it appears the gentleman died in his sleep and had been dead many hours before discovery."

Martyn jumped up from the chair and stalked to where Signor Mosca stood beside Serenity. "This is simply not so! Not so at all. This woman killed him; I am sure of it."

Serenity's gaze darted from Martyn to Prentice to Signor Mosca, avoiding Lucien altogether.

"I am sorry, your lordship, but I have it on the best authority, your brother, may he rest in peace, died by no one's hand but that of God, who no doubt called him home much sooner than you would have liked." Mosca raised a wary eyebrow.

Martyn mumbled, clearly defeated. Suddenly, he shouted, "Can she not be charged with some crime? She left him and notified no one of his passing."

Signor Mosca raised both eyebrows in Serenity's direction, silently conceding Martyn's point. "Her failure was of a moral nature, my friend. She must live with that for all her days."

Martyn retrieved his hat and silently left the room. For all his previous bluster, he shuffled out as though the news had hit him hard in the gut. Serenity would have

liked to give him some words of condolence, for they both had shared the life of Winsor Thorndyke, but prudence kept her from embarrassing Lucien or herself any further.

Lucien had not moved, sitting transfixed in his leather chair behind his desk. He'd listened to everything Signor Mosca had said and realized he was relieved his wife had done nothing worse than fail to notify the authorities. His simmering jealousy of the dead man came to a boil. Prentice and Mosca spoke in hushed tones while Serenity remained seated in the chair, her head bowed. He could hear the muted sounds of her sobs. Her shoulders bobbed up and down as she dabbed her nose with a lace handkerchief.

Lucien had felt his life had slipped into a state of numbness since hearing of Serenity's activities in Italy. During the past weeks, myriad emotions had overtaken him, not the least of which was shame. He'd been unable and apparently unwilling to do what a husband must in order to keep his wife at home where she belonged. He'd been all too willing to watch her travel out of his life and did nothing but ignore her. When she finally presented herself on his doorstep, his only thought was of carnal pleasures. Of all the emotions he should be feeling, he'd never accepted the real possibility he could ever care for her, as a husband should care for his wife.

He allowed his eyes to fall upon her pathetic figure. She was obviously consumed in a maelstrom of emotions, all of which were being uncomfortably displayed before strangers.

Lucien rose from his chair and in three long steps, knelt before his wife. He placed his strong hand over hers in her lap and lightly squeezed. "Gentlemen, I appreciate all you have done to clear my wife's name, but I feel I must get her to the sanctity of her chamber. This has been quite an ordeal."

Prentice nodded and placed a hand on Arturo's shoulder. "Lucien, it was my pleasure to do what I could to help the lovely Mrs. Damrill. Arturo, there are many delights to be had at the Sapphire Club, and my friend, you have earned them all. I am sure we can find you an accommodating partner. Possibly Lady Foxworth would be

willing to show you around." Prentice bowed to Serenity, clapped Lucien on the back and escorted Mosca from the room.

"Come, my dear, let me get you to your chamber. You need to rest."

Serenity remained steadfast in her chair. Her body stiffened under his hand. He could feel her anger.

"Get your hands off me," Serenity growled slowly, emphasizing each word.

Lucien removed his hands as though scalded.

Slowly, her head came up, her eyes transfixed, as cold as death. "*Now* you believe me?"

"Yes, of course, I believe you."

"No, not 'of course'. You did not believe what I told you until someone else told you the way of it. You believed me to be a liar and worse, a murderer, until Signor Mosca traveled all the way from Italy to tell you differently. What does that say of your opinion of me, Lucien?"

He bowed his head. Shame shrouded him, veiling him in the certainty there was no way out of this situation. He wanted a way out; he wanted his wife; he wanted his marriage. He'd been a fool for not seeing Serenity for the strong woman she was, but he'd resisted her at every turn.

Could she truly be blamed for seeking him out for her protection? Perhaps, but since she'd arrived, she'd demonstrated a great deal more faith in him than he ever had in her. He'd betrayed her in the worst way, by not believing in her. He'd acted the fool and knew he must repair the damage, if he wasn't already too late.

"I am a fool; that's what it says. I have nothing to recommend me, Serenity, which is true. I had no faith in your word. I had determined not to believe in your innocence on the strength of your word alone. I am profoundly sorry. You have been through a personal hell, and I wasn't there to see you through it. You did not deserve my scorn."

She stood and gave him a humorless smile. "Yes, you are a fool. And yes, I did deserve your scorn. I wasn't honest with you about Winsor. You found out the worst

only when someone else told you. I should have told you when I first arrived, and for that deficiency, I apologize." Her tears spilled gracefully down her cheeks, but she kept her chin up.

Lucien used his thumb to wipe away the tears. He cupped her cheek and look admiringly into her watery eyes. How had he not seen her before? Really *seen* her, for the person she'd become with no help from him. She was strong but ever so feminine. She'd matured in a way that made her infinitely more attractive to him than all the available women who flaunted their attributes every night at the club.

Something crashed over him, taking his breath from his body. It hit him like a thunderbolt – the reality of it as frightening as anything he'd ever experienced. Somehow, he'd fallen in love with his wife. Yes, that was it. If he never spanked her again, he would still love her. If she denied him her regard, he would spend the rest of his days working to earn it.

He turned from her, lest she read his face. He had to examine this new feeling of freedom that had suddenly hit him out of the blue. He had much to make up for before he could tell her his feelings. She would never believe him if he simply blurted out the words. He would show her with actions, not words.

"You should rest, dear, while I tend to some business. I shall check on you later, if I might."

"Yes, of course." Serenity disappeared through the wall panel, and Lucien set his mind to work. He would win his wife's love or die trying. Suddenly, nothing seemed more important or worthwhile.

* * * * *

Serenity managed to reach her chamber before all the emotion she'd kept so carefully controlled came bursting forth. It appeared to her Martyn had fabricated much of the story about the Italian authorities. She'd been wrong in not reporting Winsor's death, and as Signor Mosca had said, she would live with that for the rest of her days.

Winsor had deserved better from her, and she'd only thought of her own safety. She would ask God to forgive her, for he was the only one who could. Winsor was gone.

Her tender thoughts turned to the man who had introduced her to the sensual world of sexual satisfaction. He'd not much more to carry him through life, but the man knew his way around a woman's body. He also taught her about pleasing him, something she'd not felt inclined to make terribly obvious to her husband, lest he suspect her activities. However, the point was moot, as he knew almost everything.

When he checked on her later, she would tell him everything. From there they could either start over or end it all, but she did not want to have anymore secrets between them.

She rang for Marjorie and set about preparing for one more confrontation with Lucien.

Chapter Seventeen

It was nearly three in the morning before Lucien felt he could leave the club and go to check on his wife. He hoped she would be sleeping, for she'd gotten precious little of it in the preceding months.

When he entered her chamber through the adjoining door, he was surprised to find her awake, sitting prettily on a forest-green chaise, reading a book. Her dark brown curls tumbled about her shoulders, framing her pale, youthful face. She was a vision of beauty, he thought, looking much younger than she did just twelve hours before. He knew then a weight had been surely lifted from her shoulders. He took pleasure in the fact that he'd had some small part in that, if only by asking Prentice to help.

"Are you well?"

"Yes, quite well, and you?"

"I am fine." He tugged at his neckcloth as he walked to the window.

"And the club? All as it should be?"

"Oh, yes, much as always. Prentice is down there watching over things."

"I see. Is something amiss, Lucien?"

"Yes, I suppose it is."

Serenity stood and walked to where Lucien stood by the window. "Please tell me what it is."

He turned to her, his face a study in sadness. "I fear I have destroyed whatever modicum of trust you may have had in me, and the loss pains me."

She'd thought of this very subject dozens of times during their weeks of silence, concluding she'd forgiven him long ago for her last spanking and even for his mistrust in her. She'd never been one to foster anger or grudges, thinking it as nonproductive as learning to embroider. She rested her hand on his folded arm.

"I have forgiven you, Lucien. I understand you were angry. Please come with me." She took his hand and led him down the hallway to the punishment room.

Inside, with the door shut, she spoke the words she'd only thought before. "I wanted to bring you to this room so I wouldn't be fearful of coming here again. I forgive you, but I believe this has changed us, has it not?"

"I hope it hasn't, but I understand if you feel differently about our arrangement."

