



# LUST BITES

ARTISTIC SIGHTS  
HEAVENLY DELIGHTS

VICTORIA BLISSE

A Total-E-Bound Publication



[www.total-e-bound.com](http://www.total-e-bound.com)

Artistic Sights, Heavenly Delights

ISBN # 978-0-85715-507-8

©Copyright Victoria Blisse 2011

Cover Art by April Martinez ©Copyright March 2011

Edited by S. F. Swift

Total-E-Bound Publishing

This is a work of fiction. All characters, places and events are from the author's imagination and should not be confused with fact. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, events or places is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any material form, whether by printing, photocopying, scanning or otherwise without the written permission of the publisher, Total-E-Bound Publishing.

Applications should be addressed in the first instance, in writing, to Total-E-Bound Publishing. Unauthorised or restricted acts in relation to this publication may result in civil proceedings and/or criminal prosecution.

The author and illustrator have asserted their respective rights under the Copyright Designs and Patents Acts 1988 (as amended) to be identified as the author of this book and illustrator of the artwork.

Published in 2011 by Total-E-Bound Publishing, Think Tank, Ruston Way, Lincoln, LN6 7FL, United Kingdom.

**Warning:** This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total e-sizzling*.

# **ARTISTIC SIGHTS, HEAVENLY DELIGHTS**

**Victoria Blisse**

## *Dedication*

To all my readers who make my writing experience all the more pleasurable.  
Thank you for all your support. I hope you enjoy your read.

## *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

Peugeot: Automobiles PEUGEOT LLC

Jaguar: Jaguar Cars Limited

## Chapter One

As she bashed back whipping tree branches and picked carefully through thorns Hermione wondered why she had said yes to this posh young man. She'd like to have said it was merely for Philip's good looks and charm but she had to face up to the fact it was the money involved that had motivated her the most.

"We're nearly there." His upper-class accent seemed out of place in that jungle of branches and mulch. "I told you it was a bit overgrown. It's worth it though."

"I'm sure it is," Hermione replied as she dragged her bags and canvas case through the dense thicket and glared at the back of his soil-brown wind cheater. She knew the reason she'd done this and was grumpy at herself for it. Money should *not* dictate art but if some rich guy wanted to offer her an obscene amount just to paint his portrait in a certain place—what else could she do?

However, when she'd agreed she hadn't realised she'd be pushing her way through overgrowth as thick and thorny as that in the fabled *Sleeping Beauty* story. She'd thought he was talking about a neatly manicured corner of the manor's gardens. It wasn't until he headed into an enclave of shady, newly-leafed trees that she began to suspect otherwise.

Philip couldn't be completely unaware of her worries. Every tut and gasp and long exhalation had to show her less than complete enjoyment of the day so far.

"Here we are," Philip said as suddenly the mess of twigs gave way and an obvious clearing came to light.

"Wow." Hermione took in the vast array of different greens and was awed by the majesty of nature. Across one side was a small pond, mingled grey and green reflected in the water. At the other end a host of bright bluebells shone between the blades of vibrant grass.

"You didn't lie, did you?" She smiled at him.

He grinned back. "This is the most beautiful place I've ever been." He sighed and stared into the vast yet stark blue sky.

"It's very well hidden away, isn't it?"

"When I found it quite by accident as a kid I just knew I should keep it quiet. And as I grew up I kept the secret because if Mum and Dad knew, they'd want to tame it into the formal garden and I don't think that's right. This place is wild and should be kept as such."

She completely agreed with him. Such a beautiful place deserved to be preserved. As she looked into his eyes she noticed a flash of acknowledgement within them. He must have read her approval in her face.

"Yes. This place would be ruined if someone tried to run a path through it or tried to prune back the bushes," she said. Maybe Philip wasn't quite the stuck-up snob she'd thought he was. And maybe she shouldn't be so hard on him.

"So I was thinking I could sit over here." He strode over to a large fallen tree, its roots dangling uselessly in the air like a wooden waterfall.

"Fantastic." The artist in Hermione took over as she directed him to sit on top of the large trunk. "Just sit on an angle a bit—no, no, to the left a bit. That's it, a bit further back." She tutted and walked towards him, then grabbed his long frame by his muscular shoulder and pushed him back, angling him to her requirements.

Looking at Philip's face, she saw that he was blatantly ogling her chest. She'd forgotten how much her V-necked top exposed her cleavage if she wasn't careful, and she hadn't been careful.

She waited, staring at his eyes, hands on her hips.

He looked up. Caught him, she thought triumphantly.

"S...Sorry." A blush spread across his high cheekbones but there was a sparkle in his green eyes. "I just couldn't help myself. It looked so very inviting down there."

Damn him. Hermione flushed and covered her bared chest with one hand before stepping back to set up her stool and get to work.

"Don't move an inch," she shouted as she rooted through her bags and boxes for pencils and paints. When she glanced over her shoulder to check on him his gaze was fixed firmly on her arse. She'd worn the long, thick skirt as protection from this sort of thing, because she'd heard rumours of his cad-like ways. It obviously wasn't working as even from this distance she could see the tented material in the front of his crotch. She knew she should be angry and affronted but something inside her felt flattered. She sighed inwardly and turned her attention back to her paints and brushes.

"You have a gorgeous arse," he said. "Plump and juicy."

"I beg your pardon?" Hermione snapped. "I'm not here to fulfil some seedy sexual fantasy of yours, so behave, right?" She might have been somewhat aroused by his appreciative gaze but she did not want him to know that. She had to keep this professional. Painting his portrait could be key to furthering her career. She did not want to spoil that, however offensive his comments might be.

"Yes, erm. Sorry," he replied, squirming against the bark of the log. "I was just thinking aloud. I'll shut up now."

"Thank you. So if you can stay as still as possible for me..." Hermione smiled as she settled herself on the small folding canvas stool. "I should be able to get this done fairly quickly."

"No problem, I could sit here all day. Oh, is it okay for me to talk?" Philip's cheeks continued to redden.

"Yeah, it's fine. I might ask you to shush though, so don't be offended if I do, okay?"

"Okay, it's a deal."

Hermione was in artist mode. She dealt with chatty customers every day and as long as they were happy they didn't bother her. When Philip had first approached her, his sharp upper-class accent had jangled on her senses. The expensive suit, the briefcase and the clean-cut, sharp-nosed look set off alarms in her head the moment he opened his mouth. It wasn't him as such, but life had taught her not to trust those with money. She was poor, had always been poor, and she distrusted those who weren't. She had been determined to say no right up until the point he offered her the equivalent of three months' rent and a pair of new boots for Ellie...in cash. Survival instincts kicked in and she had agreed before she'd really thought it through.

A soft semi-silence fell. Birds chirped and leaves rustled in the shivering spring breeze.

Hermione was a little unsettled by Philip's gaze upon her body. Even when she tried to hide herself behind her work she could still feel it drive through to her flesh. What really disturbed her was the way her skin tingled in response to the gaze, and the way her heart fluttered with pleasure.

She was one hundred percent sure that he was not her type. He was clean-cut for a start. He had no facial hair, not even any real stubble. She had never dated a guy who didn't scratch along her skin when he kissed her. She wondered how Philip's soft cheek would feel

pressed against her own, his lips over her lips...She shook her head. She couldn't afford to be distracted by risqué thoughts.

There was no doubting he had something about him. He was good-looking. Strong jaw, bright eyes, wide shoulders and tall. He wasn't as obnoxious as she believed he would be, but she preferred the more rock-like and 'salt of the earth' type of man when she dated. Ellie coming along had somewhat put paid to her love life. Seven-year-old Ellie was her light, her life, but on her more introspective days when she would long for a relationship with a man. She yearned for the freedom of being just single and not a single mum. She would not change her circumstances for the world, though. She'd sacrifice everything for her daughter.

"How's Ellie?" Philip's voice cut through her thoughts and made her focus on him in more than an artistic way.

"Oh, she's good. She's with my sister today." Hermione wasn't sure she was comfortable chatting with a near stranger about her daughter, even if Ellie had seemed to be quite taken by this man on the odd occasion they had met. In the school holidays Hermione still had to work, so it meant taking Ellie with her. She had always been a good child, thankfully, but she was shy around strangers. Not so with Philip though. She took to him the first time he mumbled a hello.

"She's a little star. Very bright. She'll make her mark on the world, I know it." Philip nodded slightly, blushed and held himself still once more.

"She sure will." Hermione smiled. "Glad to know it's not just me who can see it."

Again the silence fell, and Hermione concentrated on her drawing. When she finished the outline, she could see it was going to be a good painting. It just needed a little colour and a touch of life.

