

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

Kate Pearce

Eden's Pleasure

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Eden's Pleasure

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EDEN'S PLEASURE

Kate Pearce

Chapter One

England, 1815

“That’s it, Eden. Open your eyes. There’s the girl.”

I half-opened my eyes as the warmth of a man’s gloved hand caressed my left breast, bringing with it an unexpected but not unwelcome tug of desire.

I gathered my scrambled thoughts and gazed up at the clear blue sky through the new budding leaves of an ancient oak tree. The last thing I remembered was flying through the air as my borrowed horse misjudged the height of a stone wall and ungraciously unseated me. I wiggled my toes and then my fingers. To my relief, apart from the bruise to my pride and a slight ache in my head, I appeared to be unscathed.

“Eden, are you in there?”

I frowned as I realized the teasing male voice was familiar and settled to the problem of which of the Harcourt twins had come to my rescue. I decided it was Lord Gideon, the elder of the two, as Gervase, the younger by ten minutes, was probably abroad with the army.

“Shame on you, Eden.”

Gideon began to stroke my nipple between his finger and thumb. Heat pooled in my lower body and I pressed my thighs together to prolong the sensation.

“Shame for what, Gideon?” My voice was husky, my throat too dry. “Falling from my horse?”

Gideon smiled and continued to play with my rapidly hardening nipple. His golden hair, ruffled by the exertions of the hunt, caught the rays of the sharp spring sunshine and shone like an angelic halo.

“No, love, not for falling but for not wearing a proper corset.” He pinched my nipple and I could not contain a gasp. His eyes narrowed and he continued softly.

“When you did not respond to my calls, I sought to check your heartbeat and found not a modest corset but this confection of black silk and lace.” He flicked the silk with his fingertip. “I ordered my groom to turn away so I could touch you as I wished.”

I glanced over his scarlet-clad shoulder and saw his groom at the entrance to the glade, his back discreetly turned, holding the reins of our two horses.

I arched my back with a shiver, delivering more of my breast into Gideon’s deft fingers. He seemed to understand my unspoken invitation and finished unbuttoning the front of my modest black hunting gown. Soon he had both my breasts bared. I waited, dry mouthed as he gazed down upon me. Had I changed in the five years since I’d last seen him?

After a long while when all I could hear was the distant call of the huntsman’s horn and the faint yapping of the dog pack, he leaned forward. He laid one large hand palm downward on the valley between my breasts and spread his fingers until his thumb and little finger rested against my nipples.

“I was sorry to hear of your husband’s death, Eden.”

It took me a moment to respond, so fixed was my attention on the wondrous sensation of his fingertips stretched across my breasts.

I stared defiantly into his wicked blue eyes. “I was not. I am glad to be free again.”

Gideon of all people understood the misery of my marriage to a man old enough to have been my grandfather. Indeed, he and his brother had been the main cause of it. After being discovered with the Harcourt twins at the age of eighteen in a scandalous state of undress, I’d been forced into an unwelcome marriage to protect my shattered reputation.

“And,” I continued, “my husband was ill for a least a year before he finally passed away. I think it was a relief for everyone.”

Gideon raised an eyebrow. “I am so glad you mentioned relief, Eden.” He leaned closer and I inhaled the fresh citrus scent of his cologne. “How on earth did you manage

without a man in your bed for so long?" He flexed his hand and drew my breasts closer together. "Did you bed one of the footmen?"

I managed a small laugh. "My stepdaughter, who is at least twenty years older than me and a jealous dried-up crone, kept a strict eye on my activities after my husband's death." I leaned back against the comfort of his arm, releasing the peppery scent of the bluebells crushed beneath me to mingle with my own dawning arousal.

Gideon's smile deepened. His other hand slid down the side of my leg and caught the hem of my riding habit.

"I have just remembered something else about you."

I caught my lip between my teeth as his fingers closed around my knee and headed upwards. "You liked to ride without anything between you and the horse." I held my breath as his hand dealt with my petticoats and came to rest on the naked nest of curls at the top of my legs. He gave a satisfied sigh. Without further thought, I opened my thighs at his gentle pressure. He slid his fingers around to cup and then probe my slick, wet passage.

He knelt up and leaned over me, one hand massaging my nipple between his finger and thumb and the other pressing into my mound of wet curls. With a muffled scream, I came, pushing my hips up from the ground to grind his palm harder into me.

I could scarce look at him when I finished shuddering but when I did, there was no mistaking the appreciation in his blue eyes. Gideon took my shaking hand and rested it on the front of his straining breeches. His thick cock stirred urgently against my fingers as I stroked him with my thumb.

"I think you are in need, Eden. And, as I feel in some part responsible for the debacle of your marriage, I intend to aid you."