He looked so sad, and Serenity empathized. She'd cried several rivers as she thought about how it would be impossible to continue with the specter of his anger coming to the fore ever again.

"I cannot submit to you as I did, Lucien, with the constant fear you will lose control. You don't care for me in any kind of protective way; therefore, I have to protect myself."

"I can't say my anger won't ever flair again, but I am a great deal more aware of my capacity for it now and shall endeavor to use the utmost restraint. You are wrong as well. I do feel protective toward you. If I did not, I wouldn't have had Prentice go to Italy. If I did not, I wouldn't be here now."

She acknowledged what he said with a nod. "We must set down new rules."

"I am amenable to anything that will make this right for you."

"As I said before, I won't submit to being restrained again. It is the most helpless feeling, Lucien, and I won't be put into that situation again."

"I understand I broke your trust, my dear, and again, I am terribly sorry. I won't restrain you, I promise."

"I want to continue with our arrangement."

She knew by telling him that she wished to continue, he would know her trust in him wasn't completely gone. In the hours since her exoneration, she'd realized she cared deeply for him and feared he would never feel anything close in return.

Lucien had a feeling he knew where Serenity intended to take this conversation, and he bristled. He greatly feared he would hurt her yet again, but this time in a much more insidious way.

"I am pleased you wish to proceed, with the concession of no restraints as you have requested." His tone was mellifluous, not betraying in any way the fear he felt in his heart.

"I would like to forego the spankings using any implement other than your hand. I would feel much more comfortable, if you don't mind."

"Of course, I don't mind, and I completely understand." He found it difficult to make light of the idea that their sexual relations would resume as he saw fit. He'd missed her these last weeks. Though he'd kept his regular appointments with his clients, he'd not fucked them. His heart had not been in it.

"When shall we start?"

"I shall leave it up to you, my dear. You are the aggrieved party, and I don't wish to foist myself upon you against your will."

Serenity had moved across the room while they'd talked. Now she came back to stand in front of him. She took the lapels of his coat, and before he could blink, she removed it and sat it on the chair beside the bed. Deftly, she undid the buttons of his waistcoat and shirt. Lucien stood stock-still as she removed the two pieces of clothing from his body. She explored with her hands, stopping ever so briefly to rub her

forefinger over his nipples. He flinched.

Next, she lowered herself to her knees as she released the buttons of his breeches from their moorings and slid the finely tailored linen over his hips and down his legs. She traced her hands over the same path, causing Lucien to suck in a deep breath as she lingered on his inner thighs. He wore no small clothes, making it easier for her.

"Do you mind?" she asked as she took his arousal in her hand, stroking slowly.

"No, I certainly don't."

Lucien became lost in her ministrations. She unhanded him, moving on to his buttocks. She allowed her fingers into the crevice between his cheeks, lingering at the sensitive pucker.

With no time for thought, Lucien took her arms and raised her to her feet. He captured her mouth at first tenderly and then with more urgency.

Too much time had passed since he'd tasted her, and he reveled in her essence. Their tongues danced together, thrusting and parrying, trying to get closer then pulling apart. He feared he was bruising her lips, but he couldn't seem to get close enough to her. His hands were just as busy, exploring her breasts and derriere.

As he ravished her mouth, he turned her toward the cheval mirror that stood in a corner near the bed. He released her mouth, eliciting a mournful groan. Then he turned her, so her back pressed into his chest.

"What do you see, Serenity?" His hands rested on her slender, white shoulders.

"I see us."

He slid his hands down her arms, touching every inch of her delicate, creamy skin.

He insisted she watch in the mirror as he did so. "What do you see?" he repeated in hot, whispered tones.

He cupped her face, soft hands, thumbs trailing the over the well-defined cheek and jawbones. "Your face is so delicately made. Your lips are perfection, enticing me to kiss them for no reason at all but for the taste of them." Her head lolled back against his shoulder but Lucien quietly commanded, "Open your eyes. I want you to see what I

see."

He slid his hands down until they surrounded her long, swan-like neck. "I imagine your lovely neck would do justice to jewels of every description." He saw her smile and look at him from under her eyelashes. He leaned to kiss the back of her neck and trailed kisses around until he reached the delicate part just under her chin. He smiled when she swallowed with difficulty under his lips.

Lucien's hands made their way to the ties at the front of her night rail, unlacing the delicate ribbon that held it closed over her breasts. When he was done, he opened the front, exposing her breasts to the chill night air. With the short sleeves tightly around her arms, she was bound by him and his ministrations. He took the pliant flesh in his hands, rubbing his thumbs across the hard, pebbled nipples, which had stood so tantalizingly erect long before he ever touched them. "Are these anxious for attention, Serenity?"

She nodded.

"Soon." He continued to tease her breasts, squeezing the lovely, distended nipples between his thumb and forefinger with significant pressure. She groaned her approval. Every time she closed her eyes, Lucien coaxed her to open them.

"I just want to feel," she said.

"I want you to see me touch you, as well as see your reaction." His gaze locked upon hers.

Lucien removed the night rail, gliding it over her skin. At last, she stood naked against him. The top of her head did not even reach his chin. Although tiny and delicate, the woman had a determination he'd rarely seen in any man. This exercise was as much for him as for her, for he wanted to know her body again. He wanted to experience the softness of her belly that his hands had so casually glided over numerous times and never stopped to explore.

He trailed his hand lower, touching her cleanly shaven mons. "Mmm," he hummed in her ear. His palm slid over the smooth skin as his fingers dipped lower, teasing her clitoris before disappearing into her wet folds, clearly waiting for his

attention. "You are dripping, Serenity."

She gasped. "Yes, I am."

He entered her with two fingers, arching them up to tease. Then he removed them and brought his fingers to her mouth. "Do you taste the nectar of your desire?"

Her knees seemed to grow weak, and she trembled against him. He clutched her shoulders and slid his palms down her back, thumbs on her spine, inching over the delicately defined bones. He resolved to kiss every inch of it, often. He began, and she trembled against him even more unsteadily. "Hold onto the mirror, dear, and keep your eyes open."

He kissed his way to the soft globes of her bottom. "What does that feel like?" he asked.

"Heaven," she answered with an angel's whisper.

His breath caught as he saw for the first time the result of his loss of control. He'd left her with reddened ridges where her delicate skin had been broken under his lash. His heart leapt in his chest, remorse overtaking him. He kissed her derriere, every inch, reverently touching, placing his face against her and kissing her again.

"Lean forward just a bit."

She readily complied. His hand slid between the cheeks and found the taut, pink entrance. He would never get tired of seeing it, breaching its boundaries, and plunging himself within those tight walls. She wiggled against his hand.

He reached for a bottle and moistened his finger with the lavender-scented oil. "You have the most beautiful bottom, Serenity." He applied the oil and pushed his finger into her. "Can you feel how your body takes my finger in so easily?"

Serenity nodded, and her eyes floated closed.

"No, open your eyes. That's it. I want you to see how you react to this."

"I can't." Her gaze implored him.

"But you can. I want to bring you an awareness you have never experienced before."

"Oh, Lucien, please," she begged in a deep, sensuous murmur.

"What do you want?"

"More." She groaned as his finger slid in and out.

He replaced the one with two and continued his movements as a thumb circled her clitoris. She moved with him, trying to bring herself closer to where her need was greatest. She mumbled and groaned, and reacted to his touch by moving, wiggling, writhing.

"Keep your eyes open, sweeting. Watch how your eyes grow darker and sparkle in the firelight as you come. It is a most beautiful sight."

Serenity did as he asked. He sensed the very moment her mind detached from her conscious thoughts, and she soared toward the shower of colors that had exploded before her. She clutched the mirror with white knuckles as she gasped and heaved, her body giving way under a powerful climax.

"Oh, Lucien." Her body continued to release the need she'd stored within for so many weeks.

Lucien's mind overflowed with admiration and desire for his wife. He couldn't deny she'd touched his heart in some very profound way. At this moment, he would attribute it to lust, which he knew he would forever feel for her, but he knew for a certainty there was much more to it than that.

"Lucien"

"Yes, my dear?" His voice was rough with desire.

"I want you to"

"You want me to what, darling?"

"I want you to spank me, now." Her eyes pled with him.

"Are you sure, love?"

"Oh, yes, please. I need it Lucien, please."