She looked up and noticed Philip's pained expression. "Are you okay there?" she asked.

"Yeah, not bad," he rasped, then smiled that disturbingly disarming smile.

"Sounds like you need a drink. Hang on." She reached into the recesses of her bag and pulled out a slim bottle of water. She popped open the sports cap and strode the few feet over to Philip, offering it to his lips. He smiled and accepted the tip of the bottle gratefully. As Philip gulped, Hermione tipped the bottle more and stood on tip-toe to get the necessary angle.



She over-balanced slightly and, unable to catch herself in time, she crashed into Philip's thigh. The bottle flew from her hands, splattering them both with water in the process, then dropped with a thump to the ground. Philip wrapped his arm around her falling body.

Their words poured out and stumbled over each other.

"Are you..."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Don't worry. Are you —"

"Yes. I'm fine."

Hermione looked into foliage-green eyes and stopped. Her hands had landed on his chest, her stomach against his thigh. Philip's arm was tight around her and his fingers gently gripped the opposite shoulder, holding her reassuringly in his warmth. The bark of the tree rubbed across her calves and her knees stung from their impact against the log.

"Are you sure you're okay?"

She focused on his liquid lashed lips and stuttered.

His lips planted upon hers.

Surprise was the gentlest of emotions Hermione felt. A whole sea of emotion rolled over her as lust, shock, outrage and passion all at once transmitted across their bridged lips.

She found herself reacting and pressed her lips back against him, gently caressing his plump soft folds with hers. She clamped her fingers around the thick material of his shirt, pulling him against her before she realised fully what her body was doing. She was ignited like a bush fire. Dizzy, she was unable to stop burning.

Eventually Hermione drew away from the kiss and stood back a step. Philip's hand rested on her upper arm as she panted and straightened her hair.

"I'm sorry...I don't know what came over me there." Her cheeks were hot and she stared at the grassy floor.

"Please don't apologise." Philip smiled. "It was as much my fault as yours. I don't know what came over me, I'm usually far more restrained. I'm afraid I do believe I've broken pose as well."

She looked up at him and saw the cheeky glint to his eye and she laughed

"I think it's time to break for lunch," he said. "Is that okay?"

Hermione knew she was incapable of fine motor skills, so she nodded her head. "Good idea. So that basket is a picnic then." She chuckled. "I did wonder."

"Yup, I thought we might be here a while." Philip hopped off the log, moaned happily then yelped. "Ouch, my buttocks have gone to sleep. Want to wake them up?"

Hermione giggled and flushed some more. "Cheeky! Are you asking for a spanking?"

Philip chuckled. "No thanks, I prefer to be the spanker, not the spankee. I was thinking more along the line of giving them a rub or a kiss or something."

"Nope, it's a spank or nothing." She enjoyed teasing him and was quite surprised by her flirtatious nature. He might not be her type but he was the only man to show interest in her for a long, long time. It was as if the interest he had shown had switched on her long-lost flirt switch. Or something.

"Oh, okay then, just one." He braced himself over the fallen log.

"Right, are you ready, buttocks?" Hermione spent a moment admiring the curve of Philip's bottom as he laid waiting for her slap.

"Ready as they'll ever be," he replied.

"Here it comes." She raised her hand high and let it down quickly. She was a little surprised by just how much power she put into the spank and pleasantly impressed by the feel of his taut buttocks beneath her hand.

"Ouch! I wanted them waking up not knocking out." He pulled himself to his feet.

"Sorry." She smiled. "It seems I don't know my own strength."

"You're not sorry at all. I can read it all over your face. You were enjoying it, weren't you?"

"Well, maybe a little. It's not every day you get to spank a rich kid."

"Kid? Is that what you see me as?"

"Well, I know there's not much difference in our age. It's just you seem to lack experience, that's all."

"Lack experience? I'll show you how experienced I am." He grabbed her arm. "Was the kiss I gave you just now inexperienced?"

"I don't know...I just thought...I wasn't thinking." Hermione wasn't sure if he was genuinely pissed off or if he was just messing around with her. Her heart pounded.

"No, you weren't." He pulled her to the overturned tree. "And now, young lady, you'll pay for your insolence."

He pushed her down on top of the rough bark and held her there. She didn't struggle. She was too surprised at finding herself with her arse in the air to move.

"It's all just a bit of fun," he whispered as he leaned over her. "If it gets too much just shout 'paint brush' and I'll stop. All right?"

She nodded. She wasn't exactly sure where this was leading, but she was tingling all over with anticipation and she really wanted to find out.

"This skirt is much thicker than my trousers," he said, then caught the hem of it in his fingers. "You'd not feel a spanking through it." He flicked his wrist and pulled the material up and over Hermione's back, exposing her cloud-white knickers to the warm spring air.

"What are you doing?" she gasped, her cheeks flushed. Her heart continued to pound like a bailiff's knock on the door.

"Just giving you what you deserve, madam," he replied. She glanced up at him and saw his focus was on her bum. His tongue slipped out and wetted his bottom lip. He was obviously enjoying the view.

"A good spanking." He raised his free hand. The other was laid on her back keeping her skirt up whilst holding her down.

"No, I didn't say you could do—" Her rant was cut off by the loud crack of his hand connecting with her milky flesh.

"That's for calling me a kid," he said then raised his hand again. "I am not inexperienced simply because I am wealthy, right?" He slapped down again and she yelped with the impact. "I asked you a question." He spanked her again. "Answer me when I speak to you."

"Sorry, no, no, you're not."

"No I am not, what?" Again he struck her bottom.

"Sir, no, you're not inexperienced, sir."

"That's better." He smiled and stroked his hand over her bum.

Hermione had been outraged by the first spank, then frightened by the second. But as his hand rose and fell, her emotions changed. She realised she looked forward to each spank. The pain that had flared in her arse at first had mellowed into pleasure, and she wanted more.

As his hand fell she would rise up on her toes to encourage his spanks. She was sure he could see her do this, and didn't care. She wanted him to know she was desperate for it. She'd never been spanked before, and was quite surprised by her love of it. She was a strong woman generally, but as a single mother in her mid-twenties with no family to help, she'd

had to be fiercely independent. She'd always had the upper hand in any dealings, but now she thoroughly enjoyed being on the receiving end of his upper hand as it slammed against her flesh. It seemed somehow to be freeing.

"Damn, woman, you're enjoying every moment of this." Philip groaned and brought Hermione out from her pleasure-induced trance. He stopped spanking, pulled her upright again to press against her and forcefully place his lips on hers.

She pulled away. "We shouldn't be doing this. Shit, I think I better go." She dashed over to her paints and brushes. Her pounding heart drove her on. As much as her body yelled at her for denying it pleasure, she continued to pack, hands shaking as she began to bundle her things into her bag.

Philip swore under his breath and strode over to her. "Hermione, Hermione, please don't go. You were enjoying yourself, I was enjoying myself. Please don't go."

The genuine catch in his voice made her turn to face him, a paint-filled brush grasped tightly in her hand. "We shouldn't be, though, I barely know you. And...and you're my customer. I can't. I shouldn't. I really just shouldn't."

"Hermione." He grasped her shoulder. "Please don't ignore this. I've been watching you for so long. I've wanted you, wanted this for such a long time. Please don't deny me now."

"You mean to say you hired me because you fancied me?" Instantly she was enraged and jerked away from his hand. She continued to pack her things. "Now I'm insulted as well as embarrassed. Fuck you, Philip. What the hell were you thinking?"

"Hermione, I love your work. I sit and watch you over lunch. I adore your art. I also think you're gorgeous. Please don't condemn me for using the only opportunity I had to speak with you, to meet with you. I did what I could to interact with you."

"I feel like a damn whore, Philip. I feel like you've bought me. Do you realise how degrading that is?"

"I've bought your art. I truly want you to paint my portrait. I'd not want any other artist to do it." Philip sighed and ran his fingers through his barley-coloured hair. "I can't help that I love the curves of your body, the soft velvety pout of your lips, the softness of your skin. I can't help that every time I look into your eyes my whole body explodes with lust." He looked at her and sighed.

Hermione was still livid. She still felt used, but somehow the anger seemed to be separated from her as if she wasn't personally involved with it. Maybe it was because she was caught up in his passionate plea; all she wanted to do was kiss away the pain upon his face and discover the depths of the lust he professed. However, her stubborn nature made her zip up her bags and stride across the glade back the way she came.

