

## *The Rake and the Young Innocent*

### The Rake and the Young Innocent

Alternate title: Bought, Bound and Bared

She sat at the formal table going through the motions of eating, stalling for time as she watched the man across the table eyeing her. She had been so nervous since this afternoon when her Aunt had told her he was coming to dinner. She had hinted that he was coming for much more than the simple fare they were now serving at the ornately carved mahogany table. And now, she somehow had the feeling that he was here solely because of her.

Without lifting her head, she looked around the table at her siblings and her cousins. Margaret, her own sweet cherub of a sister was desperately trying to keep the small pile of riced potatoes on her fork until it reached her mouth. She was five and had only known her mother for three short years before she died. Next to her sat Theodore, her very grown up brother, who was trying to be everybody's keeper. He was nine. He had been sorely affected by their mother's passing. At the end of the table sat Molly, Aunt Patricia's youngest daughter. She was a bit simple or maybe just a little slow at times, but a smiling, cheerful towhead nonetheless. She was six. On the other side of the table sat George, Aunt Patricia's only son, and the bossiest child she'd ever had the misfortune to meet. He was fifteen. Next to him was Mary, a momma's girl who was rarely more than a few feet away from her mother. She was eight. Then there was Aunt

Patricia, newly widowed and burdened with six children, herself included. She was Julia—tall, willowy and curvy with long blonde hair, dewy skin in an unremarkable face, and nineteen just last month.

At the head of the table sat the man her aunt had invited to dinner. The man she had met on only one other occasion. At a wedding, in Dorchester, a long, long time ago when he had been only twenty-five. He was thirty-two now. She couldn't remember whose wedding it was, just that he'd been there and that he'd never lacked for a simpering woman on his arm for even a moment.

He was good looking by any woman's standards, devastatingly handsome by hers. He was rather tall and well formed with hard chiseled looks that made her aware that this man was probably never denied much of anything. And he was wealthy, extremely wealthy. Wealthy beyond compare, her aunt had told her. It was evident in his manner of dress and by the ornately adorned livery of the coachmen that had accompanied his regal black lacquered coach. There was a ducal coat of arms on the door, but she wasn't familiar with the hierarchy of the court, and didn't recognize the crest. It was curious though, a mermaid entwined with a serpent against a clamshell. He had been introduced as the Duke of Thornhill.

She was having a very hard time fathoming why he was here; they hardly ever had visitors, and certainly none of this caliber. And how was it that her aunt even knew this well-bred gentleman?

After dinner the Duke asked Julia to take a walk with him in the orchard. She hesitated, but her aunt encouraged her with a vigorous nod of her head and a pointed look toward the door, so Julia finally took his proffered arm and let him lead her out through the French patio doors.

They walked in silence along the oyster shell path that led to the far end of the orchard. She had heard her Aunt Patricia admonish the other children not to tag along, and to allow the Duke his privacy with her, so she knew she would be all alone in the moonlight with this man who was not much more than a stranger to her. And that in itself was very odd.

As they walked, he gingerly took her hand and then lifted it to his lips. He placed tiny little kisses on each fingertip before turning to face her and looking into her bewildered eyes. She was stunned by his attentions. Things like this simply didn't happen to her.

“You know why I'm here, don't you?”

“No, Your Grace, actually, I do not.”

“Your aunt sent for me a week ago. She heard that I am finally in search of a bride. She says she chanced upon you bathing two weeks ago, and she seems to think I will find you suitable. She knows I have very discerning tastes when it comes to women.”

“Pray tell, Lord Thornhill, how does she know this?”

“I am not at liberty to say. Just be assured that I trust her word, that is why I am here today.”

“Exactly what did she write you about me?”

“She said that you were long of limb with a very sweet nature.”

“And that was enough for you to come all this way?”

“She said other things.”

“I wish to know them, sir.”

“Are you sure?” he asked as he led her over to a masonry bench in front of a rose arbor.

“Yes.”

He gave her a wry smile. “Very well then. I choose not to keep secrets from you, if they are for the telling. She said that you had breasts as luscious and as plump as ripe white-fleshed peaches, and that the tuft of fur that protects your womanhood is so fair and so fine that even standing twenty feet away, your cleft is fully visible.”

He chuckled as her hand went to her throat. She blanched and then gasped.

“You asked.”

“She would not dare say such a thing!”

“Of course she would. She’s saddled with six children and she’s completely expended the monies left her. She knows that you are her most

valuable asset, and she intended to make certain I would come to inspect the merchandise.”

“I am not merchandise!”

“Oh, my dear, how wrong you are. The fact is, that you are. You are a commodity to be bartered to the highest bidder. She knows I can pay the highest price and that I am willing to do so, if I find what I want . . . what I desire.” His eyes smoldered as he looked into her face.

“I have a say! She cannot sell me!” She stood and began pacing.

“Madame, if you are to my liking, she already has.”

It was then that Julia remembered that her Aunt Patricia had been sequestered in the library with the Duke for the better part of an hour shortly after his arrival this afternoon. She turned, looked at him, and gasped. Could it be true? Could her aunt have sold her to this man?

Now that she thought about it, it was probably the only viable solution her aunt had been able to come up with after learning of their dismal finances from her late uncle’s solicitor last month. Of course! This would solve all her problems! Unload the ugly, undowried niece, and at the same time earn an income to provide for the rest of the family.

In actuality, it was a rather good plan and she should be grateful to her aunt for thinking of it. After all, her own dear siblings would suffer along with her aunt’s children if they were to be thrown out of their home, destitute, onto the street. She should be happy to help in any way that she could, but this, not this!

Married to this arrogant aristocrat whose only concern for her marriageability was her youthful body.

She moved back to the bench, and as if in a daze, slowly retook her seat. This could not be happening to her. She had been raised as a lady, a proper and respectable lady. One who would have a come out, attend balls, and be courted by proper and respectable gentlemen.

The Duke knelt beside her as she sat on the bench and his fingers gently stroked the side of her long neck. “Your forehead is high and your nose a trifle long. You have nice cheekbones and creamy fair skin, but you are not lovely in face, neither are you homely though. Your looks are just average. Your one outstanding feature is your beautiful pale blonde hair. I do like your over plump lips though. Even though they are not fashionable. I however, shall find many uses for them.”

He stood and looked down at her. “You are without a dowry, you have not had a proper coming out or attended a season and you are virtually an unknown living out here in this rural burg as you do. You have no skills other than teaching, child rearing and gardening, although Patricia has done extremely well with training you in the social graces of being a lady. You could do far worse than marrying me—a duke. A duke who can provide for you and your entire family in an elegant and grand style.”

“If this is a proposal, it is not one such as I’ve dreamed of all my life. Being reminded that I am an unlovely maiden with over plump lips, an unknown country goose, dependent on my aunt, with no funds available to secure a husband.”

“You are lovely in the ways that I need you to be lovely. I require a special bride, one that pleases me carnally. I venture that once broken, you will suit me quite well.”

“Are you asking me to marry you, Your Grace? Your words addle me, sir. I cannot tell whether you approve of me or disapprove of me.”

His hand cupped her cheek and as he pulled her to her feet, he leaned in to kiss her. His lips were ardent as they pressed against hers. His other hand moved through her hair as he pulled her close and crushed her mouth under his. His lips covered and moved over hers as his tongue forced its way between her teeth and upon entry, he plundered her mouth until she finally pushed against his chest to separate them. She was woozy from his advance, but it had not been entirely unpleasant, and that surprised her.

“Yes, I am asking you to marry me, if you meet my criteria, that is.”

“Criteria?”

“Yes, there are certain conditions that must be met.”

“And what might they be?” she was still trembling from his kiss, but trying not to let it show, so she forced herself to be haughty in her reply.

“I must view you first and you must be virginal—no man must have ever penetrated you.”

“I assure you sir, that I am virginal. Chaste in fact, except for your kiss. View me? What do you mean by that?” Odd feelings came over her—fear, awareness of his impressive size, and desperation—the longer he spoke the more real this was all becoming.

“I mean I must see you naked first. I must see your breasts and your womanhood and you must prove to my doctor that you are indeed a virgin. I am sorry, but your word just will not do in this matter.”

She stood there wondering if she was imagining this whole ridiculous conversation. She shook her head in disbelief as she mumbled, “You expect me to disrobe and allow for your inspection before we are to become betrothed?” She was incredulous with shock. The impropriety of such a request was so foreign that she could not comprehend it in its entirety.

“Yes. In fact, that is why we are here. Your aunt has sent us to this secluded orchard for you to do just that. She has assured us of privacy while you bare yourself to me so I can see if you are as pleasing to the eye as she has told me.”

“She would never!” Julia was indignant and shamed to her toes. “Surely, she did not!”

“Madame, I assure you that she did. You are welcome to check with her if you like. She knows it is a condition of my accepting you as my wife. You are to display yourself for me this night, here in the moonlight in this secluded glade.”



He bent and kissed her on the neck. It felt warm and tingly and it thrilled her. He continued kissing her neck, trailing light kisses all the way up to her ear where he engaged his tongue in the whorls. Her body was betraying her and she sensed that he was counting on that.

“So, what say you?” he breathed devastating warmth into her ear. “Do you wish to be my bride?”

He was right, she could do a lot worse than this incredibly handsome man who stood before her causing her body to vibrate and sing. His hands caressed her forearms as he kissed her lightly on the lips, then he kissed her eyelids and her nose before clasping her hands in his and gazing into her light blue eyes.

She stared back, mesmerized, looking into his hard, steely, dark blue ones. She simply nodded as if in a spell. She had acquiesced without meaning to.

His lips descended to hers and he greedily feasted on her full, pouty lips, nipping lightly on first one then the other before forcing her tongue to tangle with his. He murmured his pleasure as he kissed alongside her jaw. He felt her lean into him as her knees weakened and he smiled into her hair. When his lips reached her ear he breathed into it again, “Bare your breasts for me, or as I prefer to call them, your titties.”

She was shocked by his vulgar words, but strangely, also tantalized by them.

“I . . . I cannot,” she whimpered.

“You can,” he countered, keeping his eyes on hers as he deftly unbuttoned the line of buttons along the back of her gown. Then he started pulling her gown down over her shoulders. When her lily-white shoulders were bared, he forced the gown even lower, revealing her lace chemise and corset.

Unlacing the bodice, he whispered, “No one is around, it is just you and I,” as he continued to tug on the strings lacing her in. Before she could stop him the tension eased and all was undone. His hands moved the fabric of her gown and corset out of the way. Then he pulled her chemise to her waist, baring her breasts to the night air.

“Sweet Mary Agnes, she was right. Your tits are magnificent,” he said as his eyes hungrily devoured her. She stood there in her shame as she watched his eyes rove over her. His face was alight with pleasure, his lips in a wide grin.

“Perfect, perfect—the shape, the size, the nipples. They are absolutely perfect.” It was hard not to see the pleasure and lust in his eyes, and even though she was unnerved posing like this in front of him, she was also excited and thrilled by his lavish praise.

His hands reverently cupped her and he gingerly hefted each breast, his fingers groping and kneading as he felt how full and pliant she was. “Like warm, soft clay, molding itself to my hands,” he murmured as he stroked her and pinched her. The sensations were new to her. She was flushed with heat and tingling with feelings she had never felt as he continued to stare down at her and

fondle her. His thumbs grazed her nipples and she moaned from the intense pleasure he was giving her.

“Ah, responsive, too. I like that very much.” He circled her nipples over and over and they budded into tight hard pellets. Then he bent and took a nipple in his mouth and she thought she would die from the heat it sent coursing through her.

“Oh my!” she exclaimed.

“Oh my, is right. These mounds are luscious. They display *very* nicely, very nicely indeed.”

He bent to kiss the other breast and she swooned. He had to catch her about the waist to hold her up as he continued to suckle her.

“Ah, yes,” he said as he straightened, never taking his eyes from her chest. “These will do very nicely. Now let’s have a look at the rest of you.”

“The rest?” she squeaked.

“The rest,” he said firmly, looking up from her breasts to meet her eyes. “Your cunt, your womanhood, the juncture between your thighs. I want to see your body and learn all its secrets.”

“Sir, I beg of you, surely this can wait for the nuptial night?”

“Surely madam, it cannot. Pull the hem of your gown up to your waist and I will remove your pantaloons.” His brusque matter-of-fact manner unnerved her, yet she didn’t know how to deny him.

She moved to cover her breasts with the camisole but he grabbed her hand, “Keep those uncovered, I have not yet looked my fill upon them. Now raise your skirts.” It was a voice not to be brooked, his ducal voice, one she imagined caused everyone to bow to his demands. Immediately.

Her hands trembled as she inched her gown up from the sides, each hand bunching the satin material. He watched as she revealed her feet, clad in soft but badly worn slippers, her trim ankles encased in white snagged stockings. She hesitated at her knees, but all he had to do was pierce her eyes with his and arch his brow and she continued gathering the folds in her arms. When she finally stood before him with the skirt of her gown completely gathered at her waist, revealing her garters and her pantaloons, he sighed in appreciation.

She stood before him topless, her breasts bared to the night air as she held her dress out of the way so he could strip her of her pantalets. His aim, to view her womanhood, or in his words, “her sweet naked cunt,” uttered as he prepared to strip her of her remaining undergarment.

He was excited beyond measure at the sight in front of him. He was as hard as he’d ever been and he could not wait to kneel before her and examine her closely. He stood and took her by the shoulders and gently led her backward so she could lean against the trunk of a huge tree.

“This may take a while, you may need the support,” he said as his eyes raked over her breasts again. Then she watched as he knelt in front of her and

his hands moved to unfasten the tapes of her pantalets. She held her breath as he undid them and slid them down her thighs, letting them fall below her knees.

She felt his low gasp followed by a long drawn out sigh of wonderment as his breath fluttered the tight curls sparsely covering her. She was tempted to drop the skirts she was holding, but knew that was not the thing to do—already she had divined his one-mindedness about her body. But his perusal there, the knowledge of exactly where his eyes were focused caused her knees to buckle. He gripped her thighs tightly to steady her.

“Do not even think of removing this sight from in front of my eyes by fainting,” he murmured as his fingers skimmed the insides of her thighs on their way to their target. His thumbs led the way, gently pushing against the flesh at the top of her thighs to splay her for him.

“Spread your legs further for me,” he commanded in a soft whisper. And even though she whimpered, she knew better than to disobey. His fingers groped higher, pushing the flesh apart between her legs.

“Beautiful muff, my love. Show me more, I want to see it all,” he said as he forced her legs even further apart. She looked down to see that he knelt on one knee, wedged between her thighs with his neck crooked so he could view her better. She saw the top of his head angle to the side as he craned his neck to look into the absolute core of her body, and she felt so violated that she sobbed out loud.

“Shhh . . .” he whispered. “It’s all right. I’m not going to hurt you. I just want to look. You are incredibly beautiful here, my love. You have the most beautiful cleft I have ever seen. Patricia was right, you are perfect. I will have you as my bride.”

He leaned in and kissed her where his fingers had separated her labia and she trembled. She felt herself stiffen under his warm caress and then she involuntarily arched herself to receive another blessing from his lips.

He laughed as he stood, moving close to her so that even if she dropped her skirts, they would still stay up. “You will break in just fine.”

His hand caressed her naked thigh as his eyes sought hers, then his fingers found her warm, wet slit and he softly massaged her. “My fingers feel good on you, don’t they?” he asked, daring her to lie.

She only nodded as she trembled against him and he chuckled again. He kissed her thoroughly as his fingers explored her, and she didn’t know what was delving deeper, his tongue in her mouth or his fingers in her secret place. The sensations he was causing as he kissed her, impaled her, and then bent to suckle a tender, fleshy breast flooded her with a desire she had never known before. Her breath came in hard uneven pants as heat coursed through her veins, she felt lightheaded and in need of something she couldn’t name. When she jerked against his finger, drowning it with her hot, sticky juices she cried out with her release.

She felt she was being washed over the edge of a precipice after reaching the summit, and then softly floating down to be caught by a welcoming wave of fluffy cotton. It was like drowning in a warm sea while still being able to breathe. Her body shuddered against his and he kissed her beneath her ear as he whispered, “I promise you that is the first of many, my delectable bride-to-be.”

“Was I right?” A voice called out in the still night, and Julia recognized her aunt’s voice. She strove desperately to cover herself, but the Duke would not allow it, forcing her hands from her breasts with one hand while keeping her skirts up with his other hand around her waist.

“Yes, you were right. As always,” he said to the approaching voice as he indicated the bared breasts with a flourish of one hand. His hip, pressed into hers, secured the gown when he removed his other hand from her waist, “These are magnificent—ripe, full, fleshy and high on her chest. With soft pink nipples I will be the envy of. And this,” he cupped her mound, “is every man’s dream. Cunt hairs so soft and sheer, it is almost like she is shaven for viewing. You have done well, my love.”

*My love?* Why was he talking to her aunt that way? And why was he allowing her aunt to see her like this? Why was he not covering her? She struggled to free herself, but he held her firmly. The word “nipples” connected in her mind to “envy” and “shaven for viewing” screamed at her, but she couldn’t make sense of what they could possibly mean. She continued to try to pull away from him so she could cover herself.

“Now, now, you have a body built for display, do not be self-conscious. While you are not fair of face, you are more than fair of body. Believe me, few women possess such enticing charms in both arenas,” he said, his tone mocking.

Her aunt sidled up and took her time surveying her. “Yes, she is first quality. I fear you may not have paid enough for her. Mayhap, we should renegotiate?” she said with a sly smile.

“I’ve settled enough on you for you and your brood to live comfortably for the rest of your lives, and you know it,” he said with a wink. “Accept my thanks for finding me this prize, I shall indeed treasure it. I have the dispensation and the special license with me; we will be wed on the morrow after the doctor has certified her for me. You’re sure she is virginal?”

They were talking as if she wasn’t even there, yet both sets of eyes were fully on her. She was red with shame but helpless to cover herself.

“I am sure. I have allowed no males, servants or otherwise to be in her presence alone, especially once I discovered her naked in her bath. I knew she was uncommonly formed.”

“Good,” he said as he ran his fingers through her tight curls, angling his head down to see past the bulk of the wadded gown. “She is an incredible find, I cannot wait until I have the time to play with my new toy and discover all its special secrets.” He pulled his hand away and let the gown drop to the ground. Julia visibly relaxed until she remembered that her breasts were still uncovered and both her aunt and now her betrothed’s eyes were fixated on them.



Her aunt sauntered over and grabbed a handful of the plump flesh and pinched it together, letting her thumb graze the nipple. “You did well, Your Grace. You will be truly proud on your wedding day.”

“That I will,” he said as he pulled Julia’s camisole up over the full white mounds with their jutting rose-colored tips. “That I will.”

“What are you two talking about and how do you know each other and why do you call her ‘your love,’” Julia demanded in her indignation, as she tried to piece her garments back together and to achieve some semblance of order in her appearance. “And why are you allowing him to look upon me like this after all these years of teaching me to be proper and chaste and ladylike?”

The words were issued in a scream as the realization of exactly what had happened here in the openness of this orchard came to her. She was now betrothed to this man. She would be marrying him tomorrow as soon as the doctor vouched for her! Her body would be his to do as he willed and apparently he willed it to be displayed for his eyes. How often, she did not know, but he was obviously paying a great deal for the right to do so as often as he wished.

Her aunt had indeed sold her to this man, this man she knew nothing of, nothing except that his kisses drugged her soul and made her body betray her by relishing the touch of his fingers and mouth.

“You may tell her all you know of me when you are away with her tomorrow, but I would have her know nothing of us until she is far away from here,” her aunt said with a stern countenance.

“I understand.”

“Come Julia, I will see you to your room where you will be locked in for tonight. It is for your own good. I have come too far in this for anyone to breach you and ruin my arrangement.”

Julia was stunned by her aunt’s words. Her aunt had plotted in this scheme or whatever it was, and now she, Julia, her once beloved niece, was not even to be trusted until the morrow when a doctor would come and examine her?

“Molly and Meg will sleep with you tonight to insure that you do not harm yourself,” she said, the meaning of her words all too clear. “Your maidenhead will provide a roof over the heads of your siblings and half-siblings. They will have new clothing on their backs and ample enough food because of you. Should your maidenhead be breached tonight, they will be orphaned.”

Her aunt did not say this in a mean-spirited way, just in a matter-of-fact way, as if the choices were simple—as if this was indeed the last option open to them. She looked tired and sad, but unapproachable. It was obvious that her mind was made up and that nothing Julia could say would sway her.

Her life had been given over. She now belonged to the Duke of Thornhill—body and soul. But sadly, he only seemed interested in her body. She followed her aunt back to the house and up to her bed chamber where her sisters were already in bed waiting for her.

