

*This book  
is a personalized gift  
to you from:*

**Adam & Eve**

**Mario Broser**

A photograph of a man and a woman in an intimate embrace. The woman is wearing a black lace bra and black underwear. The man is shirtless. They are standing in front of a window with blinds.

*This ebook is brought to you by*

# Adam & Eve®

LOTIONS • LINGERIE • ADULT DVDS • SEX TOYS

Go to  
**adamandeve.com**  
now and get  
**50% OFF!**  
your highest-priced item

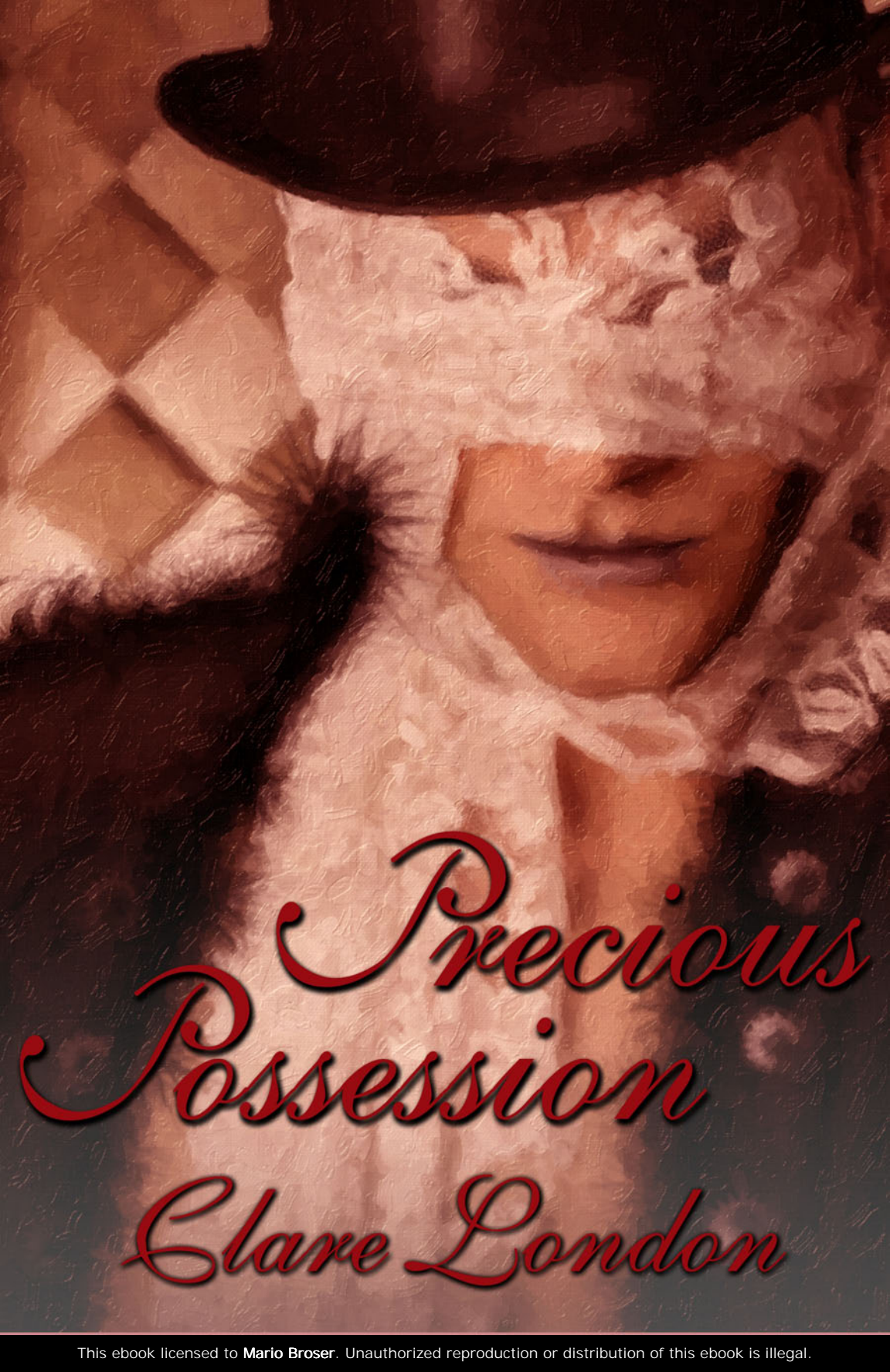
— *Plus* —  
**FREE Shipping!**

— *Plus* —  
**3 FREE DVDs!**

Enter code  
**"SEXY77"**  
at checkout!

*click to play*

Certain items not available for discount.



*Precious  
Possession  
Clare London*

*Precious Possession*

By Clare London

Published by [JMS Books LLC](http://JMSBooksLLC.com)

Visit [jms-books.com](http://jms-books.com) for more information.

Copyright 2011 Clare London

ISBN 978-1-61152-091-0





## *Precious Possession*

By Clare London

The night was thick with the damp, silent fog of autumn and the moon was a sickly spot behind the mist. Its tendrils seeped through the walls of the London house, its soot-laden breath making the servants shiver in their ragged clothes, as they slept huddled together for warmth in their meagre quarters.

In the master bedroom, the young man moved sluggishly under his comfortable covers, the room still warmed by the embers glowing in his own fireplace. His pale, handsome face was less than peaceful in his sleep, his closed eyelids flickering with swiftly passing emotions.

The house was silent, apart from the usual night time sounds of creaking boards and the hiss of the night air as it slipped through the oak doors connecting his room to the corridor outside. The sleeper was still unusually disturbed. His long fair hair was loose around his neck, wisps tangling across his cheeks as he shook his head in denial of something that no one else heard.

For a moment his strong, slender body tensed, and arched up gently from the mattress. His lips were moist with saliva, moving silently, forming the shape of words. They were full lips, though drawn back in a grimace as they struggled with phrases that were both unintelligible and unspoken. The sheets rustled underneath him and the cord of his dressing gown slid off the end of the bed on to the floor. Then his hand moved slowly up under his silk nightshirt, and a soft gasp escaped his mouth.

The voice was within him again; he knew it as certainly as he knew he dreamed. It carried the sweetness of a caress and the aggression of a cancer. There was no recognizable form to it, nothing but the warm slipperiness of naked skin, and the hot, fragrant whisper of breath on his neck. He couldn't have explained how a voice could be incarnate, but he knew that it was. The wet imprint of lips suckled at the sinews of his body, dragging at his flesh with a dark, damp desire. The illusion of

sharp teeth grazed at his throat.

None of this was new to him. Every night a new assault; a fresh seduction. Every night the anticipation of its approach, mixed with the despair of its arrival. Its possession of his mind and body brought with it the unwelcome gifts of climax and conflict. He struggled, and yet he succoured it, too.