"Hermione!" Philip shouted her name, once and again. He reached her within moments and whipped her round to face him. Her eyes were wide with shock as he desperately lunged forward and pressed his lips to hers. The force made her step away. The back of her ankles hit something hard. Then she felt the rub of rough bark on her shoulders.

Hermione's lips surrendered to him surprisingly quickly. Her grip loosened and she dropped her bags. Her hands hung in the air for a moment, indecisive, then lifted to Philip's arms and gripped him hard. She fought with herself for control but her lust won through. All common sense left her the moment his lips touched hers. She pushed against him and made him stumble back a step. He could not balance and fell back into the long grass, pulling Hermione down on top of him.

Their lips did not part, not even for a moment. The kiss continued. Hermione's tongue slipped between Philip's lips and took command of his mouth. Her legs were between his, with his erection pressing just under the curve of her soft stomach. Philip's hands wrapped around her and stroked along her back, then along the under-curve of her breasts.

"We shouldn't do this," she whispered, trying to convince herself as much as anything. "We're not compatible."

"Why not?" Philip stroked her arm. "You're a woman and I'm a man and we're both clearly attracted to one another. I think that makes us perfectly compatible."

"You know what I mean." She pressed a hand to his chest, ready to push up and off him. "You're out of my league."

"No, I think you'll find that's the other way 'round, but I'm trying hard not to let your great beauty faze me. Come on, Hermione, you know you're just creating excuses."

She was finding it hard to concentrate pressed up against him, his obvious arousal distracting her. "I'm not the kind of girl – woman, even – who does this. I have a daughter, a life and I've got to make it all work all by myself. I can't jeopardise that, I don't have the time or the energy to deal with a broken heart."

“Who says I’m going to break your heart?” Philip ran a gentle hand along Hermione’s back. The tension between them was close to a breaking point. “Look, I think you’re gorgeous and I want you. You can feel how much I want you.” He looked her straight in the eye and her cheeks flushed in response to him. “I am not going to hurt you. I don’t want to do that. I’m going to put you in control. If we do this now, you can decide if it just becomes a one-off, a pleasurable interlude between two adults one afternoon. Whether it leads to more is in your hands, Hermione. I promise I will respect your wishes whatever you decide.”

She looked into his eyes and in their depths all she could see was honesty. Honesty and lust. She had longed for control, and now she had it. She could walk away from this with her head held high. She knew it would be nothing more than a passionate fuck. They were too different to make a more permanent relationship last but she wanted him so much. It had been so long since she’d been with a man.

“Whatever happens you’ll sit for the rest of the painting and pay me, no quibbles, no arguments, not pleading or begging or trying to get more from me than I want to give?”

“Exactly. I’m in your hands. Whatever you decide, I’ll respect it.”

She didn’t answer with words but as she looked down into his eyes she felt her mind being made up. He genuinely meant what he said. She could get the sexual satisfaction her body craved without jeopardizing the job and the much needed money she would raise from it. Then he’d leave her alone to work. It seemed the perfect solution.

She dipped her head forward again until their lips touched once more. The answer was in her kiss, and Philip eagerly responded. He rested his hands on her hips and she could feel him holding back, with the tension in his body obvious. He wanted her to make the first move. She was happy to do that.

She needed to feel him on her bare skin so she pushed herself up. Her thighs parted around his pelvis and her knees bent until she knelt over him, around him. She looked him in the eye as she lifted her top to expose her rounded tummy. His gaze followed the material of her blouse as she eased it up her arms and over her head, throwing it to her side.

He moaned when she snapped off her bra and threw it to the ground. She smiled as she felt his cock stir once more and reached forward to unzip his gillet. Once it was open she rolled up his soft top until she could see his nipples and whilst holding the top up, she leant down and took one between her lips, sucked and nipped and enjoyed.

Nothing mattered but the urgency of their lust. Hermione was sick of thinking, of shielding herself from the world and her desires. She was going to sate her throbbing need and she was determined to revel in every moment of the passionate encounter.

She stretched her torso and hung her heavy breasts over his face and was rewarded by feeling his lips and teeth grasp at whatever flesh they could reach. She felt sexy. Her mind was consumed with her needs. All false pride was forgotten. As Hermione crawled up his body he feasted on the flesh that was visible.

“Show me you mean it,” she whispered just as her thighs enveloped his face and her long skirt settled around his head. His tongue travelled up and down the length of the material covering her. He used his nose to nudge the fabric to the side and when he moved, she squeezed her thighs rhythmically as he licked and sucked.

Hermione’s eyes were closed, her head thrown back, enjoying the feel of sunshine and wind on her skin. Philip’s lips, tongue and nose were doing a great job of teasing and taunting and suggesting satisfaction, but she needed something more to really fulfil her need.

She lifted off Philip’s face and rolled onto her back in the cool grass. “I need you.” She groaned and watched as he licked his lips then sat up from his prone position. Her heart leapt in her chest when he moved towards her.

He smiled as he crawled over to her. He threw off his jacket and jumper as he moved, oblivious to where they landed or the possibility of grass and mud stains. Next he loosened his belt and lowered his jeans. He pulled his boxers with them which freed his wet-tipped erection. He scrambled between her legs and rubbed his cock up and down her damp, partially covered slit. He hooked the material covering it to one side with his thumb. He pressed himself inside her, eased in and then out and repeated.

Now that was what she needed, what she craved. Hermione moaned in deep appreciation as Philip slipped his cock inside her. Her pussy spasmed and clenched in tiny explosions with each frenzied thrust of his hips.

He placed his arms either side of her shoulders and thrust all the harder. He nuzzled his lips against the nape of her neck and down to her breasts and nipples.

Hermione’s senses reeled from the stimuli within and around her—the smell of the fresh crushed grass and soft fertile soil, the cool breeze on her naked flesh, the sight of the natural beauty all around her and the miracle of nature that was above and inside her. This was more than lovemaking. It was elemental in its impassioned ferocity.

Eyes closed and lips fastened to Hermione's, he pushed harder and deeper into her. Her breasts wobbled with the impact as her nipples grazed his chest.

"Oh, Philip." She moaned and squeezed his cock, shook and shuddered as she poured her natural juices over him. Her orgasm seemed to make him thrust harder and faster until he shouted her name as he exploded.

Panting they lay side by side in the thin spring sunshine, hand in hand.

\* \* \* \*

"Are you ready to pose again?" Hermione grinned. "I'm ready to paint."

"Sure. Though I think I've gained some grass stains here."

"Good. That's just what I was aiming for. I need you to blend in more with your surroundings."

They both laughed and what tension that may have occurred dissipated. Hermione set once again to painting Philip in the lush clearing. She had been incredibly satisfied by the sex, mellow and happy from her orgasm.

But she already craved more.

She would just have to ignore her desires and get on with it. There was no way they could make a relationship work. She was poor and a single mother. He was stinking rich and she had heard he was a ladies' man. She'd just have to learn to be satisfied with what she had.

She looked intently at what she had drawn. His face didn't quite look right. She glanced at him to examine the angle of his chin and noticed his head was dropped forward. He had a thoughtful look to his face as if he were contemplating something painful.

"Are you all right?" Hermione asked, worried that he hadn't enjoyed the sexual interlude as much as she had.

"Yes, yes, I'm fine." He smiled. "Why do you ask?"

"It's just you were frowning then and I can't paint you frowning. I need your smile."

"Oh, sorry, I was just thinking over a problem, that's all. I'll stop it now and smile." He pulled a big cheesy grin.

"Okay, that's too far the other way." She laughed. "Something in between the two would be just perfect."



Philip relaxed his mouth a little.

She nodded enthusiastically. "Yes, that's just it. Thank you." It was funny really, how relaxed she felt with him considering how nervous she'd been about taking the job in the first place. She wondered what problem had made him frown, though. Was she the problem? Was he regretting what they'd just done?

As she dipped her brush into the jar of water she glanced at her watch. "Oh, shit. Philip, we'll have to leave it here, I'm supposed to pick Ellie up in half an hour."

"Yeah, no problem." Philip stood up from the fallen tree and winced. "I'll see you back to your car."

"Thanks." She smiled. "Time's just got away from me. Now, when can you sit for me again? The painting is still quite far off being finished."

"Oh, I'm pretty flexible. I can have Monday off if that's any good to you."

"Erm, yeah, I can do that. Mondays are slow tourist days anyway." Hermione put her paint brushes into her bag.

Philip helped to empty the water jar. "Okay then, I'll pick you up if you like. What time's best?"

Hermione was in such a whirlwind mind state that she just agreed without much thought. She didn't normally let people come over to her flat, let alone strangers, but to have a lift and not have to use her precious petrol would be good. "If you could come after nine in the morning, that'd be great. Ellie will be in school. I'll need to be back to pick her up at three, though."