She was surprised when the Duke arrived at nine the next morning to take her to the doctor.

“I thought Dr. Herrington would be coming here,” she said.

“You’re not seeing Dr. Herrington, you’re seeing my doctor. Dr. Lucien Rinaldo. He’s traveled from London to examine you for me. He and his nurse have been invited to use Dr. Herrington’s offices in town.”

“You don’t trust anybody do you?” she sneered at him.

“No. Not when it’s important. And this is very important.”

“Why? Why is it so important that I be a virgin? You obviously aren’t unpracticed.”

He laughed uproariously. “That is, in fact, true. However, I paid for a virgin and a virgin I shall have. I don’t really have to explain it to you, but I will. I am thirty-two, never married—in fact, never planned to marry, until my eldest brother died late last year. Now the line must continue with me. I will eventually need an heir. You shall provide me with one when the time comes. When I deem you are ready to bear a child for me, you will do so. Although I would prefer the mother of my children be a virgin on the day I marry her, the legacy of my family requires it to be so. So, I must be assured that no man’s prick has found its way between your thighs before mine.”

She gasped at his language and he chuckled, “You might as well get used to my language, I don’t intend to change it for you.” He took her elbow and assisted her onto the carriage block.

The coach pulled up and she saw that six outriders as well as the over-embellished, liveried footmen from yesterday accompanied it, along with the same two drivers she'd seen the day before. Even the tiger, the young man riding on the back, was in full uniform, and from the little she knew of the aristocracy, that was considered a flagrant display of excess. How wealthy was this man she was going to marry anyway?

He handed her up into the carriage and for all outward appearances, it looked like he was a detached gentleman taking her for a Sunday afternoon outing, not the rake she now knew him to be, taking her to *his* doctor to have her inspected because he believed she could be lying to him. And never in her life had she ever wished so much that she had lied and that the good doctor would back her in her lie. But since he was such a good friend of the Duke—that was highly unlikely.

Molly and Meg had been so severely instructed not to let her out of their sight last night, that she was not even left alone to go to the garderobe, so even if she had been able to find something appropriate to use, she wouldn't have had the opportunity to use it to cause her virgin blood to flow. But she had thought about it all night as she tossed around in her sleep.

As soon as the Duke was situated in the carriage beside her, he tapped on the roof and the carriage surged forward.

“Good morning, my dear,” he said belatedly, “I trust you slept well?”

“About as well as one could with two youngsters in my bed kicking me all through the night.”

“Well, tonight shall be different; I don’t kick.”

*Oh yes, she had that to look forward to.* Being bedded by a man she hardly knew. She had hoped one day to find a mate, but she had fancied being able to fall in love before being expected to relinquish her body over to the desires of a rutting husband. That would have made it at least tolerable, she thought.

She didn’t know much about the actual act of consummation—her aunt had told her only a little of what to expect. She had advised her to make sure her bladder was emptied before going to the marriage bed if she preferred pleasure to pain, but other than that she was completely unsure as to what to expect. She knew that the male penis would enter her between her legs and that he would pleasure himself in her body until he had coaxed his seed to spill out of him and into her. That was enough to terrify her; she wasn’t sure she wanted to know any more of what would be expected of her in the marriage bed.

Her aunt had hugged her this morning and told her to be obedient, that some unpleasantness was to be expected for the grand reward they were all getting. She had told her about the new manor house the Duke had bought for her and the children, and the school the Duke was sending her brother, Theodore, to at the end of the summer. It had warmed her heart when Teddy had come to her this morning after breaking their fast. He had hugged her around her

hips and thanked her wholeheartedly for marrying the Duke so he could attend the most prestigious Bolton Arms Academy. All of the girls had new gowns delivered to them early this morning, including her. All the accoutrements had also been provided and she had learned that the Duke was much more than considerate; he was thorough—not neglecting a single detail. Not so much as a hair ribbon was omitted from the new ensembles.

She was wearing her new gown as instructed in the letter that accompanied the gown, the petticoats and all the prerequisite undergarments. He had also provided new leather slippers, a matching pelisse, and a velveteen cloak that was as soft and cool as wild moss in a summer glade. The quality of the materials was impeccable and the workmanship the finest she'd ever seen. If this was a sampling of the luxuries the Duke would bestow on her, mayhap it wouldn't be so bad being yoked to him and occasionally availing him of her sexual favors. She knew that many women had it a lot worse than she would have it. At least she wasn't to be saddled with a toothless man thirty years older than herself with three chins, gout, and pudgy, pasty skin.

She turned to look at the man sitting beside her and realized that he was staring at her. His dark blue eyes were assessing her from the new, pert green velvet hat with the brown-feathered plume all the way down to her new stylish kidskin slippers.

“Proper clothing makes a world of difference on you. Although, don’t get too used to it. I expect soon for you to be out of all your clothing for a goodly amount of the time.”

She blushed at his words but his husky voice had triggered another response in her that she was completely unfamiliar with, and a seeping warmth crept into her chest and belly. The man was so sure of himself. What must it be like to always get what you wanted whenever you wanted it, she wondered.

“Now that I am really taking a good look at you, I find I may have spoken a little too hastily yesterday. You really are quite charming. Your skin has a wonderful glow and your plumped lips are quite enticing, indeed. Lean over here and kiss me.”

“What?”

“Kiss me. It’s easy, just press your lips against mine and move them around some.”

She sat back against the squabs and shook her head.

“That was not a request, that was a command. And no one disobeys me. I hope you do not have to learn that the hard way. Now do as I say and kiss me.”

She looked from his steely hard eyes to his firm lips. Timidly she sat forward and turned toward him. She allowed her body to lean into him until her lips grazed his, then she sat right back.

“If that’s the best you can do, we have a lot of work ahead of us,” he said before he grabbed her by the shoulders and hauled her onto his lap. She squealed as his lips descended to hers and he kissed her passionately and thoroughly, his tongue quickly breaching her lips and darting inside between her teeth. His tongue repeatedly flicked over hers trying to coax it to retreat with his into his mouth, and finally, he succeeded. He managed to tantalize her tongue into exploring his mouth and it surprised them both. He groaned from the unexpected pleasure and she gasped from embarrassment at her forwardness.

He laughed and pulled away from her, “Do not cower so, your tongue will soon know all the places there is to know on me, the inside of my mouth is just the beginning.”

Her insides shuddered at his words. She was shocked not only from the impact of learning that he would be expecting her to use her tongue on other parts of his body, but also from the effect of his kiss. It had called to a place deep down inside her and Lord help her; she wanted another just like it.

The carriage pulled up in front of a short drive and halted at the front door of the local doctor. She knew him well because of her sisters and her brother, but personally, she had never taken sick that she could remember.

A footman opened the carriage door and the Duke stepped down and then turned to lift her out. His hands on her waist instead of on her forearms attested for all who cared to watch that she was allowing him to be quite familiar with her body, and she again blushed at the intimacy his touch afforded.



He set her down beside him and together they walked up the short path to the door. The door opened just as they reached it and the genial old doctor she was familiar with greeted them.

“Your grace,” he said falteringly, “allow me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Herrington and I am most humbled that you have chosen my offices for your personal physician to utilize during your visit here.”

“Where is dear Lucien?” the Duke asked jovially.

“He is waiting for you in the study with a glass of sherry.”

“Marvelous.”

“I will take your betrothed to his nurse.”

“Thank you, but I prefer him to meet her while she is still clothed if you don’t mind.”

And then it all came back to her, what they were here for. Horrified, she realized that soon a strange man would be gazing on her naked body, well, not so much on it as into it. She ducked her head and looked at the hem of her gown as the dread washed over her. If she didn’t comply, he would not marry her. Her aunt and the children would be homeless. Teddy would have no academy or university awaiting his arrival with his coat full of tuition money. All would be lost if she did not obey. She remembered her aunt’s words. She had known how hard this would be for her. Julia realized she had no choice in this, she was the only one who could save her family from ruin.

The Duke took her arm and led her down a darkened hallway and then with his hand on her lower back, he escorted her into the study. A man stood from behind the desk and smiled at them.

*Dear God, he was young! Not a fuddy-duddy old man in his cups as she was hoping. Sweet Jesu, this rakish-looking man with his intelligent eyes would soon be examining her! There!*

“Lucien!” the Duke called out. “Good of you to come on such short notice.” They clasped each other about the shoulders like the good old school chums that they were, and she saw that the doctor was taller than her soon-to-be husband. When he turned to face her, she saw that he had exotic dark eyes that sparkled with mischief.

“Did I really have a choice?” the man answered with a lopsided grin. “A summons from the Grand Duke of Thornhill is not to be ignored,” he said in a put-on lofty voice. “Besides, I wouldn’t have missed this opportunity for the world and you know it.”

“Julia, this is my dear old friend, Dr. Lucien Rinaldo, doctor to the *ton*. Incredibly smart lad. He found a way to have women eagerly part their thighs for him, and he gets paid for it. Handsomely, I might add. We were roommates at Cambridge. Lucien, this is Julia, my betrothed . . . unless you tell me otherwise,” he said with a pointed look in her direction.

The reminder that he thought she could be lying to him pricked her again, but she didn't dwell on it. A nurse came into the room and stood beside the doctor.

"Julia, it is indeed a pleasure to make your acquaintance. This is my nurse, Agnes. She will take you to the examining room and help you to disrobe. The Duke and I will share a sherry and then we'll be with you shortly."

"*We'll?*" she asked horrified, her wide eyes darting to the Duke's.

"You did not think I would allow another man's eyes to feast on the part that makes you female without me being present did you?" His tone was mocking and somehow she knew that he was enjoying this.

She took a deep breath and said as calmly as she could, "I don't think that would be proper, surely you trust your friend. He is a doctor."

"Proper or not, I will be present for his examination of you." His eyes narrowed as they bored into hers, "No man looks at you outside of my presence," he said and she could hear the anger and determination in his voice.

She knew then that he would not listen to any of her pleas for decency, decorum, or modesty and she turned scarlet with rage and embarrassment.

The doctor picked up a glass of sherry that had already been poured. It sat on the edge of a silver tray beside a crystal decanter. It was filled with a matching light brown liquid. He handed it to her saying, "Here, have a few sips of sherry, it'll calm you down a little."

"I don't want to be calm!" she retorted.

The Duke took the proffered sherry and thrust it into her hand, “Drink it!” he hissed through clenched teeth. Then he turned back for the glass the doctor was offering to him.

She took several small sips as she looked over the rim of the glass trying desperately to think of a way out of what was coming next.

She was still trying to think of something to say, something to let him know she refused to do this, when the nurse suddenly took her arm firmly in hers, and none too gently led her out of the room and down a hallway.

When the nurse had shut the door behind them in the tiny examining room, she gruffly rasped, “Remove everything. Not a stitch is to be left on ya.”

“I cannot believe that you expect me to disrobe for two men! It’s not proper!”

“One of those men is your doctor, one is soon to be your husband. That’s proper enough.” She reached over and pulled off Julia’s hat, pulling the large hairpin out of her hair as she did so. Her long blonde hair tumbled past her shoulders.

“Now look what you’ve done!” Julia screamed, suddenly aware that she was practically hysterical and totally foolish to be concerned about her hair when this matron was rapidly divesting her of her clothing.

Julia fought the nurse as she tried to unbutton her bodice, but clearly she was no match for her, and suddenly she felt her arms grow heavy and useless

against Agnes' formidable maneuvers. Within minutes she was standing naked before her in the small room, her clothing locked in an armoire in the corner.

"Here," the nurse said as she thrust a bed sheet at her. "You can wear this 'til they get here, but then they're going to want that off, too." Agnes openly ogled Julia as she opened the sheet and spun it around Julia's body and then tucked it under her arms. "You're a real pretty piece once your clothes is off, I'll give you that. Get up on the table," she said gesturing to the cloth-covered table in the center of the room.

Julia turned and looked at the table for the first time. It was high off the floor. It was padded and covered with an oilcloth. A short stool had been placed at the end of the long table. Attached to all four corners of the table were leather straps and silver clamps with short bindings.

"No! No!" she cried, and then as she saw the nurse advancing on her, her sobs turned piteously low, "no, no, please, no."

The older woman softened slightly, "It's no use fightin', they're gonna do it, ya might as well make the best of it. C'mon, sit yourself up here and let me strap you down. I don't want to hurt you, but my job is to get you ready for them."

"No, no, no," she wailed. "Please, don't let them do this."

"The stuff in the sherry'll be workin' soon and it won't be as bad as you're thinkin'. The doctor's real gentle-like, he won't hurt you none, nor cause you no harm. I been working with him eight years, he's kind."

"But I can't," she whimpered, "I just can't."

“Ya must missus. Your master wants Dr. Rinaldo to show him your maidenhead, and ain’t nobody gonna tell the Duke ‘no’ ‘bout nothin’. C’mon, I’ll help you. Sit in the middle now. Now lay down.” She pushed her until she was prone, her head resting on a small pillow.

“What was in the sherry?”

“Just a little laudanum, it’ll make you mellow but I didn’t give you enow to knock you out.”

“Why not?” That sounded like a pretty good idea right about now.

“Doctor’s orders, just give you enow to settle you down and strap you up, otherwise you’ll get the megrims.”

Right now, she’d rather a case of the megrims than the memory of this. She felt the matron lift each arm and secure it with the strap, then the matron went to the foot of the table and separated her legs and secured each ankle with her foot flat on the table. With each limb, Julia tried to fight her, but every muscle was so heavy she couldn’t do much more than flail at her before it was restrained at the edges of the examining table.

Then Agnes pulled the sheet out from under her and snapped it high into the air letting it slowly waft down on top of her naked body. She walked over to the window and opened the curtains leaving only the sheers closed, flooding the room with bright morning sunlight. “This window faces the rose garden and there’s a locked gate at the end, so you don’t have to worry about anybody seeing sumpin’ they’re not supposed to be seein’. But the doctor requires the

daylight to see. The doctor and the Duke'll be in shortly, you got no worries ifn' you've been a good girl, if not . . ." she shook her head and shut the door behind her. Then Julia was alone in the room, naked except for the sheet that had settled lightly over her.

*I don't have to worry about anybody seeing sumpin' they're not supposed to be seein'*, she mimicked to herself. Neither of these men was supposed to see her like this! What made them think they had the right? Oh Lordy, what had she gotten herself into? Tears leaked out of her eyes and ran down to the pillow that was propping her head up.

The knob turned, the door creaked on its hinges, and the doctor walked in followed by the Duke, who closed the door firmly behind him. Her eyes met his and she felt sure he was delighted with her palpable fear.

"Julia," the doctor said as he sat down on the stool at the end of the table between her covered, splayed thighs. His voice was very soft and cultured as he continued, "I won't be doing anything that will hurt you. We're just going to take a little look at you. You will feel me touch you from time to time, and I will be inserting a small spreading devise that will enable me to get a better view inside you." The Duke stood over his right shoulder smiling down at her. This was going to be awful. She closed her eyes tightly. How could this be happening to her?

"I'm going to lift the sheet up over your knees now so I can examine you."

She sobbed and struggled against the restraints as he gingerly lifted the sheet over her knees. She felt the cool air of the room on her thighs and genitals

and knew she was uncovered, naked in front of their eyes. She tried to move her legs to close off their view, but she couldn't.

The doctor reached up and pushed her knees fully apart and she knew she was now gaping wide for them. Nothing was hidden from their view. She turned her head and stared at the wall and let her tears silently wet her face.

“Jesus Stewart, she’s gorgeous!” the doctor whispered, evidently so awed by the sight of her that he couldn’t help his outburst.

“I told you she would be. Look at those light blonde curls would you? I’ve never seen anything like it.”

“Me either, such fairness against the pink. Her hairs are so pale that they’re almost white.”

She turned her head and looked down between her knees and saw the wavy brown curls of the doctor’s head. The Duke was bent, peering over the doctor’s shoulder. She squeezed her eyes shut and even more tears oozed out.

“Watch as I spread her lips,” the doctor said as his fingers touched her. She jumped and squirmed away but his hands went under her, gripped her buttocks and pulled her back down to the very edge of the table saying, “Shhh, it’s okay,” he crooned and she felt his fingers touch her again then spread her nether lips. “Ahhh, such a pretty, healthy pink vagina.”

The Duke looked up at her, as if to reassure her, “You’re showing us your pink vagina, sweetheart and it is truly lovely. You have a delightful little cunt.” She squirmed and tried to close her legs but they were too heavy; she couldn’t get her



muscles to contract. Then the Duke actually seemed to be smiling at her discomfort, and in that moment she hated him for it.

Then he looked down again to where the doctor's hands were installing a small tube, and he addressed his friend, "So, is she?"

"See for yourself," the doctor said and moved slightly out of the way, but she could still feel his fingers on her holding her labial lips apart with the tube partially inserted into her. "She's small inside, but I can see everything's still intact."

The Duke moved into the vacated space and crouched low. She heard the doctor say, "See that thin membrane way up inside? Here, I can touch it with this swab." She felt something enter her and touch her. "That's it, Stewart, that's her hymen or maidenhead as you Highlanders say. It's intact and ready for popping!" he said, sounding very pleased, as if he had just discovered a rare jewel. He pulled the tube out.

"What is this?" The Duke asked, and he bent forward to graze his finger on her. She felt more fingers join his. *My God, now they were both touching her at the same time!*

"That's her first set of lips, this," he said stroking the inside of a velvet fold, "is the second set, where all the love juices come from, she'll get wet for you here and it'll spread to here," he said pointing. "Look, she's getting wet now. See that light milky glaze? It's coating her like a fine, silky patchouli oil—her body's getting ready to mate, making your entry easier and protecting her from being rubbed

raw. If you make her come, this is where that lovely woman's essence comes from," he said as ran his finger around the top rim of her vagina.

He inserted his finger inside her, stood and pushed against her mound with his other hand. "If you curl your finger inside her and stroke the front wall of her vagina like this, making steady and firm contact, there is a very special spot where you can make her scream and cause her to flood your hand."

He shoved hard, sending his long finger deep into her core, his palm cupping her. Leaning slightly forward, he pushed against her mons from the outside, flexing his wrist several times with the effort. When she groaned, he stopped and held both hands still. A moment later, Julia's body arched up to meet the downward pressure. She lifted her hips, grinding herself into his hand. All control left her as she cried out and began frantically convulsing against him. Sobbing with shame, she turned her head to the wall as her body betrayed her and swamped his hand.

"See?" he said triumphantly, pulling out his finger and showing him her copious release. A pool of thick creamy slickness coated his palm.

"Nice . . . you do know your way around a woman's cunt. Always wondered where that creamy stuff came from," the Duke said with a chuckle. "I've looked between the legs of many women and never noticed that there were two sets of lips before. I suppose I was more interested in the sweet honey hole."

The doctor smugly smiled at him and began to slowly massage Julia, calming her and forcing her to relax after her powerful orgasm. He was pleased

he knew something about women that his friend, the Duke, London's most notorious rake, didn't know. But he was doubly pleased that he was able to bring this beautiful woman to her completion so readily by his more than capable hands.

The Duke elbowed his friend aside to sit on the stool between Julia's parted thighs. He leaned in and kissed Julia on her nether lips, using his tongue he redistributed the musky dew as he licked her slit from top to bottom and back again. She gasped and her eyes opened wide. Both the doctor and the Duke chuckled, then the Duke stood, licking his lips.

"Can't let any of that stuff go to waste, can I?" he said when he saw his friend's amused expression. "She tastes as good as she looks, Luce."

Lucien knew that, as he had just sucked her essence from his fingers. They both stood back and stared at her, at the moist junction between her thighs. "She is lovely isn't she?" the Duke said.

"You've done very well for yourself, Stewart. You've certainly done your family proud."

"Yes. I think everyone will be well pleased."

What in the world were they talking about, she wondered in her lightly fogged head.

"Now, let me see her breasts and I'll check to make sure she has good nipples for nursing your heirs."

"You just want to see her tits."

The doctor laughed. “Yes, I do in fact.”

She felt the sheet being pulled completely off of her until she was lying on the table completely naked and open, nothing covering her anywhere, nothing at all.

“Ahhh. Perfect. They are simply perfect,” Lucien breathed.

“Here, let me sit her up so you can see their true shape. They are quite full and heavy, yet still high on her chest,” the Duke said proudly.

She felt the Duke’s hands on her back and shoulders as he lifted her into a seated position, and when she looked up she saw the doctor’s eyes deeply searching her own before his hands reached out and cupped her breasts.

“Ahhh. Stewart. You are the luckiest man in the universe. These are marvelous. So soft, yet firm,” he bent lower and concentrated his eyes on her nipples, “nipples to entice any man’s tongue.” He stroked them and pulled on them and then rubbed them back and forth between his fingers. “Look how long they’re getting just by my rubbing them, imagine how long they’ll get by you suckling them. She’ll nurse just fine, both you and the babes will be able to suckle her with abandon.”

