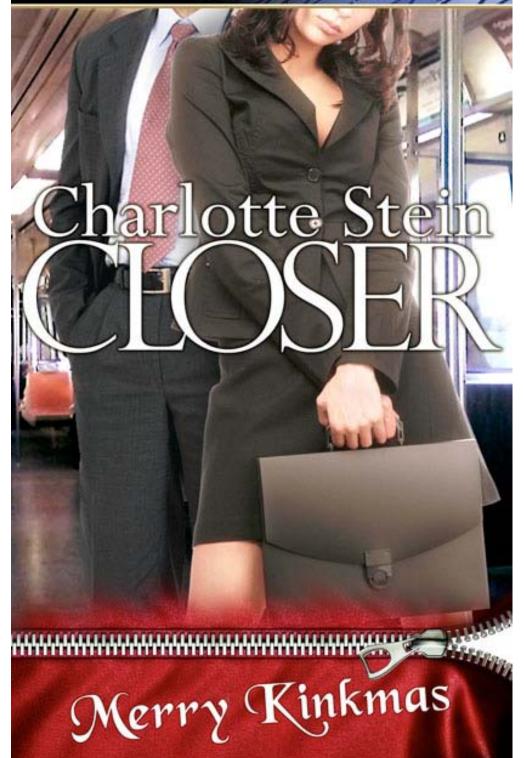
ELLORA'S CAVE Moderne



Closer

Charlotte Stein

Judy has a bad habit, one that gets worse during the busy Christmas season. She likes to rub against strangers on trains. And with all the hot businessmen on her route, she's not kicking the habit anytime soon. After all, she's not really hurting anyone. But she definitely feels dirty when a gorgeous stranger catches her in the act—until it's clear he wants to join in, and he's not the type to take no for an answer. In fact, he isn't taking no for an answer on a lot of things.

Judy may think she's only willing to go so far, or get so close. But Holt thinks differently...

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Dedication

To AS, for being so damn tall. And kind of like a Nordic god.

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Chapter One

The urge had gotten so bad she even knew what time of year was best for doing it. Christmas. Christmas was the best time of year for indulging her little habit, because during the holiday season everyone went temporarily insane and forgot things like personal space in an effort to buy useless things no one ever wanted.

They crammed themselves into shops and tinsel-laced streets, wedged their way onto buses and sandwiched their cars into car parks. But best of all, they got on trains. And they didn't sit, oh no, because old people and pregnant people and jerks who'd gotten there first always sat.

Instead, the people she wanted to be amongst stood, in thin aisles and broad aisles, in the spaces by the toilet and the exits, by luggage racks when bags and brightly wrapped packages filled it up and on it when they didn't. But better than all of this, they pressed against her. They jostled her. Some anonymous stranger rubbed her when they thought she wasn't looking or paying attention.

Oh yes. That was the best sort of press.

At first, of course, she'd hated it. There she was, just starting a new job. Her little suits always immaculate, pencil skirts with little kicky pleats and neat, professional, well-tailored jackets. A coat that she'd almost deemed too expensive, and a new, businesslike haircut that would make everyone understand the kind of person she was.

A professional person. A together, carefully kept, in-control sort of person. People would respond well to that and understand she meant business. No one would ever rub up against her on a train, looking the way she did.

But someone had. They'd pressed their front to her back, and on that very first day to work she'd spent her journey there with a mouthful of the man in front. Mortified beyond belief. Unable to understand how so many people could travel to work every day like that, enduring the heaving, sweaty, intrusive presence of so many other people.

How awful. How terrible. How wet it had made her, to feel some anonymous body sliding against hers.

Though naturally, she'd tried to deny it. The next time she'd stood right in the corner, right next to the exit, so nobody could come up on her from behind. Most of her knew that she'd probably imagined the man behind her, rubbing and rubbing, but some part of her said otherwise. He'd probably gone home that night and masturbated thinking about her round ass in her tight skirt.

Maybe he'd wondered how far he could have gone before she protested—a hand on the back of her thigh, perhaps? If he'd lifted her skirt, just a little, would she have cried out?

She didn't know if she would've or not. She only knew that when she'd stood there, wedged in that little corner with some man's back in front of her, she'd made a little sound just thinking about it. A little cry, for the cry she didn't make.