"All right. Do you want to stand here and watch me do it?"

She nodded feebly, shaking with her craving to feel his hand.

"Continue to hold onto the mirror and bend over a bit more. Keep your eyes on the mirror. I want you to see your face as my hand strikes you. How many do you

want?"

"As many as you wish, Lucien. I need you this way, please."

He began lightly but she demanded more. "Harder."

He struck her harder, careful to avoid the delicate raised lines.

"Oh, yes, that's what I want. More. Please."

After every couple of strokes, he would rub her, his fingers dipping into her lust-soaked folds, teasing her clitoris. Lucien worshipped her as she begged him to, spanking her as much for her as for himself. His erection was massive, the crown of his cock throbbing with each strike of his hand against her reddened derriere. He counted twenty, and she still offered herself, demanding more.

"Serenity, I want you; I need you." He needed to sink himself inside her and dwell there forever.

"Take me like this, Lucien."

"Do you want to see me do it?"

"Oh, yes."

"Lean forward just a bit more and hold onto the mirror tightly, for I intend to ride you hard."

Serenity gripped tightly as Lucien ringed her tiny waist with his trembling hands. He entered her with a savage thrust. Her legs wobbled but she withstood his entry, thrusting herself back against him.

He worked his hand between them and plunged a finger into her bottom.

"More!"

He added another finger and moved them in and out of her arse, matching the rhythm he'd established with his cock. Lucien thrust hard into her over and over again. Serenity's body began to tense. Lucien looked at her face in the mirror. Her eyelashes looked like two wispy fans shadowing her half-closed eyes. "Open your eyes, sweetheart. Watch as I make you come."

Serenity languidly opened her eyes, searching until she found his. She smiled longingly just before her release overtook her with crashing intensity. Lucien's arm

went around her waist to hold her up while he ground out his own climax in a rush of warmth and light.

His knees folded, bringing them both to the floor, the intensity of his release depleting his strength. The room hung heavy with the pungent scent of their musk. Lucien recovered enough to carry her to the bed. He washed her gently, cleansing away the traces of his seed from her inner thighs then he spread oil on her bottom.

Lucien settled her against the pillows. "Your arse is a pleasing shade of pink and quite warm."

She smiled engagingly, though her eyes remained closed. "It feels wonderful. I love feeling this way, Lucien. Warm and well"

"Well what?"

When he turned to her so she could finish her thought, she was breathing deep and steady. He found it strange she could fall asleep so quickly.

Serenity felt as content as she'd ever been in her life, peaceful and completely sated. Her eyes closed, but she still heard Lucien talking to her. Her bottom felt wonderful, but now she felt embarrassed. If she hadn't been so relaxed, she would never have almost told Lucien she felt well loved. Now, she'd had to pretend to have fallen asleep to keep him from asking her to finish her sentence. Lucien must have believed her ruse, because he simply gathered her in his arms and fell asleep himself.

It felt like hours before Serenity actually did sleep. Instead, she retreated into a fantasy world where she and Lucien would make love for hours and spend the rest of their days happily in each other's company, in love, and in mutual agreement that they would live happily ever after. With this in mind, she drifted off to the music of Lucien's even breathing.

They slept until late morning, in each other's arms. She felt safe.

"Are you awake?" he whispered.

"Yes, I am."

"I've been waiting for you to open your eyes. Are you well?"

She nodded and smiled widely. "To be honest, I haven't felt this good for a very long time."

Lucien's smile at her comment made her heart flip twice in her chest, a combination of self-gratification and embarrassment. Despite the lack of decorum in using the word 'love' to describe how she felt, it was indeed the proper word. He'd gone out of his way to bring her to a state of satiation she doubted happened often in the bedchambers around London. She'd never felt more beautiful than when she watched him in the mirror, touching her and caring that she reached the epitome of sensual and sexual fulfillment.

They made love again. She pleaded with him to take her anally again, but he wouldn't.

"Not today, princess," he admonished. "You have had enough. Your pretty little bottom shall be sore."

"I don't care."

"I do, sweeting. I'm not a brute."

"Oh, but you are." She laughed as she rubbed her reddened cheeks.

Chapter Eighteen

Life had become idyllic for Serenity. Lucien remained attentive and concerned for her welfare. They had ventured away from the club on several occasions, attending the theatre and even riding in the park, a ritualistic affair that really held no interest other than it afforded her time with Lucien.

They spent considerable time talking, something she'd never expected in her marriage. Lucien seemed particularly interested in her thoughts and feelings, to the point of distraction. They would make love, and then he would ask her how it could be better, as if such a thing were possible. He probed her mind for every fantasy she'd ever dared think of and then divulged his, much to her delight and surprise.

As she lounged one very chill evening in early November, Marjorie brought her

a missive. From the bold sweep of writing on the page, she knew immediately it was from Lucien.

"Prepare and join me."

Marjorie aided Serenity in the preparations, and within a very short time, Serenity pranced happily down the hallway, headed for the room that had become so important to her. Her heart skipped a beat with each step, for she knew no matter what would happen, Lucien would have created yet another wonderful night.

She walked into a dark room. The only light came from a single beeswax candle on the bedside table and a low fire in the grate. The draperies were drawn, the bed turned down.

"I want you to remove all your clothing, slowly, for me." Lucien's honeyed voice fell about her like her favorite cashmere shawl.

"Why do you . . . ?"

"No talking," he warned.

She couldn't see him, for he was completely in shadow. It made this interlude quite intriguing.

Serenity began to loosen the bodice of her dress. As she lowered it over her breasts, Lucien growled his approval.

"Touch your breasts."

She did as he bid.

"Squeeze your nipples until you cannot take anymore."

Serenity took her breasts in hand and rolled her nipples between her thumb and forefinger.

"Ah," she purred, enjoying something she'd never done before.

She'd become lost in her own world when Lucien ordered her remove the rest of her clothes, slowly. His tone was mellow, his voice deep and sensual.

"Take your hair down, darling."

She did, combing her fingers through it as it cascaded over her shoulders.

"Now, go to the bed and settle yourself against the pillows."

She did as he asked.

"Yes, that's fine. Now, raise your knees and spread your legs wide. That's the way. How does it feel being naked and having your legs spread so wantonly?"

"It feels wonderful. Why don't you join me?"

"Soon enough love. First, I want you to pleasure yourself. You do remember how?"

"I believe I suffered your wrath for doing just that. But yes, indeed I remember how."

Without another word, Serenity slid her hands down her body, over her stomach and lower. The very thought of doing this in front of Lucien made it feel even naughtier. She fingered her moist folds, dipping two fingers into her sheath before the same two fingers found her clitoris and began circling.

"Oh, yes, love, that's the way I want you to do it. Do you feel the heat rising within you?"

"Yes." Her voice came out rough-edged.

"Do you wish it were me?"

"Yes, please."

"Close your eyes and keep them closed."

She did as he bid her, then she felt silk covering her eyes. *Mmm. Delicious.* Her tongue jutted out over her bottom lip, a blatantly sensual gesture.

"Trust me," he whispered. "No harm shall come to you."

He secured her hands with silk ties to the bedstead, followed by her ankles. She was provocatively spread to Lucien's view, and she loved the feeling.

"Please, Lucien, help me."

"Shh."

She felt the end of the bed dip as he joined her. He settled himself between her thighs, using his fingers to open her silky folds. Then she felt his tongue, jolting her with the sparks of pleasure. Serenity moaned as he came in contact with the very spot she yearned for him to touch.

"Oh, Lucien, yes."

His tongue circled her clitoris, tantalizing her. She arched her back toward his mouth. He inserted two fingers inside her and hooked them upward. Within seconds, she was lost, her body inundated with sensations made sharper by the restraints and the blindfold. She tensed, the fire of release building, crawling up her spine and down again. She tugged on the ties around her wrists, but they held firm, and she could hold back no more.

"Oh . . . my . . . God!"

Lucien held on through her intense climax until she finally settled back onto the bed, breathing heavily. Her mind reeled with what he had put her through, and she wanted more.

She felt his hands on her breasts, kneading the aching mounds, teasing the nipples with tiny pinches. She became confused when she felt his mouth on her breasts and on her nether lips. "Lucien, what is happening?"

"Shh, love, just enjoy it."

"Please tell me."

"I am fulfilling another of your fantasies, dear." His voice wasn't as close to her ear as she'd expected.