Still shocked and deeply embarrassed by my enthusiastic response to his less than intimate touch, I allowed him to pick me up like a damsel in distress and carry me to the nearby hunting lodge. I pressed my hand to my breast and felt my rapid heartbeat and the surge of my blood.

The house seemed empty, everyone else out enjoying the pleasures of the hunt. But Gideon took care not to be seen by the servants as he found his way to my room and deposited me on the embroidered chaise lounge at the foot of my bed. Bemused, I lay back as he locked the door and then manhandled the couch around until I faced the large gilt mirror beside my bed.

I stared at my reflection as I waited for him to join me. My black hair was tousled and my cheeks bore the flush of arousal. My green eyes already held the expectation of passion. In truth, I looked better than I had in years and all because of a three-minute tryst under an oak tree. My nipples tightened as I stole another glance at Gideon and wondered what he planned to do with me next.

He sat behind me on the chaise, his long muscular legs, encased in tight buckskin breeches and shiny black top boots, on either side of me. He brought his hands around my waist and unbuttoned the front of my riding habit. I trembled like a virgin at the determined brush of his fingertips.

“Ah, Gideon, I’d almost forgotten how good it feels to be touched by a real man.”

He chuckled, the rich sound vibrating against my throat. “You are definitely worth touching, my dear, I can vouch for that.”

He undid all the buttons, eased my arms out of the long tight sleeves and then disposed of the dress, corset and petticoats. I lay against him clad only in a thin black silk chemise, black silk stockings and leather riding boots.

Gideon sighed as he eased my thighs apart, revealing the dark glistening curls of my mound. He still had his leather gloves on and had not removed any of his own clothing.

“Gervase and I often wondered how you would look out of those terrible clothes you used to wear – and now I have found out.” His thumb rubbed over my clitoris in a soothing yet relentless rhythm and I leaned my head back onto his broad shoulder and closed my eyes.

“No, Eden, you must watch. I promised to educate you.”

I forced my heavy eyes open and watched his thumb brush over my swollen clitoris back and forth, back and forth, darkening the leather of his glove with my wetness. He took my hand and kissed my fingers.

“If your stepdaughter was such a dragon, how did you cope with no man inside you during your year of mourning?” he asked, his voice silky soft. I was enjoying his attentions too much to reply and merely shrugged. He pressed my fingers down towards my mound and slid them inside me. “Is this what you did?” He moved my fingers in a circular fashion until I nodded and then he slowed his stroke. “Scarcely as big as a man’s cock, are they, love?”

I shook my head and watched mesmerized as he interlaced his gloved fingers with mine and thrust them back inside. A subtle thrill of pleasure darted through me. I arched my back and felt my tight sheath caress and cling to the roughness of his leather glove. He pressed his thumb against my labia and held my gaze in the mirror.

“Still not big enough, darling. Shall I prove it to you?” He removed my soaked fingers and brought them behind me to his buckskin breeches. I could not help but gasp as I grasped the shape of his cock. It was so huge, I could scarcely get my fingers around it. My body throbbed with a sensuous welcome, opening me wider, making me wetter.

“Let me see you. Let me touch you,” I pleaded but Gideon refused to be distracted.

“Later, Eden. This time, I wish only to teach and please you.” He dragged my hand away from his breeches and brought it to my breast. I was pleased that despite the coolness of his tone his breathing grew harsher.

“I have to go to London tomorrow, and I would hate for you to miss what I have planned for you.” His fingers returned to torment my swollen clitoris. I tensed as he unfastened his breeches and his hard wet cock rubbed against my naked buttocks. I moaned and instinctively tried to lift myself and make him slide into me. His arm tightened around my hips and he held me firmly against him.

His suddenly cold blue eyes met mine in the mirror.

"I said you were not to touch me. Do you wish to learn or shall I leave you now?"

"Don't leave me like this," I moaned as his thumb drove into me, making me squirm.

"Then be still, for I have something for you." He reached down beside the chaise and picked up his riding crop. I reclaimed his gaze in the mirror and frowned.

Holding the whip halfway down, he pressed it into my hand. "Don't pout, love. This is your present, to keep you busy and wet for me whilst I am away."

"Do you wish me to whip myself?" I shrugged. "I had enough of that during my marriage. It does not excite me."

Gideon shook his head. "Give me the whip."

I gave it back to him and he curled his hand around the leather handle. "I want you to wrap your fingers around this and then think of how my cock felt."

I did as he requested as a low burn of anticipation and excitement settled in my stomach. The whip handle was smooth and large and similar in size to Gideon. I began to see what he wished of me and took the whip back into my hand. With murmured words of encouragement, he helped me position the handle at the entrance to my passage.

He pressed both of his thumbs against my clitoris and spread his fingers through my curls, opening me wide. I watched the tip of the whip disappear into my wetness and released my breath. There was no pain, only a smooth, thick sense of being overstretched and filled to bursting point. I paused for a heartbeat to get used to the sensation.