Then she'd pressed her body against the man in front.

That was how it started, she knew. That was when it went from disgust, and being pressed, to pressing back. And so quickly too! One second she was a normal person, the next she was getting off on the feel of a hundred strangers, clamoring to get near her body.

Or at least, that was how it felt when she closed her eyes. Like being clamored for.

But better than that were the dirty things she could imagine happening, with barely any effort at all. One time she'd been trapped between three businessmen in their soft wool overcoats, her senses full of their interchangeable and ludicrously rich-smelling man-perfumes. She'd gotten so close to one of them she could have tasted the tang of the shaving gel used to get that gun-metal stubble down to nothing.

So close he could have forced his mouth on hers with very little trouble at all. And then maybe one of his buddies could have pushed a gloved hand up her leg, between her thighs and beneath her skirt.

Of course she would have preferred the fantasy if he hadn't been wearing gloves, but then that was the problem with getting off on rubbing against people on trains. There were always far too many layers and it never got any better, not even in summer.

At least in winter the secretive peep of the nape of someone's neck always got close enough. So close she could have just poked out her tongue and licked, and oh she knew she got nearer to it every day. It tempted her constantly, that final perverted step. To just reach out and really touch—it didn't seem like that big a deal. No one would ever know.

Except for that man sitting over by the window. He'd know.

She tried to pretend otherwise, but her body argued with her. It jolted as soon as she caught him staring at her and told her in plain language—he's just seen you, curling your body back at the probably very innocent and completely unaware guy behind you.

And he thinks you're a pervert.

Even if her body hadn't been so kind as to inform her of these things, his expression told the rest of the tale. He looked amused in such an awesome and obvious way she could have pasted his face beneath that very word in the dictionary. She could have used it to explain what amused meant in a Powerpoint presentation.

It was perfect and it made her burn, perfectly, with a shame so big and bright it could have nuked a city. She'd been caught and the person who'd caught her thought she was very amusing, and even worse than that...oh definitely worse...

He was unbearably attractive.

She didn't even want to look at him a second time in case his attractiveness grew and swelled and tried to rub her face in the terrible thing she was doing. But of course she couldn't resist, because attractiveness also made you want to look directly at it.

Especially when it was his kind of attractiveness.

He seemed to have a slight...otherness about him, as though the sum of his parts should add up to something alien and grotesque. But somehow it didn't. Instead he looked cool and still and strange, those pale blue eyes of his almost too wide set but not quite. They burned where they touched, too, even from all the way behind the little thin-rimmed glasses he wore.

As though he knew. As though he knew and wanted her to feel it all over.

She tried to look away, of course, but it was too late by that point. His face was just too interesting to stop looking, and the contrast between soft and strong in every one of his features only dragged her farther down. He had a little cleft in his chin and it clashed with the pout of his mouth and that small snub of a nose.

But it was his hair that really did the trick. The stubble all over his jaw looked coarse and almost dark, but the hair on his head seemed fine and near white-blond. Like it'd be silky if you ran your fingers through it.

It turned her on just looking at him, which seemed even more bizarre and appalling than him catching her rubbing herself off against strangers. She had the overwhelming urge to shout at him, *It's not as bad as you think! I've never* actually *brought myself off!*

As though such a thing made it all better, and if he could just see the level of pervert she was he'd totally understand. He looked like the kind of man who'd understand the desperate needs a woman had that she didn't want to admit.

But then, she was a lust-driven crazy person. Her brain was irretrievably warped. If he'd been George Clooney, she felt sure she would have imagined him being completely okay with her insane kinkiness. Sexy actors like George probably loved women who surreptitiously accosted men on trains, and would immediately profess his undying love for her on realizing she was that kind of person.

Then they'd get married and run away to Kinkyville together.

Though back in reality, she actually did the following—on realizing a fairly ordinary man who was not George Clooney had discovered her secret, she squeezed her way to the toilet, climbed inside and locked herself in for the entirety of the journey.

Then pretended for the rest of eternity that she had never done such a thing, did not want to masturbate over it and would never do it again—whatever "it" was. She pretended while eating her lonely-person-ready-meal that night, and while in bed, staring at the ceiling, being not turned-on.