He kneaded the flesh back and forth and up and down and around in circles on her chest. “Showpieces, these are,” the doctor murmured.

“Yes, I know,” the Duke said proudly from behind her where he was still propping her up for him.

She turned her head and her eyes met his, and she could see the lust in them. She was on her elbows, her legs splayed; her knees spread wide showing them both every private part of her body. She was still unable to move, unable to retract anything, and unable to keep them from looking at her most private parts. All she could do was sit there and let them look at her to their heart's desire.

The doctor abandoned her breasts and came around the table to stand at the foot of the table. The Duke eased her back down and went to stand beside him and together they stared at her in silence for several long minutes.

Finally she could take their fascinated scrutiny no longer and she whispered, "Please." The doctor bent to pick up the sheet from the floor and covered her with it.

"Thank you, my Lady Thornhill," he said as he smoothed the sheet in place, then he bent and kissed her on the cheek. Using her soon-to-be title was his way of assuring her that she had passed all of his tests. "I've never enjoyed an examination more."

"Hey! Don't make me jealous here."

What kind of man was she marrying? A man who would allow all these liberties to be taken on her body by this man's eyes and his hands, but now he was objecting to a simple kiss on her cheek? How was she to get along with this man? He was a monster. And so was his friend.

The doctor left the room and the Duke bent over the table to take a nipple into his mouth to suckle it. She sucked in air and cried out in surprise. He

continued for many minutes, alternating between breasts and she felt more of that warm liquid collect between her thighs.

When he was finished, he ravaged her lips and she thought she tasted herself in his kiss. Then he stood above her looking down at her and with steel in his eyes as he grated out, "Men may look at you, but remember, *you are mine.*"

He abruptly left the room and the nurse returned to help her dress. *What in the name of Holy Heaven did he mean by that?*

On the carriage ride back to her aunt's house, she vented her anger at his treatment of her. "If I am to be your wife, a lady of the realm, why was I treated so shabbily and so disrespectfully, by you, the doctor, and his nurse? Surely it is obvious to me that you meant to humiliate and shame me beyond what was required to certify my chastity!"

"Madam," he said complacently, "You were a player in this game long before I even knew of you. Dr. Lucien Rinaldo, the Earl of Navona, has been promised an unencumbered view of my betrothed's maidenhead since we were but fourteen years of age. And had he not turned doctor, I would still have been obliged to make sure he had it."

She gasped at his harsh words, and as her hand clutched at her throat. Her eyes met his hard defiant ones, and she knew she would never have a say in anything that concerned her. She was indeed, bought and paid for, and he would never accept her as anything but his sovereign property, over which he had

complete and absolute control. Her body belonged to him. He would do with it what he wanted, and she was beginning to suspect that he had plans she was not going to like.

“No need to be shocked. Between friends such as he and I, it is done all the time. What a woman’s body is subjected to is just not always something that they are aware of,” he said with a sly leer, “she is not always conscious or awake and so is quite often unaware of her husband’s proclivities. At least the liberties I have taken with your body have been done with your full knowledge.”

“And outraged objections!”

“You might as well learn not to voice them, it will only get me angered and make things harder for you.”

“What am I to be? Your lady or your whore?” she said with great vehemence.

He reached out and roughly grabbed her breast through her gown and bodice. She felt the savagery of his possession of it. “I may allow men to feast their eyes on you, but I will never allow them to have you! You are mine! While I will enjoy watching others build their lust for you, I will never let them sate themselves within your body.” He squeezed her breast harder and she could feel his fingernails digging into her soft flesh like talons. “And you best never allow that to happen either, my Lady,” he sneered at her while making a mockery of the word ‘Lady.’

Then, with a slight shove, he removed his hand from her breast and lightly stroked her cheek as he softly whispered, “Your job is to tantalize. To make men openly aware of the wondrous prize I have attained for myself, to make jealousy ride high in the hearts of my cohorts. I wish them all to envy me, my *very lovely Lady Julia.*”

As she sat stunned by his venomous revelations, she was told the details about the marriage ceremony they would be having later this afternoon, and about the journey back to his estate near Heather Moorland. It would take three days for them to travel, and on the fourth day, they would again be married. This time it would be a proper Hedonic ceremony honoring his family and their traditions, and this he told her, would be their true handfasting day. The ceremony today was something to appease her aunt because he knew she would not let him take her away without the benefit of marriage and all that it promised her. Their true marriage ceremony would be one in the style of the ancient druids, the pagans, from whom his father’s Welsh ancestry was derived.

None of this made a lot of sense to her, but she listened anyway, hoping to understand more of what was expected of her. When he got to the part about their wedding night, her heart sang. She had a reprieve. Since he felt that they were not really and truly married until the second ceremony, they would not be consummating their marriage until that night, five days hence. However, he said, admonishing her severely for her zealous delight, “We will be traveling together in



the same coach, sharing the same room at the inns and sleeping in the same bed. And there are other things I expect you to do for me, and one or two I may do for you if you choose to behave.”

The man was so cryptic all the time, why couldn't he just speak plain English? What was in store for her on the road to her new home? The strange light in his eyes hinted to her that he would be pleased, but that she might not. She was quick to note that he seemed to divine a strange sense of pleasure whenever he exerted his power over her, especially when it required her to be humiliated or humbled by him.

The wedding at her aunt's took place in the formal salon, shabby though it was. They both repeated their vows mechanically, she because she was nervous and still caught up in a maelstrom of different emotions, he, because he gave little credence to the validity of this ceremony as this was not his religion.

While they were attending the small reception her aunt had arranged for them, the servants packed all of Julia's possessions and loaded them into the wagon the Duke had instructed his head coachman to purchase. Then Julia said tearful goodbyes to her siblings and cousins. Finally, turning to her aunt, she buckled under the strain.

“I don't know if I can do this,” she sobbed in her aunt's arms, “I'm not ready to be a bride or a mother!”

“You are indeed ready to be a bride, my dear,” her aunt said as she consoled her. “As for being a mother, I would not worry. I venture it will be quite some time before the Duke allows you to become one.”

Julia looked at her with questioning eyes, but her aunt did not elaborate further. As she stroked Julia’s overlong blonde hair, she whispered in her niece’s ear, “I know one thing for certain; he will not hurt you if you obey him. If you do not though, he has his ways, and they are not pleasant. You will never wear a bruise from his loving though . . . love bites—that I would expect. Maybe you won’t come to mind them. In truth, I envy you. His is quite a virile man and you will be cherished and well loved as his lady bride.”

“How do you know all this?” Julia asked.

“He was my first, a long, long time ago. Before I met either of my husbands. He will tell you all when he is ready. Take heed of my advice, if you know what is best for you . . . and for the family you are leaving behind.” With that, she gave her a small kiss on each cheek and set her aside.

The Duke of Thornhill bent and took Patricia’s hand in his. He raised it to his lips while he focused his stern blue eyes on hers. “You have found me a gem among gems, the prized ruby of the lot. It is that much more rewarding that this gift comes from you, a very special lady of my past. Tell me, do you ever think of me and the times we had?”

“Always,” she answered with a small smile. “More often than you would ever imagine,” she whispered.

He bent to kiss her on the cheek and Julia swore that she saw his hand stray to cup her bottom before he turned to face his new bride.

“All is in readiness, let’s make haste. I would like to make the first inn by midnight.”

She was ensconced in the carriage beside him and after many frantic waves to the family she was leaving behind, the caravan pulled through the crumbling front gates and began the long journey to Thornhill Manor.

Many moments later, she looked up to find him staring at her.

“Is something wrong, sir? Do I have mud on my face?”

“No. I was just assessing your looks. It is your overlong hair that draws your face down and focuses such attention to your high forehead. I think when we arrive at Thornhill, that mayhap your new lady’s maid should trim the front and allow some wisps to grace your forehead. She could thin away the heavy weight of it with loose layers. It is well past your arse so it could stand some attention.”

She blushed at his reference to her bottom.

“I am to have my own lady’s maid? I will not have to share her?” she asked.

“Indeed you shall. In fact, you shall have several. You will have all the trappings of being a Duke’s lady, save one.”

“And may I ask what that might be?”

His eyes bored into hers and he said, “Modesty. You will not be permitted modesty. In fact, for the rest of the ride tonight, I will require that you remove your

gown, corset and camisole. You may keep your pantalets and stockings on. For now, I just want to see your titties bounce.”

Her eyes went wide and she drew her cloak tighter around herself.

“And I am desperately tired, so please do not argue with me. Simply remove your garments and sit in front of me displaying your breasts.”

“Your Grace,” she said, “you said yourself that we were not yet man and wife. How can you ask this of me?”

“My Lady, you are mine, one way or the other. I have paid a fortune for you. You are either my slave or my wife, I do not care which, just remove your clothes!”

The anger in his voice was evident and she was afraid to prick his ire any further. She remembered her aunt’s words about him not hurting her unless she disobeyed him. Slowly, she unwrapped the cloak and let it fall off her shoulders.

His eyes watched her fingers as she unbuttoned the front of her gown. When she had unbuttoned it well past her waist, she slid it off her shoulders and allowed it to bunch around her middle. She sat looking at him, hoping for some sort of reprieve, but he simply nodded his head at her chest in a silent command for her to continue disrobing.

The corset was tightly laced under her breasts, and it took her a few moments to get the strings untangled so she could loosen the stays and unlace it. Finally, with his help, it was completely unlaced and it fell behind her against the leather seat squabs. The only thing left to remove was the thin cotton

chemise, and as she looked into his face, she saw his hunger and knew that if she did not hurry and pull it down, that he would rip it right off of her. It was one of the new ones he had given her, and it was fine and soft against her skin. She did not want him ruining it. Quickly she slid her arms out of the sleeves and let it settle around her midriff. Her breasts were now free, jiggling up and down with the motion of the carriage.

She watched his face as his eyes drank her in. And felt cheap and tawdry like a sailor's whore displaying herself. His eyes darkened with desire. There was something wicked behind his eyes, something evil, but it was also sensual and commanding. She could not help but look down at herself to see what it was he was seeing.

From above, she could not see the sumptuous, curving fullness made round like heavy globes that beckoned to be hefted and cupped. All she saw was the gentle slopes leading down to the pert nipples, the tantalizing pale undersides completely out of her view.

“Pull on your nipples,” he commanded.

“Pardon?”

“You heard me. Stop trying to defy me and do as you're told. Use your fingertips and pull on your nipples!”

Afraid the head coachman would hear, and embarrassed that he should know what she was doing in the well-sprung coach, she reluctantly lifted her

hands and moved her fingers over her nipples. She grabbed the very tips of her nipples and pulled them out, holding them away from her body.

“No, not like that,” he said gruffly. “Pinch them and keep pinching them, pull them and release them, over and over again.”

She did as he said and soon she felt a tightening in her groin and a peculiar warmth spreading in her belly.

“Yes, yes,” he said, “like that exactly. It’s amazing, the color actually changes with your arousal.”

*Is that what she was feeling?* But the thought that she could be lusting for him was preposterous. Yet she continued to tug on the tips of her breasts, making them tingle as she felt her womb tightening.

He sat and watched her play with herself for many minutes before telling her to cup a breast with each hand and to squeeze them together on her chest.

“Now, lick your nipples,” he said.

“Your Grace, my tongue will not reach.”

“Try it and you will be surprised to learn, that it will,” he said with a wicked smile.

She did as he asked and she found that she could just get the very tip of her tongue to touch the tip of her nipple if she held it high enough.

“Now the other,” he said, “make them both glisten for me.”

Again, she did as he asked, feeling vulgar and ashamed. She was beginning to realize that she was going to hate being his wife if these were the kinds of things he was going to require of her.

“Here,” he said as he knelt on the floor between the seats, “let me have a taste.”

He took her nipple deeply into his mouth and suckled on it, laving it thoroughly with his tongue while the fingers on his other hand plucked and pulled on the sensitive nub of the other breast. She felt molten desire flow through her veins.

“Nice, nice titties,” he breathed into her cleavage as he moved his mouth from one to the other.

She was getting hot everywhere, her blood was flashing through her system like lightning streaking through the sky with each tug of his lips on her.

Suddenly his hand snaked beneath her skirt and up through the edge of her pantalets. She felt his fingers on her thigh. “Spread your thighs,” he moaned in a husky voice. When she hesitated and did not do his bidding right away, he barked, “Now!”

Instantly, she let her legs fall open and he pushed her thighs wide apart. His fingers found her moist cleft and they entered her, separating her lips and digging for her tunnel. She felt his fingers inside her, thrusting in and out repeatedly. More than one she was certain. He stopped and withdrew them to tease and stroke her labial lips. His fingers gripped the slick lips and he plucked

at them sending hot flashes and spiking waves of fluid through her. Then all too soon, his hand threaded its way out of the folds of her clothing. Both of his hands pulled her skirts up and her pantalets down and off.

His hands roved over her calves and then up her long legs, stroking the sides of her thighs. “You hardly have any hair on your legs, my dear, and what you do have is so fine you can hardly see or feel it, it’s so downy.” He massaged her firm outer thighs, working his way around to the smooth, soft, inner parts.

“Kick your shoes off and put your feet on the seat squab behind me, as far apart as you can get them.” When she didn’t immediately respond to him, he reached up and tweaked her nipple hard. “Obey me, dammit!”

She slipped her feet out of her new kidskin slippers and struggled to get them up onto the seat cushion across from her. He grabbed her ankles and placed them as he wished, and she realized that she was as splayed and her womanhood as prominently displayed as it had been in the doctor’s office this morning. Fortunately, it was not as well lit now, as the sun was going down and the curtains on the carriage had been drawn for them.

It was as if he had read her mind, for he reached up with one hand, and jerked the curtains aside allowing what was left of the meager daylight to enter and illuminate her.

“So pretty,” he said as he watched the tips of his fingers toy with her tiny outer lips. He flicked his fingers back and forth until they opened for him and revealed the thinner, slicker inner lips protecting her wet dark channel. “Your



knees,” he whispered, “pull them up and hold them. God I loved watching Lucien’s eyes eating you up this morning. He wanted you, I know he did.”

“And that made you happy?” she breathed harshly; for he was doing something wicked inside that felt wonderful.

“Yes. I was delighted with you. Hold your knees up high.”

She did as he asked, because now she wanted to, now she wanted him to touch her and for his eyes to devour her. When his head bent and his lips sought to taste her, she shivered and moaned and he gave a great laugh. He whispered hoarsely against her thigh as he placed a line of kisses alongside it, “I will break you in tonight for you are as lusty as I. ”

She threw her head against the seatback in shame as his lips latched onto her and he began in earnest to lick and suck her. His tongue feverishly delved into her tight channel before returning to lave the engorged nub plumping at the top of her slit.

He was very thorough in his explorations. He allowed his tongue free rein, he furled it and thrust it into her cavity, he pointed it and thrust it in as far up inside her as he could get it, he fucked her with his tongue until she thought she would go crazy from the sensations he was causing. When he felt the slight tremors begin and the little contractions building, he moved his mouth up her cleft to the secret cache and suckled on the throbbing nubbin he found there. It pulsed under his lips and she went wild thrusting up against his mouth and using her hands to hold his face tightly against her.

He stayed with her and rode out her orgasm as it rocked through her. But he was careful not to touch the ultra sensitive nub again, once it had finished throbbing and retreated into its hiding place, he would not touch it again. She was too new at this, she would need recovery time and practice before she was capable of multiple climaxes.

He lightly lapped to cleanse her of her milky essence, then gently rubbed his face with its evening stubble along her smooth thighs before he sat back and looked at all the places his tongue had been.

“You are lovely my bride. And you play well; I can’t wait for you to get some experience. You are going to be a phenomenal lover. Ahh,” he said as he sat back against the bottom of the opposite bench, “What a display piece you are my dear. The best I’ve ever seen, and I’ve seen many.”

She knew she should be flattered, but somehow being told she was beautiful between her legs was not the same as being told she was beautiful of face. After all, how many people would ever know of this but him?

He helped her arrange her clothing and then they napped for a while as the coach bounced along on its way to the roadhouse.

They arrived at the inn shortly before midnight, as he had desired. His coachman woke the innkeeper and arranged for the innkeeper’s wife to prepare a light repast for them to take to their rooms along with a jug of ale for him and a flagon of wine for her.

After they had supped at the small table in their room, he helped her to remove her outer clothing. In the garderobe, she removed the rest and slipped her nightgown over her head.

When she came back into the main part of their room, she timidly walked toward the bed. Passing a series of candlesticks on the beside table, she paused to look at him. He was naked to the waist as he sat in the upholstered chair in the corner. His muscled, bronzed chest fairly glinted in the burnished light. His face was tilted and he was staring at her as if he could see right through her gown. She gasped and turned back to the candles and then looked down at herself. He *could* see right through her gown! Quickly, she scrambled up onto the bed, pulling the coverlet up over her.

He laughed heartily at her rash actions. "Not too hasty my dear, you still have a lesson to learn tonight."

"A lesson?"

"Yes. I told you that on the journey to Thornhill, you would be required to learn three lessons. The first you will learn tonight."

"What lesson is that, sir?"

"The pose of the Druid's Mermaid."

"Druid's Mermaid?"

"Yes, did you not notice the coat of arms on my carriage?"

"Yes, I do remember that. There was a mermaid sitting on a large rock with a serpent coiled behind her in a large fanned clamshell."

“Yes. You represent the mermaid, I represent the serpent and the clamshell is the family and hearth.”

“I am the mermaid?”

“Every Duke of Thornhill’s bride is the mermaid, every duke is the snake.”

“Not very flattering for you is it?”

“No, but it is of you. You must learn to pose as she does. Here, come sit on this stool, it will serve as the rock.”

“You are not serious.”

“I am more serious than death, Madam. Get yourself over here!” he snapped his fingers and she knew this was a signal not to be ignored.

She slid out of the bed and went to sit on the low ottoman.

“Remove your nightshirt.”

“I am wearing nothing beneath sir.”

“I am well aware of that. Remove it.”

“But we are not yet husband and wife.”

“We are by your church and I do not require the blessings of my church to see a woman unclothed. It is getting late and I am tired, do as I say so we can be to bed soon.”

When she just sat there, he leaned forward, grabbed the nightshirt by the collar and ripped it down the front.

Her loud gasp continued to echo in the room long after she had emitted it.

“I told you not to try me tonight. Just do as I say!” He dropped the tattered shirt to the floor leaving her sitting on the ottoman, looking down at the beautiful new cambric gown while wearing only a torn and elegantly embroidered sleeve.

“Now, I hope I have your cooperation, because I am getting most weary of your constant objections to my desires. Now pose as the mermaid for me. Entwine your fingers behind your head and thrust your breasts up and forward.”

She squirmed on the bristly horsehair ottoman as she met his eyes. He was tired, she could see it in his eyes, and it would be best not to try his patience anymore. She raised her arms, put her hands behind her head and laced her fingers.

“Good, now sit up straight and force your elbows back so your titties jut up and out.”

She made her back ramrod stiff and forced her rib cage out.

“Your elbows should not be facing front, make them point to the far walls.”

She forced them further out. She could feel her breasts lift even higher on her chest wall.

“Good, very good. That is the first part. It will be required of you often, so learn it well. Your eyes should not look so angered though, try to feign as if it pleases you to do this.”

“That sir, I am sure I will be unable to do!”

“We’ll, see. One day, you will do this of your own volition, of that I am sure.”

“I assure you Your Grace, that I will not!”

“As you say. Time will attest one way or the other. For now, do the second part of the pose.”

“What, pray tell, is that?”

He stood and walked around her then he repositioned the ottoman and sat down again in the chair just a foot away.

“You are not a mermaid, mermaids have fins that do not separate. However, you are a woman, and you have legs that do. I bid you to separate them and display yourself. Wide, mind you, this is the position you will assume to show submission. So I must see all.”

“Sir,” she spat at him, “you are loathsome!”

“Yes, that may indeed be, however, you are mine to do with as I please, and loathsome or not, I please for you to submit fully to me. So part your legs, your feet planted at least as far as your hips and your knees facing the same walls as your elbows.”

She stared at him as if she was in a mind-numbing fog until he yelled at her, “Do it!”

She did as he said, opening herself wide to his inspection of her. At that moment she loathed him more than she could imagine loathing anything or anyone.

“That’s better. Now one more thing, scoot your arse forward so you are sitting on the very edge of the seat, forcing yourself open even more.”

He watched her as she did so, and she saw his eyes flame with appreciation and lust. “Yes, yes, yes. You have it. That is the Druid Mermaid’s pose. That is it exactly. You have learned your first lesson well.”