He pushed his nightshirt away impatiently, the fingers of one hand sliding down between his bare muscled thighs, probing at the soft, sensitive skin behind his sac. He cupped and kneaded the tight balls, tormenting them. A moan slid out from between his lips, mixed with a thread of saliva. His other hand fisted firmly around his weeping erection, squeezing the blood-red, swollen flesh, and tugging the sheath of its skin up to the top and back down again. His hips started to buck gently in rhythm with his pumping, his buttocks lifting up from the linen sheets, his heels digging in to hold his body taut. His mouth still formed its silent pleas. He lifted the fingers of his other hand to his mouth, sucking until they were wet, then he reached them back down between his legs, probing further back, seeking and teasing at his puckered entrance.

The voice responded to his movements. The deep, firm call commanded him, its low tone vibrating through his hot veins as if embedded in his own belly. It could demand; sometimes it cajoled. And sometimes it *begged*.

*Touch...touch me...*

His finger slid carefully into his entrance, seeking a spot that would conquer his resistance, demanding his surrender to the coil of lust that was creeping relentlessly through his limbs, deep and irresistible in the pit of his groin. He moaned again, and his body shivered from the unerring stimulation. He knew what he wanted, what he liked. *How* he liked it.

The voice hissed its approval, for it knew his weakness too. He felt its need like a corporeal presence, its lips like suckers, its hands like the sticky tentacles of a flytrap. He keened for its caress, even as he cried in protest.

And then he was over the brink, the sexual climax wracking through him with hot, angry bursts. His body

shuddered, and his hand gripped at his cock like an anchor to the real world. His legs stiffened—his neck bared itself for an imaginary predator. Thick white seed spattered from him, catching in his palm, dribbling across his heaving belly and spilling on his carefully laundered covers. The sound of his panting was very loud in the room now, drowning out the whisper of the wind at the window. His hand lay damp and sticky on his thigh. The muscles of his legs shook with the release of tension.

In his dream, he struggled to wake, but was never allowed. He thought he could hear the echo of his own harsh breath. The fog blanketed the sky outside the window and the room was becoming chilled. There was no other voice now. He was alone again.

As always.

\* \* \* \*

“But why no extension to the loan? Why the hell *not*?” My voice was far too loud for politeness, yet I saw no reason to moderate it. I stood in my office, ledgers and reports strewn out on the mahogany desk. When I slammed my hand down, the pencils scattered and thin-sheeted documents fluttered on to the floor. Some of them were invoices from our suppliers. In fact, many of them were.

“I warned you,” came the quiet voice from behind me, and a hand pressed the shoulder of my velveteen jacket. Valentine, my trusted bookkeeper and friend. His earnest face stared at me now. “Lucas, I showed you the declining commission figures. The Auction House has hosted significantly fewer sales over the last quarter.” He leaned forward, as if to breathe the words into my ear. “But the bank will no longer accept your explanations and I can no longer manipulate the results to support us. They are threatening to foreclose unless you can provide them with a viable business plan for the year ahead. New clients, new stock. More sales.”

“Three generations,” I spat out, bitterly. “My family has run this House for three generations, and countless thousands of



pounds have passed our doors in precious gems. We have made money for many associates, and many *bankers*, too. Our name is known throughout London. Damn it, we are courted more than the royal family itself.”

“Profit,” Valentine murmured. “Turnover. The bank works only on those indicators. Their support is very restricted, Lucas, their imagination limited.”

“How am I to work with such small-mindedness?”

Valentine winced at the sharp tone of my voice and smiled, a little sadly. “Lucas, please.” His hand squeezed gently again at my shoulder, beseeching me to be calm. He had been this way all morning and I had sorely tried his patience. We had looked at the figures from all manner of ridiculous directions, and yet they still gave the same dismal picture.

“Please, please,” I mimicked him, still annoyed. “So what am I to do? I have great plans for later in the year, there are many good families who wish to deal with us. But these things cannot be hurried. We are admired for our caution and meticulous behaviour. Surely I cannot be expected to start running a market stall in the street.”

Valentine smiled. “You could do whatever you wished, Lucas, and be successful. You have that touch. But I came to tell you that I have received an offer from a potential client. He has some valuable items to offer us, exclusively, and he is willing to bring them to the table now. Just think! A prestigious sale next month would bring the House back into the public eye, and raise its profile again. The bank would be delighted. And all he wants in return is a good price, and to spend some time with you personally, to discuss the presentation of his goods.”

“He can see one of the managers—”

“You, personally,” Valentine interrupted. “He insists.”

I raised my eyebrows, unused to such assertiveness from him. “I will arrange the sale and presentation, as I always do. No client is involved at that level.” I spoke curtly. “This is a family business, Valentine, as you well know.”

His pale face flushed, although I hadn’t meant specifically to insult him. “What other options do you have, Lucas?” he

asked, his voice also quite sharp. "Answer me that. At least let me arrange for you to meet him."

There was a short silence while I struggled to control myself. The air felt too hot; the damned knot of my cravat seemed suddenly too tight. I knew I owed Valentine a lot, not least for this unexpected business opportunity he had found. "I will see him. I believe I have some free time next Thursday morning."

Valentine bit his lip, and stepped back into the shadows by the hearth. I could no longer see his eyes clearly. He shook his head. "I'm afraid that won't do. It must be in the evening, Lucas. That's the only time he will come."

I started to laugh at the effrontery of such a client, but something made me bite it back.

Valentine sighed, so softly I barely noticed it. "I'll arrange for him to call on Thursday night." And then he left the room, with me staring, bemused, at his retreating back.

\* \* \* \*

It was much later in the evening when Valentine returned. I had drunk a bottle of good red wine from my cellar and pored over all the reports yet again. The figures did not change, and my interest was fitful. I leaned back in my chair and watched the coals in the hearth sink to a dull red glow. My anger was gone, drunk away with the rich liquor, and reason had returned, but by now I was wallowing in my own troubles; brooding on the current crisis.

Valentine came in carrying another bottle and two fresh glasses. He had discarded his jacket, and I knew he had locked up the House for me, sending the staff home and handling the domestic chores for supper, appraising what duties were needed tonight and what could be left until tomorrow.

One look at his expression and I knew he appraised my mood in the same measured, compassionate way.

"Lucas, don't be so hard on yourself." His dark brown eyes met mine and for a moment I let myself drink in the simple devotion I saw there. He was such a quiet, steady man, his pale

visage framed by silky dark locks, a vivid contrast to my own blond fairness. I may have struggled to prove my manhood to those in London's conservative business community who still saw me as a pretty youth, but Valentine *was* that pretty youth, in so many ways. Deep, soulful eyes...full lips...a slim body, but as strong as my own. He was only a year younger than I, though I sometimes felt a lot older. He had been beside me since we were children.

"I'm sorry." I sighed. "I'm intolerant of so many things, Valentine. I dislike so many of these commercial politics. Perhaps my own strategies have brought us to this."

"No!" He interrupted me, unusually agitated. "Never think that. The clients adore you, Lucas. The quality of our precious stones has increased tenfold since you inherited the business, and the name of the Fides Auction House is even more deeply respected. They thought you too young for the responsibility, I know, but you've proved them wrong many times. If there's just one criticism that I hear, it's that you spend too much time alone. You hardly ever attend society events, yet your father was so gregarious. It is good for business, you must know that. People need the chance to meet you. To bring you their patronage, to be enchanted by you." His voice was suddenly uneven. "You have a charisma, Lucas, that captivates us all."