"Right then, I'll pick you up at nine-ish on Monday."

"Thanks." She smiled as Philip picked up her bags. She gripped her canvas tightly, careful not to smudge her recent additions.

They walked through the trees in silence apart from the odd "Are you okay?" or "We're nearly there now." And the tension between them grew.

"Okay, Philip, I've got to dash." With relief, Hermione popped the boot open on her red, battered old Peugeot.

"Oh, yes, of course." He walked forward to place her bags inside. "Well, I'll see you on Monday then."

She looked at him. His cheeks seemed as flushed as hers must be; she could feel the heat radiating from them. She met his gaze for a moment, smiled, then looked down at her hands.

She played with her car keys and wondered what to do. They'd been intimate. Surely she couldn't just drive off without acknowledging it.

She brought her head forward and tilted it slightly to kiss his cheek. Philip did the same but in the same direction. In their haste they ended up lip to lip.

Despite her passion and what she sensed from Philip, Hermione was the first to pull back. She could not let herself get distracted. She was not going to become a mum who was late all the time. She had to go and get Ellie. "I've had fun," she said and looked at the ground, then up into Philip's face, "but I have to go now. See you Monday."

"I've had fun too, Hermione. Take care." He smiled.

He looked so calm and in control. It worried her somewhat that her confused emotions were written all over her face for the world to see. She'd never got the hang of guile. She hurried to the driver's side door and jumped into her little car.

\* \* \* \*

Philip felt anything but in control. However, he'd had many years of practice when it came to projecting a calm front whilst everything behind it was falling apart. Hermione did things to him he didn't understand. Her kiss lingered as if her lips had scorched their imprint on his. His heart thumped as she drove off and threw a casual wave his way. Could she see how affected he was by her? Was that a good thing or not?

As he walked back to the manor he thought over what had just happened. He'd been lusting after Hermione for ages. He watched her every day from his office window, bent over a large board, pencil in hand and soft conker curls escaping their elasticised confines and slipping over her ruddy pink cheek as she painted yet another characterised portrait for a customer. He'd thought about approaching her several times but he didn't know what to say. In the end he decided to give her an offer she couldn't refuse.

And he really did want her to paint his portrait. He hadn't lied about that. He could see she was talented and he wanted a permanent reminder of her. That was weird in itself. Philip wasn't the kind of guy who wanted permanent reminders of girls. At least he hadn't before. Now he felt all weird inside like someone was running a whisk in his stomach and kneading his heart like dough.

He'd wanted her, and had thought the seduction would have been much easier. Women had thrown themselves at him and his money for as long as he could

remember...but not Hermione. No, she was different and that was what made her so attractive. He'd thought that once he'd overcome the challenge of seducing her then he'd be able to forget her and get on with life.

But it didn't feel like that at all. He felt all the more attracted to her now they'd been intimate. She was stunningly beautiful and her every move had aroused him to almost painful levels. He wanted to make love to her again to see if it had been some kind of one-off fluke but he doubted it. He couldn't even bring himself to think of it as a fuck because it had been so much more than that.

He remembered the curve of her plump buttocks beneath her cotton knickers and how beautiful she looked lying in the grass, her body ripe for tasting and touching. He wanted more of her but he had left their future in her hands. For the first time in his life he was worried that a woman wouldn't want anything more to do with him.

He needed more of her. If he didn't get her out of his mind his work would suffer and he didn't want that to happen. As he nibbled his bottom lip, deep in contemplation, he tasted her and his arousal flared once more. Philip decided then and there that he would convince her that she needed him again.

But how?

He was normally very confident about how attractive he was but Hermione made him doubt himself. She was not interested in his money and she certainly didn't want to seduce herself a soon-to-be 'Lord of the Manor.' He realised his self-confidence had always been tied to his wealth. With Hermione taking his money out of the equation, he found himself lacking.

All was quiet when he walked in through the side entrance of the hall. His mum and dad were both out taking afternoon tea with the Arundles, and he was thankful that he wouldn't have to face their inquisition over his whereabouts. He hadn't told them about the portrait at all, for his parents were old and set in their ways and would not approve of a new, untried artist, especially a female one.

He tried not to worry about what his parents would think of Hermione. He didn't often bring women home, but not just because of his commitment phobia. Mother and Father hated any woman he'd liked and made their displeasure very clear. They would instantly disapprove of Hermione.

Not that he was planning for her to be his girlfriend, so she wouldn't need an invitation to the manor for any reason at all. No, he just needed to feel more of her skin, to kiss her lips a few times more. To see her naked, to feast upon her ample curves. To make love to her, completely and thoroughly and maybe more than once.

But he wasn't thinking about a more permanent relationship. No, no, he couldn't possibly. Yes, he felt something amazing when he was inside her, something unique. It wasn't purely physical. Something resonated deep inside of him. He felt twinges in places he was sure he didn't possess: his heart and soul.

It was not a sign that they should date or get married or have babies or anything, though even if the idea of marrying Hermione didn't seem that scary. And the prospect of spending his life with just one woman didn't seem so bad if that woman was Hermione. Although he had to remember her daughter, Ellie. He'd spoken to the little one a few times. She was very bright and charming but he had to remember that Ellie was an integral part of Hermione's life. He might dream whimsically of a future with that beautiful, bewitching woman but he was not ready to become a father, not of his own newborn child and certainly not of a seven-year-old.

He had just a crush on Hermione, an infatuation because she was different. She resisted and he wasn't used to that. That was all. He was not ready for a relationship with anyone, and definitely not with a single mother. A short, sexy, exciting fling he could do and he would enjoy it but that was all. If he could convince her a fling was what she wanted, which might be difficult.

When Philip reached his room he picked up his mobile from the bedside table where he'd purposefully left it that morning. He had several missed calls, most from work colleagues in need of his help. He sighed, then redialed the last number on his phone. He could sit around for the rest of the day and drive himself crazy over Hermione or he could work.

"Hi, Michael. What's the problem?"

And with one phone call he made his decision.

## Chapter Two

"Morning!" Hermione chirped as she opened the door. She thrust two bags into Philip's hands and walked out with her painting. She didn't want him poking around her home.

"Well, it's good to see you're eager to get to work." Philip laughed and led the way to his Jaguar.

"Yes, well, they're predicting rain later and the sky is already looking a bit overcast, so we need to get going."

"Oh, right."

"And I think just this one more sitting should be enough. I'll be able to work on it without you present once I get a good basis for it," Hermione continued. She wanted to get this job over and done. Then maybe she could concentrate again. She'd not been able to go five minutes without thinking of Philip since seeing him on Saturday.

"Oh, well, that's good then, I guess," he replied.

The drive over to Haughtington Manor was filled with awkward silence that was only broken a time or two by uncomfortable small talk.

Though distracted by desire, Hermione wasn't worried about her emotions showing. She wore a light jumper under her rain jacket, and her nipples were not *that* big. She was aroused though. Just the briefest whiff of his aftershave had her remembering what had happened between them. One look made her want to kiss him and she didn't dare think about what might happen if she got one taste of him. She wanted him again, she really did, but she had to hold in her arousal and get the painting done. Once he was out of her hair she'd forget him, or at least try. That was the plan. In her hearts of hearts she knew it wouldn't be easy.

"Did you have a nice Sunday?" he asked.

Was that desperation in his tone? No, couldn't be. "Oh, not bad," she said. "We took it easy, watched a couple of films, ate popcorn. It was relaxing. And you?"

"Oh, I just did a few work things that needed finishing off and had dinner with Mum and Dad."

"Sunday is meant to be a day of rest, you know." She smiled. "But the dinner sounds nice."

"Yeah, well, you've not met my parents. I got a solid hour being told I should settle down, get a wife, make grandchildren for them. It was not a fun time."

"It doesn't sound it. But they only want the best for you, I'm sure."

"Honestly, Hermione, I think they're just ashamed of me. All their friends' children are married and most of them have grandchildren. As far as they're concerned I'm letting the side down."

"I am sure that's not it at all. Parents only want what's best for their kids. I just wish mine were still about to boss me around."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Philip said. "I didn't mean to be so flippant. I do love them. They just drive me round the bend sometimes."

"I understand." She smiled. "My parents used to send me batty sometimes too."

Minute droplets of water began to appear on the windscreen. Philip switched on his wipers. "Maybe it's just a shower."

The little flecks turned into huge drops that couldn't be distinguished from each other. "I don't think I'll be able to paint in this." Hermione sighed.