She felt hands releasing the bindings on her ankles. They lifted her bottom off the bed and slid a pillow underneath her.

"Oh, yes," Lucien murmured as his oiled finger slid into her anus.

"I shall never tire of that feeling." Serenity gasped as Lucien stroked her and feasted on her.

Someone else was ravaging her breasts.

"Lucien, I wish to see what is happening, please."

"Your senses are greatly heightened by the darkness. You feel things that with sight you might overlook."

"I suspect what you are doing, and I don't want to miss anything. Please."

She felt the silk loosen from around her eyes, and in a moment she gazed into the

eyes of the most beautiful woman she'd even seen in her life. Her flaxen blonde hair and icy crystalline blue eyes made her a classic beauty. Serenity's eyes went wide with amazement as her gaze darted from the woman to Lucien.

From his position between her thighs, he grinned wickedly. "This is Lady Patience Churchwood. She wished to meet you."

Serenity noted they were both clothed.

He went back to lavaging her clitoris, while Lady Patience continued to torment her nipples. He brought her to climax once again, his finger still buried deeply inside her anus. She bucked wildly, lost in the rapture Lucien so adeptly wrought upon her. He slithered up her body, taking her lips in a claiming kiss. He tasted like her, and she reveled in it. She'd come to adore his mouth upon her, in any fashion he wished. His tongue teased her mouth open. Hands teased her cunny; fingers dipped into her, working her, until she felt yet another thundering climax crash over. This was what heaven must be like, Serenity thought, some decadent, alternate heaven where sexual games were played with complete abandon. She wished to dwell there for an eternity, if only she could experience this forever.

She feared her body couldn't take much more pleasure but it seemed there was so much more yet to experience.

Lucien whispered in her ear, "Are you enjoying yourself?"

"My God, yes," she said aloud. "But please release me, so I might play as well."

Lucien nodded to Patience, and together they untied the silk scarves. Serenity remained still for a few moments and then sat up. "I think you both are exceedingly overdressed."

Lucien's intent had been to bring Patience in so that by turns, they could orally pleasure his wife. Then he would dismiss Patience so he and Serenity could finish out the evening alone. He hadn't intended for the three of them to romp, but it seemed Serenity had other ideas. He'd not participated in a ménage à trois in some time, and found he wasn't adverse to the experience. He owed this fantasy to Serenity.

Serenity began to undress Lucien, teasing him with kisses.

"What is it you want?" he asked, not wishing to presume too much.

"She has a lovely body, does she not?"

"Yes, she does."

"I wish to see you use it. Lady Patience, would you mind?"

Lady Patience looked at Lucien. "I have long hoped for the opportunity to be used as Lucien would see fit."

Lucien hesitated. It certainly wasn't because his cock was reluctant, for it ran rampant at the thought of what Serenity proposed. The possibilities unfolded before him with sparkling clarity. "What do you want me to do to her, darling?"

"Lady Patience, what would you permit my husband *and me* to do to you?"

The lady smiled wickedly. "I am a blank canvas, my dear Serenity. Do with me as you will."

"Oh, the possibilities." Serenity tapped her fingertip to her chin. "Lucien, I would like to see you spank her, and then I shall try my phallus on her. What do you think?"

Lucien's hand slipped under the other woman's skirts and found her quim. "Oh, yes, I believe your suggestions are pleasing to the lady, my dear."

Lucien assumed his role as master. "Undress, and then on your hands and knees, Patience."

She complied with verve.

"That's what I like to see, someone who does as they are told. How would you like to see me spank her — with my hand or possibly with your favorite strap?"

"I believe the paddle would be in order, don't you agree, Patience?"

Patience wagged her bottom excitedly. "All three if you would, master."

"As you wish." Lucien chuckled. He began to spank Patience's buttocks, first one and then the other, with his hand. "You haven't had this in some time, have you, my lady?"

"No." She gasped as a particularly hard smack hit her. "And I have missed this. With his lordship dying so precipitously, I have been at a disadvantage."

"Rest on the pillow, and put your hands over your head. I want that arse high." He spanked her harshly, but he knew it was what the lady wanted. She and her husband had long been members of the club and had participated in some of the more ruthless games offered there.

"You should have come to me. I do still take private clients."

"Yes, I definitely should, if your lady wouldn't mind."

He got off the bed and went to the dresser where he stored the various implements he used on Serenity. He chose her strap. Menacingly, he doubled it and slapped it against his thigh as he walked back to the two ladies. Patience remained on her hands and knees at the edge of the bed, and Serenity sat absently playing with one of her own breasts and rubbing the warm arse of their plaything.

Lucien handed the strap to Serenity. "Would you care to start?"

"Oh, please, Serenity, I would love to be strapped by you. A strap wielded by a woman seems to have a crueller bite."

Lucien gave Serenity a quick lesson, but it appeared she hadn't needed it. She stood in the perfect position and with quick efficiency, reduced Patience's bottom to a quivering mass of deeply reddened flesh. Patience screamed with abandon, spurring Serenity to new heights of arousal.

"I believe I shall have to come to Serenity for my punishments, Lucien. She seems to know just what I need."

Serenity lifted her eyebrows to her husband. "I shall be a demanding taskmaster, my lady."

"Then you are who I shall engage."

Serenity smiled. No doubt she would revel in her newfound role.

"I would like to feel the paddle at Serenity's hand, Lucien, if you wouldn't mind."

"As you wish, my lady." Paddle in hand, Serenity laid it on with aplomb. She teased with it, even running it between Patience's cheeks.

"I want to feel the sting for days, Serenity. It has been a very long time."

Serenity put her entire body into the strokes, and Patience seemed more than

pleased.

Lucien had rubbed the lady's back and breasts, teased her clitoris, bringing her to the brink of climax and then moving away. He gave Serenity a hand signal of five fingers, indicating five more strikes. As they began, he worked Patience's clitoris until she came thunderously. She tore at the counterpane and screamed her satisfaction. She was crying when Serenity went to her, but assured Serenity they were tears of joy.

Serenity kissed the blazing cheeks of her new friend. "I believe I promised you my phallus, did I not?"

Patience smiled broadly. "I believe you did, my dear, and my arse is ready for the largest one you have. Lucien, you told me she was insatiable, and I believe she is teaching me a few things."

A few moments later, as Serenity worked "Little Lucien" into Patience's arse, she thought about how she had indeed fallen in love with her husband on this night. Of all the sexual fantasies he'd fulfilled for her, this had been the most forbidden. In his typical style, he'd brought it to life with more dimension than she could have ever imagined.

Serenity began stroking the phallus in and out of Patience as her other hand rubbed the now crimson cheeks. She wished they were hers. Her quim throbbed with the want of the strap. After they had had their fill of the ménage, when they were alone, she would ask Lucien to spank her as well. She longed for it as surely as she wanted his cock in her own arse.

Patience moaned as Serenity stroked the phallus, and Lucien worked her clitoris. The woman would be well satisfied.

"Lucien, I wish to see you fuck Patience in the arse."

"No, dear, I don't believe so."

"Oh, but I insist." She wanted to see him take Patience from behind and savage her as only he could. "I want to see you take her harshly."

Patience was breathless. "My God, Lucien, fuck me, please."

Lucien looked at Serenity with a silent entreaty. She mouthed the word *please*, leaving Lucien nothing else but to do as he was bid.

As he removed his trousers, Serenity slowly removed the phallus, which left Patience's anus gaping and ready. He moved into position behind Patience, his knees resting on the edge of the bed. Serenity applied oil to his cock and guided him into position. His eyes again questioned her, and she nodded and kissed his tense lips.

He went slowly, until Patience lunged back against him, forcing him into her until the wiry hair at his groin teased her tender arse. Serenity saw his eyes close and knew he had become thoroughly engaged in the moment.

This was her chance. Lucien leaned over Patience, moving in and out. She oiled her fingers and began to touch Lucien's backside. He growled but did not shoo her away. She kissed his cheeks and lightly smacked them. He'd established a rhythm, and she schooled her smacks to come when he plunged into Patience. She inserted a finger into Lucien's arse, eliciting a moan.

"Does this please you, my darling?" she whispered.

"Yes, damn you," he ground out.

Serenity chuckled, "I thought it would. Would you like more?"

"Mmm."