He sat back in his chair and lifted his mug of ale from the table beside the chair. He put it to his lips and drank heartily, never once taking his eyes from her. He continued to stare and sip for several long, torturing minutes. Then his eyes moved up her body to her face. “You may need to practice. There will be times that you will be required to sit like this for upwards of an hour.”

“I cannot believe you would be so cruel as to require this of your lady.”

“Believe it, I will. Many, many times.” He stood and put his hand out for her to take. She removed her hands from behind her neck and put one in his and he pulled her to stand against him.

She felt the soft furry tickle and the heated flesh warm her as his chest pressed against her breasts, and for a single moment she was not so inclined to pull away. Then he set her away from him while he continued to look down at her breasts.

“You may retire now,” he breathed with some difficulty, “tomorrow night’s lesson will require more of you, for I am ready to receive my satisfaction, and it cannot yet be in the conventional way.”

Again his cryptic words stymied her, but even without knowing their true meaning, she knew that her second lesson would not bode well for her.

She went over and picked up what was left of her nightshirt and wrapped it around herself before crawling back into the bed.

“You may wear that scrap tonight, but in future, you will come to our bedchamber naked, naked except for your smile.”

He smiled benevolently at her, lifted a sardonic brow and nodded. Then he finished his mug of ale before removing the rest of his clothes and sliding in beside her.

She had made sure she was facing the wall and well off to the side of the bed, utilizing only the tiniest portion of space, so that he would not be tempted to accidentally touch her during what promised to be a long night.

Her mind would not let her sleep. Her life had changed drastically in these last twenty-four hours, and more surprises were in store for her. She had to endure two more nights of his ‘lessons’ before they would well and truly be married, and then she would have to endure endless nights of his touch. Long nights where he would force himself into her after using her body to tantalize all of his senses. Then he would spill his seed deep inside her. Not for the first time in her life, she wished she had been born male, with a rod and testicles between her legs, instead of the slimy wet slit he seemed so very fond of.

The next day was dreary with rain and the carriage was gloomy with little light seeping in through the streaming rain pelting the windows. Both the Duke and his soon-to-be-duchess felt the depression of the day deep in their bodies,



and so slept for a good portion of the long ride. They were almost mired in mud when they finally pulled off the main road and into the yard of a shabby inn.

“I’m sorry for the accommodations,” the Duke said to her as he handed her down to his footman, “it was either this or the coach all night and I for one, am in dire need of a change of scenery, be it good or bad.”

She tended to agree with him. Her back hurt, her legs were cramped and she desperately needed to find a garderobe. She’d had a sneezing fit a few moments ago and that hadn’t helped matters at all.

She followed the innkeeper’s wife into the inn while her husband gave his instructions to the coachman. When he joined her a few minutes later, she could tell that he was in no mood for simpering pleasantries.

“We will not be dining in the common room,” he barked, looking down into the faces of the short couple who owned the inn, “instead we would like a meal brought to our room, some meat, cheeses, bread and the best wine you have. Also, I should like a hot bath brought to our room immediately, I am afraid my dear lady may be in danger of catching the ague, and that will not do. Bring her plenty of hot tea and I would like you to provide a maid to attend to her needs.” He dropped a heavy bag filled with coins into the man’s hand and suddenly the pair became frantically agitated in their haste to serve the Duke and to carry out his wishes. Julia thought the desperate woman was going to expire as she made her way toward the kitchen, bumping off of the sturdy oaken timbers that were barely wide enough to accommodate her more than ample frame.

“Well, at least your money buys good service,” Julia said snidely as she moved past him to follow the young maid that had been summoned for her.

He leaned down close to her ear and huskily whispered, “My money buys lots of things: grand carriages, ducal mansions . . . winsome brides,” he reminded her as he patted her rump as she turned to go up the stairs.

Her mood was somewhat restored after she had been allowed to soak in a hot copper tub set behind the screen in the garderobe area. She noticed that the well-endowed chambermaid, turned temporary lady’s maid, was eyeing the Duke with keen regard each time she chanced to look over the screen. She could hear him moving around the room and giving orders to his valet who was out in the hall. Then she heard the door close and a few minutes later as the maid knelt while washing her hair, he sauntered into the small alcove. He eyed her as she sat in the tub, the tops of her breasts barely under the level of the water, the rest of her clearly in view, as the water was clear and still.

She sat helpless as his eyes roved over her. Then she watched as he followed the trail of her soapy hair to the hands of the young maiden kneeling by the tub. She watched as he brazenly assessed the young woman, from the dark brown curls wispy and wet around her face, to her bountiful cleavage displayed almost to the tips as she bent low to dip the small pitcher she was using to rinse the soap. She stood to get Julia’s comb and hiked her skirt to her thigh when she lifted one knee from the floor before the other. Her long flounced skirts trailed on the floor covering her dirty bare feet as she crossed the room, swaying her ample

hips. She came back and began combing out Julia's hair. Julia saw the Duke's eyes looking up, past her shoulders and knew that they were silently communicating something to each other over her bent head. Then his eyes returned to her face and he asked her if she was feeling any better.

“Yes, thank you, I am. The hot water has taken away the chill that had seeped into my bones.”

He continued to look into the depths of the water, and she was unnerved as she felt his probing gaze. The maid poured a final pitcher of water over her head and then held a towel out for her, indicating that she should now stand and step from the tub.

He wasn't taking the hint though. He was standing steadfast waiting for her to exit the tub. She didn't know if she could do it. He'd already seen her naked a few times, but she was by no means used to it—to be naked in front of him with a strange woman also in the room viewing her at the same time—it was somehow unnatural. Not to be done. But what did she know of gentlemen and ladies and their servants? Maybe this was done all the time.

Finally, she crossed her breasts and stood, turning to face the towel that was open and waiting for her. She thought the maid would wrap it around her but she did not, she simply took the towel and gently dried her. She took her time doing first one limb and then another before wiping at her neck, her chest, her abdomen and lower. She had never had anyone dry her off before.

Unaccustomed to having servants like this, she didn't know if the maiden was

lingering or just being thorough, but she did know that the Duke was enjoying the show.

Finally a robe was brought to her and she slipped her arms into the long silk sleeves and wrapped the long garment around her, cinching it with a belt.

“There is some dinner for you on the table by the fire. I think I will take a bath now to see if I can get as toasty as you.”

The maid moved to leave, but he grabbed her wrist. “You may stay, I have need of your services.” The woman blushed a deep red, but she stayed where she was as the Duke began disrobing. Julia, taking that as her dismissal, left the bathing area and sat in a chair by the fire. Idly munching on small chunks of cheese, she wondered at the feelings she was having. She did not like the fact that there was a woman assisting her betrothed with his bath, and from the sounds of things, she wasn’t all that sure that getting him clean was the object. She should be feeling relief that there was someone holding his interest instead of her for the time being, but the feelings she was experiencing were more akin to anger and some form of dissatisfaction and unsettlement.

She heard a low groan from him and several high-pitched giggles and squeals from the servant before there was a long, weighty silence. Minutes later, he appeared in front of her in a deep crimson gown of fine satin with his ducal crest embroidered on the pocket. She watched as the chambermaid slipped out of the room behind him, her bodice drenching wet, her dark nipples easily seen through the thin cotton.

“Sounds like you two had fun,” she murmured.

“Jealous?” he asked with a crooked smile.

“No, not hardly. You can have her if you like, I really won’t care.” She wasn’t exactly sure she meant it when she said it, but it conveyed the attitude that she wanted to have.

“No. Not tonight. I have plans for you. It is your job to please me now, not hers, although she did make a valiant attempt at it.” His hand went to the opening of his robe and he pulled the long cord that held it shut. When it parted she saw his manhood jutting out, proud and long, poking out of a thatch of curling black hair so thick it covered the entire juncture where his thighs met. Hanging slightly below the fleshy pole, was a bulbous sack, covered with its own downy hairs.

So, this was it. This was the male incarnate, the temple of man that women worshipped at, the part of their bodies that ruled their thoughts and determined their futures. As impressive as his was, and she really had no comparison to base it on, it did not seem like such a forceful weapon, capable of overpowering centuries of women, bending them to the will of the man who wielded it. And then she saw it grow larger and redder. It danced up his belly, straightening and jerking—jutting out as if to lead the charge. She could see pulsing blues lines feeding to the tip. The tip that was almost purple now in what seemed like rage. Dear God, this was supposed to fit inside her?

When it finally stopped growing, it was substantial enough to keep his heavy robe from closing.

“Like it?” he asked simply.

She stuttered a reply, “I . . . I suppose it’s acceptable.”

He sputtered. “Madam, it is far better than acceptable. Some women have called it magnificent.”

“Oh.”

“Kiss it.”

“Pardon?”

“Kiss it.”

“You’re not serious.”

“Oh, indeed I am. I have just bathed so it is very clean. I assure you that the little maid was very thorough with her task. Lean forward and put your lips on it. Now!” he commanded.

She jumped from the suddenness of his loud voice. She watched as he thumbed it down to the level of her lips. She sat forward on the chair and he inched it toward her.

“Just take your lips and kiss the very tip,” he urged, his voice softer now as she was in the act of complying.

She pursed her lips tightly and then leaned forward barely grazing it with her lips.

“Again, more sensuously this time, not just a peck.”

She did as he asked, careful to kiss it above the little hole she had noticed that was oozing something glistening. She heard his guttural moan at just about

the same time she felt his hand on the back of her head, pushing the stiff rod into her face.

“Take it between your lips,” he hissed.

“No!”

“Yes! Do as I say!”

“No!”

He forcefully held her mouth open and shoved a good portion of himself into her.

She gagged and tried to push away.

“You can make this easy and we’ll be done in a matter of minutes or I’ll call the serving wench back, have her do it with you watching, and then require you to do it after her, and I guarantee, instead of minutes, I’ll be up to an hour of thrusting into your lovely mouth. Now let me feel those soft puffy lips I bought, treating me properly.”

He placed his penis at the edge of her lips and waited for her to kiss it. Tentatively, she did, lingering slightly longer this time.

“Better. Now alternate between kissing it, licking it, and taking it into your mouth and sucking on it. If you want this to be done fast, you could also reach down and gently cup my balls. Gently, mind, they are soft and the most fragile part of a man. Squeeze too hard and what might be ecstasy turns into agony.”

She did as he asked, moving her hand slowly down to cup his swaying sacs. If this would make things go faster, she would do this, more of this and less of her mouth would suit her just fine.

But soon, she was surprised to find herself challenged by this strange appendage, trying to coax it into submission to her desires. She found she could make it do things, and she could make him do things by simple touches, wanton licks here, there, and then lower. She could hear him gasp and groan above her and she felt his knees jerk as he fought to stay on his feet.

Mesmerized by the power she seemed to hold over him, she ruthlessly sucked on him as she silkily caressed his scrotum. She suddenly felt him lurch inside her mouth and at about the same time, she felt the warm spurt of something vile fill her mouth. Quickly, she moved to back away but his hard hand was gripping the back of her head, holding her fast to him, not allowing her to disengage herself from his pulsing, throbbing member as it continued to jettison its load against the back of her throat. When he finally released his hold on her head and allowed her to ease off of him, she found she had a mouthful of the most repulsive-tasting stuff she'd ever tasted. She ran for the garderobe and spit into the wastewater still standing in the tub.

“Lesson two, quite solidly learned. You’re turning out to be a pretty good student,” he called out to her from the other room.

She wiped her mouth out the best she could and then came out to stare at him. “This is something you expect me to do as your wife?”



“Oh most definitely, my dear. I will insist on it.”

“I can’t believe it. Women actually do this?”

“You just did.”

“You made me.”

“Usually that’s the way it comes about. But some women actually come to enjoy it and even ask to do it. I’ve had prominent ladies of the *ton* kneel between my legs and suck me off with abandon.”

“You’re joking!”

“No, I’m not. In fact, even some of the whores prefer that to being poked.”

She shook her head in disbelief. “It never even occurred to me that this was done, that a man would stick his penis into a woman’s mouth!”

“Men do it whenever they can. As far as I know, they’ve always done it. On the campaigns, when there are no women around, they even do it to each other.”

“Stop!” she said, her hands up, palms out. “I don’t want to hear anymore. This is too much. Isn’t that the same thing you use to eliminate with?”

He gave her a cocky wide grin. “Well, yes, but not at the same time.”

“It must be filthy!” she spat against the back of her hand.

“I just had a bath! You saw me!”

“Ohhh! This is just so disgusting!” She turned her back and walked over to the window to look out at the rain. “What pray tell do you have in mind for lesson three?”

“Would you like to see?” he asked excitedly.

“No! No!” she said as she backed away from him. “I’m sure I’ll need at least a day to recover from lesson two.”

He chuckled and went over to her. His hand breached the opening of her gown and he found a warm mound of flesh. “You’ll like lesson three, I promise you,” he said as he slowly turned her to face him. Then he bent low to take her nipple into his mouth. “I promise.”

“You promised!” she cried as she scooted off the bed the next evening at their last roadhouse stop. “You said I would like lesson three! Well, you’re wrong! I hate it! Hate it! Hate it! You hurt me! My aunt said you wouldn’t hurt me if I did as you asked! I have tried hard to do as you’ve asked! Can I not trust anyone anymore!” She ran crying from the bedroom to the garderobe and sat in the cold bath water that she had used an hour earlier. It helped with the immediate problem but left her shivering and covered with goose flesh.

Fresh from her bath, when her body had been warm from the heated water, he had taken her to the bed, stripped her of her robe and placed her on her hands and knees at the end of the bed. He had gently massaged her bottom with warm oil and indeed, it had felt wonderful . . . until his hand had strayed and developed a particular fondness with her crevice. She had noticed when she had looked over her shoulder at him that he was naked and that his male member was glistening as if it too was coated with the very same oil. But she hadn’t made

the connection. He was giving her pleasure by using his slick hands on her and she thought she'd come to like Lesson three.

Until without any warning he had plunged himself inside her tight bum, causing her to emit a loud scream. He knew, that because of his rank, despite her echoing screams throughout the roadhouse, that no one would disturb them. Such were the ways between men and women. Women had no rights. No one would dare to interfere with a man taking his pleasure in a woman, no matter how he achieved it.

As she had continued to scream at him and sob, he had grabbed her swaying breasts and roughly squeezed them. He had pulled hard on her nipples, callously pinching the tender tips with his thumb and fingers. All the while he had brutally withdrawn and reentered her, taking great pleasure in her tight puckering hole. When he had finally collapsed on top of her after spending his seed inside her, she'd given one great shattering sob and fainted.

She was conscious now; soaking in a tub of cold water and so sore she was afraid what would happen on the morrow when the food she had eaten tonight had to leave her body. The man was vile! How dare he!

He walked into the small, enclosed room and stared down at her. "I said you'd like it, and I promise you, that you will. It may take several more times for you to get used to my size, but then you will achieve pleasure from this. Lots of women do. Did you not know that this is the place men take their pleasure in when their wives are heavy with child? Or too loose from the births of many?"

“No! Why would I know such things! I know nothing of the ways between a man and a woman. But what I have learned from you, I would gladly forget if I could!”

“It will take time. But I assure you, that men and women have been doing this for many, many years, long before you or I were ever born, and this is the way it is. These are the things they do.”

“I do not believe you! I think you are evil, that you practice a strange sort of concupiscence! You desire women in unlawful ways!”

He laughed heartily at her words, “Unlawful you say? Nothing a man requires of his wife, or his betrothed is unlawful. You should be happy that I don’t take my pleasure with a woman as others do, with the whip.”

She blanched and stared wide-eyed into his smirking face. Good Lord, what kind of monster had her aunt sold her to?

The next afternoon they arrived at Thornhill Manor and Julia was relieved to be settled, but also fearful of the lessons the Duke might have in store for her.

They went through the impressive wrought iron gates of the large estate, and then traveled down a long lane flanked with massive cedars on each side. It was not until they cleared the lane that she was able to see the enormous house that was Thornhill Manor. Surely this could not be her new home. It was a castle, four of the largest houses she’d ever seen combined into one. No wonder this

man who was her husband in one faith, and soon to be doubly hers in another, walked as if he owned the universe. It seemed he did.

A scout had ridden ahead so now household servants were lined up on the large curving drive in front of the palatial steps that led to the regal front entrance. There must have been forty of them, all in different uniforms signifying their duties. She turned and looked behind them through the coach window when she heard the sounds of dogs coming to greet their master. The velvet green lawns that surrounded the manor led to ornamental gardens with rows upon rows of trimmed hedges, a fountain in the center of each. The bushes around the foundation were artfully pruned and beautiful flowers bloomed in profusion. Everywhere the eye focused, there was something beautiful growing. She sighed at the magnificence of the setting before her. The landscaping chores alone would keep twenty men busy.

“Like it?” he asked, as he reached for the latch on the carriage door.

“It’s lovely, like something out of a fairy tale,” she whispered as she watched him stoop down to gather his dogs. It was obvious that they adored him, as he called each one by name and rubbed it behind its ears. How could anyone who loved animals like this be cruel to his wife, she wondered, momentarily allayed of some of her fears.

The Duke’s butler welcomed him home and asked for the honor of introducing his soon-to-be bride to the more elevated servants. The Duke simply nodded, and she was introduced to the housekeeper, the upstairs maid, her own

ladies maid and her assistants, the cook and the head groomsman. The others were pointed out in the groups they had been arranged in, and then she was following behind the Duke into the grand hall.

She had to bite her tongue in an effort to keep from gasping in awe, and clamp her reticule tight to her chest to keep from spinning around on the polished marble floor to look at the beautifully frescoed ceiling above the huge crystal chandelier. Surely, there was a bevy of servants whose only job was to light and extinguish the hundreds of candles it required each evening.

The Duke was led off to the left through a high archway, and she was quickly escorted up the huge curved staircase. She was a little winded by the time she made it down the long hallway to her room, where she was met by yet another maid. She was admiring the beautiful room when the Duke's valet knocked on the door.

When he was bade to enter, he announced, "The marriage ceremony will be downstairs in the formal ballroom in two hours. The Duke has instructed the household staff to prepare your bath. He requests that Clarisse do your hair. He will arrive shortly with your gown."

She nodded her acquiescence and followed her maid from the antechamber to the bedchamber and then to the bathing chamber.

Each room was grand, opulently decorated, with each designer touch complimenting the overall scheme. The bed was lavishly dressed in rich satin, the bright colors muted by fine lace edging. Everything matched: the shams, the

rolled pillows, the tiered bed hangings and the wall hangings. It was sumptuously beautiful. She wanted to hug her arms and spin around in her glee, but the formal setting and the stiff and proper attendance of her servants stifled her.

“Come this way, Madam,” directed Clarisse. “Time is getting by us, we must hie, lots to do, lots to do,” she said fretfully. Julia soon became aware that there was a significant amount of tension between the maids, caused no doubt, by the fear of not being able to do the Duke’s bidding within the Duke’s time constraints.

While she was being undressed, the comments that were made confirmed that he definitely had that effect; all the servants lived to please the Duke. Or, more accurately, their aim was not to displease him.

She was naked and in a fragrant tub within minutes. She tried to relax and enjoy the silky hot water surrounding her, but her maids were too intent on their duties, bustling to and fro, to let her enjoy a thorough soak.

She was dried off, swathed in a thick, white robe, and led over to a dressing table, where two women worked on her hair. They trimmed her hair per the Duke’s instructions, sent up on a monogrammed note card, while she was bathing. Following his suggestion, Clarisse gave her bangs. It made a remarkable difference in her appearance, as it softened her face and took away the detracting look of her high forehead. The rest of her abundant mass of hair was curled with hot irons and pinned to her head, achieving an intricate coiffure such as she’d never seen before. When they were done with her hair, she looked

remarkably different, quite lovely, in fact. Looking in the mirror that was slanted over the dressing table, she was amazed at the difference, and continued to stare at herself. Why, she was actually pretty, she thought.

The style they gave her was a work of art, and the crowning touch was, literally, a crown. A small diamond-studded tiara was tucked into the blonde curls at her temple. Gorgeous diamond earrings were attached to her ear lobes, and then a matching diamond necklace was fastened behind her neck. She felt like a princess in a fairy tale. She could hardly wait to see the dress.

One of the maids left the room and a few minutes later the Duke accompanied her back. Over her arm she had a voluminous white gown, and Julia could see from where she stood that it was first quality. Made from yards of beautiful, smooth, brilliant white satin it had seed pearls sewn everywhere.

“Ohhh, it’s lovely,” she said as they entered the room.