"No, not outside anyway. Is there anything you can work on inside?"

"Well, yeah," she said. "I can do you inside."

"Wa hey." He grinned. "What about the painting though?"

She giggled and slapped his arm. "You know what I mean," she said. "Behave."

"Well, you can't blame me for trying. Okay then, we'll go up to the house and we'll find somewhere for you to paint in peace."

Hermione was over-awed the moment she walked through the side entrance of the manor. Even though they were walking into the kitchen, everything was on a grand scale and she felt as if she was stepping into the backdrop of a fairytale.

"We'll go into one of the side halls. You should have some good light and it'll be quiet. No one ever goes in them except to dust." He picked out a couple of cans from the huge fridge freezer as he walked past, then led the way into the hall.

The last time Hermione had walked down such a grand hall was when she'd visited a stately home on a school trip. She felt like she was in a museum and the setting emphasised how different her circumstances were. She didn't usually consider herself poor. Yes, she had

to work hard to look after herself and her daughter, but they always had food to eat and bills got paid. But compared to the affluence of Philip's home she was a pauper.

She had been wrestling with Philip's offer all night and had on a couple of occasions fantasised about things going further, a relationship developing and all that would come with it. She had really convinced herself it could work, that they weren't so different after all. Those dreams showed themselves as what they were as Hermione walked through the chandelier-hung halls to a neglected room that was bigger than her whole flat.

"Will this be okay?" he asked. "It's not the most comfortable of rooms but the windows are huge."

"Yeah, this will work," she said. "I may need some artificial light because there is not much of the real stuff outside right now." A gust of wind forced the rain against the window with a heavy clatter to emphasise her point. "I'm not quite sure where you should stand or sit. I could do with you in a similar position to that on the log the other day...so I can do some work on your body."

The memory of rough bark against skin and his hand on her arse coursed through her mind and heated her cheeks.

"Hmm, that'll be good," he replied with a smirk. "If I lean up on the back of this sofa here, that's pretty similar, right?"

Hermione nodded. "I can do you from the waist up there at least."

"Damn, I was hoping you'd work from the waist down."

"Would you stop that," Hermione barked. "I just want to get on with this painting, all right?"

"Okay." He stared at the floor. "I'm sorry. I don't want to upset you."

"Well, just sit there and behave then," she snapped, harder than she meant to, really, but she was flustered and vulnerable. If he made a move on her she would not be able to resist.

\* \* \* \*

Philip was bored and his legs ached from leaning back in such an unnatural position. He'd stood in the same place for what felt like an absolute age while Hermione fussed and

faffed around with a standing lamp, then her paints and her canvas. But he enjoyed watching her and could not stop himself from feeling excited by her presence.

He wanted to get over her. It was quite obvious that she would want nothing more to do with him. He could not see a repeat of Saturday's tumble in the grass happening any time in the future. But however much he tried to tell himself it was over, that he should just forget her, he couldn't manage it.

She looked so good and he could remember how she felt against him, how he felt inside of her, all the little noises she made and the taste of her...He had to stop torturing himself with the memories. He couldn't spend the whole time in her presence sporting a hard-on.

He had imagined things to go in a far more sensual direction than they had, and he felt helpless to change that. He was uncomfortable. He had always been able to make things lean in a more romantic direction with other girls. They never protested and generally encouraged him but with Hermione, he felt his hands were tied and he didn't like it.

"Oh, hello dear," a familiar female voice called from the doorway. "We didn't realise you were in here, son."

"Hello, Mum," he replied with a weak smile. "What do you want?"

"Well, your father wanted to see that old portrait of the duke. You know, the one everyone says looks like him, but I'll be blowed if I can remember where it resides these days."

"Beatrice, Beatrice, what are you doing in there?" a belligerent voice shouted from the hall.

She stepped out of the room. "I'm talking to Philip and a young girl. Hold on a moment, I'll wheel you in." She re-entered. "Wait a moment whilst I go and get your father." She turned on her tiny heels and walked out again.

"Oh, wonderful, Dad's here as well." Philip sighed and smiled at Hermione, who looked decidedly bemused. He wasn't surprised. Most people looked startled after meeting his mother, who wheeled his father into the room.

"Who's that woman over there?" Philip's dad pointed a bony finger at Hermione.

"That's Hermione, Dad. She's here to paint my portrait," Philip patiently replied.

"A woman? Why didn't you tell me? I'd have got Bertie in to paint you and do a proper job."



"I didn't want Bertie to paint me. I wanted Hermione to paint me. Her work is excellent."

"Let me see," Philip's father snapped, and his mother pushed him over to the canvas.

"I've got quite a bit left to do before it's finished," Hermione explained. "The rain has rather hampered things today."

"Yes, well, I suppose it's not so bad for a woman," he grumbled. "I still think Bertie would have done a better job. I mean, look at the setting. It's so overgrown. Bertie would have painted you on the lawn."

"Dad, I wanted a painting like this. Anyway weren't you two busy looking for something?"

"Oh yes." Mum smiled. "Do you know where the duke is?"

"I think it's in the long gallery, about halfway down."

"Ah, yes, you might well be right. Come on then, Arthur, let's find this portrait for you." Philip's mum sighed.

The old man ignored his wife. "So are you sleeping with my son?" he asked Hermione.

"I am not," Hermione spluttered. "I'm painting his portrait."

"Well, yes, of course you say so." He looked at Philip. "She's quite the looker, son. Great tits but she really is as common as muck. You should only bring ladies into the house."

"Dad," Philip cried. "Don't be so rude! She's right there and she *is* a lady, a wonderful lady."

"If you say so," his mum added stiffly. "Come on then, Artie, dear, let's go." She skilfully turned the wheelchair. Philip opened the door.

"Bet she's great for a shag, son, but don't bring her back again. You know I don't approve of your doxies in the house," the old man said as he was pushed out of the door.

"Goodbye, Dad." Philip sighed, then shut the door behind them. "I am so sorry about that, Hermione. My father is old and obnoxious and doesn't even attempt to hold his tongue in check these days."

Hermione shrugged. "He didn't say anything that wasn't true. Maybe I should just go now."

"Well, you are a good shag, but the rest is nonsense. You're a lady and a great painter. Don't let him get to you."

"Philip, just...don't. This was a bad idea. I think we should just abandon it all. You don't have to pay me. We'll just put it down to experience and you can get Bertie to paint you a decent portrait."

"No, Hermione, don't do this." He walked over and grabbed her wrist, stopping her from dropping her brush into the open bag in front of her. "My parents are mad and stuck sometime back in the last century. I swear, they never have a good thing to say about anyone. Don't take it to heart."

She sighed. "Philip, they're right. I'm a single mum who lives in a tiny one-bedroom flat and paints tourist caricatures to make money. You are the son of very wealthy and aristocratic parents, your fridge is the size of my daughter's bedroom and you're just completely out of my league. Yes, I may be a good shag but there couldn't possibly ever be anything more between us. It's impossible."

"You don't believe that, do you?" He stroked his thumb across the top of her wrist. "What does any of that really matter? We're attracted to each other. I can't stop thinking about you and your kiss and your touch and your body against mine and I know you've thought about me. Haven't you?"

Hermione shook her head then her gaze met his. She stopped mid-shake. "Philip, I can't deny that I've thought about you, about kissing you and carrying on what we started the other day, but realistically it can't happen. We're just not compatible."

"Nonsense. My hand fits perfectly here." He ran his fingers into the cup at the bottom of her back. "And my lips lock perfectly with yours." He leaned in and kissed her. Hard and unyielding, his lips forced themselves against her. He wanted to ignite the passion he knew rested just below her surface.

"You see," he gasped as they broke to breathe. "We are completely compatible."

Hermione didn't disagree. Instead, she ran her hands up his back as their lips locked again. She pressed her body into his erection and Philip smiled. She'd feel exactly how much he wanted her. She slid her hands down to his waist where his red shirt tucked into his black trousers. She plucked at the material until it pulled clear, then rubbed his warm skin. He moaned with appreciation and copied her move, suddenly enflamed with a need to feel her skin against his.

They moved together to remove each other's tops. It wasn't pretty, it certainly hadn't been choreographed but it worked. With a bit of tugging and the odd curse his shirt and her

T-shirt found their way to the floor. Her bra followed as he kissed a path of passion down the curve of her neck and into her abundant cleavage.

She was a feast and Philip was determined to enjoy every last mouthful. She mewled happily as he covered her warm breasts with kisses and teased each nipple with licks and sucks until they stood proudly and begged for more.