She removed her fingers, and went to the dresser. Soon she was back with the smaller of the phalluses. When it was properly oiled, she added some of the slippery substance to his anus and slowly inserted the phallus to the hilt. It seemed to give him a new drive, for he begged Serenity to stroke it as he rode Patience to completion. He came inside the other woman with a roar as Serenity gently but surely fucked him with the phallus. Sweat had beaded on his chest and brow, veins bulging in his neck. She knew he would be angry with her, but it would be worth his ire. She'd learned something new about her husband and would use it to bring him great joy and satiation in the future.

Serenity was beyond aroused, and she wished to have her husband to herself.

Patience seemed to sense the change in Serenity's mood, for after she recovered

from her tumultuous orgasms, she said, "Thank you, Lucien, for introducing me to your delightful wife. I do hope we can repeat this experience in the near future."

"Indeed, my lady." Lucien smiled as he lay back into the pillows.

"Then I bid you good night and good fucking." She patted Serenity's bottom and licked her nipple. "A little something to remember me by." She laughed as she made for the door.

Serenity was at the washstand taking care of the phalluses when she heard, "Come here, my little wife. We have much to discuss."

"I do hope you are angry with me Lucien. I truly need you to be."

Chapter Nineteen

Lucien laughed lustily. "No, I am not angry, but you shall get what it is you want, have no fear."

Serenity walked to the bed and kneeled on the edge. She'd carried a wet cloth and began to wash Lucien's cock, bollocks, and arse. He allowed her leave, enjoying her ablutions.

"I want you," she said seductively.

"How do you want me?"

"I want you inside me, Lucien, deep inside me. I need to feel you filling me and lo—"

"Finish it, Serenity."

The possibility she was beginning to feel as he did came crashing into his mind like a thunderbolt. She'd revealed too much for it not to be so.

She kept her lips tightly closed, and Lucien decided he would let it go for the time being, but he would explore this with her on the morrow. In his present condition, he rather fancied himself happily married. Possibly she did as well.

He spanked her as she wished, warming her up and then taking her favorite strap to her charming arse.

"I need this." She moaned, shaking her bottom for more.

He laid on twenty strokes, letting her moans and cries wash over him.

Finally, she begged him to fuck her. He mounted her, taking his time to touch all of her, bringing out her deepest emotions, until she wilted in satiety. He'd wrested every bit of emotion from her, until she could do nothing but nestle in his arms and sleep.

* * * * *

Lucien rose before Serenity the next morning, dressing and stealing away to his library, where he found work in abundance to occupy his time. However, work wasn't what interested him. When he slid out of his bed, he'd left his wife sprawled on her belly, her chestnut hair splayed across the snow-white pillow. He'd looked at her at length, examining the fairness of her face, her nearly flawless, creamy skin, and thick eyelashes, the longest he'd ever seen. They formed perfect fans beneath her closed eyes against her lightly freckled skin. Her perfectly shaped nose held just a tiny upward turn.

She was a rather beautiful woman. It wasn't her beauty, though, that had his mind so twisted; it was her determination to wring all she could from their sexual encounters. Their interest in the erotic seemed equal. She submitted to his will like a practiced devotee.

Her reaction to Patience Churchwood being in their bed had been extraordinary. He'd anticipated shock but could never have wished for what he actually had received. Serenity had been anything but tentative, as though she'd experienced lovemaking with a woman. He sincerely doubted such a thing had happened in her life, but she certainly appreciated the female form and seemed readily able to hold her own.

Serenity's verve with the strap and paddle had been admirable, and he would definitely consider assigning her some female clients in future. How could he not, when Patience had been so thrilled with Serenity's abilities?

A few things did concern him, though. For the second time, she'd become sexually aggressive and had done things to him he'd enjoyed. Did other men enjoy having their backsides probed without wanting more? He felt sure he simply enjoyed Serenity's ministrations and no longer felt averse to incorporating them into their bed play, but the taboo nature of it all made him wonder if there were something more to it than simply feeling wonderful.

And of course, he couldn't forget the matter of his ever-growing feelings for her. He needed to find out her feelings before he would consider declaring his. He wouldn't impose himself upon her without knowing she felt the same.

The decision left him feeling freer than he had in some time. He would maneuver her into a confession of her sentiments toward him, and soon.

* * * * *

The day progressed with each of them going about their separate tasks. Lucien kept to his library, working on club business, and Serenity spent time reading and preparing menus with the cook. she couldn't remember when she'd had a more mundane but pleasurable day.

Late in the evening, she lounged on the chaise beside the fireplace, naked, her long hair draped over her shoulders, with only a blanket to warm her. Lucien had intended it to be an early night, telling her he would join her by one. But at half-past two, he still hadn't come

She'd worked herself into a sexual frenzy with thoughts of the ménage he'd arranged, and just seeing him rouse Lady Patience had just about been her undoing. Add the sight of Lucien's arse being impaled upon her phallus, and Serenity was in dire need with no husband in sight.

Dare she risk being caught touching herself? Possibly with the blanket, even if he did come into the room, he wouldn't be able to tell what she was about. After all, it was his fault she was so overset.

She brought her hands under the blanket and found her newly shaved mons. She'd grown to love the feel of the silky smooth skin. It provided stimulation of her naughty thoughts, which became more abundant as time went on. The erotic world Lucien had introduced to her made her feel the need to climax many times each day.

Serenity reasoned when she was in need and Lucien wasn't available, she should be able to alleviate her need. She laughed to herself, knowing Lucien wouldn't feel the same way, but she needed some justification to proceed.

Her fingers found her clitoris and began flicking and circling. Her eyes drifted shut as she prepared for the orgasm she so desperately needed.

Suddenly, the blanket flew away. When she opened her eyes, her hand still in place, she saw the glittering amusement in her husband's eyes.

"Haven't we learned our lesson yet, Mrs. Damrill? I believe I shall enjoy reiterating the fine points."

Serenity remained calm. It was then she realized she'd wanted Lucien to catch her. He would punish her, and then they would make love the way she hoped they would for the rest of their lives.

She smiled up at him, but he didn't smile back. A thrill coursed through her.

"What were you doing?" His voice was flat. Not angry, just flat.

"Do I really have to explain it to you? It should be fairly self-explanatory."

"Well, not to me."

"I was thinking of our time with Patience and how it looked seeing you with her. I had no idea when you would be coming to me, and I couldn't wait."

"You do know this has earned you a punishment?"

"I would expect nothing less."

Lucien sat on the chaise longue and indicated to Serenity she should position herself across his lap. She did so cheerfully, looking forward to his attentions. He spanked her with his hand, all the while explaining to her she wasn't allowed to pleasure herself without his permission. She cried, but the tears were of unadulterated joy. Though she knew he did not feel anything close to love for her, she knew she'd

never felt so loved. She'd come to adore him, and love was the only word she had to define what she felt for him.

"Do you feel you have learned this time?" Lucien asked.

"I must honestly say I don't know."

Lucien laughed heartily. "Get up, my dear, so that I might undress."

He removed his breeches and then resumed his seat, slouched in the comfortable, wing-backed chair. He spread his legs wide, his cock demanding satisfaction. "I believe I would like for you to attend me, my wife." He rather fancied himself King Henry the VIII and her Anne Boleyn.

"Yes, I see you are in need." She knelt before him and took him into her mouth, expertly ministering to his obvious problem.

One of his hands fisted into her hair, holding her where he most needed her to be.

"Oh, you have the sweetest mouth." His head lolled back against the chair, and he immersed himself in the sensations she was producing. Her tongue swirled over the crown, and her hand delicately but firmly slid over the engorged blue veins. It felt like heaven, or at least as close as Lucien ever expected to get. He'd seen and participated in more than his share of decadency. He would never be ashamed of the way he lived, for he required sexual activity more often than most. The thought rarely left his mind.

He'd needed release for much of the day and had no opportunity to visit his wife. Now, he debated whether he wished to finish this way or plunge himself deeply within her warmth. The latter won out. He guided her to her feet and brought her to rest upon his lap.

In one fluid, purposeful motion, he sank himself inside her. She greeted him with sensual moans, and her body bucked to meet his.

"Ride me into heaven," he murmured as he took hold of her hips and helped her to establish a rhythm.

She rose high, almost unsheathing him, then she savagely slammed back down.