The maid shook it out and draped it on the bed, the long, flowing skirt grazing the thick, lush carpet. That’s when she saw that it was slit up the middle of the skirt, all the way from the waist to the hem. The opening at the waist a good four inches wide at the top, cutaway to two feet or better at the bottom. Surely there was an under skirt for it, but she looked around and didn’t see any other pieces of fabric except for the tulle veiling for her tiara that Clarisse was holding in her arms.

“Where is the underskirt?” she asked as she looked over at the Duke.



“There is none,” he said. “The dress has been specially made to showcase your breasts and your womanhood.”

It was then that she looked up toward the bodice and saw that it was scooped out. There were wide satin straps for the shoulders, but there was no material between, until ruched satin resumed from the sides, as a wide empire waist joined to the material of the skirt. Surely her breasts would be completely exposed. She gasped and put her hand over her mouth. He meant for her to wear this atrocious gown to her wedding! He meant for her to show his guests her breasts, her belly and her womanhood! All his odd comments came back to her: *Display piece . . . showcase . . . men may look at you . . . your family will be so proud . . .*

“No! No! I won’t wear it! I won’t! I won’t go through with this! You cannot make me wear this hideous gown! What kind of man are you anyway? What kind of man enjoys showing his bride off like this?” she screamed at him.

He crossed the room and his arms tightened like vises on her forearms as he held her apart from him and shook her. “You’ll do as I say! This is your wedding gown and this is the gown you will wear downstairs in just a few minutes.” He yanked on her sash and roughly pulled her robe panels apart. The robe slid off her shoulders to the floor and she was naked in front of him and all of the maids.

“You will put that dress on now or I will drag you downstairs completely naked except for your veil! Clarise fetch the gown, Marguerite step her feet into it while I hold her arms.”

“No, No, No!” she said shaking her head so hard that her tiara tilted and a few curls dislodged.

Instantly, he pulled her back toward the bed and turned her over his knee and with his bare hand he paddled her rump a dozen times as hard as he could. She thrashed and screamed and kicked, but it did no good, he had her in an iron grip around her waist, his hefty weight leaning into her back with each burning smack of his hand. Finally, he stood up and thrust her off of him. Her backside was raw and burning, she felt the heat from it as she moved to rub her bottom with her hand, but it was too sore for her to even touch. “Marguerite the whip,” was all he said as he ran his fingers through his tousled hair. Marguerite went to a small closet and produced a whip that appeared to be an overlong riding crop. Marguerite gave her a rueful look as she walked in front of her to hand it to him.

“What I’ve done to you so far will not leave marks, but this I’m afraid will. This will hurt more than you can possibly imagine, but don’t think that I will not use it on you, I will. Now, do my bidding and get into that gown!”

Both maids quickly took her arms and walked her over to the end of the bed. One held the gown open under her feet while another lifted her stiff legs into the opening. Then they pulled it up, adjusted it properly and turned her to face him.

The smile that came across his face was at once smug and satisfied. As he leered at her, he murmured, “Nice, nice . . . very, very nice.”

“You do not know how long I have waited for this day,” he said as he advanced on her. “My family, my friends, my peers, are all gathered here to witness my marriage, to view my lovely bride and all her lovely charms.” He took her chin firmly between his fingers and forced her to look into his face. “Dishonor me and I will set my dogs on you tonight, you will run naked across the lees while they hunt you down for their supper.”

The flinty hardness she saw in his dark eyes terrorized her but she still could not see the sense in this. “Dishonor you? You must be daft. Does this not dishonor you? Me like this?” she asked as with a wide sweep of her hand she indicated her nudity.

Both maids gasped and jumped back when they heard the insult she had hurled at him. Menacingly, he gripped her chin harder and with his other hand he grabbed her left breast and squeezed it painfully hard. “Daft am I? I think not. Daft would be if I allowed every man here tonight to not only drink his fill of you with his eyes but also with his hands and his cock! And don’t tempt me!” he shouted, “I could command that just as easily as not.” His mouth crushed down over hers and he roughly took her lips with his, not at all mindful that the force he was using would redden the skin around her mouth.

With a low hiss, he warned her, “Parade yourself for me at our handfasting or I shall send a courier canceling all the debts I have paid on your aunt’s behalf

while I watch my dogs chase you in the moonlight.” He harshly released her, sending her crashing into the bedpost. The pain of the contact reminded her instantly of her sore and swollen cheeks.

“Clarisse!” he called over his shoulder, “fix her hair and arrange the veil as I’ve instructed. My brother Edward will be up to escort her down to the hall and from there to the ballroom in fifteen minutes. See that she’s ready or you can pack your valise tonight.”

“Yes, sir!” Clarisse replied with a stiff curtsy.

The door slammed behind him and they all breathed a deep sigh of relief.

After a few silent moments, Julia said, “I won’t do it! I won’t.”

“Miss, you have to. He will have you killed if you do not.”

“I don’t believe that, and anyway, what he wants me to do is worse than dying. Look at me! Look at this hideous dress!” She marched over to the cheval mirror and stared at her herself. Her hands went to her face and she cried like a heartbroken child.

Clarisse came to put her arms around her shoulder, “Miss . . . Miss, it won’t be so bad, there’s a veil that covers you, see?” she held up the long swathe of tulle.

“Just ‘til the rites are over, then he will lift it! Besides,” she said as she fingered the material, “this will not cover anything! It is see-through!”

“Yes, well . . . to be honest, if I had a body like yours, I might be inclined to show it off a little, be proud.”

“Be proud!” she turned and spun, glaring at her.

“It’s no use you know, if you don’t get ready and come down, he will send someone up to fetch you.”

She stood looking at her image in the mirror. Her full breasts brazenly highlighted by the sculptured cut out the bodice, the slit down the center of the skirt focusing every eye on her center, the very core of her. She tilted her head and stared at the area between her legs. *Good God, with her legs spread, you could see her pink gash!* How mortifying, how incredibly mortifying. What was she going to do?

Suddenly there was a knock on the door.

The other maid ran to answer it. When she returned she was wringing her hands in front of her, “It’s Master Edward, he’s come for you. There are four others he brought with him. You’d best get ready missus,” she said with sorrow in her eyes. “He plays mean that one, I can tell ya.”

Clarisse nodded her head in agreement. “Come, sit here and let me fix your hair.” Gently she re-pinned the floppy curls, readjusted the tiara and attached the tulle veiling. It fell over her in waves, but she wasn’t fooled, it hid nothing.

The two women led her over to the door and Clarisse opened it wide. Julia watched as the men on the other side gasped and their eyes opened wide with pleasure. If there could be such a thing as her life’s worst moment, this had to be it. Slowly, the man she assumed was Edward, bowed in front of her, his eyes

never leaving the area of her womanhood which he was focused so intently on, “Lady Julia, I am your brother by marriage, I am Edward, the eldest after Stewart. I am honored to attend to you. Come, everyone is waiting to view you.”

The other four men stood stock still looking at her like she was the first woman they’d ever seen. One who was crossed-eyed appeared to be looking at her navel, but she knew he was looking much lower. One who was quite a bit older, pulled on his long beard as he feasted his eyes on her, unabashedly looking his fill as if he had every right to view her like this. She shivered with fear, and tears of humiliation flooded her eyes. As she turned into her maid who stood by her in the doorway to shield herself, the tallest man moved to stand by her shoulder and she knew he was getting a bird’s eye view of her breasts as he leaned over her.

Sweet Jesu, how was she going to get through this? *View* her, he had said; everyone was waiting to *view* her. They knew. They expected him to parade a naked bride for them to view. How disgusting, how absolutely vile. Well, she wouldn’t crumple; she wouldn’t allow them to drag her in screaming. She’d do this, she’d do this for her aunt and her brothers and sisters and her maids and because she truly wasn’t certain if he would feed her to his dogs if she disobeyed. She knew he didn’t like to have his authority questioned and certainly not in front of other people. Just how many other people would be here, she wondered. There hadn’t been a lot of time to invite people, but then again with the wealthy, news traveled a lot quicker than it did for the poor.

She was urged to turn back and face the men by Edward who took her by the arm, "You are quite lovely, my Lady. My brother has done quite well for himself. Come, become my sister. Would that it could be my wife," he muttered as he viewed her from the side as he pulled her down the hallway with him. At the top of the stairs, she gasped and turned to go back but Edward kept a tight hold on her and pushed her down the first few stairs. As preoccupied as she was with trying to keep from falling, she was still quite aware that there were many people at the bottom of the curving staircase staring up to get the first view of the Duke of Thornhill's new bride.

The shame that filled her could not be described as she watched the shocked faces as people realized she was practically naked for all to see. Slowly as they descended, she looked into their faces, but none met her eyes as they were all assessing her charms. Edward continued leading her down the staircase and as they continually turned into the spiral, more and more people came into view for her and she for them. The oohs and ahhs and gasps of pleasure, delight and disbelief filled the air as everyone turned and drank her in. The men surely would never notice the color of her eyes or her fancy coiffure with the stunning tiara and even the women had envy in their eyes for her breasts instead of her jewelry. One by one as she passed them they ogled her and then when they were at the bottom of the staircase, she saw that the people she had just passed were but the overflow from the huge ballroom. There were hundreds of people here. Hundreds. And she was all but naked in front of all of them.

She tried to block out the murmurs and the leering eyes as Edward continued to lead her forward toward the makeshift altar at the end of the room. She could make out the Duke standing by a man who looked like a monk only dressed in purple robes. The Duke had unbridled lust in his eyes and something else, something that scared her to the core as he communicated a silent threat to her. She was suddenly terrified, because she now understood that if she wounded his pride, he would devise all manner of retribution and gleefully watch while many others carried it out. He was proud of her and her body and he was completely delighted that it was being so blatantly displayed for all to see. This was what he wanted . . . this was why he wanted her to become his bride.

It was an eternity before she reached the steps where the Duke stood, waiting for her to reach him. She lifted her head slightly to meet the monk's eyes and she was appalled by the way his gaze inspected her as his tongue repeatedly licked thick lips. Beside the Duke was the Duke's best friend, Lucien, the doctor who had been privileged to confirm her virginity in front of the Duke's own eyes. Oh, would this nightmare never end? At least on the small stage that had been constructed, she was facing away from all the witnesses, the only ones who could view her nudity now, were the monk, the doctor and her husband, the Duke. The monk never took his eyes off of her; the Duke was beaming like a lighthouse beacon; and the doctor, well he was the only one in the room so far who had bothered to look at her face. Her eyes met his and she saw his sympathy for her reflected in his deep blue irises. His strong chiseled chin lifted



as if trying to steel her as well as him. He was the only man at the altar who dared to meet her eyes. But then, he'd already seen her body in the most intimate way a woman could share it. She finally allowed the tears welling in her eyes to flow out of them.

The strange vows were said, she didn't remember a word of them later, but she thought at the time that they were different from any she'd ever heard before, many having to do with obeying, making her husband proud, living to please her husband and family, and always striving for his admiration and that of his entire dukedom.

When it was time for him to kiss her, he turned her to face him, and then he slowly lifted the veil, which fell to her knees. He gathered it all in his hands. Each inch baring more of her flesh until there was no barrier at all. He tossed the long veil over her head, kissed her lustily, and then proudly spun her around to face the crowd. Her completely uncovered breasts were jutting out for all to see, her nipples taut and high, their youthful fullness and firmness a testament to all who could see them. Good God, she was topless, exposed for all to see. Three hundred people were viewing her breasts, gazing hard at their tips.

Then as she stared out at the strange faces, she realized that a lot of them were focused much lower on her body. The stark blondness at the juncture of her thighs was drawing their eyes like a magnet. How did a woman stand in front of so many, unclothed as she was? She looked up at her new husband, pleading with her eyes for him to take her away from the intense scrutiny, but all he said

as his eyes looked into hers then down to her breasts was, “I am so proud of your breasts, and your sweet womanhood, too. You are the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen and apparently, I am not the only one who thinks so,” he said as he indicated his enthralled guests. He raised his hand high in the air then lowered it, encompassing her slight form as he expansively introduced his beautiful new duchess. The crowd let out a huge roar and all applauded enthusiastically. Talking about her beauty would have meant something if he’d meant her face or even if he’d meant her body, if he’d cared enough not to share it with anyone. But the arrogant, despicable man seemed to get an immense satisfaction from showing off his new wife’s nakedness.

“Come, let’s greet our guests and have some refreshment.”

Dear Lord, she had to talk to these people dressed like this? Dine in front of them dressed like this?

As soon as she was able to make her way to the head table, she sat and placed a napkin in her lap, and then she crossed her legs under the table and crossed her hands over her breasts. It did no good, the Duke pulled her up for several toasts and then at the end of one, he brazenly grabbed a breast, poured his wine onto the tip and suckled it in front of everyone. She was so mortified that she thought she would die. When finally the dessert had been served and it was time for her to make herself ready for him, she was allowed to leave the hall. She ran up the staircase as fast as she could and down the hallway to her suite of

rooms. She flung herself across the bed and cried her heart out; heedless that Clarisse was stroking her wracking shoulders.

After a while Clarisse gently shook her, “You did the Duke proud my Lady, he is in fine humor, but he insists you ready yourself for the breaching.”

“Breaching?”

“Your maidenhead, he wants to breech it soon. You are to get ready for him. Come, I will help you get undressed.”

“Undressed!” she screamed. “He needs me more undressed than this?”

“Yes, my Lady. You must be totally unclothed for the breaching.”

“There are rules for this too?”

“Oh, yes. There are rules for everything.”

“Just what the hell is this crazy religion he practices, anyway?” she spat out.

“Druidism, my Lady. They worship the land, the body and all of nature. Traditions and rituals are very important and family is everything, even dead family is revered. Never say anything bad about family, especially the Duke’s mother. He idolized her.”

“How did she die?”

“I don’t know for sure, my Lady, that was before I came, but I heard that the old Duke’s brother came to claim her after the Duke had died and she was watching him come through the gate from the west tower when she fell from the window.”

“Poor woman. Although, if her husband’s brother was anything like the current Duke, I can understand why she stood so close to an open window.”

“My Lady!” Clarisse admonished.

Julia shrugged. “You never know, she might not have taken a fancy to the Duke’s brother.”

“A woman must honor the traditions. Now, come, we must get you bathed and perfumed and I think you could use a bit of hypocras before the breaching.”

“Hypocrass?”

“Yes, it’s a fruity wine for women who need to be a little mellow.”

“Well, why didn’t you give it to me before?”

“Two reasons, you can’t always stand on your feet too well after imbibing and also, the Duke said he wanted to make sure you were well aware of everything that went on during the handfasting ceremony.”

“More like he wanted to make sure I was aware of the degradation and humiliation he was doling out for me. I swear he gets intense pleasure out of my displeasure.”

“That is the way it is sometimes, it’s the power they like to have over their women, it’s what makes them virile. If you’re smart you will give them what they want, instead of making them take it, because they will take it one way or another.”

“How is it you know so much about men, and the Duke in particular?”

“I am available to all the men in the manor, it is part of my job. The Duke has taken me many times in the past, but lately I have lost my shape and he has searched out others.”

“What?”

“Surely you know that Druid men do not honor their marriage vows?”

“No, I did not!”

“You will find out when you are unavailable with your courses or heavy with child. Other women will be forced to pleasure him for you. But with the Duke, most women don’t need much forcing,” she said with a wink. Then she hurried off to make the new duchess’ bath ready.

Julia’s maid had just finished brushing her hair. The Duke had instructed Clarisse to take it down and brush it until it shone. The Duke entered the room and saw her sitting in front of her dressing table, her maid painstakingly smoothing her long blonde tresses. She was sitting on a silk brocade boudoir stool in a satin robe and she was nervous. This was her wedding night. This is the night her husband would ravish her and make her his. She was scared, filled with trepidation, and curious, all at the same time.

The Duke raised his eyebrow at her lady’s maid and indicated that she should leave them now by a slight nod of his head toward the door. Abruptly, Clarisse abandoned the brush on the vanity and vacated the room.

The Duke walked over to his new duchess and offered her his hand. She took it timidly, avoiding his eyes as he pulled her to her feet. As soon as she was

standing, he untied the robe and pulled it off of her shoulders, letting it drop to the floor. “I don’t like it when you cover yourself.”

“I cannot always be naked for you, my husband,” she murmured softly, very aware of his hot gaze moving over her breasts and belly and lower.

“Oh, yes you can. This is *my* house, these are *my* servants and you are *my* wife. I own you now and should I prefer you naked for the rest of your life that is exactly how you will be. Now come, we must meet my brothers for the fealty swearing and your deflowering.”

“What?” She didn’t understand what he was saying exactly about always being naked if he preferred her that way, but his next comment was the one that absolutely threw her. “What have your brothers to do with this?”

“Everything. They will be there. They will watch. It is required that you prove to them and to me that your are virginal.”

“I have already proved to you and your doctor that am I virginal!”

“My brothers must witness our first coupling. I must show them your blood. The traditions are centuries old. Every duke and his duchess have been viewed in this manner, including my mother who had to suffer nine of my father’s brothers swearing fealty and kissing her maidenhead.”

“What! What are you talking about now? Surely you are jesting about all this, this is not done!”

“I assure you Madam, that here at Thornhill, it is. I am taking you where you will be viewed individually by each of my brothers, they will swear fealty to

you, kneel between your thighs to kiss your maidenhead, then they will all stand behind me and witness our coupling.”

“No! No! I won’t allow this! You cannot!” She pulled away from him, but she was no match for him. He bent down and easily picked her up, her naked skin chafing against his rough hauberk. He carried her to a door on the other side of the suite and kicked it open. Then he carried her into a room where his brothers had already assembled. He carried her over to a long wooden table and laid her none too gently upon it. Then he whispered harshly into her ear. “Do not embarrass me or you will rue it. I promise you, do less than I instruct and you will feel my wrath against your fair skin.”

She looked up into his face, her eyes terrified as he took each wrist and secured it loosely to long leather straps attached to two corners of the table. “I have looked forward to this moment all of my life. I have searched out the perfect woman that I can be proud of. Do *not* cross me on this!” he hissed as he slowly stood up. His hands gently arranged her hair over her shoulders, bringing it down to her breasts, but careful not to cover them as he looked down at her nipples, pointing up at him. Her arms were lashed to the table above her head and slightly to the side. As she looked down at her body she could see her nipples as peaks of mountains, and through the valley between them she could see her flat stomach and the slight blonde fur sitting up at the juncture of her thighs. She was relieved that he was not lashing her ankles at the bottom of the table. It was a short table and her legs hung over as she kept her legs together. But that was

hard on her back, and after a few minutes, it also burned her thighs, and she had to keep scooting her sore bottom around to ease the cramping of her muscles.

His eyes met hers sternly and as his hand went to one nipple and roughly pinched it, he raised an eyebrow as if to say, *I can hurt you. You know I have many ways I can hurt you, so let's do this my way.*

He kept squeezing her nipple between his thumb and knuckle, pulling it up and twisting it until tears were flowing from her eyes and down her cheeks to the table. "Are you ready to listen to me yet, because I have all night, if you aren't. He produced two small silver clips from a front slit pocket and immediately attached one to the nipple he had just abused. She whimpered and moaned from the pain, knowing full well that if she screamed as she was tempted to, that he would only make things worse for her.

"I do not like to hurt you, Julia. Pain is not a vice for me. But I will use it if I have to. Are you ready to do my bidding now?"

"Yes," she whimpered. "Yes, just please remove that thing from me."

"From what part of you?" he asked, bending down to her face with a menacing scowl on his face.

"My breast."

"Now you know what I prefer to hear them addressed as."

"My tittie," she whispered, shamed and degraded to use his crude words.

"Say the whole thing and remember that politeness counts."



“Your Grace, would you please remove that pinching thing from my tittie?” she asked in a soft sobbing voice.

“Certainly,” he said and complied by bending down, removing the clip and kissing her bruised nipple. “There, now that we understand each other, let me tell you what is expected of you as my lady.”

He indicated his brothers scattered around the room. “These are my brothers. There are five of them. You met them at the reception, but I will introduce them each to you individually. Then they will request you spread your legs and show them your womanhood, specifically your virgin maidenhead. With your feet on the edge of the table, you will spread your legs wide and drop your knees and allow them each to view you for however long each one desires. He will then drop down one knee and kiss you between your legs, then he will stand again and you will close your knees and put your legs down and I will introduce you to the next brother. Each will say the same thing and you will do the same thing. And then Luce,” he indicated his friend, the doctor on the other side of the room with his eyes burning intently into hers, “will help me ready you for your deflowering. I too, will kiss your maidenhead and then I will thrust my rod into you. I will spill my seed into you and then withdraw my member for my brothers to witness your virginal state. I will do this by smearing your blood on your thighs. Then we will celebrate and you will be allowed to go back to your chamber to rest until I am ready to take you again. If you defy me, it will not bode well for you. Trust me on this. I have selected you as my bride and according to Druid law this

is what you must do. All the past ladies of this manor have done so on their wedding night. And should we have any sons together, their wives will be expected to do the same.”