"God, you're gorgeous." He captured her mouth with his.

As they kissed, Hermione's fingers sought the fastening on his trousers. When they were both down to only their underwear Philip took her by the hand and led her to the antique chaise longue he'd been leaning on earlier. He spun her around as they reached the padded bench and she squealed in surprise. He caught her around the waist. Once their gazes crossed, he very slowly slipped his fingers into her lacy knickers and pulled them down.

He gently pressed her into the cushioned back of the sofa before pulling off his pants. He settled himself between her thighs and nuzzled her neck. She was beautiful and the touch of her skin to his was electric. He felt completely alive, as if without her he only ran on half power. With her naked skin against his he felt every movement, every caress of her breath on his cheek. It was so good he never wanted to go back to the desensitized norm he experienced without her.

"Fuck me," she gasped as his teeth grazed her collar bone, "please fuck me, Philip."

He didn't respond, just pressed his hips forward. He guided his cock to her hole and slid gently in. She wrapped her arms around his neck and clung to him, letting out a moan of satisfaction.

Philip was astounded by how in sync he was with Hermione. When he groaned she gasped, when he pushed deep into her she lifted her hips to meet him and drive him all the deeper. His pleasure was heightened because of hers. He was absorbed in every movement, consumed by everything she did. He had never before felt so alive.

"Hermione," he gasped. "I can't hold back much longer."

"Good, because neither can I." Moaning, she slithered her hand between them and caught some of her juices on her fingers. As she rubbed her clit, Philip felt the back of her hand bumping against his pelvis.

"We are compatible," he whispered, his breath caressing her ear. "So very, very compatible."

"Yes, Philip, yes." She came, her body shuddering against him. He stilled as he filled her, overtaken by so much pleasure he was afraid it would disappear if he moved even an inch. He held his breath, hoping to continue the ecstasy.

"Wow," Hermione panted. "It's not often I enjoy being proved wrong, but this time I really did."

Philip laughed. "I always enjoy being right but this time was extra special. Now we better get dressed just in case Mum and Dad come back this way!"

Once clothes were replaced, Philip posed while Hermione worked some more on the painting. All was silent.

Then he noticed a faraway look in her eyes as she stood holding her paint brush aloft longer than he'd seen her do before. "What are you thinking about?" he asked.

"Oh, just stuff, you know."

"Well, no, I don't. That's why I asked. You looked worried."

"I was thinking about us, actually," she said. "I was just thinking about my daughter. You see, if you date me, she's in with the package and I don't want her to get hurt."

"Hermione, the last thing I want to do is to hurt you or Ellie." He walked over to her. "I meant it when I said you were in control. We'll go at your pace and we'll work it all out as we go along." He reached out and stroked her arm. He wanted her to feel how much he meant the words he said. It was important to him to keep her. He didn't want what they had to end. He would do all he could to keep her and that included looking out for Hermione's daughter. "I like you, I really do and believe me, I'm going to do all I can to make this work, okay?"

She nodded and smiled. "Thank you." She leaned in and kissed him, her smile sandwiched against his.

"Oh, well...now we know why he commissioned this girl to do his painting," said a snotty female voice.

Hermione and Philip parted and spun. Philip's mum had just walked through the door.

"Mother, will you ever learn to bloody knock!" Philip cursed.

"Now, Philip, dear...language! It's my house I can go where I please in it. If you didn't want me to see your philanderings, don't do it in my home. You need to hold your libido in

check, especially around the workers. Anyway, I just came to tell you we found the duke and your father's having his nap now. I'll leave you and your floozy to it. Goodbye."

"Wow, I don't think your mum approves of me," Hermione said, eyebrows raised.

"My mother doesn't approve of many people, so I wouldn't worry about it. However, if it's father's nap time I do believe you might need to be getting home."

Hermione looked down at her watch. "Rats, you're right. For some reason I lose all track of time when I'm with you." She opened her bag and started to pack things away.

"I like to think it's because I'm just all kinds of attractive," he replied with a self-deprecating chuckle. "Nothing to do with bad time keeping at all."

Her laugh made him smile but he noticed a forced edge to it that made him worry. His mother had ruined his chances with so many girls that he'd lost count. But he was not going to let her ruin this. Oh no. Hermione was far too important to lose.

\* \* \* \*

That man made her mind turn to mush. Hermione was not feeling at all calm or in control as she raced along the winding country lanes to get to her daughter's school in time. Every time she met with Philip she ended up racing around like a headless chicken. She might be a free spirit, but she was very punctual. At least she normally was.

What was it about him that made her forget everything? Surely she wasn't so shallow that his rakish good looks undid her senses to such an extent. No, it was more than that. As much as she didn't want to admit she had deeper feelings for Philip it was the only real explanation for the way her body responded to him.

She was anything but shallow, but when he touched her she forgot everything else. All she wanted were his fingers, his lips, his...well, yes, thinking like that was what had got her into trouble seven years ago.

Ellie's dad, Steve, had been a very charming guy. She'd never been able to concentrate when he was around her either, but she'd put that down to youthful exuberance. After all she'd been only eighteen at the time. Steve had seduced her and she enjoyed every moment of it...until the morning she'd learned she was pregnant.

He'd been supportive at first, held her while she cried, promised to be with her no matter what. But he encouraged her to 'get rid of it' at every possible moment and when she

decided she would keep her baby, he left. Not a word of goodbye. He just disappeared from her life completely.

She had struggled through her pregnancy alone. The birth, all twenty-eight hours of it, she saw through on her own apart from the midwives who looked after her professionally. She took Ellie home to her small one-room flat and no one waited there to greet them. It had been really tough in those early days but she'd got through it. Ellie had got her through it. That sweet little baby was worth all the pain, all the struggles and hardships life brought her way.

And Ellie was still the centre of Hermione's world. She had to remember that and not let her stupid hormones get the better of her. Once the portrait was finished she would avoid Philip at all costs. Not that it'd be hard. They didn't run in the same circles. Plus, she'd heard that the prime painting spot by the cathedral might be up for grabs next month as the one-man-band guy was contemplating retirement. Fair enough, he was rapidly approaching eighty.

So she could move pitch and never have to see Philip again. She should have been relieved but she wasn't. She wanted to cry. All she could think of was the perfection of his body in hers, the magic he contained in his fingers and his lips that gave her instant intense pleasure at their touch.

So much pleasure that she forgot the insults of that posh woman who claimed to be Philip's mother. And just thinking about his father made Hermione's blood boil. But she could forget about them after just one touch of his fingers, just one kiss of his lips. All common sense had left her when they made love on the chaise longue where the parents could walk in—or in one case, wheel in—at any moment.

It just wasn't like her, not the new her, not the hyper-sensible parent Hermione, and she was scared to go back to the sensual, over-emotional woman she used to be because she couldn't take that heartbreak again. She didn't want to start to fantasise about the perfect life that could be offered on a lover's caviar-garnished plate. A lover, a husband and a father for her child, to have it snatched cruelly from her grasp at the last moment.

She was better off single. She and Ellie would survive together. They didn't need anyone else even if that someone else made Hermione feel so perfectly content inside. That illusion should be shattered by her hand before it was revealed by the wickedness of another.

## Chapter Three

Philip had been dating Hermione for two months. They'd kept it fairly casual and informal but every time they met the same passion sparked. He hadn't tired of her at all. In fact the more he knew of her, the more he wanted to find out. He found it refreshing that sometimes she would insist on paying for things, telling him it was her treat. He had never had any other woman even try to do that for him before. He found it endearing.

Hermione kept him separate from Ellie for the first month or so, but clever Ellie demanded to meet the man who was putting the lovey-dovey smile on her mum's face. Ellie told Philip the story several times on the evening they were introduced, after she stopped hopping up and down and exclaiming, "I'm so glad it was you," which Philip found very flattering and reassuring.

They got on well, and Philip became a feature at dinner on Friday nights. Sometimes they'd all go out to the cinema or they'd stay in and watch a film or play those silly board games you only ever play with friends and family. Friday became an evening he grew to love, and he hoped Ellie and Hermione enjoyed them just as much.

Philip didn't want Hermione and his parents to cross paths again. It seemed much easier to keep them completely separate. But one night he was leaving to go round to Hermione's for their Friday night delight—which was how he thought of these evenings—when his mum stopped him in the hallway.

"Where are you going, Philip?"

"Out, Mum. Don't wait up." He didn't look back.

"Now, wait. Where are you going? You've hardly shown your face here in weeks and I want to know which woman has you wrapped around her finger. I've asked round and nobody seems to know. Lady Fortnum is distraught that you're gadding around with someone who isn't her horse-like daughter."