He brought his hand up to her center, and as he circled her erect clit, she stroked them to mutual orgasms that rocked their souls.

Much later, as they lay kissing lazily, their eyes gritty with exhaustion, Lucien whispered, "You are amazing."

Serenity purred, her languorous state obviously having lowered her guard. As she drifted off to sleep, she reached up, petted his face, and said those fateful words, "I love you, Lucien."

* * * * *

Lucien lay for hours, playing those words over and over again in his mind. He questioned whether she knew she'd even said them aloud, or if she'd simply been caught up in the afterglow of their lovemaking. He'd long ago admitted to himself his enjoyment in hearing them, but he wasn't sure he could ever say them as easily as she had.

As the sky shown pink in the early morning, Lucien drifted off to sleep, his arms around his wife, her bottom curled against his groin. The tentacles from Serenity's heart had wrapped tightly around his own, and in all his forty years, he'd never been so happy not to be alone.

* * * * *

It had been several days since Serenity's sleepy admission of love for him. He could still hear her words inside his head. As he'd ruminated about them and his own thoughts on the subject, Serenity slipped into his library.

"May I join you?" she asked quietly.

"Of course you may." He stood, genuinely happy to see her. "Would you care for a glass of wine?"

"Yes, that would be nice."

He poured her a glass of Madeira, and they sat in the chairs flanking the black marble fireplace.

"This room is quite impressive, Lucien. I would love to see more books in here, though."

"Purchase all you like, my dear. I have no objection to you stocking the shelves."

"Really, I truly would appreciate having a variety of books to read."

Lucien couldn't help wondering about her admission. He needed to find a way to broach the topic.

"Am I disturbing you?" she asked.

"Not at all, why do you ask?"

"You look preoccupied."

"No, not really. Just before you came in, I was thinking about you."

"About me? I had no idea you gave me more than a passing thought." Her eyes fairly twinkled with mischief.

"Lately, it has been much more than just in passing. Much has happened, has it not?"

"I did come here in the hope we could talk about the past few days. I wish to thank you for asking Patience to join us. I'd had hopes of a ménage at some point, but I had only mentioned it briefly."

"You are quite welcome, dear. She has been a member for sometime so our acquaintance is of some duration. I knew I could trust her to indoctrinate you properly."

Serenity gave him a disarming smile. "Would you consider inviting her again?"

"Certainly, I did garner some benefit as well."

"I am not sure how to approach you on this, but I need to know about, well, what I did to you. I enjoyed doing it, and I believe you did to, but the first time, you were so angry with me. If it bothered you the other night, I need to know so I don't repeat it."

Lucien sat calmly with one leg crossed over the other. He sipped his brandy, savoring the burn.

"Did you enjoy it?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Why did you get so angry the first time?"

"There is a part of me that's ashamed of my curiosity with how it would feel. I have long had an interest in anal sex play. I have seen men together, and though I have no desire to experience another man, I have always wanted to know how it felt. You seem so enamored with everything to do with your arse, it actually enticed me even further."

"Would you ever consider letting me test you further with Little Lucien?"

"If the circumstances seemed right, I might. I must admit to an enjoyment that went beyond any of my expectations. I understand why you like it so much."

"I believe it goes beyond enjoyment. I feel so close to you when you take me that way. It is exciting, the feeling of fullness and the connection between us. I especially love it after you spank me and while you fuck me you pat my bottom. It is like heaven."

Lucien couldn't keep his smile contained. He was married to a lusty wanton, and he loved her beyond measure. Never, in his wildest dreams, could he have conjured this woman.

"How would you like me to spank you tonight, dear? Afterwards, I shall take you hard, any way you wish."

Serenity stood and closed the distance between them.

"Raise your skirts, and lie across my lap."

She did as he asked. His ample lap had become home to her. Holding her skirts around her waist, she laid down.

"Oh, yes, my dear, such a beautiful bottom." His hand rubbed her cheeks. "I need to make up for my neglect. Your bottom is not nearly the color I like it to be."

"No, and I cannot feel it during the day, either."

"I shall remedy that, I promise you."

"Oh, yes, Lucien. Please."

He patted her again then delivered the first smack.

"Oh, yes," Serenity cried as his hand came down again.

"I know you need this, dear."

"Harder," she whispered.

He struck again and then spent a moment, rubbing and dipping lower to tease her moist, feminine folds. She raised her bottom to meet his hand, and he rewarded her with a few sensual circles with his fingers.

"More."

"More of what?" He swiped her again, followed by another pat. Her howls of joy filled the room. Lucien knew she was in heaven.

As Serenity wept with ecstasy, Lucien pulled her up to sit on his lap. He held her close and rubbed her warm bottom. He felt the same way, but couldn't bring himself to speak the words that sat on the tip of his tongue. He closed his eyes, taking in her lavender scent and the feel of her in his arms. He'd never imagined himself being so vulnerable, and yet she had him at her mercy, this tiny woman who held his heart in her hands.

"Let us go upstairs, dear," he whispered. "I want nothing better than to ravish you thoroughly and then hold you close all night long."

Chapter Twenty

Marjorie entered Serenity's room and flung back the draperies, letting in the bright autumn sun. Another maid came in to stoke the fire, and soon the room was as toasty as the snug bedclothes Serenity was so reluctant to abandon.

"Mr. Damrill wishes for me to prepare you, ma'am. I have brought tea and toast for you to enjoy while I take care of other things."

Serenity stretched and pulled herself up to a sitting position. Marjorie sat the tray on her lap and went about preparing the razor to shave her.

She ate quickly, not being particularly hungry. She'd come to enjoy the feeling of her quim being free of the curly brown hair. It was naughty, and she loved the feeling. It pleased Lucien and had come to be of the utmost importance to her.

When Marjorie was finished, Serenity stepped into her bath and luxuriated in the steaming lavender-scented water. During her soak, she reflected upon her life in Lucien's care. She treasured the thought each morning that he would spank her twice during the day, more if she asked, and all the while, he'd talk in the low-rumble he affected during such times.

She willingly bared her bottom and encouraged him to lay his hand or strap or paddle upon her, because in the end, she needed that almost as much as she needed him inside her. She couldn't explain the need of it to anyone, nor would she try. She realized it wasn't something for which most people wished, but *she* required it as surely as the next breath of air.

Her mind drifted back several days to her conversation with Lucien. Never had she been able to have such an open and frank discussion with anyone. However, with Lucien, it was a requirement. He despised the delicate machinations people usually performed when outspokenness would accomplish the task in much less time.

If Lucien had taught her nothing else, she'd learned if one had something to say, they should simply say it. She rather liked the new person she had become, and it was a credit to Lucien that he'd taught her well in just the few months they had lived together.

As she bathed, her eyes closed, and her hand drifted to her quim but quickly pulled away as though she'd been burned. Another of Lucien's rules came to the fore. However, she allowed her hand to drift back, relishing the baby-soft smoothness of her skin.

She sighed and sank lower in the water when she felt his warm breath on her neck.

"Touch yourself," he whispered, his hands on her breasts, which floated just above the waterline. "Open your legs wider, and let me watch you come."

She hadn't opened her eyes, for somehow she wasn't surprised by his presence. She opened her legs, frustrated that the hip bath wasn't wider. Wantonly, she raised her legs out of the water and propped them up on the sides of the metal tub. Her hand delved into her water-soaked folds, swollen still from the previous night's activities. She

circled her clitoris as he whispered naughty things in her ear.

"I want to spank your beautiful bottom until you beg me to stop." The seductive rumble of his voice was enough to induce an orgasm from a nun. "When you are finished, do you wish me to spank you?"

"Oh, yes."

"I cannot get enough of you, Serenity. You are all I think about. You have bewitched me."

Serenity was too lost in her own pleasurable world to acknowledge Lucien's words.

"That's it, my love, come for me. Loudly."

She worked herself with increased speed, until she shattered in his arms, for he'd encircled her upper body, holding her breasts in the palms of his hands. He squeezed her nipples hard as she came apart, raising herself out of the water as her body tensed. Her breathing became ragged, rusty with the fulfillment she'd reached at her own hand.

Soon her body became limp, and she sank back into her tepid water. Lucien still held her, his touch ever so welcome.

"Simply beautiful, love," he said in a soft, soothing tone. "Let me get you out of the cold water."