She was totally in shock about what was expected of her, she just could not believe that her husband would be requiring this of her. Her common sense told her this was some type of jest, surely he was playing a trick of some kind on her, so she tried to reason it out with him by asking, “And what of your brothers?”

“It is the same, whether eldest or youngest. When they marry I will be required to view each one of their wives. View her, swear fealty to her, kiss her cunt and witness his possession of her.” Impatiently, he turned from her and said, “Now let us begin. Brothers!” he called out to them and they all came forward standing close to the table she was displayed on.

*Oh my God, this was for real! He was really going to do this!*

“Behold! I give you my wife, the Lady Julia.” They all smiled and clapped and as she focused her eyes on each face, she saw that they were all feasting their eyes on her nakedness. Tears fell one right after the other onto her cheeks and then plopped onto the table. In the corner, out of the way, she saw the Duke’s doctor. He stood with his arms crossed over his chest, leaning back against the door to the small chamber, a look of disgust played over his features. She sobbed aloud but knew he would not be able to come to her aid. The Duke was too powerful and he felt that this was his right to shame her like this. She had been bought just as a slave might be. She was his to do with as he pleased,

and now he was pleased to allow his brothers the right to examine her body in front of him and to kiss her in her most intimate place while he watched.

“Edward,” he called out ignoring her loud sob, and the tall man who had escorted her earlier, with his short, full beard and the same piercing gray eyes her husband had, stepped forward to the end of the table.

“Edward, may I present to you my bride, the Lady Julia, Duchess of Thornhill.”

Edward looked down into her face, then his eyes traveled to her breasts and then continued down her body, stopping at the juncture of her thighs. “Lady Julia, show me your virgin maidenhead and I will swear fealty to you.” His voice was strong and deep and with every assurance that she would comply.

Julia looked up at the face of her husband, who stood towering above her, but there was no compassion there, he expected her to do as he asked. He simply took her constrained hand in his and gripped it slightly, as encouragement. She looked back down between her breasts at the handsome Edward, the second eldest brother. His face was stern as he stood there waiting for her to do her duty. Slowly she brought her knees up, placed her feet widely apart, her toes gripping the edge of the table, then even slower still, she allowed her knees to fall open. She saw Edward’s eyes focus on her, and she squeezed her eyes shut, unable to watch him as he examined the most intimate part of her body. Several minutes passed as she lay there exposed to his eyes and to those of her husband’s, then she heard the creak of leather and looked to see Edward

kneeling at the end of the table. She knew she was positioned close to the end of the table and that all he had to do was to lean forward slightly to place his lips against her. He did so, but she was not prepared for the bristly feel of his beard as well as the softness of his lips. He pressed the kiss and held it and she thought she felt him inhale deeply as he did so. Then he was standing and the Duke squeezed her hand, signaling for her to close her legs.

She brought her knees up and her legs together, and then she closed her eyes and waited for the Duke to call the next brother. “Warner, may I present to you my bride, the Lady Julia, Duchess of Thornhill.”

Warner stepped forward and she saw a heftier man with a scruffy spade beard and dancing silver blue eyes. His eyes met hers and he winked lasciviously at her, seeming to thoroughly enjoy her apparent distress.

“Mighty fine, big brother!” he said as he slapped the Duke on his shoulder. “Mighty fine morsel indeed.”

“Warner! Show some respect! This is my bride you are viewing.”

“Yes, yes. And most eager I am to do so. Lady Julia,” he continued, in a more refined voice, “show me your virgin maidenhead and I will swear fealty to you.” His eyes were fastened to her center waiting for her to part her legs for him. Again, she looked up at her husband. He smiled down at her and simply nodded at where her legs were, silently bidding her to part them for Warner.

Again, she slowly pulled her legs up, but hesitated to drop her knees open. Her husband cleared his voice with a loud ahem, and she resignedly let them fall

open to his brother's leering gaze. Warner was practically licking his lips as his eyes feasted on her blonde tufts and pink lips. It was obvious he was in no hurry to kiss her and move on.

After several interminable minutes where she could practically hear Warner drooling, she heard her husband's impatient voice. "Warner," he admonished, "I would like to take my wife's maidenhead before the day expires, if you don't mind. Satisfy yourself that she is acceptable and appears pure to your eyes, then kiss her!"

With one last glance at her blonde thatch, Warner knelt and bent low and she braced for his kiss. She knew it would be rough and more than just the peck that he was entitled to. When she felt his tongue slither into her, she slid her bottom back on the table and backed away from his scorching mouth. Warner laughed and stood up and she hastily closed her legs.

The Duke reached down and gave her thigh a reassuring squeeze before he called, "Thomas, may I present to you my bride, the Lady Julia, the new Duchess of Thornhill."

Thomas strode forward. He was clearly charming and youthful with a wide eager grin on his face. He was closer to her age and she sensed that if she had met him at some other place, in some other way, that perhaps they would have gotten on well together. "Lady Julia," he said in a deep husky voice that she found very sensuous, "show me your virgin maidenhead and I will swear fealty to you." He patiently waited, his eyes fixed on hers as she slowly brought her legs

up and then opened them for his inspection of her. He politely waited until she was settled into the required position before he lowered his eyes first to her chest, then her stomach and then finally her most private regions. She couldn't explain it, but she was so much more embarrassed by his perusal than she had been by any of the others. He made her feel wicked in opening herself up to him in such a manner, but also, she thought she could feel his censure at her willingness to do this. Although they all knew that she had not been willing to do this. The Duke, in his way, was very persuasive and powerful. They all knew that he brooked no refusal at anything he commanded, they had all been on the receiving end of his punishing side at one time or another. But still, it was as if he faulted her for her surrender—surely her reluctance must count for something!

Thomas kept looking at her femininity and then pointedly staring back at her face as if trying to reconcile the two. A blonde beauty for sure between her legs, something quite uncommon, but not the outrageous beauty one would expect to accompany so fine a body. He finally knelt and using his thumbs, pulled her labial lips wide as he bestowed a kiss deep inside her. She felt his tongue exploring and she actually pushed back against it. He chuckled as he pulled away and stood. She almost forgot to close her legs before the next brother was called, the Duke had to touch her knee to remind her.

“Jason, may I present to you my bride, the Lady Julia, the new Duchess of Thornhill.”

Jason stepped forward. He was tall and lanky and apparently much more embarrassed than she was. Then she remembered that the Duke had told her that his brother Jason was preparing to take his vows. Certainly, this would be abhorrent to him. But the stern look the Duke gave the reluctant brother indicated that he had no choice in the matter, he had to do his duty by his new sister-in-law.

In a shy, low voice, she barely heard him as he muttered the practiced words. "Lady Julia, show me your virgin maidenhead and I will swear fealty to you." His head then looked to the floor where he focused his eyes on the fresh rushes as she once again parted her legs and knees for full access. There was silence and nobody moved, as she lay there exposed with no one looking at her. Then she heard the Duke clear his throat and hesitatingly, Jason lifted his head and allowed his eyes to follow the length of her thighs searching out the area he was supposed to approve for his brother. Clearly, he had never seen anything like this before and although she thought for sure this would be a quick perusal by a reluctant brother, she was wrong. He was fascinated and could not tear his eyes away. There were several minutes of tense silence when she finally realized that the Duke would not be calling a stop to this brother's interest. All the brothers seemed pleased that Jason was inclined to linger. Finally, the Duke muttered softly in Jason's ear. "You could touch her if you like, I will allow it." Then as if trying to coax him to, he took Jason's hand and placed it on her.

Julia's eyes opened wide and she tensed as her husband led his brother's fingers over her. "Use your longest finger and insert it here," he urged, shoving Jason's finger into her. "All women are as soft and as silky here as is my Julia, mayhap you should not be so anxious to give your life to religious service. Mayhap you should take a few women first to be sure." Jason solemnly nodded and slowly withdrew his finger.

"You may kiss her now," the Duke reminded his brother and his brother dutifully lowered to his knee and placed a velvet soft kiss on the top of her now-gaping slit. It was such a soft caress that she arched into it to feel it better and Jason moaned while his brothers laughed.

Again, she needed a reminder to fold her legs in. "Jeremy," the Duke's strong voice beckoned, "may I present to you my wife, the Lady Julia, the new Duchess of Thornhill, and your mistress," he added, reminding the young lad that she was now also to play the part of a mother to him.

A sheepish lad stumbled up to the table and Julia gasped. The child was no more than twelve or thirteen! And they were making him do this? She was outraged!

The Duke saw her indignation and quelled her with a look; "The rite requires all males descendant from the Duke, regardless of age, to have the right and responsibility to view you for me. Even if he were only five, he would be here awaiting you to open to him. "Jeremy, remember the words we rehearsed? It is



now time to say them to my wife.” The Duke patted his youngest brother on the shoulder and led him over to stand between Julia’s outstretched legs.

“Lady Julia, . . .” the lad said in a squeaky voice that was more feminine than male, “show me your virgin maidenhead and I will swear fealty to you.” He had not stopped taking his eyes off of her breasts and the nipples that were peaked atop them. This lad was surely getting an education at her expense. Julia had to be brought back from her train of thought by her husband’s voice, “Julia, spread your legs wide for my youngest brother Jeremy, he is most anxious to have his first view of womanhood since leaving the womb.” There was humor in his voice and she heard the others chuckle with him. Reluctantly, she spread her legs for this babe in the woods and endured his gasp of delight as he knelt to appraise her charms. His face was mere inches from her womanhood as he peered into her. She could feel his breath vibrating against her nether lips.

“Kiss her lad,” one of his brothers called from across the room. “And make sure you put your tongue into it!”

The boy complied and soon she was wiggling away from his frenzied tongue as he continually licked and lapped at her. His brother, the Duke pulled him away from her. “Jeremy, she is mine to tongue and suckle. Find your own sweet pussy to eat.”

He turned his brother around and teasingly pushed him back toward the others.

Then he turned back to her, his hot eyes feasting on every inch of her. He looked at her breasts, her belly and her womanhood for long minutes, but not once did he look at her face before kneeling at the end of the table and placing a kiss on her slick lips, a lingering kiss that included his tongue. He pressed it into her and she could feel his mustache rubbing up against her. It felt good and she arched up to meet it just as he ended it and stood, still staring at the vision between her legs. She felt strangely bereft as she pushed up against the emptiness, wanting more of the feel of his lips and tongue on her there.

“Luce,” he called, “will you assist me now?”

She watched as the un-amused doctor pushed himself free from the wall and walked over to her. He gave her a reassuring smile and patted her shoulder. She had already closed her legs and was holding them tightly clasped, afraid of the next part to come.

The doctor moved to a small side table and carried a bowl back with him. “Julia, you will have to spread your legs again, so I may place this sponge inside you.” She watched as he sopped the small sponge around in some clear liquid.

“Why?” she asked, trembling with fear.

“The Duke does not wish you to get with child right away, this goes up inside you and keeps his seed from impregnating you.”

“Must I have this?”

“If your husband says that you must, then you must. It is his choice.”

She looked over at her husband and his eyes met hers for a piercing moment before he turned to the doctor and nodded.

Gently, her husband pried her legs open and then lifted her to the very edge of the table. She looked down between her legs and saw that everyone in the room was watching as the doctor placed his thumb and forefinger at the top of her slit and spread her wide open. Then he gently inserted the sponge into her, pushing it further back with his longest finger until it would go no further. “She is ready, Your Grace,” he said and then she felt his fingers sliding up and down her slit. He was trying to keep her moist for the eventual breaching but she did not know this, she thought he was taking his turn with her as all the others had and it angered her.

The Duke had already dropped his hose and was now poised at the end of the table, his hardness jutting and eager. She looked down her body and saw his thick member jumping and pulsing in its anticipated pleasure of entering her. *He was too big, surely it would not fit!* She remembered how big it had felt in her mouth and knew that its length surpassed her there. She was terrified that he would enter her body and that she would not have ample room for him. The others in the room moved in closer and gathered around to watch the show. Had she looked, she would have seen that they all had large protrusions behind their codpieces as they ogled her and anticipated their brother’s pleasure as their own. Her husband wrapped her legs around his torso and took her splayed hips in his hands then he placed his prick between her smooth inner lips. He pointed his

manhood down slightly until he felt himself slide to her channel opening. Then he shoved himself all the way into her, breaching her maidenhead. She screamed from the tearing pain of it, not knowing that part of her agony was due to the seepage of the vinegar solution from the sponge into her freshly torn flesh. Her husband held her to him to still her, than slowly he withdrew and reentered her causing her even more tearing and agonized pain, but he was heedless and uncaring. He was already in the throes of his climax, the powerful and erotic ceremony having brought him to the ready long ago. It was his right to take her thus and take her he would. He knew he had to perform for his family, he had to loose his seed in her and possess her as his and he had to do it forcefully like a warrior, not timidly like a wimp. Using his hands splayed under her, cupping her firm buttocks, he repeatedly lifted and carried her to him, thrusting his hard lance into her and then drawing it out just long enough to build more force before assaulting her even harder with the next stroke.

She thought she was being torn in two. The pain was searing and the pressure of him inside her was more than she thought she could bear and then suddenly, he jerked, stilled, and held her tightly to him as he pumped into her. His loud self-satisfied groan echoed through the chamber and she could hear his breathing rough and raspy as he tried to lift off of her. He grabbed her breast with the palm of his hand and squeezed it roughly saying, "Mine, mine, these are mine. And now this is mine, too," as he bent low, cupped her mons, and took her lips with his. His tongue darted into her mouth and she could taste the wine

they'd had at dinner. He slowly withdrew from her, careful not to lose a single drop of the red fluid clinging to his limp member. He held it against one thigh and wiped it against her and then he did the same on her other inner thigh, smearing her virgin's blood in long streaks. He beckoned for all to come see and they all peered over his shoulder at her bloodstained thighs. A loud cheer went up and there was thunderous clapping. The Duke was slapped on the back and escorted to a far corner where he was toasted and cheered and congratulated.

Julia, lay still at the end of the table, unsure what to do, she was so near to the end that she was in danger of falling off and she could feel something sticky oozing out from her and running under her and down between her bottom cheeks. She had nowhere to put her legs; they were well over the edge, but nowhere near to reaching the floor so she could scoot back up onto the table. She tried to shift so she could sit up, but she could find no purchase with her feet.

"Here, let me help you," she heard the doctor say, and he helped her to move back before he reached behind her and undid her hands. Then he took a clean white napkin and asked her to part her legs slightly, "Last time. I won't be swearing fealty and I promise not to look," he said with a tiny smile. She spread her legs slightly and then he wiped between her lips, his eyes never leaving hers.

Everyone was ignoring her now. She was no longer the center of attention, except the good doctor, and Jeremy. The doctor saw her tears of shame and humiliation clustered on her lashes before running down her lovely cheeks. It hurt him somewhere deep inside to see her so miserably unhappy.

Jeremy had also come to help get her comfortable. Several times she thought his hands had strayed as he helped the doctor walk her back to her room. She felt hands cup her breasts, but before she could look down to see whose they were, they were gone. But she already knew the doctor's touch. He was gentle and sure, not groping and crude.

When she was safely tucked into her bed, the doctor moved to leave, wrapping his arm around Jeremy's shoulder, he insistently pulled him along to make sure he left her bedchamber. She heard Jeremy mumbling something to the doctor. It sounded like he said, "It is a shame I will have to kill all five of my brothers to get her."

"It is a shame you were not second born, then the only one you'd have to do in would be Stewart," the doctor answered with a chuckle. "Surely, all five of them would be hard to manage without anyone knowing your plan. Maybe it would be best for you just to find your own bride."

"I could never find one such as she. She is so beautiful."

"That she is lad, that she is."

At the door, the doctor looked back at her and smiled. "I will check on you tomorrow. It is pointless to do so now as he will probably want to avail himself of you again tonight. I will check to make sure you are not too badly torn and help you remove the sponge in the morning. Mind, it should never stay inside you for more than two days. Good night, my Lady."

He closed the door behind him and Jeremy, and she lay there alone recollecting all the shame and embarrassment her husband had put her through this day. And soon, he would be coming to take her again. To assault her body and demand his marital rights yet again. She rubbed the nipple that he had hurt so badly earlier in the evening. She looked down to see the purple bruise on the very tip. Her aunt knew of the travail she would be put through to become this man's wife—she was sure of it. What other horrors awaited her, she wondered.

She was sound asleep when her drunken husband came to her bed. He climbed in beside her then lifted the covers high so he could see her nakedness. "You did fine tonight, my lovely wife. I was the envy of all. Even little Jason!" he said with a barking laugh. "All my brothers want you, even our dear little priestly one wants you!" he roared with laughter.

"Well, they can't have you! They can see you—all of you, my sweet lovely. But they can't have you! Well, not until I die at least."

"What?" she said suddenly desirous of being awake instead of feigning sleep. *Why was everyone referring to his death all of a sudden?*

"They get you, one by one. If I die you go to Edward, if he dies, you go to Warner, if he dies, you go to Thomas, then Jason, then finally Jeremy. One day, they think they all will have their chance at you." He snickered and let the sheet flutter down, then he drew her to him. "But they may not have you while I live. Men may look upon your lovely, lusty body, but only I shall have you!" he hissed

into her hair. "And have you, I shall. Part your thighs for me, I am anxious to feel myself inside you once again."

Reluctantly, she accepted his thigh between hers. She bit her lip in anticipation of the recurring pain as he pried her thighs open. She tried to move away from him, but he caught her by her nipples and pulled her back into his chest. She whimpered from the pain but he continued to pull on the tender nubs and twist them mercilessly. "You will learn to give me what I want," he said gruffly, as he used his large, hairy thigh to fully part her smooth ones and then he climbed on top of her.

When she woke the next morning, she was alone, and then she remembered that she had been sent back to her own chambers, across the hall from her husband's, sometime in the middle of the night. Sometime after he had taken her three painful times in her vagina, and then once, humiliating her and shocking her unbelievably, by taking her in her rear just as he had on the third night of their journey. Had that only been the night before last? It seemed to her that she had suffered a lifetime since then.

She heard her door open and she cowered under the sheets, afraid it was him again. But it was only her lady's maid, Claire. "The doctor says for me to help you bathe before he comes up to check you and remove your sponge." She had said it so matter-of-fact, that Julia wondered if it was common knowledge around



the manor that she'd had a soaked sponge thrust well up inside her by her husband's direction before he had thrust himself brutally into her.

She moved her legs to the edge of the bed, cringing from the soreness she felt everywhere from her waist down. She even had to grasp her breasts after the sheet had lightly rasped over them. They were sore from her new husband's vigorous and rough caresses. She winced as she remembered how hard he had squeezed them and how painful her nipples were from his pinching and pulling and then that clip he had used! Heaven help her if he ever used it on her again.

Claire helped her to perform her ablutions and to bathe. The hot water in the hip tub did wonders for her aches and soon, she was languorous with the feel of the steam on her face, warming and pinkening her skin. She was just about to stand and reach for a towel when the door opened and she heard two laughing males voices. She looked up and saw her husband and her doctor standing at the door watching her step from the tub. They watched her as she reached for the towel and they continued watching her as she self-consciously wrapped the towel around her body.

"Luce is here to check you out my love, to refresh your sponge and see what havoc I took on your body last night. Come lay on the bed and let's have a look, shall we?"

She trembled with fear and something else—indignation at his treatment of her.

“I think I shall be fine in a few days time and I do not wish to viewed again. I thought we were done with all that last night.”

Her husband came over to her and mockingly took her hand as he led her over to the bed. She heard the doctor closing the door, almost in Claire’s face. She was just returning from taking the soiled linens away.

“It is my doctor’s job to advise me of your condition. He will be viewing you often as he is helping me to keep you healthy and without child. He is the one so concerned about you healing from last night’s activities, it is not I. I know that you will most probably need some time to heal, but that is what we have lesson number two for, n’est pas?” he said with a snide smirk.

He roughly pulled the towel from her and pushed her down onto the unmade bed. “Have at it, Luce, but know this, I will not abstain for more than a day and a night, so heal her tears if there are any, and quickly.” He grabbed a chair, spun it around and sat with his arms braced on the back of the chair, facing the foot of the bed.

The doctor walked over to where she sat at the end of the bed. “Lady Julia, I know how hard this must be for you, but I will need you to lie back and spread your legs for me.”

She looked up at him with venom in her eyes. “Is this how you get satisfaction, Doctor, constantly gaping into other men’s wives’ wombs?”

The doctor looked visibly shaken by her curt remark to him. “No, my Lady, of course not. This is my profession, I derive no other pleasure than helping you stay healthy.”