She pretended while getting dressed for work the next day and while planning a journey that did not include the same train as the one no one had seen her on, doing...things.

But unfortunately all of this only added up to a kind of ravenous arousal by the time she took the 5:34 train home, and though she had vowed to be good and swore that she didn't really do things like that, other people had not taken similar vows, apparently. Other people were not sitting down, in the corner, by a window.

They were standing instead. Very close by. And getting closer still.

She tried to act like she hadn't seen him, but it was very hard, because he was very tall. It seemed crazy, really, how much he stood over the other people on the train. He looked weird and out of place pushing through the crowd, like a Nordic god suddenly come to Earth and finding he had to squirm through a maze of bodies just like everyone else.

Then she blushed, to think that she'd thought of him as a Nordic god. He looked kind of like one, but that was no reason to actually let her brain go there. Her brain had already been to Weird Staring Town and Pervert Avenue. She didn't need it pushing her into any more corners from which she would never escape.

But alas, it was too late. He'd managed to somehow maneuver himself into the tiny space behind her and there was definitely no escaping from such a thing. That was the other problem with being a pervert on a train—it also trapped you. She could barely

move as it was, and him sandwiching himself between her body and another person's body forced movement into the realms of the impossible.

He was too big, that was the thing. He felt massive behind her, like a great blond bollard. Like something you'd tie a house to, to stop it flying away. And it got weirder, too, because she couldn't stop thinking that if she were to look up she'd be able to see his face. Wasn't that crazy? No one was so tall that if you stood in front of them you could look up and see their face behind you.

That just seemed...insane. Insanely tall, like something out of a story with the words beanstalk and Jack in the title.

People weren't that tall in real life, were they? And even if they were that tall, they didn't stand behind women and press their bodies right up against other bodies and oh no, oh no. He wasn't doing that, was he? She couldn't tell. There were so many people all over the place, and all of them pressing and pressing and it couldn't possibly be that he knew and thought...

God, she couldn't bear to think about what he thought. He thought she was a pervert and apparently he wanted to exchange secret pervert passwords with her. *I'll rub my cock against your ass, and you rub your ass back at me*. Something like that. She couldn't feel his cock, exactly, but that didn't mean it wasn't there.

Or that his hand wasn't on her hip.

At first she thought she'd imagined it. It could well have been some old lady's handbag touching her...there. But then handbags didn't tend to have fingers and palms and they definitely didn't lean down and whisper in your ear—

"Tell me to stop."

It sounded like a dare. He had some kind of unimaginable accent and he was daring her in reverse. Or at least, that's what it felt like. Daring in reverse. Because really, he was pushing her toward the opposite of stopping, wasn't he? She felt sure he was. It sounded as if he wanted her to slap him and demand he stop, but she could hear it in his tone. She could hear it buried underneath the accent she couldn't place.

You don't really want me to stop, do you?

It was true. She didn't. His hand felt good on her hip—right. Firm and sure, as though he knew exactly what he was doing. There was nothing accidental about the touch or his body pressed against hers and she found she didn't mind. More than that, in fact. Saying "I don't mind" seemed flimsy and pathetic in the face of her real reaction.

Her entire body clenched and everything went hazy and she thought of ridiculously overblown poems about something coming to someone, at last. At last, at last—no more waiting.

Instead he rubbed his front against her back and when she didn't move or act shocked or any of the other hundred things she could have done, he slid his one dirty, perverted hand around to her thigh.

Really high up on her thigh too. Why, it was practically over her pussy. Right there, in the middle of a crowd on a train, a *hand* over her *pussy*. Though she could hardly blame him. Her pussy felt so swollen and all encompassing by that point, he could have touched her elbow and accidentally felt up that aching space between her legs.

She could feel her clit like a second heart, beating and beating. Everything seemed so wet down there—she was sure embarrassment was just around the corner. Soon it would seep through her panties and make it to her thighs, and then what? Then he'd feel it, or someone would know, and her humiliation would be complete.

God, what a glorious moment *that* was going to be.

Even more glorious, probably, than the feel of his stiff cock pressing into the curve just above her ass.