She readily agreed and stood so she could take his hand. Immediately, she went to the bed, climbed up, and rested her head upon the mattress, her bottom up high and ready. "Lucien, I want you to spank me wet."

If Lucien lived to be one thousand, he would never find anyone like his Serenity. Yes, that's what she'd become to him — his. She was enticingly on her knees on her large, four-poster bed, her legs spread wide, her bottom high, asking him to spank her shiny, wet buttocks. It was as erotic as a sight could be. He'd begun to believe that providence had shined upon him when it led her to the doors of the Sapphire Club that summer evening so many months ago.

Though he'd not told Serenity, his intention for this day was that they remain

secluded in her bedchamber. They would enjoy all the forbidden pleasures. He'd arranged for food to be delivered in the connecting room, so they wouldn't lay eyes on another soul for the next twenty-four hours.

"How do you wish for me to spank you, dear?"

"With your hand, for now, Lucien."

Immediately he put his hand upon her pink bottom, rubbing her and dipping lower to tease. "I love this position," he said with a chuckle. "So much is available to me."

"Yes, I rather like it as well."

As he spanked her with one hand, he used the other to seduce her. "Does this sting? You seem to be enjoying this immensely."

"Oh, yes, it is absolutely wonderful. It is as I imagined it to be."

Her cheeks reddened immediately.

He did not strike her hard, but rather abundantly. She howled, but he knew she was affecting the reaction for her bottom wagged temptingly at him, begging him for more. His cock grew rock hard as he struck her, begging him for surcease. He reached under her and patted her quim, dipped two fingers inside and brought her easily to orgasm as he spanked her.

Without warning, he plunged a finger into her anus as she was still in the throes of her pleasure. She immediately jammed herself against his hand, wordlessly asking for more.

"What do you want, little one?"

"I want you in my arse, now, please Lucien."

One-handed, he had his breeches unbuttoned and down over his hips in no time. He retrieved the amber-colored bottle of oil from the bedside table, without removing his finger. He oiled his cock and slid between her cheeks, slowing only for her muscles to adjust to the intrusion.

Serenity rocked against him, until he filled her to the hilt. Nothing could feel better than this. He reached under her and tugged at her nipples. Serenity groaned her

approval while she rocked back and forth on him, impaling herself and then sliding almost free. She clutched his raging arousal, teasing him to come while making it impossible for him to come too soon.

He found her clitoris, and as he used his fingers to raise her to a higher level of desire, he battered her arse. They came together, their shouts and moans mingled to create an opus as beautiful as any artist could create. With uneven breaths, they collapsed, wrapped in each other's arms.

Lucien knew at that moment he never wanted to be anywhere else again.

"What are you thinking at this moment?" he asked her.

"I am thinking you are a lusty man and how glad I am to be married to you."

Lucien laughed. The sound seemed to come from his soul, and the sonorousness of it touched her.

"I suppose I am," he said, "but you seem to bring it out in me."

"I fear it was in you long before I came along, Mr. Damrill."

"Yes, but it's wonderful to share it with you, my lusty baggage."

It was Serenity's turn to laugh. No one had ever called her either lusty or baggage before, and she loved it. A certain freedom could be had when one gave oneself up to desire. Lucien had shown her a different way of life, one she could embrace as being truer to the person she wished to be.

Lucien absent-mindedly played with her nipples while she gazed into his eyes. They sparkled the way eyes do when they are untroubled. He lounged languidly, one of his legs over hers. When he dipped his head to suckle her, her breath hitched with the wonderful sensations he induced.

"I cannot imagine being anywhere else," she blurted out before she could govern her tongue. She feared the statement gave too much away.

"Yes, this bed is quite comfortable, is it not?"

His smile was as engaging as it could be, and she knew he'd not understood what she meant.

"Yes, it is. Quite."

She loved Lucien. It wasn't only that she loved the sensual world he'd created for her, but even more, she loved the man himself. He'd taken an intractable woman and made her think of more than herself and her own needs.

"Do you trust me?" she asked hesitatingly.

"I suppose I do, though you do tend to take advantage of me when my guard is down." His impish smile and roguish eyes made an irresistible combination.

She indecorously climbed off the bed and retrieved a bowl of water and a cloth. Without a word, she soaped the cloth and washed his cock and bollocks, teasing the head until he was bulging with want. His shaft pulsed with a life of its own, bobbing straight up from the nest of wiry hair.

She examined him closely. "This is a very interesting thing. I particularly like this blue vein." She traced the vein with her finger, and he hissed.

"What are you doing?"

"If you cannot tell, I must be doing it all wrong."

He chuckled, but she sensed his unease as he waited for her next move.

She wrapped a hand around him and stroked downward then immediately up.

He closed his eyes and gasped. "If you continue that, you should be prepared for the consequences."

"I do believe I could interpret that as a threat, sir."

"I do believe it was intended as such." In a swift movement, he rolled her onto her back and plunged into her. He rode her to completion, which took but seconds. In a sweaty heap, he fell down on his stomach beside her.

She rolled to her side and began to rub his sweat-sleeked back. His eyes were closed but his breathing indicated he was very much awake. She rested her hand just above the luscious globes of his bottom. Lightly, she traced down, along the crevice between his cheeks.

"Lucien?"

"Hmm?"

"Have you ever been spanked?"

His eyes flew open but he didn't move. "No."

"You love spanking me, do you not?"

"Yes, probably more than I should."

"Are you not curious? You know, how it feels and what it does to you when you have a connection with the person spanking you."

"I suppose."

"But how can you be effective in your work if you have no concept of what it feels like?"

"What have you in mind?"

Serenity allowed her hand to come down hard upon his right cheek, causing Lucien to groan. "See, that wasn't so bad, was it?"

Before he would answer her, she smacked him again. His eyes smoldered. She had no idea what he could be thinking, but she looked forward to his retribution.

Her hand split his backside, and she dripped oil at the entrance. She bit back a laugh as his cheeks tensed, but she swatted them again, twice in rapid succession. She teased the tight little rosebud entrance, slipping a narrow finger past the tight muscle. His eyes held hers, boring into her soul. She felt exhilarated, her heart thrumming. She replaced one finger with two, and he moaned so faintly she barely heard it.

"Does that give you pleasure, darling?"

"Yes, you vixen."

She slid her two fingers in and out of his passage. "Do you want me to stop?"

He did not speak, but his eyes told her everything she needed to know.

"Do you want more?"

Again he did not speak.

She retrieved her phallus and applied oil. "Darling," she said, "come up on your knees for me."

As Lucien brought himself to his knees, shame slammed throughout his body.

His head rested on a pillow, his buttocks humiliatingly high, but his body wanted what Serenity offered. It had taken much fortitude to face her with this longing, something he never thought he could do. He'd suppressed it for so many years; he'd never allowed anyone to touch him in such a fashion, until Serenity, who simply did so without asking.

As he felt the cool marble of the phallus at his entrance, his heart began to pound. His eyes closed in anticipation of the burn he knew would come. His nerve endings danced with expectancy as Serenity slid the smaller of the phalluses past the tight sentry and stopped.

Lucien hissed when the burn hit him, but soon he began to push back against the cool marble. As she eased the phallus in, Serenity touched his cock. He couldn't bring himself to speak for all the wonderful sensations. He moaned and moved his hips but words were lost in the moment.

"Are you all right?" Serenity asked tenderly.

"Mmm."

"Do you want me to fuck you with this?" she teased as she tapped the end of the phallus, much as Lucien had done when he'd inserted it into her anus.

Lucien nodded. Still words eluded him.

Serenity dragged the phallus out so only the head remained inside. When he indicated with his hips he felt empty, she pushed it in again, continuing this pattern to his delight.

His mind silently pled with her to savage him. She seemed to understand. With the hilt firmly in hand, she changed her pattern, keeping him pleasantly on edge. The feeling of fullness and movement excited him beyond his capacity for thought, especially when she made contact with that very sensitive spot deep within his passage.

He brought his hand to his groin and wrapped it around his throbbing cock. Her free hand joined his as she took his bollocks gently but firmly, rolling them in her hand.

"Do you need to come, dear?" she asked him.

"Desperately." His breath came shallowly as he pumped his cock, and Serenity

fucked his arse.

She increased her pace, the phallus sliding easily. Lucien kept pace with her, savagely stroking himself, until he came in a torrent of sound and light. He shouted loudly, groaning his release, his body shaking.