“Pah!” she retorted as she flung herself backward and threw open her legs.

The doctor knelt at the edge of the bed and gently spread her thighs wider before using his fingers to explore her moist folds. “Stewart,” he said to the man seated behind him watching, “You have torn her in several places. This will not heal in a day, she will need at least three unless you wish to cause her pain next time you take her.”

The doctor helped her out of the bed and instructed her to squat so he could show her how to remove the sponge. He watched as she squatted in front of him and used her fingers to enter herself. After feeling around and returning with empty fingers, he knelt down in front of her. “Here, let me show you.” His fingers deftly entered her and she felt his hand push up against her, cupping her, as he reached two of his fingers as far into her as they would go. Then she felt something being dragged out of her. “You can squat as you’re doing now or lay flat with your knees drawn up high to insert it. Then use you middle finger to push it up as far as it will go, don’t worry, your husband will seat it properly with his first thrust into you.

He showed her the sponge that he had removed from her, “See? Now, we must replace it with a fresh one. He pulled another small sponge from his pocket

and using the liquid from a small vial, he wet it. "It must be soaked in this solution before it is placed up inside you, or it is not effective. But I will always do this part for you to make sure there is proper insertion."

"Thank you, doctor," she said sarcastically. "I don't know what I would do if it weren't for you, handling me like this." Clearly, she did not appreciate his concern.

"Julia, be nice to Luce. He gave up a thriving practice to take care of you exclusively for me."

Julia looked up into Lucien's eyes as he bent over her lower body. Her eyes conveyed her anger and shame to be so callously treated by him like this. Then her eyes widened in outrage as Lucien deftly parted her thighs with his elbow, her labial lips with his thumbs, and fully inserted the cold, wet sponge into her, thrusting it firmly and deeply well up into her with his long middle finger.

"It's my pleasure to serve you Julia," he said mockingly. "I will never regret leaving my practice to become your humble servant," he added solicitously and she knew that she had made him as angry as he had made her.

"Would you two please try to get along? I am not in the mood to listen to either of you complaining about the other. Julia, he is your doctor, you will do as he says. It is his responsibility to ensure that you don't get with child."

"Why is that so important? I thought you wanted an heir."

Lucien turned his head and his eyes met Stewart's. "You haven't told her?"

"Now, when would I have told her? And why would I?"

“Tell me what?” Julia asked.

“Nothing you need to know now,” the Duke muttered.

“Tell me!”

Luce slowly withdrew his finger and stood. “I’ll leave you two now,” was all he said before he briskly strode across the room, opened the door and then firmly shut it behind him.

“What? What haven’t you told me?”

The Duke stood up and tugged on the pull bell, then lacing his hands behind his back, he slowly paced. “What haven’t I told you? It seems I haven’t told you about your duties as my wife.”

“Oh, Lord, don’t tell me. There’s more? More of your ridiculous rites or traditions?”

“Yes, there’s more, much, much more. You have many duties as my wife and the Lady of Thornhill. Let’s just start with today. Today, you must dress and go downstairs and become the lady of the house.”

“That doesn’t sound too hard.”

“It won’t be. Once you get used to it.”

“Get used to what?”

“Your new gowns.”

“What new gowns?”

“The gowns that have been specially altered for you. I have decided that I don’t want your breasts covered. Ever.”

“What!”

“Your breasts, I don’t want them covered. I want them exposed at all times. I want to be able to look upon them anytime I want, day or night.”

“I won’t!”

“You will,” he said huskily.

“The servants . . . visitors . . . guests . . .”

“I cannot have them all going around blindfolded, bumping into things, so they will all be privileged to look upon your loveliness along with me.”

“No!” she screamed emphatically, pulling the covers of the bed around her as she stood to face him.

“Yes,” he stated calmly, giving the impression that he was somewhat enjoying her distress.

“I won’t!”

“You will. You have no choice.” His hard eyes burned into hers then he turned to the maid who was now waiting at the door.

“Clarise, dress her in one of the gowns. If she becomes too difficult to handle, get three or four strapping stable lads to help you with her.” His eyes met hers again.

“Madam, I will expect you in the dining room for breakfast in twenty minutes. Clarise will see to it!”

Clarise curtsied with a swift bob and replied, “Yes, my Lord.”

Julia saw him turn and head for the door and she cried out after him, “No, no, please no.” She clutched frantically at his sleeve. He gently and painstakingly removed her hand saying curtly, “My brothers and I will await your arrival in the breakfast dining room.” Then he was gone, out the door and down the hall.

She was still half whimpering and half sobbing when Clarise walked over, took her by the shoulders and turned her back toward the wardrobe.

Julia turned and saw the determined look on the servant’s face and gave a low keening wail before falling to her knees in anguish, still pleading, “No, no, you wouldn’t . . . please, please.”

“Yes, ma’am, I would. It’s my job to do his bidding. Now, it’s yours, too. C’mon, just do as he says. It won’t be so bad.”

“I cannot.”

“You can. You must. He is your master now, you must obey him. The law requires it.”

“What kind of law allows a man to strip his wife and parade her around naked for all to see?”

“The marriage laws allow him to own you as chattel and you are his to do with as he pleases and you know this, it has been thus forever. Now come, before I have to call for the male servants to hold you down while I dress you.”

“Undress me is more like it!” she bitterly retorted as Clarise pulled her to her feet. “I am no less a slave than you are!”

Clarise, winced at her words, then softly stroked Julia's cheek as she gently tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "Now that is the first time you've said something that's holds more truth than you know."

"I am really and truly not dreaming any of this am I, Clarise?"

"No, Ma'am. You're bought and paid for just like the rest of us."

"Good God! What am I going to do?"

"There's nothing you can do. You belong to him. And he wants to show you off for as long as he can."

"For as long as he can?" Julia asked with a puzzled frown as she turned to look at her.

"Until you've birthed a child. After that he cannot display you any longer. The heir's mother can not be disgraced in that manner once a babe has been delivered of you."

"You mean if I get pregnant, he can no longer force me to disrobe in front of others?"

"Once you've given birth, yes. Up until then, he can still allow you to viewed. In fact, there's been many a Lady of Thornhill that's had quite an audience in her birthing room. But as soon as the child is snuggled up to a breast, only the Duke is privileged to see her ladyship naked in any way, from that point on."

"So that's why he is so insistent I not get with child."



“Yes, Ma’am, all the dukes have been that way. Many of the dukes have hired doctors to make sure that their ladies didn’t conceive. We’d best get you dressed, your time is almost up,” Clarise said as she took a long saffron-colored gown out of the large armoire.

Julia looked at the gown with its plunging, square cut neckline and a feeling of dread came over her. “I don’t know if I can do this,” she whispered.

“You’ll get used to it. You will. We all have.”

“You are fully dressed!”

“I am now. But many’s a night I go from bedroom to bedroom naked as a jay as each brother takes his turn with me. Luckily, I am losing my attractiveness and the newer maidens are much more popular, so I am not out of my clothes as much as I used to be. But there were days, years ago, that I’d not get to wear a scrap of clothing for weeks on end.”

“What kind of place is this? A brothel of some sort?”

“No. They’re just Druids who like their women naked and they see nothing wrong with fornication in front of others. But you don’t have to worry about that; no one can have you but the Duke. Unless they don’t care about their life. Here, slip your feet in.”

Clarise helped Julia into the gown and then Julia walked over to the cheval mirror. Tears burned the backs of her eyes when she saw her breasts so brazenly framed. She easily noticed the purple bruising on the one and wondered what everyone else would think when they saw it, too.

“At least you know you have breasts worthy of being on display. All I’ve heard from everybody is how lovely your breasts are. Each duke tries to outdo the previous in finding a woman of beauty he can be proud of displaying. They’re all saying this Duke has outdone them all and that men will come from far and wide to view you when the word gets out.”

“Men will come here, to see me?”

“Oh, yes. Many men will come to see your charms. You can be sure of that. The Duke will try to make sure every man on earth gets to see you before you can conceive and carry his child. When you are heavy with child, he will still bring men home to see you.”

“This is so sick. I can hardly believe I got myself into this.”

“All the women say that. You will get used to it. It won’t be so bad.”

“But the servants . . . the visitors . . .”

“They will all be appreciative. The servants won’t pay that much attention after a while. Everybody will get used to it.”

“Not me.”

“Even you.”

“I won’t.”

“You will. They all do. Come, it’s time to go downstairs. Your husband is waiting.”

“As are all his brothers. And the servants.”

“And there are some guests that stayed overnight from the handfasting.”

“Wonderful. How many men will be viewing my breasts today?”

“Your titties, remember that your husband prefers you call them your titties, you might as well get used to that, too. Probably no more than thirty or so.”

“I just can’t do it.”

Clarise took her by the arm and led her to the door. “They are all the same people who saw them yesterday. I know you don’t want to hear this, but if I had your titties, I’d be struttin’ and happy to be show ‘em off.”

Julia snorted, then smiled over at her and patted her hand. “Thanks for helping me. Now, we just have to figure a way to get me with child as quickly as possible.”

“Dr. Rinaldo is a very good doctor and the Duke’s best friend. The Duke does not want you with child yet. I think you are going to be a showpiece for the Duke for many, many years, if you ask me.”

Going down the stairs, one by one, Julia resolved to find a way. She didn’t want to spend her life degrading herself and allowing men to build their lust by viewing her nakedness.

Walking into the breakfast room, she watched as all eyes moved to her chest. Every servant and every man at the table stopped what they were doing when she came into the room and focused on just one thing. Well, actually two things. Julia looked over at her husband and saw approval and pride bursting on his face. He loved this; he would never want this to end. It was obvious that he loved showing her body off to every single male he knew. As he came to hold her

seat for her, he bent and gently kissed the purple bruise on the tip of her breast. “Good morning, My Lady,” he murmured, “You look absolutely lovely today.”

He took his seat at the other end of the table, and raising his hand, he said, “Gentlemen, I give you the lovely Lady Thornhill.”

All eyes focused on her again, and everyone clapped. Then the servants proceeded to serve. During the meal, every time Julia looked up from her plate, she saw either a servant or one of the Duke’s brothers staring at her breasts. She could not wait to get back to her room. Later, when the Duke informed her that he expected her to go horseback riding with her, she insisted she be allowed to bind her breasts so that they would not get the tendency to sag from the bouncing. When he realized, she was right, he changed his mind and said they would tour the gardens instead. He did not want her breasts covered, at least not for a few more days. He knew she had to get used to being topless in her own home.

Because her home had so many men in it, men who went out of their way to run into her so they could see her luscious body, she was forever reminded that her breasts were bared by the expressions of delight on their leering faces.

The day she found out that the Earl of Statonsbridge was coming especially to see her, Julia cringed. When the Duke had her summoned to his office, she knew it was not good news for her.

“Julia, a dear old friend is coming to visit today and I have promised him an unencumbered view of you. I believe he is bringing one or two guests and of course, they will be included in your viewing.”

“My viewing?”

“Yes, Julia. You will be required to show them your titties and your pussy. Like you did for me that first night at the inn, remember? The Druid Mermaid’s pose. I will need you to do that for me probably around one in the afternoon. In the library, I believe. I think that would be a good place to show you off to my good friend and his guests.”

“You can’t be serious!”

“I assure you that I am.”

“I go around day and night topless allowing all who cares to see my breasts . . .”

“Titties, Julia, say titties. I like that much better, your titties.”

“My titties, then!”

“Yes, and now you will show them your pussy, too. I was just letting you know, so you could prepare. I think it would be much easier if you wore no undergarments under your gown, then you could flash them when you courtesy and then you can just drop the whole thing on the carpet by the stool before sitting down to the pose.”

“Stewart, are you really going to make me do this?”

“Absolutely. It is the reason I married you. You know this. This is what I desire of you. This is what gives me pleasure.” He pulled her to him by putting an arm around her waist, and then he cupped a breast and caressed it. “I love showing you off. I love watching men’s eyes as they feast on you. I love to watch

the flare of lust in them as they examine you. And I love that they want you and can't have you. But they can't know what they're missing unless you show them. So you must show them what is mine . . . everything that is mine. He pinched a nipple hard as his voice lowered. "And you can either show them, or I will. You can pose and display yourself or I will have you strapped down and position you myself. Either way, these men coming today are going to see your sweet juicy pussy. Do I make myself clear?"

She simply nodded as she stepped away from him and then ran to her rooms.

She threw herself sobbing onto the mattress. A few minutes later, she heard a soft knock followed by the door opening. Out of habit, she reached for the duvet on the bed to cover herself and then realized how ridiculous that was; everyone on the estate had certainly had their eyeful of her bared breasts over the last month. She looked up to see her doctor coming toward the bed. Still clutching the bed covers, she sniffed and wiped at her tears.

"Don't tell me it's time for another check up," she said indignantly. Sometimes, his eyes on her bothered her more than anyone's.

"No," he said softly. "I saw you run up the stairs and into your room. I wanted to see if there was anything I could do."

"No, there's nothing you can do. Unless, of course, you can talk my husband into allowing me a modicum of decorum when his guests arrive this afternoon."

“Ah yes, the Earl of Statonsbridge, the Viscount Spencer, and his brother-in-law, old friends of the Duke’s.”

“Why does he insist on my disrobing for all his friends?” she sobbed anew.

Lucien sat on the cover beside her and took her hand in his. With his other hand he gently patted hers. “It’s a way of proving himself to his peers. He has always been over confident and boastful, to the point of arrogance at times. Which only served to earn him taunt after taunt. Now it seems he’s trying to prove something to the world all the time. In this case, it seems he’s trying to prove that his wife has the most beautiful body anyone has ever seen.”

His eyes met hers and with one hand he gently pulled the duvet from her fingers, letting it slide from her grasp to her waist. His eyes followed it down and he focused directly on her bared chest—on her nipples that were hard from the cool satin of the linens.

“And you do. You have an incredible body. Any man would be proud to have you as his. Most just wouldn’t have to show you off to have that satisfaction.”

“I don’t know how much longer I can stand this humiliation. I was raised that my body was private. That my chastity was a reward for my husband and that he would treasure me for honoring him in that way. The Duke does not treasure me so much as flaunt me, and I can no longer find pleasure in his company because of that. I have been shamed out of any love that I could have

had for him. If I might speak freely with you . . . he disgusts me and I abhor being in his bed at night.”

“I know that this is not the typical marriage. You are more duty bound than most, and though your duties are certainly unpleasant, you are still his to command. There is no way out for you.”

“Sometimes, I just want to die.”

He patted her hand again. “Please don’t talk that way. We’ve already had one duchess choose the afterlife to living here at Thornhill. It would grieve me deeply, if you chose that path also.”

There was a loud knock on the door and one of Julia’s maids entered the room. “My Lord beckons you to the library. His guests have arrived and he has need of you. He requests you wear the green gown with no modiste.”

That was her way of saying that the Duke wanted her naked under her gown and slippers—naked and accessible.

The doctor stood, pulling her up with him. “Change your gown and I will walk you down,” he said with a small smile of encouragement.

She simply nodded and walked behind the screen where her maid was removing the requested green gown from its wrappings.

Julia saw no need to send Lucien from the room while she dressed; after all, he had seen her more than simply undressed. It didn’t make any sense to ask him to leave when just ten minutes hence, she would be baring all, not just for



him and her husband, but for her husband's new guests who were all but complete strangers to her.

On the way down the stairs, Lucien took her arm in his and tucked it into the crook of his elbow, covering her chilly hand with his warm one.

"Please do as he says, Julia. It means a lot to the Duke to impress these men and it would hurt me unbearably to see you punished for disobedience. Whether you like what has become of you or not, the law entitles him to the full use of your body in any way that he so pleases. It is just your unfortunate lot that you have fallen in with a man who prefers you naked in front of others to warm and solitary unions in his bed."

"Lucien, what is it you feel when you look at me?"

It was the first time she had called him by name and he felt a surge of happiness. "I think you are the loveliest woman I have ever seen and I can never seem to get enough of looking at you."

"So, you enjoy it when I parade around like this?" She indicated her state of undress.

"Yes, I must admit that I do. However, I get no joy at all out of seeing others getting their eyeful or slaking their lust under the table while ogling you."

"So . . . you would prefer I *not* show these *gentlemen* my body—my titties and pussy—according to my husband."

"What I prefer does not matter, as I am not your husband."

"But if you were?"

“If I was, I would allow no one, save me, to admire your delectable, creamy, smooth skin. Maybe I would let them see your face and your shoulders, and an arm or two, but that would all. The rest I would save for just me.” He looked over at her and winked. “I would keep your bountiful breasts and your delectable genitalia all to myself.”

She smiled coyly over at him and she actually blushed.

It was so sweet, the smile that was just for him. He felt his heart hammer in his chest.

They entered the library and four men rose, her husband and three others. The Duke had a wide smile as he stood to receive her. “Julia, my sweet Julia. Luce, thank you for escorting her down for me. You may join us for a nip of brandy if you’d like.” He indicated the open decanter on the tray atop the massive desk.

“Thanks, don’t mind if I do.” He went over and poured himself a stiff shot of the amber liquid. He would not leave Julia unless he was asked to; he knew how hard this particular exhibition was going to be for her. And for him too, as now, against his better judgment, he was developing tender feelings for her.

“Julia,” the Duke said as he spun her around to face the Viscount, the Earl, and another man. Julia watched as the Viscount’s eyes bulged out of his sockets while he perused her full breasts and hardened nipples. “May I present the Viscount Spencer?”

The Viscount managed to move his arm up to ensnare her hand. He dragged it to his lips, never once letting his eyes rove anywhere but on her chest.

At that moment, the other two gentlemen turned to face Julia. The Viscount was slobbering on her fingers when the other men came alongside and saw her. Actually they saw only her breasts; they didn't appear to be interested in seeing her face. The shame that filled her made heat flush her from head to toe.

"Lovely," they murmured.

"Incredible," a man mumbled in French. "Oui," his companion agreed, "tres magnifique!" All the while, the Duke beamed and enjoyed each flattering reaction. Julia was introduced to each man and each man in turn took her hand and kissed it, their lecherous eyes burning into the soft flesh of her breasts.

After a moment of standing and being introduced, the Duke pulled Julia to his side and squeezed her waist. "Gentlemen, I know you have heard stories in London about my ravishing young wife. It will be your job to go back and confirm that they are all true," he said with a huge smile. Then he turned to Julia, his eyes burning shards of warning into hers, "Julia, my love," he said, sugar coating the meaning his eyes were conveying, "show these gentlemen my pride and joy, my most wonderful new play toy. Stand here my love and pull your skirts up until the fine hairs of your womanhood are visible to my friends."

The look he gave her brooked no refusal as he firmly set her apart from him so she could do his bidding. Consciously, she was aware of Lucien walking

to the double doors and silently closing them to allow her at least some privacy from the rest of the household while her husband forced her to display herself.

Holding back the tears, she balled handfuls of her gown in each hand and slowly raised her skirts. She saw the look on each man's face as with each second she revealed yet more and more of her legs, and then her upper thighs, and then finally, her gown was gathered around her waist, and she was showing them her femininity.

The shocked responses, the oohs and aahs, the sharp intakes of breath attested to the fact that none of the men had really thought it would go this far, that surely the rumors could not be true. They hadn't believed the stories they had heard about the very fair maid that the Duke had married; the fair maid he was so eager to show off to his cronies. Even the most lecherous of men would not treat a woman so.

"Gentlemen, my Julia. Isn't she a delight?"

Each man silently nodded as he continued to stare at the blonde triangle between her legs. Julia squeezed her eyes shut and forced out a tear but not before seeing Lucien across the room looking daggers in the Duke's direction.

The Duke smiled and then handed Julia a brandy, but only she could read the message in his smile—the secret, pertinent message. "The Druid Mermaid," he whispered to her. She vehemently shook her head and said in a low, sobbing voice, "Please, no."

“Do it!” he hissed. He abruptly walked around to her back and deftly unbuttoned the long line of buttons on her back. Then with large, firm hands, he pushed it off of her shoulders. It pooled at her feet covering the only item of clothing she now had on—her shoes.

He pulled a stool forward, facing the low sofa, and she was instructed to sit. The four men scrambled to find seats, and sitting on the very edge of the sofa, they awaited the show they had been told, but had hardly hoped would follow.

Reluctantly, Julia sat on the warm leather pad keeping her knees tightly together while the Duke moved to stand behind his friends who were sitting on the sofa. From this vantage he could oversee her and make sure she capitulated to his demands. His steely eyes were commanding her in no uncertain terms that unless she obeyed him, he would punish her severely.

“Julia, please sit in the Druid’s Mermaid’s pose for us, it would please me very much to show my wife’s pussy to my guests.”