Yeah, she could definitely make it out now. Unless he had a rather odd-feeling umbrella about his person, that was his dick rubbing against her. And though it wasn't as surprising as the realization that she actually maybe wanted to be humiliated, she found she liked it right there. She found she liked it almost as much as if he'd stripped her naked and pushed her on a bed, then slid his big stiff cock right between her legs, right over her swollen clit.

Oh, that would have been nice. But this was nicer, in so many strange and unexplainable ways. She didn't fully understand how the heat of the train and the obliviousness of its passengers or the threat of them no longer being oblivious added to the overall experience, but somehow they did.

He did. He added to everything, just because he knew. The fact that he had his hand on her thigh and his other hand creeping up inside her jacket barely meant anything at all, beyond the fleeting physical experience. It was his knowledge, breathing into the back of her neck when he leaned over her. The words he spoke in another language she didn't understand, and how she kind of knew what they meant anyway.

Dirty girl, she thought and reveled in it. Swam around in it. Longed for him to touch her clit, right out in the open like this.

Instead his hand slid beneath the safety net of her jacket and found the firm swell of her left breast. And though there still remained a shirt and her bra between his fingers and her flesh, the sensation it provoked suggested otherwise. It felt as if she were naked beneath her jacket, to have him touching her in that way. She could almost feel the pads of his fingertips passing over her tight nipple, teasing it in a way that layers of clothing could never allow.

It came close to being too much. As though at any moment she was going to come just from having her breast fondled and her thigh stroked and oh she could feel his firm cock. She could really feel it, and his breath seemed hot and harsh against the back of her neck, like maybe...yeah maybe he was going to come too.

Just from being a pervert with another person on a train.

She imagined him walking home with all of that...mess...forming a stain through his underwear and the trousers he was wearing. Imagined having to feel it all sticky there around his cock, which would almost certainly get hard again just from the shame and disgustingness of coming in his pants after rubbing against a stranger.

Charlotte Stein

Jesus, what a dirty boy he was. Almost as dirty as she, really—though in the end, not quite. If he came—which she wasn't sure about at all—he didn't do anything as filthy as take her hand and press it over his cock. No, no.

But she did. She put her hand over his and pressed it right over the swell of her sex and couldn't even seem to care one jot about it. It felt good to feel him there and it felt good to give in to orgasm, with her face pressed to someone else's back.

And try as she might, she couldn't feel bad about any of it.

Chapter Two

She didn't know whether she'd be embarrassed on seeing him again, or what sort of embarrassment it would be. Would it be the good, down-low and dirty kind—the kind that had forced her to masturbate at least twice since their last encounter? Or the bad kind that made her not want to think about the word encounter ever again?

Encounter implied they'd met in a bar and very tastefully flirted with each other, and then after a reasonable amount of time had retired to her boudoir to make sweet love between flowery sheets. Not heaved against each other on a packed train then refused to look one another in the eye.

Jeez, was that really what they had done? She could hardly wrap her head around it. She didn't want to wrap her head around it until the 5:34 train, when she was forced to, because there he was. Right there, in his usual corner seat. And even worse—much, much worse than that—the train wasn't as crowded as usual. No maze of people straining beneath the weight of a million gaudy Christmas presents. No harassed-looking men wondering what they were going to do with the pack of three bath salts and a singing Santa they'd just bought.

She didn't know why. Unless maybe God had decided to punish her for being a filthy train sinner, by making said train almost empty so that everyone could see how awful she was. How much she'd thought about his hands on her and his cock on her, and his come... Oh God she'd thought about his come.

She'd thought about it way too much for her health. And by the looks of him, he knew it, too. Of course he did. He knew everything. He wasn't wearing his glasses and his eyes looked even paler and more filled with gleaming knowledge than they had before. The dictionary could no longer take his picture being under the word amused

and had to switch him to something even worse. Some word that meant more than amused, in a really awful way.

Though naturally, she couldn't think of one offhand. Instead, her mind just smushed together gargantuan and amused to make one unholy pairing of embarrassed horror—garmusetuan.

She tried to move so he was no longer in her sightline, but unfortunately the man she'd managed to squeeze in next to on the fuzzy, muddy blue cushions took up a lot of space. He'd eaten up most of his seat and started on hers. Which meant she had to perch, awkwardly, half into the aisle and totally visible to her partner in crime.