"But still we face foreclosure," I said, a little wryly. A candle on the wall sputtered in the quiet of the room. It had been a long day, and I'd not be sorry to see the end of it, with the consolation of spending the rest of the evening with my best friend.

Valentine poured us both some more wine, and brought it over to where I sat by the fire. He settled into a chair opposite me, his brow creased. "A period of consolidation, that's all you need. The foundations have been shaken, but not rocked. You must keep your nerve, and let people see that you have every confidence in the future of the business. Maybe attendance at the opening of the Grand Hotel next week would be a perfect opportunity. I know you received the invitation. Serena would love you to escort her—"

"Not you?" I interrupted him. "I am sure she would prefer

you by her side rather than her tedious brother.” It was provocative of me—almost cruel—and I didn’t know what made me snap at him like that.

His gaze fell to his cuffs, the starched fabric less than crisp, as if he’d wrung his hands together a hundred times since dressing. The shirt was a good one, for I gave him use of my tailor and insisted on advantageous credit terms for him, though it was not as fine as the ones in my own wardrobe. There was always something about his clothes that made them look a little more worn than they should be. It was almost as if he wanted to wear his social status as a uniform, so that all might see he did not have as proud a family name as my own.

The candlelight lent a soft glint to the sweat on his forehead and there was the sparkle of stray drops on his lashes. Despite myself, I leaned forward and raised a hand to touch him. I wanted suddenly to apologize for my abrupt mood, to tell him how much I appreciated his constancy and to take hold of that gentle, unassuming face and tilt it up to mine...

“We need your permission, Lucas,” he said, abruptly, and flushed. My hand fell back to my side. “She has no other close family but you. As her brother and guardian, our marriage needs your support.”

My hand clenched involuntarily into a fist. My mouth felt a little dry. The moment was suspended in time, the atmosphere full of strange, harsh disorientation. “I had no idea your plans were so...well developed.” Did I sound angry? Bitter, maybe.

He leaned towards me now and took my arm. I think I shivered. “You’ve both shown me friendship and companionship, Lucas. Don’t think I’m not grateful. Your father’s generosity gave me a home after Papa’s death, and also a respectable position for me in the business. Hell...” he laughed, a little self-consciously. “Isn’t that the very stuff of romantic novels? The poor, distant relative, taken into the bosom of the rich, successful family. Finding a rewarding life there, and maybe love, too.”

“Love.” My voice was a harsh echo. My eyes felt hot underneath their lids and my chest tightened as if hands were squeezing the blood and breath from my heart.

Valentine's eyes narrowed, and for a moment I glimpsed anger in his expression. He moved his hand away, but I felt every movement of his departing fingertips, trailing almost seductively along the inside of my wrist. "Yes. Love. We all need that, Lucas, surely?" He dropped his gaze and frowned. "I'm concerned for you. I don't think you are sleeping well. You've been so distracted recently...I would almost say disturbed."

I didn't reply, for the idea was nonsense, and any denial from me untenable. He meant well, of course, and I had no justifiable reason to be annoyed at his concern. Did I say before how highly I esteemed Valentine? He was both a friend and an excellent employee. A man of great sensitivity and fine looks.

He was exquisite.

And my admiration of him was slowly destroying me.

I had looked at him every day of my adult life, and I felt things I should not. I chastised myself—I *despised* myself—for my need and my predatory thoughts. I fought myself with determination and a young man's arrogance, and yet I continued to lose to my basest desires.

And now, all I could think of was that, married to my dear sister Serena, he would be even further from my reach.

\* \* \* \*

The young man lay in his bed and sweated silently. How could he call them dreams? They came at the deepest part of sleep. They were *part* of him, drawing out his anguish and his lusts. His hair lay spread on the pillow, thin strands of it sticky on his cheeks, and his long, elegant fingers clenched into fists at his sides.

The low voice laughed, softly; the voice he'd grown used to, night after night.

It was a nightmare, surely. A possession of both his mind and his body, his limbs suffused with the flow of rich, hot blood that felt less than—and yet somehow *so much more than*—his own. He was consumed by an ache that began at his extremities, then rippled swiftly through every nerve. His legs

tensed on the cool linen beneath him; his fingers ghosted over the taut skin of his hips. He'd foregone his nightshirt this evening, his naked body spread out on the bed like a sacrifice. Long legs...a slender, almost hairless torso...his cock nestled amongst crisp curls, twitching its way towards full erection.

The voice that filled him drew in its breath with approval. It was in his head, in his veins, in his heart. It pumped along with the rhythmic shudder of his body. His hands crept inexorably towards his groin and the comfort he would find there. He wanted it—he *needed* it.

He had been ordered towards it, time and again.

*Let it happen. Surrender to it.* The voice was familiar in its persuasion, rich in its seduction. He resisted it, but he couldn't remember why. Not when it offered such promise, dripping sensuously around him, both delicious and destructive in the humid darkness. He began to pump himself, almost lazily, the smooth, damp skin straining under his touch.

*You are magnificent. You must be treasured, like warm, beaten gold. Like a rich, ruby jewel...like thick velvet cloth.*

He felt the climax race along his veins, so much faster than before. But then wasn't every night escalating that little bit further, spinning him that little bit nearer a total loss of control?

*Touch...* came the whisper, barely more than the sound of the blood rushing in his ears. *I want to touch you...*

The young man shuddered, and his back arched up on the bed, his heels dragging across the mattress. The heavy wooden base creaked; the sheets clung to the glistening sweat on his thighs. If he'd been awake, he would have heard his panting grow harsher, like so many nights before. His hands were fierce on his own body, knowing how far he could go, knowing what would satisfy. He pumped at himself, his eyes still closed tight, his body still in his sleep, yet its needs concentrated on his swollen shaft.

He groaned and cried out softly as his climax rushed through him. The thick seed burst from him in eager escape, running between his fingers, coating his already slick skin.

*Let me be your first, you beautiful, untouched creature. Be*



*ready for me. You are already reaching for me. Needing more.*

“No!” he sobbed, but the sound was swallowed by his gasps of breath, heaving and desperate, the only sounds in the still, cool bedroom.

\* \* \* \*

“Valentine is here with a...guest, Lucas.” Serena’s voice was polite, but her whole demeanour showed her disapproval of business being conducted at our home, and in the evening, too. I had no appetite to argue with her. The day had been long, and the anticipation of this evening painful. I had attended many business meetings in my professional life, of course, and I had no fear of them.

Why, then, did this one feel so different?

Valentine appeared at the doorway behind her, passing his overcoat to our manservant. He placed a proprietary hand on her arm, and her cheeks coloured. Had they touched hands in the hallway, linked fingers in that coy way that lovers have? Had they kissed? His lips were pink, like a woman’s. I wondered how they might taste.