"Mother, I'm going to be late," he snapped, but made the mistake of looking back over his shoulder. He never could break away from her disapproving glare.

"Well, answer me quickly then you can go."

"Hermione. I'm going to see Hermione, I've been seeing Hermione and if I don't go soon she's going to chew my ear off for being late. Are you satisfied now?"

"That amateur painter woman?" His mum screwed up her face like a pug swallowing a wasp.

"The professional artist who painted my portrait, yes, her."

"Oh, Philip," she said as if he was a ten-year-old who'd just trailed in mud over the carpet, "not her. She has no breeding, she's common. You can't fall in love with a woman who works, it's just not seemly."

"I will fall in love with whomever I chose, and I do love Hermione whether you like it or not." It felt good to tell someone.

"You have always been an awkward one. Well then, if you love her, we should get used to her. Invite her over for dinner tomorrow night. We'll have a go at getting to know her."

"Mother." He sighed.

"Don't. I want to meet the woman in your life properly. I'm not asking much, am I?"

"Fine, I'll invite her, now I've got to go," Philip snapped.

"Okay, darling. Have fun."

Philip knew his mother was up to something but he wasn't sure what. After Ellie went to bed, he broached the subject with trepidation.

"Your mother wants me to come to dinner?" Hermione said slowly, trying to digest the idea. "Why on earth does she want that?"

"She wants to get to know the woman in my life properly, that's what she said. I know it doesn't sound as pleasant a way of spending your Saturday night, but I would like it if you could get on with my folks."

"Well, sure. I mean, I guess. They're your parents and I need to get to know them at some point. What do I wear?"

"Oh, nothing too fancy. You'll be fine. I'll pick you up around seven. Have you got someone in to watch Ellie?"

"Yeah, it's all sorted. Philip, I'm not looking forward to this. I don't know what I'm going to say to change their opinion of me."

"Don't worry about it, sweetheart," he replied. "We'll eat, make small talk, then I'll take you off for a tour of the place. We have a dozen bedrooms all with big, firm beds. Some even have four posters."



"Mmm." Hermione smiled and snuggled into Philip's embrace. "That sounds good. I guess it can't go that badly, can it?"

\* \* \* \*

Hermione spent hours choosing something to wear. In the end she went for the classy black dress she'd bought for a funeral years ago and only brought out for occasions that involved meeting older people in a social context. Instead of pairing it with brightly coloured tights and a stripy cardigan, she simply put on plain tan tights and a plain black shrug.

"You don't look like my mum," Ellie told her. "You look like one of the boring mums at school who don't wear colours and rush about all the time."

"I know, but I'm going to a very posh place for my tea and I have to dress appropriately."

"I'm glad I'm not going." Ellie tied the neon pink laces on her shoe. "I don't own anything boring to wear."

"No you don't." Hermione smiled before hearing a knock at the door. "Oh, that'll be Auntie Sandra. Are you ready?"

"Yep," she replied as Hermione opened the door and greeted her sister.

"Whoa, you going to a funeral?" Sandra gasped when she walked in.

"No, worse. I'm meeting Philip's parents and I need to look smart."

"You look depressing." She shook her head. "Add a little colour, black doesn't suit you."

"I agree," Ellie said. "You don't look right."

"Well, thank you both for your advice." Hermione hugged her daughter. "I'll see you in the morning. Be good."

Hermione shut the door behind them. They were right. She needed more colour if she was to show any of her personality. However, that was exactly what she was doing her best to hide.

\* \* \* \*

"You look..." Philip seemed to be struggling to express himself. "...very sophisticated."

"Thanks." She smiled. "I don't feel it. Come on, let's get this over with."

They chatted on the way over, but Hermione sensed a heavy atmosphere. She guessed that was down to her nerves.

"Ah, welcome, Heather." An overly smiley Beatrice greeted Hermione at the door. "Do come in."

"It's Hermione, Mum." Philip sighed.

"Oh, I am sorry, I'm terrible with names. Come on in, Harmony, dear, come on in. It's bitingly cold out there."

Philip rolled his eyes and shrugged his shoulders. Hermione just smiled. This was going to be a long evening. She grabbed Philip's hand as Beatrice led the way down the imposing corridor. She was wearing a light pink two-piece suit that looked incredibly expensive even from a distance. Hermione, in her most expensive and smart dress, felt like she'd turned up in jeans to a meeting with the Queen.

"Your father is already seated. You know what he's like, dinner has to be at seven-thirty on the dot. I gave him his starters to keep him quiet. We'll have to skip to the mains." At this point she looked round and stared at Hermione. "It is such bad form for a guest to turn up late."

Hermione's cheeks burned with embarrassment. She knew this dinner was a mistake but she did it because Philip asked. She'd do anything for him. That realisation shook her. He had become so very important in her life.

For someone to be so important...she must love him.

Hermione loved Philip.

The revelation startled her, though deep down she had known it for a long time. She loved Philip. That feeling made her smile. But what did that mean? What would Philip do if he knew she loved him? Would he panic or would he stay?

She couldn't think on that profound revelation, but had to concentrate on surviving the meal to come.

"Oh, she's finally arrived then," Philip's father barked as they walked into the dark, wood-panelled dining room. The chandeliers and silverware alone dazzled Hermione with their bright affluence. "I've already finished tomato soup."

"We'll just have the mains with you, dear." Beatrice smiled and sat to the left of her husband, who'd been placed at the head of the table. "Was the soup good?"

"Passable." He nodded curtly. "Now, then. I want to speak to Philip's bit of fluff."

Philip winced and Hermione took a deep breath. She was determined to be polite, so she bit her lip and smiled sweetly.

"I guess that would be me," she said. "Hello, Mr. Haughtington."

"Yes, well." He cleared his throat and looked down his bulbous nose at Hermione.

She pulled up a seat next to Philip on the opposite side of the table from his mother.

"I want to know something about you and your family. Tell me about your parents, your standing in the world," the old man continued.

"Well, sir," Hermione said hesitantly. "I'm afraid I can't tell you much about my parents because they died when I was very small. My grandma brought me and my sister up."

Two black-suited waiters brought in gleaming white plates. Hermione paused a moment whilst the waiters served expensive French-cut lamb and prettily arranged potatoes and vegetables.

"All I know is that Dad was a greengrocer and my mum would help him in the shop. My granddad was a greengrocer before him, and my grandma baked the best treacle tart I've ever tasted."

"Oh, so you do come from common stock. Not even a banker or a doctor or something in the family."

"We might be common, but we are hard-working, honest and very loving. My family cares." She stabbed her lamb cutlet with her fork.

"That's nice, Hilary, but love doesn't put food on the table, does it?" Beatrice asked.

"But what food is there tastes wonderful and is prepared with love." Hermione smiled tightly. "I didn't want for anything as a child."

"Apart from manners and etiquette, but commoners just don't teach the important things."

"Mother," Philip snapped. "Hermione is my girlfriend. Please treat her with some respect."

An uncomfortable silence fell. The food was perfect but Hermione had to choke down each bite. Her throat was tight with emotion. She was angered and embarrassed and really, really uncomfortable. She loved Philip and that was the only thing that kept her at that table.

"I see you finished the portrait," Philip's father finally said.

"Yes, I did. I'm really pleased with the finished painting," Hermione said, glad to be on some comfortable ground.

"Well, at least someone is," Beatrice sniped.

Hermione put down her knife and fork. "Look, I was willing to do this for Philip's sake but I am not going to sit here and have you insult my family, my painting and myself." She took a breath.

Philip looked as though he planned to say something, but her hand on his arm stopped him.

"I was quite willing to try to get to know you. Your son is an amazing person and I love him. I thought I could maybe learn to like you. After all your DNA came together to make this man. I am really sorry your stupid prejudice stops you from seeing I'm actually a pretty good person. I'm sorry your noses are so high up in the air that you miss the beauty of anything below the flipping horizon line. I really am sorry I can't finish this meal with you. I wish you well, I really do, but I'm not going to sit here and take your shit any more. Good night."

Hermione pushed her chair back from the table with an un-ladylike screech and stepped away.

Mr. Haughtington began to clap. "Oh, at last," he cackled. "I knew there was a firecracker in there somewhere."

Hermione stopped and stared.

"I am sorry, my dear, but I needed to find out what you were made of. If you'd have taken that all evening I would have known you and Philip would never last. Now I know you have some balls, excuse my French, I know you're the girl for my lad." Philip's father continued to chortle.

"Did you know about this?" Hermione turned on Philip with a scowl.