Whose name she didn't even know. Hell, he didn't know her name, either! He could have been something suitably Nordic, like Sven, and she could have been something electric and exciting, like Vivian.

Which didn't sound very electric and exciting at all, really, when she considered it. How awful that her mind couldn't even come up with a fake name that matched whatever they'd done the day before. If anything said she wasn't that person more clearly, surely it was the name Vivian.

And yet when he stood up suddenly and started in her direction, the urge to run didn't press on her. She didn't feel the need to get away or pretend something else had happened yesterday. Instead she waited for him to come close, very close, so close she knew he'd leaned down to speak to her and hadn't mistaken her for someone else.

It had definitely happened and this oddly attractive man definitely wanted to talk to her. And his voice, oh his voice. It still turned her inside out and upside down. It was no longer just about pressing up against strangers. It was about him and what he pushed her to.

"Come with me," he said, and this time she almost recognized the accent. Swedish, possibly, which not only sounded right but seemed appropriate, somehow. As though all Swedes were licentious gods who made you follow them into a public bathroom.

Because that was what he did.

He didn't give her a moment to think about it or gather herself. He waited by her chair until she stood too, and followed him to the little space-age-looking curving toilet in the middle of the train. Of course she'd been in one before—to calm herself down, to wash her hands, to splash water on her usually too-hot face—and knew what they looked like inside.

But it seemed very different being trapped in there, suddenly, with another person. Other people took up a lot of space, even in the new and improved bathrooms trains now had. And that applied doubly to him and all of his excessive tallness. His hands alone appeared to take up masses of the cold blue space, as though he could have reached out and covered everything with one well-placed touch.

She hoped the well-placed touch was going to be all over her. Of course, he could have been thinking about touching the toilet or the sink, but somehow she doubted it. A person didn't ask another person to come with them unless they really meant it.

Though she had no idea what he might have been meaning by any of this. She didn't even know when he reached past her to lock the door, then stood before her, waiting. She couldn't guess what he was waiting for. He looked just as confusing out in the open as he had closed in and hunched in his seat, the contrast in his features also present in his clothes in an odd, disjointed way.

He wore a suit but had paired it with Converse trainers and a t-shirt. Some kind of swirling, faded design adorned the front of said t-shirt, but she couldn't make it out completely. The jacket hid it.

And then he reached out one casual hand and turned her around, just like that, and hid the rest of himself from her. She didn't protest. It seemed impolite, or like she hadn't fully grasped the purpose of whatever this was. Instead she gazed at the blank gray door that had shut them in and felt cold and strange without the press of a hundred bodies.

He seemed to know that was what she was thinking too. He leaned in when she least expected him to and whispered in her ear. "Is it strange, without everyone else to keep us close?"

Definitely Swedish. She could hear it now in the way he clipped off some words and expanded others. His voice sounded like clotted cream, somehow, and it made her want to turn back around almost as much as his hands on her arms did. He had clasped her at both elbows and just that slight restraint felt like something she had to fight against.

Surely she should fight? She thought so, even when he removed his hands and stepped back and there appeared to be all of this air between them. She could feel it, cool and oppressive even through the thick wool of her coat. The train's bathroom had previously seemed small and cramped, but now it felt immense. Like a ballroom. Like a ballroom with a toilet and a sink and a murky mirror in it.

And a tall, tall man with a voice like clotted cream, saying things like —

"It's funny, isn't it? That when you're amongst all those people, you don't have to say anything to them. You're so close, but you don't have to ask or say or do anything, really."

She thought about going for the door. This was not the thing he'd promised, with his pale eyes and his almost threatening *come with me*. She wasn't quite sure what he *had* promised, but this wasn't it.

However, she couldn't quite make the final leap there. She couldn't press the button and unlock the door and go out, back into a place full of possible crowds and anonymous people. His voice held her and so did the strange empty spaces between them.

"But I can ask. Here is what I think I will say." He paused and she waited. Every fiber of her body waited. "Take off your jacket and hang it on the hook on the back of the door."

At first she wanted to refuse. Her stomach was lurching so hard she couldn't tell it from the rock of the train. She could feel her heart pounding in her shoulder blades and that didn't seem like a good thing.