*Good God.* I shocked myself. I was becoming more careless, maybe because of the recent troubles at work. This was something deep inside me that must remain there, even at the risk of increasing my personal torment.

“Mister Valentine, sir, with Mister Gideon Arnaud,” the manservant announced. Valentine’s eyes sought out mine as if to remind me how much depended on this meeting. There was a movement in the shadows behind him, the rustle of cloth as a top coat was removed, and a man strode into the room, passing Valentine as if he were nothing more than part of the décor. A tall man, and broad of shoulders—he was a burst of energy and a bold presence, a wind of force in the calm, quiet evening. Immaculately dressed in a personally tailored suit, and a crisp white silk shirt. Sumptuous purple waistcoat and soft, expensive leather boots marking a confident path across my polished wooden floor. I felt a tightening in my throat, as if the air had

been suddenly charged around me.

"Mister Arnaud, good evening." I struggled with the civility. When I held out my hand, it was almost like a challenge.

The man in question slipped off a glove and took my hand eagerly. "Mister Lucas Fides. They say throughout London that you are both intelligent and attractive. And I would add, quite charming. It's a pleasure to meet you properly at last."

A deep voice, laced with arrogance. A voice that cultivated a natural charisma, and then assumed it would be heeded. I found my eyes drawn to his hand, the long fingers curled around my palm. It was a firm touch that suggested far more than politeness.

"I am not aware that we've ever met before," I replied with spirit. "In either a proper or an improper circumstance. But I welcome you tonight."

The man smiled and loosened his grip as if he knew how it disquieted me. We were both standing over by the hearth, but after he released my hand I took a step further back, away from him. I couldn't have explained why.

I examined him as closely as discretion would allow. He must have been a good fifteen years older than I, but he had such unusually handsome features it wasn't easy to age him. His skin was paler even than Valentine's, but I couldn't hazard a guess at his nationality, either. Straight nose; taut cheekbones; slightly square chin. Maybe north European? I had heard of people there with great fortunes and unusual heritage. His hair was almost raven-coloured, and he wore it loose, just a little too long for the current fashion. There was also the hint of precious metal—a gold earring?—glimmering at his ear. Such an affectation was unheard of in our city's society. His eyes were a soft dark brown, but sharp in intelligence, and far richer than Valentine's young puppy-dog look. His mouth was full and twisted in a half smile that had teased since his first glance at me. I glanced at his neck and saw his cravat had been slightly loosened. I frowned. I knew the man had been perfectly dressed when he first stepped into the room and set eyes on me. I couldn't recall seeing his hand at his throat at any time. I felt as if

time had passed and I hadn't been aware of it. The disorientation was strange and unsettling. There was a stirring within myself that I couldn't identify.

He was extraordinarily striking, like no one I had ever met before. Something teased at me, tugging at the sleeve of my mind, demanding attention.

I was afraid—suddenly and completely inexplicably—and I struggled to hide it in my expression.

He was watching my face, as if memorizing my features. His gaze was far too intense for polite behavior. “You have the measure of me, Mister Fides,” he murmured. “Do you like what you see?” His eyes glinted with amusement at my appraisal of him. I felt an irrational desire to strike him, but swallowed the urge. His own gaze never flinched.

“Would you care to tell me something more about yourself, sir?” I said, more firmly.

“Lucas?” Serena’s voice was hesitant. Maybe she thought me rude towards him, but I doubted whether our manners held any interest at all for Gideon Arnaud.

He smiled, his eyes never leaving me. “Your sister has been most kind, and your house is charming. But I am afraid that I have little time tonight for a resume of my past and present. Maybe over dinner, another night? In fact, I insist on it.” He looked behind him as if to share the joke with the others, but his eyes darted swiftly back to me, as if he really had no time for anyone else. I heard Serena murmur something, and I glanced up. Valentine had taken her arm and was directing her back out of the room. She glanced at his face, and flushed. But she nodded her acceptance and left the room, and as I watched, he closed the door gently behind her.

\* \* \* \*

Gideon Arnaud slipped off his other glove and moved towards one of the armchairs. It was impossibly rude not to offer him a seat, and so I gestured to the chairs and sat alongside him. Valentine was still in the room, but he seemed content to

stay by the picture window, his back to us. Arnaud settled himself easily, his movements confident, his limbs graceful despite his size. “I have caught you a little unawares, Fides, but you might guess that I enjoy that approach. I also guess that you like to know a little more about the men you do business with, and so I bring myself here tonight along with a sample of my goods for your ...*entertainment*.” He paused, and I thought I heard Valentine shift gently, as if he listened more carefully than he appeared to. “Unless, of course, you are willing to accept my patronage and companionship without condition, and in the spirit in which it is offered?”

I wondered how many times Arnaud had asked that question and received his preferred answer. I suspected other business associates had been both happy and grateful to answer ‘yes, indeed.’ I knew instinctively he was a man who expected attention and would usually receive it in full, but no, I was not ready to accept him on those terms. Instead, I stared back into eyes that expected obeisance, and I pursed my lips. Arnaud’s gaze was marked by dark-flecked irises, a kaleidoscope of passion channelling out through his eyes. I felt the full force of him—of a bold irrationality; of fervour and self-obsession; of an inherent danger. And all of it over laden with that vibrant, cynical charm.

“No,” I said. “I will not accept anything from you, Arnaud, without condition. I think that *you* might guess that of *me*.”

I definitely saw Valentine move this time. His face was in my view, over Arnaud’s shoulder, and he seemed to be smiling.

My visitor rose and moved to the table by the fireplace. He drew out a black velvet bag from inside his jacket, and in a single bold movement he spilled out a pile of jewels onto the linen tablecloth. A pile of luxurious size; of many-faceted cuts; of a vivid brightness that caught the licking flames of the firelight and reflected them back across our enraptured faces.

“Rubies,” I said, softly. I sounded shocked, even to my own ears.

“Yes, of course,” he murmured. “Rich, ruby jewels. Thick, velvet cloth...”

My eyes darted up to his face, the colour of the rubies staining my cheeks.

“The prizes of my collection,” he said gently, raising an eyebrow as if to admonish me for a childish overreaction. “That’s all I describe, Mister Fides.”

I stared. Valentine came around to stand at my shoulder and gazed down at the jewels. “Lucas, they’re magnificent, aren’t they? They would be such a spectacle. We could invite every jeweller in the city. Every woman would respond to them. Every man would buy them for a lover.”

“Allow me a modest involvement in the event, and they’re yours to handle,” Arnaud said, smoothly. “I just ask for your time. Your company. It’s not too much to grant me, is it, to be able to handle such treasure?” I felt Valentine’s excited breath on my neck, but it was Gideon Arnaud’s palm that I gazed at. The last, single ruby lay on the manicured skin, and winked its reflection at me.

“It’s *all* yours to handle,” he said, his voice much lower, as if he wished to exclude Valentine.

“The jewels...” I said, a little shakily.

“Of course,” he smiled. “That’s what I meant.” His gaze flickered to Valentine beside me, then back to me. “So, should your young assistant take them now, to begin his cataloguing?”