Serenity kept the phallus in place until Lucien had realized his climax completely. Once he calmed, she slid it from his passage, using her free hand to sooth the burning entrance. Lucien collapsed to his stomach, exhausted once again.

Chapter Twenty-One

When Lucien's breathing evened and then slowed, Serenity knew he'd indeed fallen asleep. He had his arms wrapped loosely around her, his grip relaxed as he fell deeper in repose. Serenity loved looking at him, especially in dishabille. He was indeed handsome, his bulky frame so relaxed. Her loins clenched at the sight of his buttocks and the remembrance of what he'd allowed her to do. He'd been in her hands, at her mercy, and she'd given him pleasure as she had no one else.

"I love you, my darling," she whispered in his ear, with no fear he'd heard her pronouncement, for he slept on peacefully.

Lucien feigned sleep, enjoying Serenity's gentle touch as she brushed his hair from his eyes and lightly brushed the smooth skin of his freshly shaved face. He couldn't contain the smile tugging at his lips, no more than he could restrain the elation in his heart. He waited a few more minutes, so she wouldn't think he'd actually heard her, and then he stretched, rather loudly in fact.

"Did you sleep well, dear?" she asked solicitously.

"Yes, I did, and you?"

"I don't believe I have ever rested so well."

Lucien pulled himself up on one elbow. There was some unfinished business between them, and before he could fully put their past behind him, he needed the

answers to his questions.

"Would you allow me to ask you about Winsor Thorndyke?" he asked as peacefully as though he'd asked for a cup of tea.

Serenity was taken aback by Lucien's question, but not in the least bit surprised. She'd long ago determined that when he came to her with questions, she would answer as truthfully as she could. "I am willing to answer any question you wish to ask."

"How long did you know him?"

Serenity sat up and situated herself against the pillows. Lucien watched as she collected her thoughts.

"I met him at a country assembly about six years ago. Winsor's estate, Chetwood Manor, is not terribly far from my home, though I had honestly not known of its existence. He asked me to dance, and we began to keep company from then on."

"He didn't know you were married?"

"He did, but I truthfully did not consider myself married in anything but name. I thought myself bound to a man I didn't love, and worse, one I feared."

Lucien nodded.

"Winsor was an engaging man, and it did not take long before he kissed me. When he did, I felt something I had never felt before." She looked at Lucien, whose jaw tensed with each word.

"Are you sure you wish to hear this?"

"Yes. I need to hear it."

She nodded and continued. "When he kissed me he pulled me into his world. He approved of me. I engaged in sexual acts with him I have only *enjoyed* with you. When I was with him, I thought he must have been the most marvelous lover in the world, but you have shown me there is so much more."

"Did he spank you? Is that where you acquired your need for it?"

"Yes, he did, but it was more playful than it is with us. He indoctrinated me, but Lucien, you have given me what it is I really need."

"I don't want you saying that simply because you think I want to hear it."

"I wouldn't do that, no matter what the consequences. You have opened a world to me I pray will always be there."

"Did you love him?"

"I won't lie to you, Lucien. I believe I did."

Lucien held his head high. "I gave you precious little to love in me, Serenity, and I am glad you found someone who treated you as you deserved."

Serenity nodded, and her eyes filled with tears. "You cannot mean that, Lucien."

"Oh, but I do. I am grateful to him for tutoring you and treating you well. He did treat you well, did he not?"

"Yes, he did, and he taught me sex could be enjoyable. But Lucien, it has been you who has taught me that the true joy of marriage lies in our mutual pleasure. You have answered every prayer I have ever had. While Winsor introduced me to the thrill of being spanked, it has been you who gave it meaning."

Lucien pulled himself up to face her. He put his arm around her slender waist. "You have given me a gift, Serenity. You have made me see how empty my life was before you entered the club that night. You have given my life a purpose."

Lucien rolled over her, taking his weight upon his arms. His hands cupped either side of her face as he gazed into her eyes. He knew she had no idea how important she'd become to him, and if it took all night, she would know by the time the sun had risen, for their marriage would be a real one, starting now.

His lips touched hers, tenderly at first and then with greater urgency. She opened for him, and his tongue plunged in, lapping and tasting. She was his, in every way God and man intended, only she had no idea of the extent of his love for her.

With a throbbing cock, he entered her quim, wishing to sink in deeply. The feeling nearly undid him. Serenity raised her legs to rest around his waist, her heels pulling him close. He groaned his approval as he slid himself home, the place he longed to be above all others.

Her heat skittered across his nerve endings. He wanted to be closer to her, though he couldn't be. Her tensing muscles embraced his shaft, a welcome like no other. As he began to move, she met his every thrust. He took long, teasing strokes at first, but soon he lost control and claimed what was his for a lifetime. Heart-slamming, soul-rending, he plunged into her again and again. He gasped for air as he gave her all he had. She wasn't left behind; she met each stroke with determination enough to wring all there was out of him.

The sound of moist flesh and bodies slamming into each other filled the room, as did their pungent musk. It seemed to intoxicate them both, for they became lost in the conflagration their lovemaking became.

Lucien suddenly slowed and withdrew. "Get to your knees," he said, his voice edged with desire.

With his help, she rose to her knees, her head resting on a pillow. His cool hand rubbed her inflamed bottom and split her so he was able to tease her anus. She pushed back against him, signaling approval. He found the scented oil and lubricated her entrance, then entered her with two fingers.

"Wonderful . . ."

Lucien's heart swelled fuller if possible, for he knew he'd found the one person he was meant to love — that one person who knew who he really was and loved him anyway.

He fucked her mercilessly with his fingers. "Do you want me inside you here, darling?"

"Oh, yes." She pounded against his hand.

"Tell me how much you want me inside you," he whispered.

"I need you, Lucien. I need you more than I ever have."

Her hips arched at just the right angle when his arousal breached the rosebud entrance. He stopped, allowing her to adjust, but she plunged back against his groin, forcing his thickness into her, past the tight muscles she must have willed to relax and into the warm depth of her arse. He reached underneath her and clamped onto her

breasts, holding her tightly.

When she screeched with pleasure and pain, Lucien smiled wickedly. He pinched her nipples harshly and began to ride her. Again she met him, stroke for stroke, slamming her buttocks against his groin. She seemed lost in this bit of heaven they had created together, seeking the pleasure he implicitly promised. Her hand reached her core before his did. Her lithe legs spread wide, and she frantically circled her clit. Lucien stroked wildly, the muscles of his buttocks tensing and releasing. The muscles of her passage clamped down hard on him as her body tensed in preparation for the crashing climax that overtook her. She expelled a loud, keening moan from deep within her. They came together in a tumult of passion.

Lucien cried her name over and over, unable to restrain himself. "I love you Serenity, I love you."

He threw himself to her side and brought her down beside him, pressed against his chest. He remained inside her, and his arms tightened around her boneless body.

"I love you, my darling wife."

"I love you too." She'd whispered it almost too softly for him to hear.

"Did you say what I think you said?"

She turned her head to face him. "I love you, Lucien." Her soft inflection washed over him with warmth and surety.

"Do you? Do you really love me?"

"I do, with all my being. You are all I could have ever dreamed. You are everything to me. You are my world."

Lucien grinned, the feeling of contentment seeping into every pore. "Well, I do believe I shall have to rethink how I service my clients, don't you?"

"Would you have any objection to me taking care of Lady Foxworth? She might just learn a thing or two about flirting with another woman's husband."

Lucien laughed, imagining the scene.

They lounged for some time, talking about the future their declarations of love had opened up for them.

Aroused once again beyond explanation, Lucien rolled Serenity over onto her stomach and slapped her bottom. "Not quite the color I'd like to see. Isn't it time I spanked you again?"

With a flirtatious giggle, Serenity whispered, "In my dreams."

~The End~

About the Author

Brita Addams grew up in upstate New York but has lived in southern Louisiana for many years. She is an avid reader, particularly of biographies and anything historical. She loves to travel, which she and her husband do as often as they possibly can. From her earliest school days, writing was always a part of her life, though while raising their family, it just seemed to hum in the background. Now, with the encouragement of her hero — her husband — and her children, she has been fortunate in being able to create the stories she's always longed to write.

To learn more about Brita Addams and The Sapphire Club Series, visit <http://britaaddams.blogspot.com/>