But then her mind tried reason, even though she wasn't sure if reason was the right term for it. Her mind said—hey, the last stop is almost upon you. You've only got ten minutes, anyway. What does it matter? Which didn't sound like reason so much as the crazed ramblings of a deranged imbecile.

And yet when he said –

"Now untuck your shirt from your skirt."

She did it. She stumbled out words that sounded like, *I'm not going to be naked*, but she did it anyway.

"You don't have to be naked. Just untuck your shirt and pull it up."

That sounded pretty naked to her. And it definitely felt naked when she pulled it up and he suddenly pressed against her. Just like that and even worse—he'd taken off some of his own clothes too. Or at the very least, he'd pulled up his t-shirt so that his bare skin could press against her bare skin and oh that was very weird.

It was too weird. She definitely took a step forward, on feeling it. But then that was the problem, wasn't it? When other people weren't there to hem her in, she *could* step forward. Nothing forced her to stay with his smooth, cool skin all over hers.

She had to rely on herself—a shaky proposition indeed. She had to keep still as he slid his hands around her middle and eventually found his way inside her shirt. His palms felt as cool as his hard belly and they left tingling streaks wherever they touched.

But that wasn't the best part. Oh no. The best part came when he pressed his mouth to the nape her neck, suddenly and wetly. It sent a shock all the way through her and for a moment she wasn't sure she could carry on standing. The train rattled and only made the feeling worse, but it was okay in the end. It was okay. He had hold of her and that was okay. She thought again of how she didn't even know his name as he slid his hands upward to cup her breasts.

Then down, down to the hem of her skirt.

Though the journey of his hands wasn't the dirtiest thing about the whole operation. No—it was the feel of his bare and ever-so-slightly furred chest sliding against her back. She closed her eyes and drank it in, that sensation she'd so longed for. No clothes between them, still that feeling of slight anonymity with that clashing hint of desperate, pushing need…heaven. Heaven. She could hardly bear it, and bore it with even less skill when he clasped the hem and pulled up.

Slowly. He did it so slowly. Every movement seemed deliberate, which again contrasted with the feel of the pressing crowd. The crowd was rough and jostling, not careful like this.

And yet it still burned her from the inside out. She knew she was wet before he got anywhere near her panties, and she got wetter yet when he mouthed the back of her neck again and purred into her skin. "You can get away, if you like. Any time you like."

God he was so freeing in so many ways. Most of which he probably didn't know about—though she'd admit he seemed to know enough. She wondered if he'd watched her before that first day she'd seen him and known the way she was going before she even understood it herself.

Maybe. Maybe.

He certainly knew enough to let her keep her panties on, so that when he slid his hand inside she had that extra bit of feeling provided by the pressure of the material against his fingers. It held him tight and close and made the sensation too bright and intense. She couldn't stop her hand from lashing out to smack the door.

But he didn't jolt or otherwise react when she did. As though he expected her to jump with the feel of his big, rough hand pressing over all of her slickness, as though he knew she could hardly stand it.

And she couldn't, because outside the door there could have been someone waiting and maybe they'd heard. There could have been a million people outside who all knew that she was a dirty girl with a stranger's hand inside her panties, one long finger probing and sliding through her embarrassingly slick slit.

Any second and he was going to find her clit, at which point she felt pretty sure she'd die. Not just from the touch, either, but from the knowledge that actually—he wasn't a stranger. He no longer stood outside the door, guessing at what she was doing within. He didn't watch from his seat. He got up close instead.

So close that she flinched when his finger slid inside her. She moaned when his thumb found her clit. This was undoubtedly the dirtiest thing she'd ever done—but it only got dirtier from that point on.

She had to touch him in return. He'd pushed her there, to that place, though it hadn't exactly been a long trip. She simply reached back and found the hard shape of him through the rough material of his trousers. Then when pressed forward she pressed back, rubbing and feeling out the shape of him.

He felt good. Of course he did. Big, tall guy like that—it would have been a crime to find him small or wanting. Instead something firm jutted rough against her palm and when she managed to get her fingers around it and squeeze, he made a sound. A sweet, curdled sort of sound.

She found her voice then, all right.

"Fuck me. Just fuck me. You have five minutes – fuck me."