\* \* \* \*

We were alone, Gideon Arnaud and I. Valentine had taken the jewels to my strongbox and to record them in his ledgers, except for the last one. Arnaud stood by the fireplace, still rolling it between his fingertips as if reluctant to part with it. I gazed into its rich crimson depths and I felt as if I existed in there, trapped within its beautiful shine, manipulated by his pale, elegant fingers.

“Who are you?” I whispered.

He laughed. It was a low but vibrant sound. The curtains at the window rippled softly as if with the vibration, when I knew it was only the night breeze. “But you know me already, Lucas. I may call you that, may I not? You know me, and my voice. And I

know far more of *you* than any person before me.”

“No,” I said, doggedly. I turned away from him, to stare into the fire, the heat an excuse for the horrified humiliation that flushed my face. “I’ve never met you before. I’ve never known anyone show such rudeness, such appalling arrogance—”

“But that’s nonsense, Lucas, isn’t it? You are such a splendidly arrogant young man yourself.” The tone of his voice was very stern. “I didn’t think you were a hypocrite, too. I have no time for the weary, wasteful conventions of London society, and I believe that you have the same struggle against convention yourself. It makes no less a man of you, but is a demonstration of how awkward you will always be here. How disturbed and disturbing to your loved ones. How *frustrating* your life will be without breaking free of it.”

“Who are you to tell me how my life is?”

“Oh, but Lucas, I am the only one who *knows*!” He laughed again, and I glimpsed the brief shine of perfectly shaped white teeth. “The rubies were my calling card, and *only* that. I wouldn’t usually pander to such protocol, but I thought you would appreciate the sensuality of such stones. It was important that I meet you at last, in the flesh, you see. I cannot wait any longer, and nor do I think can you. Come with me now, and we can abandon this charade.”

He was much closer now, taller by a head or so, leaning down to breathe his words on me. I felt the heat of his body; smelled the slight coppery tang of his unfamiliar cologne. He tugged at his cravat as if it irritated him, and I was vividly aware of the movement of his arms, tightly muscled and stronger than anything I might show in my defence.

It was ridiculous, but the bizarre, mystifying fear suddenly returned, creating a cold shudder throughout my body. I was angry with myself for being so weak, yet it was a startlingly physical effect.

He sighed, and I wondered if I’d said something aloud. His eyes danced as if with the knowledge of every thought I’d ever had, every cry I’d ever given in the dark of the night. “It’s frightening, isn’t it? But don’t fear *me*, Lucas. You have power,



too. A strength of will, that in one so young is both impressive and delicious. It just needs nurturing. We will work so well together...Damn it, Lucas Fides, compared to that, what are *rubies*?" He turned suddenly, and flung the final stone across the room. It fell against the dresser, rattling the bone china inside, rippling the reflection of the room in the glass doors.

His voice snapped angrily. "Your magnificence is trapped amongst these milk and water creatures, peddling their goods for them for the sake of a commission and a paltry reputation that will likely never survive three more generations." There was a growl underlying his words; the air in the room seemed to resonate with it. "You deserve so much more. I've waited too long to see you to this age, to this place, to this *readiness*!"

He turned back swiftly, and caught me off balance, his hand gripping my shoulder. I didn't try to pull away, but looked up into his eyes. What had made me think they were mere brown? There was gold there, and the red of his own rubies, like blood against his lashes. They held the flames of the fire, and captured my own shock and swirling confusion. I felt his other hand trace its fingers along the base of my jaw. It was a touch both possessive and sensual.

"Beautiful," he murmured. "And ready, at last."

"What are you saying?" My voice was hoarse, and I wrenched my head away from him. "You have never met me before. I decide when I'm ready for whatever I want to do."

He shrugged. He looked a little angry now, as if he hadn't expected my resistance to him. "And you will decide you want to join me, very soon. It's what you want, what you crave. I make no secret of the fact that I want to be your first, and you will give me that honour. I demand it!"

"You demand it?" Then I felt the anger rise up in me, too. "You will demand *nothing* of me, for you talk a wild, uncouth nonsense, and you touch me without my permission, and you assume a familiarity with me that I allow to *no one*!" I knew I was shouting—I wondered why Valentine didn't hear me and rush back in. "My first? What does that mean? How patronizing and offensive will you be, Arnaud, before I call my people to have you

thrown out of my home?”

For the first time, his confidence appeared to waver. His eyes flashed with something uncertain. “It means whatever you wish it to. Your partner. Your companion. You need only touch me to know what I can bring to you.” His brow creased, just a slight puzzlement. “You mustn’t try to resist me, Lucas. It’s meant to be, and you know it. Your place is to be mine.”

“Dear God!” I exclaimed. Such outrageous words. Did he really expect me to tolerate it any longer?

His hand tightened on my shoulder. “Can’t you feel it, Lucas? Can’t you feel it inside you? That’s your need for me. It’s strong today, in this household, with me near you. You’ve been calling me to you for years, now—”

I pulled back, shaking my head vehemently. “There’s nothing inside me but my father’s determination and business skills, and the love for my family and friends.”

His eyes flashed with renewed excitement; he wasn’t fazed in any way at my own rudeness. In fact, he seemed to welcome it. “And such spirit! I cannot think of a more stimulating mixture of youth and resolve. You *shine*, Lucas. Everything about you cries out to me. I felt it even before I entered your house.”

“Leave now,” I said, my words tight and awkward in my mouth. “At once.”

Gideon Arnaud smiled, and released my shoulder. I wasn’t sure if it was because of my words, or even if they bothered him. “Shall I tell you what I have heard from those cries, Lucas Fides?” He stayed too close to me: his breath was hot against my cheek, like a burn. “I hear your need, and I hear your desperation. You’ve always been like this. You’ve always felt different and isolated from your kind. You’ve struggled to be what they all want of you—but you fail.” He moved to my side so that I had to turn my head to look at him, and his voice dropped in tone. “I know that you are virgin, Lucas Fides. You have never taken or been taken, by man or woman. You have yet to experience the beauty and indescribable excitement of your first time.”

I flushed deeply and gasped at the sheer audacity of his words.

"I want to give that to you," he murmured, and that insidious smile teased at his lips again. "To take that from you. To *share* that with you."

I was horribly shocked, yet something burned in my veins. Something familiar. Something of great, fierce passion. Was I completely mad? The man was wild and disgraceful, and I had given him far more of my time than his behaviour deserved.

"I may well be virgin," I muttered through gritted teeth. "But I am not a victim. I will never take anything like that from you, nor give anything in return."

He raised an eyebrow, his fingers reaching out as if to retrace my face. "Victim? What a melodramatic word to use. Do you think that I want such a thing? Maybe I just want friendship, companionship. I seek for a like mind and heart...*Lucas*..."

He moved too quickly for me to have anticipated him. He grasped my chin, tilted my head up, and he kissed me full on the mouth. For seconds, I allowed it—damn it, I felt my mouth open in welcome, and the sudden hot slickness of his tongue slide into me. My head swam and my limbs shivered with excruciating lust. I knew that feeling well enough to know the grip of its tendrils in my flesh. But at the same time I shivered with humiliation. It was like a violation.