Slowly her hands went up behind her head as she kept her eyes focused on his hard, steely ones. One telltale tic, told her she wasn’t jutting the tips of her breasts out far enough and she was quick to correct the angle of her elbows, allowing the men in front of her to see her in the most seductive of all poses. A direct glare and nod of his head indicated that he was ready for her to part her legs. She opened her knees and let her thighs spread wide. The looks from the

men in front of her made her feel more ashamed than she would ever have imagined she could feel.

“Wider my love,” he murmured coaxingly, “My guests would like an unencumbered view. And don’t forget to move your delectable ass up to the very edge of the stool. These men have traveled too far not to be given the whole show, right gentlemen?”

They all nodded assent, too stunned to utter a single sound.

She spread her knees even wider and scooted to very edge of her seat, baring all, denying the men in front of her absolutely nothing.

As they all continued to stare at her as she posed thus, the Duke paced around the room, basking in compliments, gloating at the comparisons they were making and smiling wickedly at Julia. He knew she hated this and that made it all the more erotic to him. He loved having this much control over her and he especially loved showing others how she would puppet for him; how she would do his bidding no matter what it was.

That he reveled in her humiliation was not lost on Luce. He saw his friend in a new light, and he did not like what he saw.

The door opened and the butler entered. Julia made a move to close her legs but the Duke tsk-tsked her, “Ahh, ahh, ahh, I did not say for you to close you legs. Spread them wide again, we are not finished looking at your charms, my love. Gentlemen have a drink of the finest port on the continent. Godfrey, please

see to it that each man has a glass of Port so we can toast my lovely bride. And Godfrey, please take one for yourself.”

The glasses were distributed and all of the men, the butler, the doctor, and the Duke included, stood to toast the Duke’s bride. Julia couldn’t help but notice that Godfrey’s eyes were wide as saucers as he focused on that special part of her between her thighs that was now exposed for all to see. The Duke came over, knelt between her legs and placed a kiss high up on her thigh and then another on her glistening lips.

“Gentlemen, I hate to be the damper on this party, but I have an urgent need to take my wife to our bedchamber and lose myself in her hot twat. Please make yourselves comfortable. Dinner will be at eight. With that, he scooped Julia into his arms and carried her now-limp body up the stairs to his suite of rooms.

“You were magnificent, my darling,” he said as he removed his stock and his waistcoat. “They were absolutely enthralled with you, and look at me,” he said as he pulled his manhood from behind his breeches. “I am like an iron rod with want of you. You displaying yourself does incredible things to me. I never remember being quite so hard and needy as I am with you. Prepare yourself for me as I watch,” he instructed. “I desire to see you with your fingers spreading your wet lips.”

Obediently, but quite disinterestedly, she lay back on the bed, her knees bent, her thighs parted, as she inserted a finger into herself. Moving it up and

down, she distractedly touched herself while he watched and finished undressing.

“No, that’s not at all how it’s done my love,” he said as he swatted her hand away and thrust two fingers deep inside her. She gasped from the suddenness of it and the pain of her stretching to accommodate his large, twisting fingers.

Then he added another and roughly shoved all three of them up into her. Taking no more time than that, he withdrew his fingers and positioned himself between her outstretched legs. “Here’s what a real man feels like,” he said as he forced himself into her so abruptly that her head hit the headboard. Then the battering began and he did not let up on the fast-paced tempo or the forcefulness of the thrusts until his senses were taken from him by a powerful orgasm that sent him to the backside of oblivion. “Julia . . .” he moaned as he fell flat on top of her, wasted and spent and ignorant of her distress.

Saturday night she was awakened at one in the morning by one of her maids. Her drunken husband was bidding her to come to the gaming room and even though she was exhausted and in a sleep-stupefied frame of mind, she could see the guards at the door, sent by the Duke to accompany her should she resist his entreaty.

Arriving in the billiard room with her hair in disarray and in her nightgown and robe, she was met by her very inebriated husband.



“Julia,” he slurred, “You left my birthday party early. I have need of you, for you are my present and I desire to unwrap you.”

She was immediately stripped of her clothing, more deftly than she would have believed him capable of in his present state. He half carried and half dragged her to the large felt-covered table and together with his brother, Thomas, she was hefted onto it.

The two of them managed to lay her spread-eagled with her knees parted. She looked between her legs and saw that there were many men in the room. They were playing cards and drinking as they celebrated her husband’s birthday.

The table was in a small, lighted alcove slightly away from where the others were congregated and only a few of them, mostly due to their drunkenness, had even noticed her. The Duke looked down at her for a few moments, went to take a healthy swig of his drink and realizing it was empty, stumbled over to the long bar to fetch another. A portly gentleman sloshed a bit of his drink onto one of her breasts and then stumbled over to a chair where he collapsed unconscious. And then there was just Thomas. He had been staring down at her for quite some time. Suddenly, he reached down and touched her right breast with his fingertips, then trailed them down to her parted legs. A thick finger delved and found her moist center. She shivered, gasped, and then hoarsely spat out at him, “No one is allowed to touch me!”

He ignored her and continued to stroke her moist nether lips. She squirmed to get away from his hand, but he easily kept her within his reach. Her

eyes met his and she saw the passion burning out of control in him and it scared her. Her eyes moved to his other hand and she saw him unbuttoning himself. Then she saw him take his red, swollen member into his large, hairy hand. She quickly looked away, turning her head away from him. Many men tried to get her to look at their members, leered at her with half-lidded eyes while they commanded her to watch them stroke the cock they were so proud of, but she always looked away. No matter her curiosity, she would not give them the satisfaction. It seemed Thomas was no different; he wanted her validation of his prized manhood. She closed her eyes tightly and prayed for her husband's quick return. Something she had never prayed for, ere now.

“Look at me while I do this or I will pinch you painfully here,” he hissed as his fingers came together at her most sensitive place, the place she knew could give incredible pleasure or intense pain if mistreated. He started to pinch her skin together and the sharp stabbing pain of the pressure brought her face around to his.

“Lower. I want you to watch me as I spill my seed on your belly.”

She was forced to watch as he roughly fingered her with one hand and jerked on himself feverishly with the other. When a white, milky substance started spurting out, the sight initially fascinated her, but when she felt the hot liquid pool on her lower belly, just above her hairs, she winced and shivered. He laughed heartily at her distress and as he quickly swiped at the evidence of his passion with the edge of his tunic. Then he positioned himself so he could caress her

breasts. “These will be mine one day, mark my words. I will have you. I will come inside your belly instead of outside it.”

Someone called his name and he abruptly stood, pinching a nipple in the process. She watched his broad back as he strode away and a feeling of revulsion stronger than she had ever known came over her.

“Did he hurt you?”

She looked up to see the doctor staring down at her.

“You saw?”

“Just the last part. I came to check on you. I wish I had come sooner. If the Duke had seen him, there would be one less brother for you to worry about down the line.”

“If he is ever to be my husband, I will find a way to kill myself, that I promise you.”

“Are you all right?”

Her eyes met his and she saw them soften. He was genuinely worried about her. It touched her in a hidden part, deep in her chest.

“Yes, I am fine. I was aroused out of my sleep to come down and entertain my husband and his besotted guests. I don’t know why the whole world gets to view my sex. I don’t know how much longer I can live like this. Why is my sexuality of so much concern outside of the marriage bed?”

“It is because of him. He is obsessed with it, always has been,” he said as he helped her up and off of the table.

“I just cannot endure the humiliation, the shame . . . the degradation. And, most importantly, the marriage without love,” she sobbed.

He wiped the tears from her face and ran a finger down her nose.

“Lovely to behold, is she not?” her drunken husband asked as he sauntered over and cupped a full breast. “I will never tire of showing you off, my dear. The men tonight are well pleased with your charms.”

“Well, I’m going back to bed! I do not feel well, yet I know that within the hour I will be called upon to service you. Please allow me to return to my chamber so at least I can rest until that time.”

“Certainly. I would of course want you to have all of your reserves at hand for my late-night passion,” he said with a leering, drunken grin. “Luce, would you mind seeing my wife to her room for me?”

“Certainly, my Lord,” Lucien replied as he bent to retrieve Julia’s nightgown and robe. “Here Julia, it is chilly in the corridor.”

He waited for her don her nightclothes, then he led her back to her suite of rooms. He made sure she was safely tucked in and then he waited in the dark corridor until the Duke came to make use of her. He did not trust any of the Duke’s brothers with so great a temptation. His concern for Julia was beginning to override his common sense. He needed to remember that though the Duke was indeed a great friend, he could be a vicious and dangerous enemy if thwarted or challenged. And where Julia was concerned, he was a man possessed.

The next morning, the Duke sat in an easy chair at the foot of his wife's bed while his doctor examined his wife.

"Stewart, you're being too rough with her, you are bruising her."

"On any other woman, the bruises wouldn't even show, but her skin is so translucent and her hair so fair."

"Can you not ready her some for your size and control some of your over rampant energies?"

"Luce, you must be kidding? She is my wife! She is mine for the taking. I do not have to "ready her." If she is tearing, mayhap she should use something to make me enter her with more ease before I come to her bed. Surely you can advise her. I do not think it is my concern. She will adjust in time, I am sure. Other women have. I am large, but I have seen men who are even larger, and women take them into their bodies eagerly."

"They are whores and much stretched, also your wife is tiny here and you know it."

"Yes," the Duke said with a wicked smile, "it is one of the reasons I chose her."

"You are causing damage and pain to her. She will need a few days healing from your bout of last night. You do not want her in pain, do you?" he said, hitting his mark, as he intended—determined to shame him.

“No, I suppose not,” the Duke conceded. But both Julia and Luce knew it was a bold lie. As long as he took his pleasure, he could care less how she fared.

“Fix her. I will make do with her maids until she is mended.” Then the Duke abruptly stood and stalked out of the room, leaving his doctor to tend to his wife.

“Julia,” the doctor said as he bent over her, his head crooked between her thighs as he tenderly probed at her, “you must make an effort to prepare yourself for him. I have this salve, it will help,” he said as he deftly scooped a generous amount from a jar with his fingers and began to gently massage her. He was watching what he was doing, his finger taking long, circuitous journeys inside her first set of labial lips. Then he looked up and his eyes met hers.

God, she was so beautiful, he thought. And his finger, with a mind of its own sought out her sensitive nub and he unerringly aroused it. Neither was aware of exactly what was happening until she took a deep breath and let out a long moan. Then their eyes met again and locked. His finger stopped for a split second and then unwaveringly, it continued its onslaught of her tender flesh. With their eyes boring into each other’s, he made love to her with his middle finger. He was exploring regions he knew clinically better than his own hand, but was now learning as a man, as a man in love.

When he sent her into a sliver of paradise and she pulsated against his finger, he watched her face soften. His eyes moved down her long throat to her bare chest and he gently leaned forward and kissed a pebbled peak. Her sigh of

content shook him to his very core. And suddenly, he wanted this woman to be his, only his.

He removed his hand from her core and slowly moved it up her belly to her breast where he gently cupped her. Was it his imagination, or did her breast actually feel fuller than usual? He looked down at her and smiled. Yes, both breasts were heavier, and the nipples puffy and distended with ripeness— ripeness that was not from an erotic touch. Yes, she would be his. Soon.

He bent down and lightly kissed her on her lips, “Have a heart my love, things will soon get better for you. I swear it.”

She turned her head on the pillow, as she lay there stunned by his actions and words, then she dazedly watched him leave the room.

He ran down the steps to the main entrance and called for a courier. Mere minutes later, he had put his plan in action.

It was four in the morning and she couldn't sleep. Random thoughts kept coming to her, slogging into her mind and then scampering out as quickly as they intruded. Thoughts of home, thoughts of her aunt and her secret past life, thoughts of women all over the world. How many were subjected to this type of abuse? How many were used as she was being used? She remembered the Duke's words about women unaware of what was being done to them, unaware while men used their bodies to achieve their satisfaction. How did they do it? With laudanum or hypocrass?

The feelings of shame and revulsion that came over her as she recalled the things her body had been subjected to in this house since her wedding day caused her to shiver under the covers. Maybe it would have been better to be taken unawares she thought, at least I would not have to waken with this awful dread and fear gnawing at me constantly.

Suddenly she heard shouting. Loud voices raised in panic echoed through the central corridor and she sat bolt upright in her bed.

Her bedroom door was slammed open and Lucien strode quickly into the room.

“Throw on some clothes, something suitable to ride in. Quickly! We have very little time!”

“What’s going on? Why is everyone shouting?”

“There’s no time to get into it now. Just trust me and get dressed.”

She ran naked across the room to her wardrobe and started pulling on a riding habit. It also had been cut out around the breasts, but he found her a jacket to wear over it.

“I’m going to take you down the back stairway. There will be a man waiting for you with two horses. He is my uncle. You are to go with him to his home in Wales and from there to my home in Italy. My family will care for you until I arrive. I must stay here for a week or two to throw suspicion off of me, then I will join you.”

“Throw suspicion off of you? Why would you need to do that?”



“I have subtly chided Thomas until I fear he has caused your husband’s death.”

“The Duke is dead?”

“Yes, I believe so. And unless you wish to be Thomas’ bride on the morrow, I would suggest you hie and get down those stairs.”

She did not need to be told twice. He grabbed her hand and led her through the corridor and down the dim stairs.

At the base of the steps, in front of a large, arched wooden door, Lucien stopped to take Julia’s face in both of his hands. “You must ride fast, but take great care not to fall. I believe you are with child Julia, my child.”

“Bbbut. . . . hhow?” she stammered. “How is that possible?”

“The sponges I have been inserting into you have been drenched with my own seed. I knew you would have to become pregnant before he would give you any reprieve. And, as I have long suspected him to be infertile, I provided my own seed for you. I am not just your surgeon, but also his, and he has had the pox from whores more times than I can count. The other night, when I realized that Thomas wanted you more than he feared his brother, I discovered his assassination plot and instead of doing something about it, Lord help me, I encouraged him. Now you must get away before Thomas comes looking for you. He will be a far worse husband than even Stewart was.”

“You will follow?” she asked imploringly.

“Yes, as soon as I deem it appropriate to break away. I do not want to cause undue attention to myself. When next we meet again, a priest will be summoned and we will wed, and then you will truly be the cherished and treasured bride that you should have been all along.”

“You want to marry me?”

“Yes. I have fallen in love with you and I wish for you to be my wife.”

“You will not display me?”

“Never! No eyes but mine will ever feast on your body again, I swear it. I will not even allow another doctor to treat you, ever.”

His thumb lifted her chin as his lips closed over hers. Hungrily, he moved his lips over hers, branding her with his heat and awakening her senses with his desire.

Then he swiftly put her aside and opened the door. He saw his uncle a few feet away on his black bay, holding the reins to a chestnut sorrel.

He spoke softly to the horse, “Jasper, meet my betrothed, Julia. I pray you take good care of her and deliver her to my mama at my estate. I will forever be in your debt if you would honor me to do so, posthaste.” He reached into his jacket pocket for a carrot to feed the horse, then tossed a heavy bag of coin up to his smiling uncle. Effortlessly, he lifted Julia up onto her mount.

“Never fear, my laddie boy. Before the moon is full we will be on board a clipper bound to our homeland.”

“Go!” he whispered urgently. “Before they come for her.”

The man turned his horse and dug his heels into its flanks. Julia did the same to hers and they were off. Lucien stood silently watching them disappear into the velvet blackness before he turned to go back through the door. He could hear footsteps running in the corridor two floors above and knew that Thomas was about to discover Julia missing from her bed. Quickly, he followed an underground tunnel back to the opposite side of the house and stealthily stole back into his own bedchamber.

Slipping back under the bedcovers, he could hear the commotion being made all over the estate as men were sent out to search for Julia.

They'd never find her. Uncle Rial was the best there was at evasion. His Julia was safe now, and as far as he was concerned, the future Duke of Thornhill had had his very last look at the perfect body of *his* soon-to-be bride.

At breakfast the next morning, he feigned shock at both the untimely death of the Duke and the disappearance of his beautiful wife. Thomas was beside himself, ordering men this way and that, insisting that the manor be searched from top to bottom for the fourth time since dawn. Lucien pretended his concern, and even mounted a horse on the pretense of looking for her. He actually went to trample any telltale signs of their departure.

By the end of the week, a dejected and drunken Thomas was resigned to the fact that she wouldn't be found, that she had somehow eluded him without even knowing that she was to be his. Lucien met with Thomas and explained that, as he did not have a patient to tend to anymore, that he was going home to

his Paris apartment. He didn't know if Thomas had ever known that he'd studied in Wales, or that he had an estate in Italy, but it didn't hurt to mislead him in any event.

Thomas simply nodded, happy to have one less person to house and feed now that he was the man of the manor and responsible for everyone's welfare.

Packed and saddled, Lucien took one last look at the manor of Druid excesses; the house of lusts and depravity, the home of sexual perverts and deviates. He wouldn't miss it. It had been fun for a while to enjoy the charms of willing women and to gorge himself on exotic and titillating maids. But now he was ready for more. He was ready for love. There would be only one woman in his bed from now on, Julia—Julia with the winsome body and the amazing, awesome breasts. His breasts, he thought with a smile, and spurred his mount into a gallop, eager to get his journey to an end. Breasts, that were growing even larger as she blossomed with child, his child.

Julia was waiting on one of the vine-covered balconies that graced Lucien's estate. She was sniffing leisurely on a bougainvillea blossom when she spied a rider coming pell-mell over the rise and across the fields. Instantly, her heart swelled. Lucien . . . it could be no other.

Since she had arrived at his ancestral home in Turin, she had been lavishly doted on. Lucien's family had welcomed her with open arms and she felt more at home here than she had ever felt anywhere. The only thing lacking was

the man who had saved her, the man who had risked his life to ensure her safety and that of her child's.

Over the last weeks her body had made her aware of her new state. Lucien had been right; she was with child, and she was so glad it was his, and not the Duke's.

She waved timidly to the rider who waved back with a gloved hand held high. She turned and ran through the house and was waiting on the expansive verandah when Lucien dismounted and tossed the reins to a waiting groomsman.

He bounded up the stairs with a big grin on his face and swept her into his arms. His mouth crushed hers as he poured his passion into her. They kissed for several long minutes before separating.

"How are you, my love?" he whispered against her temple.

"I am good."

"And our child?"

"You'll have to tell me, you're the doctor."

"I intend to do a very thorough exam this evening, in our bed chamber," he said with a sly grin.

"I will be most eager," she whispered as her hands went around his neck.

"I stopped in the village to summon the priest. He will be here within the hour. Come, let's call the men in from the fields, and the women from the kitchens. It's time to celebrate!"

"There is no danger of being pursued?"

“None whatsoever. From now on Thornhill is just a bad memory that will fade with time. From this day forward, I will never allow anyone treat you with disrespect again.”

A woman came around the corner beaming grandly and with arms wide.

“Mother! What do you think of my Julia?”

“She is exquisite, a delight to be around and a true lady if ever I saw one. You have done well my son. I am very pleased.”

He winked at Julia. “A lady indeed,” he said. “My lady now. Have you a dress ready? The priest is on his way to marry us. Please take Julia and ready her for me while I get myself prepared.”

“Your sisters have been making a dress ever since Uncle Rial barged into the house and told us you were ready to take a wife. All is in readiness.”

“Good.” He bent and kissed his bride on the cheek. “Next time I see you, I will make you mine,” he murmured into her ear and then he brushed past her and strode into the house and up the stairs to his rooms.

An hour later they stood in front of the priest and said their vows. Two hours later they made their excuses and left the wedding celebrants to their feasting. And ten minutes after that, they were ensconced in Lucien’s suite of rooms.

“Thank you for the lovely ceremony and for this dress. I felt so beautiful in it.” She stood in front of the mirror at a low dressing table admiring herself in the white satin gown.

“You look so beautiful in it,” he said as he turned her in his arms. His arms went around her and as he pulled her close to him, his lips lowering to hers. He kissed her long and hard, his passion burgeoning with each taste of her. “And you will look even more beautiful out of it,” he murmured. “Much more beautiful, but a beauty for my eyes only from this day forth.”

His hand went to the buttons on the back of her dress and he deftly undid each one. Then he pushed the gown off her shoulders and assisted her out of the rest of her clothing.

When she was standing naked in front of him, he gave a quirky smile. “Would you humor me with a request?” he asked.

An eyebrow raised in curiosity, as she stood naked before him.

“Would you do the Druid Mermaid pose for me? For just me?” Encouragingly, he pulled the small vanity stool out for her and indicated for her to sit.

Almost shyly she seated herself on it. Then as he sat in front of her on the edge of the bed, she raised her arms high behind her head and spread her knees wide.

“You know,” she whispered, “Stewart told me once, that there would come a day that I’d do this willingly. It turns out that he was right.”

The End