He laughed at that, but he didn't disobey. Instead he made everything feel as good as it possibly could, from the jerky shove of her panties down her thighs, to the spread of his fingers through her sex.

There was just a moment between wanting and getting, but it felt eternal. She stood with her legs apart and heard him snapping the condom on, and agonized. There'd been other anonymous men, other one-night stands and bored fucks, but nothing like this, nothing like this.

He put a hand into her hair and clasped tight—enough to sting but not enough to hurt—and bent her low even though she didn't want to go. She didn't say, however. She couldn't say a word. Her throat felt clogged with the closeness of his body and the emptiness of everything around them, and the way he was rubbing the tip of his cock so teasingly through her soaking slit.

It felt rude, and ruder still when he placed his other hand on her upturned and completely bare rump. She blushed when he pulled the cheeks apart, but didn't move or protest. If he wanted to look, he could look. He'd already seen all the most important parts of her anyway, with barely any effort at all.

And when he slid into her, that took barely any effort too. He grunted with it, however, and said something in that other language. The words came out guttural and made her groan in some kind of twisted sympathy, while his hand clasped her hair firmly and his too-big cock pushed all the way in.

She squirmed on its length, gasping, then came close to relaxing when his hand left her ass. It searched beneath her for her swollen bud, instead, too feverish suddenly. He had grown hot, rather than cold, and his thrusts seemed solid and jerky at the same time.

Everything felt solid and jerky. She tried to hold on to the bathroom door, but the wobbling train wouldn't let her. She tried to think about reasonable, normal things, but he fucked her and fucked her until her cunt felt like a maze of bristling sensation and her clit was too sensitive for his touch.

Though he touched it anyway and brought forth a gush of her slippery liquid all over his working cock. She was coming before he spoke, but his words egged her on—

"Ohhh, yes, your pussy feels amazing. Is that what you've been wanting all this time? Is this close enough? Tell me, sweet lovely girl. Tell me."

She could cope with pussy and wanting and his sighing moan at the beginning of all of those words. But she couldn't cope with *sweet lovely girl*. Not at all. She sobbed

into her shirt sleeves and rubbed herself just once against his searching, probing fingers and then plunged over the precipice.

Sensation spilled through her, loud and blaring. Her sex clenched tight around his still-thrusting cock and that felt good, so good. It felt like something to bite down on, thick and firm, and even better she could feel him going too. His cock stuttered inside her and his hand tightened in her hair.

Oh how glorious it was to let go. To give it up. She couldn't even feel bad about her messy clothes when they were done, or the way her hair still retained the shape of his grip.

Though she felt a twinge when he smiled so frankly and told her his name.

"Holt," he said, which didn't sound particularly Swedish to her. Not that she thought about it long and hard, because he took the opportunity to ask her what her name was and then she couldn't think at all. That was too much, wasn't it? Her name.

But he was waiting and she had to give it. Before they left the train and left each other and never crossed paths again. Though didn't names mean that wasn't going to happen? Probably. Probably.

"Judy," she said and shook his hand in a way that likely brought them even closer. Yeah, that's what that felt like. Like something very close indeed.

Chapter Three

Of course she saw him again. Every night on the 5:34 train. His usual seat, and those eyes always watching her. But he didn't try to get close again and she didn't try to get close to anyone else, either. The air had gone out of indulging her little kink and instead something heavy and sad settled over the whole affair.

She supposed that's the way things were. Push a kink so far and suddenly it looked dull and silly.

Though she couldn't say how she'd pushed it too far, or how he had, or what it had all meant in the end. That he'd gotten too close? Or not close enough? He'd said his name and that seemed close enough to sting. And she'd said hers, even though it stung just as hard to do it.

Everything about the encounter stung her, and even more so when one day, he just wasn't there. She looked and looked for him—maybe he'd taken another seat—but he wasn't there. Not even when she pushed through the after-Christmas sales crowd, searching for him—which felt silly, it really did.

But silliness didn't stop her. She pushed and pushed until suddenly, weirdly, there he was. She could make out the back of his blond head easily enough. He'd moved to another carriage and hadn't gotten a seat. Instead he towered over everyone, just like usual, probably pressing against some other anonymous woman now that he'd had his fun with her.