I reached up and thrust him away from me. My body mouthed complaint and loss, but I ignored it as the whore it obviously was. "I choose my own companions," I said, my voice cracked. "And that choice will not include you. *Never* you! I believe I asked you to leave."

His eyes narrowed. In that moment there was the subtlest shift of power, suggesting that perhaps he was no longer the stronger, more sophisticated man. He ran a finger along his lower lip and his eyes never left my face. He seemed to be calming his own breathing, too. I was inordinately pleased with my mastery of him.

And then he shrugged again and the moment passed. He picked up his gloves without another word and strode towards the door. He paused there, and turned back for a moment. "You will cry for *me*, Lucas," he said, softly. "Do not doubt it."

Then he passed through the open doorway and left me alone.

\* \* \* \*

The young man cried that night. He had no notion of why, or how, but the hot trail of tears ran down his cheeks, and his hand was fierce and cruel on his own flesh.

There was such urgency! His mind was confused and distressed, but his body cried more keenly than ever. He thought he might never be satisfied; he might never find physical peace. Would his limbs ache for a touch forever? For one, particular touch?

His body was still partially clothed. He'd found no energy to undress, only a need to collapse, and to seek the comfort of sleep. Yet the comfort had deserted him. His fingers slipped inside his open shirt, teasing his nipples to a painful hardness. With a groan, he heaved his body to its knees on the bed, stretching his legs wide apart. His eyelids were still tightly shut, though the eyes shifted with distress beneath. He pressed a hand down inside the open fastening of his trousers, and his fingers came away damp with the leaking of his arousal. He dropped his head, and began to fist around his cock, pushing impatiently at the material of his clothes, to give him clearer access.

*There's so much more to enjoy. let me show you. So much more pleasure...*

Tonight, he protested; tonight he struggled. He felt a desire that threatened to overwhelm his lustful need—and it was the desire for his own way.

The voice laughed softly, as if his desire were nothing but the trailing branch of a willow tree, to be brushed aside by a careless stranger. *Passion is good*, the voice murmured. *But not against me.*

The sleeper wept, and argued, though his words would have been unintelligible to any other listener in the night.

*No.* The voice was persuasive, but angry, now. *Accept it.*

*Revel in it! You have met the one you want. The only one. Your pride makes you precious, but you will cry for me, regardless.*

The voice was so much more vivid tonight. It saturated the common articles in his room; it crept along his clothing. It was the only thing in his mind, and it held its position most jealously.

*Give your young man's body to me, it purred. We deserve each other. Your life will mirror mine. I will be your first and forever your best.*

The young man's body arched at last, his hips slamming against his fist, his cries loud with the sudden, sharp climax. His limbs shuddered to rest. He reached the sticky fingers up to his mouth, sucking them in, licking at the seed that had burst from his throbbing, now diminishing cock, swallowing it down. His limbs stretched, languorously, and his face was deeply flushed, even in sleep. The voice had seeped into him. He had accepted it, for once.

*You cannot resist me, because I know what you want. I know you too well.*

\* \* \* \*

I had no idea of the time, but the pitying look on Valentine's face told me it was too late to be working. He moved around my office, extinguishing some of the peripheral lamps until a sharply angled shade was cast over my desk. I sat in my shirtsleeves, my cravat lying on a nearby chair and the buttons at my throat loosened. The room was always comfortably warm.

"Lucas, neither of us should be up at this hour, let alone working on the sale. It will be a great success, of course it will. It will be the greatest thing that the Fides House has ever hosted."

I laughed, a little sharply. "You speak as if it will be my best...and last."

"No!" he cried, in gentle protest. He moved over to the desk and put a hand to my forehead, as Serena might have done when I was younger. I was aware of the rustle of silk along his own shirtsleeves, as he brushed my fallen locks aside. His fingertips were very cool, and I felt my skin shiver, as if I were still dreaming.

"It's very late, Lucas. I have cleared away the supper things and locked up the House. You must go home to bed."

I don't know what made me speak out then. Valentine was so tender; such a good friend. And I felt suddenly bereft. "I am in thrall to him, Valentine. When this sale is done...I must be free of him, then. Mustn't I?"

*Help me, Valentine*, I wanted to cry out, suddenly very frightened of my weakness. *He wants too much of me. Save me!*

Valentine was gazing at me, a little startled. He hadn't asked to whom I referred, for he obviously knew. After all, Arnaud had been too often at our offices in the last few weeks. "You were generous to allow him time at the House," he said. "I had thought you enjoyed his company."

*Enjoyed his company?* I wanted to shout aloud, but knew Valentine would think I had gone mad. I had all but thrown Arnaud out of my house the first night we met, yet the following morning he had arrived to begin the cataloguing of his jewels at Valentine's side. And somehow I had never again been able to muster the courage to dismiss him. The forthcoming Fides auction of rare rubies was the topic on everyone's lips and across every dining table, and the bank's interest in us was far more buoyant. Serena had welcomed Arnaud, though remained quiet in front of him, and Valentine seemed to thrive under his attention in the cutting rooms.

Who was I to admit to a nameless, faceless fear of the man who appeared to be our saviour?

"You fascinate him," Valentine murmured. When I glanced up, his eyes stared down at me, deep brown pools of emotion that had always promised me sanctuary and support. "Is that so surprising, Lucas? Or so *dangerous*?"

I was suddenly bemused. His tone was sharper than usual. Did he have some issue with the disturbing man himself?

He laughed softly at my puzzlement. "What do I know of dangerous, that's what you're thinking, isn't it? I have a job I do well, and a modest respect from you and your business colleagues. I am propriety's most faithful servant, and as a reward, I am engaged to a charming and beautiful young woman."



I was even more confused. “Serena? You love her, though, you have told me so—”

He leaned over suddenly, his arms coming down firmly onto the desk, one on either side of me. I spun around in my chair, with no choice but to stare up at him. His eyes were unusually bright, shining fiercely despite the lack of light in the room. “You are so alike, Lucas,” he hissed. “Doesn’t everyone tell you so?” His hand took hold of my shoulder as if to anchor himself, but his fingers bit cruelly into the flesh. My breath was too short, my heart pumping. “You and Serena...she is so like you, though much more delicate, more fragile, less...” His head dipped suddenly towards my neck, and I felt the brush of wet lips against the skin at my throat. “Less *masculine*. It’s so very unnerving, sometimes, Lucas. That she’s so like you—and yet *not* you!”

I should have been shocked at his behaviour, but I wasn’t thinking clearly. His lips lingered at my neck and the tip of his tongue licked at my skin. I moaned, involuntarily. “But you want her. Everyone says so...” My mouth ghosted in response to him. I couldn’t help myself. I was weak. I needed a touch from the one that I loved...from *him*.

“No.” He sounded relieved, as if his true feelings had finally been allowed to speak. “I want *you*! She can never be anything but a substitute—a way for me to satisfy society and yet to have some legitimate intimacy with *you*.”