"No, no, I didn't. I just thought they were being extra awkward," Philip said. "Did you mean it when you said you loved me?"

Hermione took in a deep breath, held it a moment, then nodded. "Yes, I did."

"Oh, thank heaven. I love you too. I really do." He stood and took her in his arms.

When their lips met, her world exploded. Fireworks went off in Hermione's head. She glanced first at Philip, then in turn at both his parents. She laughed and heard the laughter of all those around her.

"Sit down, dear, sit down, we have dessert to come. I need to apologise too. I was frightfully rude, but Arthur here put me up to it."

"It's okay." Hermione smiled. "We common people are good with forgiveness too."

The rest of the meal was far more pleasant. Philip relaxed, his parents stopped behaving like complete morons and Hermione began to act like herself. She felt on top of the world. Philip loved her and she loved him. That was the best news she'd ever got.

"Mum, Dad, I'm going to take Hermione for a look round now. Is that okay by you?"

"Of course, of course. You lovebirds don't want to be saddled with us old fogies all evening." Beatrice smiled. "We're going to the living room. We've recorded *Emmerdale*. See you later, darlings."

As they left the dining room waving and smiling Hermione whispered in Philip's ear, "That was the weirdest meal I have ever had."

"I thought the lamb was pretty pedestrian actually." He shut the door behind them.

Hermione playfully slapped his arm. "Oh, behave! You know what I mean. It was like having dinner with Jekyll and flippin' Hyde!"

"I really had no clue what they were up to. I mean, they've been like that to every single one of my girlfriends," Philip said. "It's such a relief to find out it was an act. I was so sad when they didn't like you."

"Really?" She stroked a hand over his chest.

"Yeah, really. I love you and I wanted them to love you too." Philip led her along the corridor and up the impressive stairs. "Okay, pick a room. You can have door two, door three, door six or doors eight, nine or ten."

"How the hell do you find your way around this place without a map? I'll have door nine, that's my lucky number."

"Oh, you'll be getting lucky, whatever number you pick." He grinned and led her to the room she'd decided on.

"Oh, promises, promises." Hermione giggled and followed him. The room was huge, old and very beautiful.

"You've picked the blue room," Philip said. "It's the most impressive room in the house. We've had royalty in this room. Not for a hundred years or more but they've been here all the same."

"Oh, wow." Hermione gasped, taking in the bright blue silk drapes and the gold embossed wallpaper. "I've picked well."

"You have." Philip shivered. "Except the heating doesn't reach this far. My parents only heat the rooms we use these days."

Hermione nodded. "I had noticed it was a little chilly in here."

"Let's get under the covers." He grinned, then pulled the huge, old fashioned bolt across the door.

Hermione delicately plucked at the covers on the bed, a slightly terrified look on her face.

"These aren't the sheets the Queen slept on." He ripped back the blankets and pushed her down. "You can treat them rough."

"I like it when you get rough, but my shoes are still on and everything is so very, very expensive."

As he knelt on the bed, he pulled off her sensible black shoes and threw them to the floor. He tickled the soles of her feet through her tights.

Hermione giggled and kicked her legs. "Hey, stop it, no, I'm ticklish."

"I know, that's why I'm tickling you." He chuckled and wiggled his fingers all the quicker.

Her cheeks were flushed and her arms waved around as she laughed and struggled to break free. In the end he let her feet slip from his grip and slid between her open, flailing legs to land on top of her and claimed her lips for a kiss. Her laughter changed to gasps, then to moans as his hands roamed over her.

She tugged on his tie, then pulled at his shirt buttons to access to his warm skin. His scent lifted her arousal to another level. He pulled up her skirt and slid it over her hips to her waist. The slither of material was the only noise in the still of the antique room until Hermione groaned with delight. The opulence around her made her feel like a princess.

She managed to pull open many of the buttons on Philip's shirt, then moved down to his belt. It was hard for her to concentrate as Philip's lips danced across hers. His tongue darted in and out of her mouth. She could barely catch her breath in the seconds between kisses. She felt drunk even though she'd barely sipped her wine at dinner. She was dizzy with desire and her heart overflowed with the joy of being in love, reciprocated love.

As she fumbled with his belt she heard the sound of thin nylon tearing. It sent a pulse of arousal through her pussy as the constricting material of her tights disintegrated with the force of his onslaught.

The cool air caressed the exposed flesh of her inner thigh, but Philip did his best to instantly take away the chill. He stroked up until he met the barrier of Hermione's black, conservative knickers and sneaked underneath.

Hermione managed somehow to unhook the belt and pop open the button on Philip's pants. She didn't know how because her mind was focused on the progress of Philip's fingers along her hot, damp slit to her fleshy clit that he expertly manipulated to bring her great pleasure.

"Yes," she cried, pressing her body up into his. "Fuck, that feels so good."

He nibbled on her neck. She dug her nails into his stomach and his chest as she scrabbled against him. Not to escape but in an attempt to cling on and grasp hold of something solid as orgasmic energy bubbled and fizzed inside her.

"I'm going to come. Oh fuck, Philip, I'm so close."

"Come for me," he whispered gently in her ear. "Come for me, baby, come long and hard for me."

Her cunt clenched in response as she did as he bid. She shuddered and screamed, curled up then stretched out as her orgasm bounced around her body, shaking her to the core.

"Fuck me," Hermione growled. "Please, Philip, I need you inside me."

"Good, because I need to be inside you. Hermione, fuck, you drive me wild."

Both of them reached for Philip's trousers and four hands clawed and pulled at his underwear until his cock was exposed. He hooked his finger in her knickers and pulled the material to the side as she gripped his buttocks and encouraged him forward.

He slammed into her; it was not the time for soft, teasing moves. Hermione smiled as he glanced her way to let him know that what he did pleased her, that she needed satisfaction as much as he obviously did. Her gaze locked with his and so much was shared between them without a word being uttered. He loved her and that was written all over his face, filled all his touches.

Hermione tightened her grip on his shoulders as she felt the tension inside him build to a crescendo. He came forcefully with a grunting exclamation and then after a moment leant

forward to kiss her. Hermione sensed contentment on his lips and recognised it...she felt exactly the same inside.

"I love you," he whispered as he slipped to the bed beside her.

"I love you too."

She lay in silence beside him for a while. This was a special moment, one that needed to be honoured and took quiet contemplation to truly understand. "One day," Philip said at last, "I will marry you and we will consummate the marriage in this bed."

"Oh, we will, will we? What if I don't want to marry you?"

"Then I will have to find a way to convince you that you can't possibly live without me." He kissed the spot just below her ear that drove her to distraction.

She moaned. "I have a feeling that won't be too difficult for you. You seem to be very persuasive."

"Oh, Hermione." He smiled. "I am, I really am."

"Is that a proposal then?" she asked, only partly in jest.

"No, not yet, my love." He brushed a strand of hair away from her face. "You deserve the most perfect proposal of all. I'll work on it."

"Really?"

"Really. I love you, Hermione. I want to be with you forever."

"If I painted from now to eternity I would never be able to express just how happy I feel to hear you say that. My artistic sights just don't stretch to it."

"You do not need to. Your heavenly delights are laid out here most beautifully." Philip traced a hand along her body. "And there is no more beautiful work of art in all the world."

"Oh, there is."

He looked at her.

"Together we meld like the colours in the sunset. Together we make the most beautiful portrait. Don't you agree?"

He nodded, then leaned in to kiss her. As surely as red and blue mixed together made purple, together they made perfection.



## About the Author

Victoria Blisse is a mother, wife, Christian, Manchester United fan and erotica writer. She is equally at home behind a laptop or a cooker and she loves to create stories, poems, cakes and biscuits that make people happy. She was born near Manchester, England and her northern English quirkiness shows through in all of her stories. Passion, love and laughter fill her works, just as they fill her busy life.

Email: [victoria@victoriablisse.co.uk](mailto:victoria@victoriablisse.co.uk)

Victoria loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at <http://www.total-e-bound.com>.

## Also by Victoria Blisse

Sweet Surrender  
Christmas Spirit Warms the Heart  
Festive Handbag  
Travel Delight  
Sexier Side of the Hill  
Point Vamp: Stopping Point  
Point Vamp: The Point  
Over the Moon: Moon Shy  
Night of the Senses: Spiced Vanilla  
My Secret Valentine: Secret Surprise

# Total-E-Bound Publishing



[www.total-e-bound.com](http://www.total-e-bound.com)

Take a look at our exciting range of literagasmic™  
erotic romance titles and discover pure quality  
at Total-E-Bound.