Only she kind of knew that wasn't the case. When he caught her looking, he looked right back. And when she moved toward him, he started to push forward. Away from her, while daring her with his pale gaze to follow.

Was that what this was? She could hardly guess. It didn't seem like before when he'd asked. When he'd *commanded*. He'd commanded her to follow and she had, but there was nothing like that, here.

He pushed forward and waited to see if she would go after him. And though that felt scary, she found herself doing it anyway. She heaved and shoved through the mass of writhing overheated bodies and got close enough to almost touch the back of his jacket.

Almost. Not quite enough.

Then the train lurched and stopped and he was away again. Surging toward the suddenly open doors with everyone else, out into the great, big, wide open.

By that point she suspected he knew what he was doing. Like before in the bathroom, with nothing holding her there and nothing forcing her to do anything. No press of bodies, no clamoring—just bare streets awash with December rain and fresh air as crisp as a paper cut.

And she had to follow. She had to walk through all of that open space without anything making her and the threat of him being simply not interested hanging over her head. She could feel it there like a thundercloud or a heavy weight and cringed beneath it constantly.

But she took longer strides anyway to keep up with him. And the more she did, the slower he went, until she almost felt as though they were walking side by side. She was just a shade behind him, so close she could see the faint smile on his strange face.

It could have been that he was going to murder her. Or maybe he had a dungeon somewhere in his house and now the real BDSM whips and chains were going to emerge. Gimp masks and buzzing machines and God knew what else.

Though somehow, she didn't think so. There didn't seem to be a whiff of whips and chains about any of this. It was a beast of a new kind, distinct and unknowable and lovely, and she wanted more than anything to explore it with him. To know him better than just a name and some kinky things they'd shared on a train.

Then he stopped and her heart stopped with him. He did it so abruptly she almost ran right into the back of him, but held herself and her dignity back, just in time. Waited for him to do something weird or laugh or tell her she was ridiculous.

Though as it turned out, he did none of those things. Instead, he turned and said, "This is where I live, if you're up to coming inside."

It tickled her funny bone to hear him use a phrase that sounded so British. His accent even slipped into a bit of Brit, on the word *up*.

"You don't have to," he continued, and for once his face looked open, not closed. His eyes seemed warmer, his height less intimidating. "Maybe coming inside isn't really your thing. Maybe just trains, pressing into people, hurried moments in bathrooms."

Lord, she could have drowned in his voice. His voice was like him—both soft and strong. Cold and yet not. Open and closed.

"I... I don't know," she said, then felt cowardly and mean for only managing so slight a thing.

"I'm not a maniac or anything," he said and she believed that much. Maybe not anything else, but definitely that much.

"I didn't think that."

"No, but you think you need a kink to get close, is that right? You think you can only be close if there's something there to compel you."

She felt her cheeks heat. Who was he, anyway?

"Thanks, Dr Freud."

She rolled her eyes but he just laughed. Properly, with all of his neat little white teeth. It changed his face, that broad smile. Made him even sweeter and more attractive, somehow, like a drink she couldn't quite reach.

"It's okay. I understand. I do too. I do too."

She thought about him in weird bars, suddenly, approaching people in rubber suits or studded collars. She thought about him indulging in other fleeting things with different girls and wondered if they'd followed him too. Somehow, she doubted it. She doubted he'd even wanted them too.

She knew from experience that it was hard to ask, when you suspected someone wasn't really anything like you.

"But I was thinking, maybe... Maybe trying closeness to get at a kink. You know—that way around? Maybe that this time, lovely Jude."

No one had ever called her Jude before and for the life in her she couldn't think why. It felt nice. Safer than she would have thought. Not half as dangerous as entering into nicknames and going into houses and all the ways that other close things had seemed.

"So—you want to come in?" he asked.

And she took a breath, then got the words out just fine. No problems at all.

"Yeah. Yeah, I really think I do. I really think I do."

About the Author

Charlotte Stein has been writing for over ten years, and perving on hot dudes for even longer than that. However, it's only recently that she's had the courage to pair the two together and pen some critically acclaimed, steamy-hot erotic romances. She lives in Brit-land with her very own hunk of manbeef, and their imaginary dog.

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