“What are you saying? Valentine, what the hell do you mean by this?” I was swamped now with horror; stunned by his confession! Yet when his mouth nudged up from my chin and sucked gently at my lower lip, I grabbed at him like a drowning man might grasp a floating spar. I could smell his inexpensive scent, smell the aromas of soft cleaning cloth and the gem-cutter’s tools from his work in the auction room. I could see the smooth, pale skin of his throat at his loosened collar, I could see the sharp nub of his nipple tightening behind the thin shirt fabric. And so I leaned into him none too gently, and pressed my lips against his.

The taste of him was worth every second of the illicit shame. Damp; fresh; softly sweet. I was consumed by a lust I

knew so very, very well. I wanted more, and at the same time I knew I couldn't have it. I waited to be pushed aside—I waited for his disgust.

"Lucas." His whisper was a mix of astonishment and pleasure. "All I ever wanted...all I ever hoped." And then his hand twisted almost cruelly in my hair, pulling me to my feet. His face was against mine and his tongue thrust back eagerly into my mouth. The slender young body forced itself against me, and his hand groped at the lap of my trousers as if infuriated by their distraction. "Now!" he growled, his voice urgent, his teeth tugging at my lips, his breath hot into my throat. "I want you *now*!"

\* \* \* \*

My dream had become reality. I sobbed with it, for I was beyond words. Valentine's kisses were even hotter than my own, his tongue inside my mouth, his hands clutching at my clothing.

We leaned back against the desk, hands clawing to touch skin. He pushed my shirt from my shoulders so fiercely that some of the buttons broke off, and when I reached to undo his in return, he wrenched it out of his trousers, dragging it from his torso so that our bare flesh could meet. I stroked his skin, wonderingly; I rolled the sharp bud of his nipple between my fingers, and watched the wince of delight on his face. I kissed his mouth, his jaw, his throat. My lips sucked the sweat from the tendons in his neck, eager to taste all of him.

But Valentine was faster. He dropped to his knees in front of me, tugging at the buttons of my trousers, pushing me even further back so that my back arched against the table edge. His hand slipped inside my underclothes, cool fingers tangling in the curls at my groin and making me cry out with the shock. He pulled my cock out roughly, his palm curled around it. He looked up at me only once, his eyes dark with need, his expression one that I had never seen before on the face that was almost more familiar than my own—and then he bent his head and slid his mouth down over me.

I cried out with amazement; I was as rigid as if I were

paralyzed. All I could bring my shocked self to do was grasp his black locks and watch the pale face move back and forth, sucking me in, then sliding me out along his tongue. He was panting softly around me, making sounds that could only be described as hungry. His mouth was hot and tight, and every slide that I made in and out of him thrilled me.

I thought I would climax, there and then.

Then Valentine muttered something to himself, shifting away from me and sitting back on his heels. I should have been embarrassed to see my cock rearing shamelessly from my groin, blood-hot and glistening with his saliva. But all I wanted was to touch him again.

*Touch me...*

I heard Valentine hiss, I assumed it must be from desire. Or had I disappointed him somehow? He stood up and kicked his own trousers from his legs, now standing naked before me. His skin shone with sweat, his chest heaving with shallow breaths. He was superb—my desire incarnate.

“Valentine.” I couldn’t say anything but his name. I must have sounded like an imbecile.

But he smiled at me, his eyes still dark and demanding. “Now you know me,” he whispered “Now you know who I really am.”

I nodded, unable to take my eyes from him. He put his hands either side of my flushed face, and for a second we both listened to our harsh panting. I wanted to kiss him again, but he shook his head, still smiling. “Take me, Lucas.”

“No. Not in the office.” I was ashamed to be savouring this beauty in such a sterile place. I wanted only the best for him. I would take him to my bed, to clean, cool sheets and a warm fireplace, and we would drink good wine and laugh together...

He shook his head, letting out a small grunt. “No time. I cannot wait, I cannot lose you now. Take me at once—*here!*”

He twisted in front of me and bent over the desk. Papers crumpled underneath him; my pen rolled over the edge and away under the chair. He clutched the far side of the tabletop and splayed his legs apart for me.

I shook with desire and fear. I didn’t know what to do,

afraid of hurting him in my ignorance. He was magnificence, he was beauty, he was my prize...

Then he turned his head to the side and his dark, luscious eyes looked up at me. "Lucas," he whispered.

I was stretched over his back before I found coherent thought. My trousers slipped down my thighs and calves, hobbling me awkwardly around my ankles until I pulled one foot free. I watched my hands part his buttocks, running my thumb along the warm sweaty flesh between them. Was that really me, my possessiveness, my *demand*? He shivered, and I pressed my hot, aching shaft against his entrance, clumsy yet so very, very eager.

*I choose my own companions*, I thought wildly, and wondered where that memory had suddenly come from.

I forced myself into him as gently as I could, and yet we both gasped with it. His head dropped towards the desk, his face hidden from my view. Then I tangled my hand into his hair and began to thrust.

Time existed only in the agonized nerves of my body.

I reared above him, my feet tangled in discarded silk and cloth, and the sweat running in rivulets down my back into the crease of my thrusting buttocks. He whimpered beneath me, his face lowered almost to the desk itself, his arse high in the air. I could feel him shaking, pumping at himself with one hand, the other gripping the desktop, trying to hold his body steady against my frenzied use. I was so careless with him I should have been ashamed. My only defence was that I was overwhelmed with the passion. I'd never imagined how strong the delight could be, to take a real body instead of my own frustrating palm! I sank into it like a sensual quicksand.

I was indeed a virgin until this day. There was laughter somewhere in the back of my mind. A melodic, cruel sound. Was it real? For a moment I faltered, afraid of discovery, then Valentine arched up beneath me with a groan of pure pleasure, wisps of his dark hair catching in the sweat at my throat, the smell of him in my flared nostrils.

"Cry for me, Lucas."

I cried aloud as I climaxed inside him, my body shuddering with ecstasy, my hands gripping him fiercely. He groaned as his own climax burst from his cock, swollen within his fist. I heard the spatters of the hot, sticky fluid drip to the floor—I felt his hips forcing back against me, his muscles clenching around my shaft.

Nothing would ever be the same again. It was done. It was *bliss*.

\* \* \* \*

I lay in Valentine's arms, still gently panting. The exhaustion was a caress; satisfaction crept deliciously throughout my strained limbs. Our clothing lay crumpled beneath us, but neither of us needed cover. We were content to be naked and lying on the floor, warmed by each other. He had taken hold of me after I finished and laid me down. I hadn't been able to move with any assurance, let alone for both of us. His hands had been as gentle as I'd ever known, and yet they touched me intimately, firm and possessive as well. Then he'd stretched out beside me and sighed into my skin as he also relaxed. His head now nestled against my shoulder, his face hidden again from me.

“Lucas.” Just a whisper. “Was that what you wanted? Was it *me* you desired?”

“Yes.” I felt the slippery sweat of his body, shifting against me. Muscle, sinew, smooth young masculine flesh. I breathed raggedly, every bodily function disturbed, every part of me feeling so astonishingly different. “It always has been.”

“And so I was your first.” His lips were damp against my chest and his mouth moved as if he smiled.

*It was a chilling echo of another's voice.*

“Why do you say that?” Shock gripped my heart and squeezed. *Why that particular phrase?*

Valentine turned his face slowly up to me. His familiar face, flushed with his passion; lips swollen from my fierce kisses. Valentine had always been beside me, supporting me, caring for me. Always so loyal; a trusted friend; so generous in his devotion.

His hand trailed at my side, brushing at my nude flesh. It felt like a brand. “Did you think you’d cheat him, Lucas? Visit your desire on *me*, before he might take you himself?”

“I...who are you talking about?”

Valentine made a soft noise of annoyance. “Don’t pretend to me, Lucas. You know who wants you, who wants to master you. He has waited for many years to claim you.” He stretched gently against me, my skin as sensitive to his movements as if they were my own. “But now you’ve had *me*. He will never be your first ...just as you vowed to him.”

“What?” I stuttered in my confusion. “I never thought such a thing, Valentine. I don’t understand...My God, you know I would never use you in that way.”

He chuckled softly, yet the sound made me uneasy. “No, you wouldn’t, would you?” He kissed my jaw, his breath hot on my flesh. “You would not have the guile.”

I frowned. “I don’t care for the path of your conversation, I—”

“Be silent!” Valentine smiled, even as he raised his voice, startling me. Suddenly the familiarity of his features was twisted into something that disturbed me. I had never seen such a proud sensuality in his face, in all the years I’d known him. “He was right when he said you had strength, Lucas. Maybe not to match him, but to challenge him, regardless.” For a second, the old look of devoted admiration flickered in his eyes. “And I don’t mind, of course.” Now his voice had the sing-song timbre of a much younger child. “I’ve wanted you ever since I knew you. Ever since I was with you, in your house, touching you. Touching your *sister*.” His warm mouth nuzzled at my skin, but it couldn’t ease the chill in me. “I was only ever a pale shadow to you, a thing to be patronised. To be pitied.”

I tried to protest that I’d never seen him that way, but my throat was too dry to speak. What was he talking about? What had he *become*? I felt his arms tighten around my torso. His skin was perfectly smooth and so very pale, but where were the bruises my fingers must have left on him, deep in the throes of my passion?

“He told me what he wanted, Lucas. What he would have,

whether you were willing or not. Whether he were your first, second or ...your last."

"Who, Valentine? No one will have me but you—"

He wouldn't stop, his words tumbling over my protests with the relentlessness of sand pouring from a vessel, covering me, suffocating my replies, my attempts to regain his loving attention. "He promised that if I submitted to his desire—if I helped him to bring you along on that path—I would have my dearest desire. He promised *you* to me, Lucas, as my reward for helping him. And now I have you, don't I?"

I tried to struggle up to a sitting position, but his strength held me close.

"There has to be submission, Lucas. He'll accept nothing else." He laughed, not so softly now. And *maliciously*. "I smiled at your arrogance, that you ever imagined you had control of it all. Of *him*. That can never be, you know. Yes, you are strong and yes, you match my love for you. But he will pursue you until he receives his due." His pupils were dilated and for a moment there was nothing but bitter pain in them. "I may have been your first, but I will only ever be second to him. He has used me, as the only way of releasing your passion. He has made me accept that. But in the end we will both be his. We will both be his very best."

*So this youth was your choice, Lucas.* The voice had never visited me in my waking hours, but now it filtered through me, filling me, feasting on me. My throat tightened further and my skin grew clammy. *You refused me for him, but I'm not displeased. I can wait. You will not be able to refuse this sweet pleasure again, you will wonder what it's like with me, if it's even better, even fiercer, even richer. This is what you will become. Enjoy it first with the messenger—but later with the master himself. Look on your pleasure with this young man as my true calling card, for it is a sweet one indeed.*

*But that's all it will be.*

If I had been able to move more freely, I'd have become hysterical. The voice of the night had blended with the urbane, smooth tones of my patron. There had never been any mastery at all, had there? He had always been in control of me. The heat

of Gideon Arnaud consumed me; his voice lapped at my mind; his hands clung to me, living parasitically through my dear Valentine's.

And *my God*, how I desired it!

"Hush, Lucas." Valentine sighed into my neck, and his fingers smoothed my tangled hair back from the skin.

His lips touched the pulse there and I instinctively bared myself to him. What was happening to me?

"Hush," he repeated, softly. "Trust me. *He* does. Your need must be shared." I stared at him with eyes that I knew were wild and terrified, but his gaze met mine with a chill calm. Blood-red pupils gazed at me; irises in which I could imagine the movement of the moonlit sea and the dark, fierce wind in amongst silhouetted trees. And such *cold*...

Valentine—my friend! *My lover*.

Where was that man that I thought I knew so well?

He drew back his lips and I glimpsed the stark white of his teeth, sharpened to points that pricked at my straining neck. In that second, my heart ceased to beat. There was wind in my ears and the sour taste of horror in my mouth. The pleasure of his body became a mortal memory; the caress of his hands became bondage. I felt the first pierce of his fangs, my skin screaming its pain and fear at the same time as its deep, hungry surrender.

"What must be, must be," he whispered. When he drew back and gazed at me, small drops of blood glistened darkly on his lips, curved into a smile as lascivious as when he first offered himself to me. "I was your first, Lucas." His whisper soothed me even as his mouth had brought me the pain that distressed me. He dipped his head back down to my neck and began to suck life from me.

"But did you really think you were *mine*?"

THE END



## *ABOUT CLARE LONDON*

Clare took the pen name London from the city where she lives, loves, and writes. A lone, brave female in a frenetic, testosterone-fuelled family home, she juggles her writing with the weekly wash, waiting for the far distant day when she can afford to give up her day job as an accountant. She's written in many genres and across many settings, with novels and short stories published both online and in print. She says she likes variety in her writing while friends say she's just fickle, but as long as both theories spawn good fiction, she's happy. Most of her work features male/male romance and drama with a healthy serving of physical passion, as she enjoys both reading and writing about strong, sympathetic and sexy characters.

Clare currently has several novels sulking at that tricky chapter 3 stage and plenty of other projects in mind...she just has to find out where she left them in that frenetic, testosterone-fuelled family home.

Find details of her publications and plenty of free fiction at [clarelondon.co.uk](http://clarelondon.co.uk), including an invitation to her mailing list. Visit her today and say hello!



## *ABOUT JMS BOOKS LLC*

Founded in 2010, JMS Books LLC is owned and operated by author J.M. Snyder. We publish a variety of genres, including

gay erotic romance, fantasy, young adult, poetry, and nonfiction. We are an invitation-only small press. Short stories and novellas are available as e-books and compiled into single-author print anthologies, while any story over 30k in length is available in both print and e-book formats. Visit us at [jms-books.com](http://jms-books.com) for more information on our latest releases!

**Adam & Eve**

*Thank you for reading.*