"Take more, now. You are wet enough."

Gideon's stark commands and unsubtle pressure on the whip handle drove it deeper and deeper. I gasped as my flesh struggled to accommodate the sudden huge influx. Gideon began to rub my clitoris with hard, remorseless strokes.

I screamed as the head of the whip touched the mouth of my womb and a wave of violent pulsating need shuddered through me. Gideon held me tightly through my prolonged climax, one hand pressed to my breast, the other manipulating both the whip handle and me.

“Do you remember how we first met, Eden?”

“Yes,” I gasped as a second wave of excitement hit me. “We met in the barn at your father’s estate. You and Gervase were...” I paused to find the right word. Gideon slowly rotated the handle with a subtle twist of his wrist.

When I finished writhing against him, he whispered in my ear, “Eden, Gervase and I taught you the right words. Do I need to tell them to you again?”

I gave a tiny nod and Gideon bit down hard on my neck. “Listen carefully then. This...” he thrust his groin against my buttocks until there was no mistaking his erection. “This is my cock.” His left hand trailed over my straining flesh around the whip handle. “This is your pussy.” He laughed low in his throat. “Your choice of word if I remember correctly, my sweet. Gervase and I would have chosen something far cruder. And what Gervase and I did in the barn was fuck all the serving maids.”

I still had the grace to blush despite my exposed position and Gideon chuckled.

“You, of course, didn’t fuck anything, did you, Eden? You just liked to watch us.”

I couldn’t dispute what he said. My curiosity as to whether the twins were hurting the girls had led me to stay and watch them rut until Gervase discovered me. When they realized I posed no threat to their amorous activities, the twins allowed me to watch as often as I wanted, often performing new tricks and positions purely for my benefit and education.

Gideon recalled me from my thoughts as he tapped the whip handle again. “Move the whip in and out, just like a real cock.”

“No,” I gasped, “I cannot stand any more! Please, Gideon.”

"Of course you can, Eden." Gideon's voice held an inflexible note. "Let me do it for you if you are too afraid." I relinquished the whip handle completely into his control. "But, Eden, you must watch because I expect you to practice whilst I am away."

I stared at myself in the mirror as Gideon began to slide the thick whip handle in and out of my slick passage. Feelings began to build and writhe through my body and I felt Gideon's cock slide between my buttocks in time with the strokes of the whip.

I couldn't watch any longer as I came with a violence I had never known before. Gideon's hand slid from my breast to my mouth to muffle the sound of my screams. He groaned and bucked and came in a hot gush of seed on my naked back.

It took me a long time to catch my breath and for Gideon to remove the whip from my now tender passage. He met my gaze in the mirror.

"Will you promise to practice? I want to watch you come this way when I return." I managed a weak nod. His expression hardened and he caught my chin. "Just because I have reminded you that you are a passionate woman, don't think that you can try your charms on any man." He ran a hand down my back and massaged his seed into my pussy.

"Don't wear anything under your gown at dinner tonight. I might want to play with you again."

He slid off the couch, buttoned his breeches and departed, leaving me reeling from the sudden exotic turn my life had taken. I got shakily to my feet and ran my hands over my flushed skin. Had the fall from my horse trapped me in some sexual dream? Some of my excitement dimmed as I realized that the man who had made me come four times in one afternoon hadn't kissed or touched me with anything of his own flesh, apart from his naked cock.

I straightened my back and gazed at my defiant face in the mirror. Gideon's father had summoned me to meet him in London in two weeks' time to discuss my future. I knew he would consider it his duty to secure a new husband for me. I tossed my head.

My attendance at the hunting party had been my first act of defiance. Now I had the opportunity to enjoy myself further.

I gave myself a quick nod. I had two weeks to enjoy Gideon. I also cherished the fragile hope that he might reunite me with Gervase, his identical twin. My first love and the man who led me down a path of sexual exploration only to shatter me.

Chapter Two

I sat at my dressing table and allowed the maid to brush out my thick black hair and pile it in a sophisticated knot of curls on the top of my head. I couldn't help but wonder what Gideon might have planned for me after dinner. There was an unaccustomed ache between my thighs and a wetness I hadn't experienced at all during my marriage.

I fastened a black jet necklace around my neck and added matching earrings. The sensible part of my mind marveled at my uninhibited excesses of the afternoon. The wild wanton part of me that I kept so well hidden cried out for more. I tried to quiet my conscience by reminding myself that I had known Gideon and Gervase for most of my life. They were but three years older than me. My widowed mother and I spent most of our summers ensconced at the Harcourts' country house where I had been allowed to share the twins' lessons and run wild with them in the confines of the estate. My mother's remarriage left me alone with the twins the summer I reached the dangerous age of eighteen.

After that, my forced marriage dragged me to the cold northern climate of Glasgow and I lost touch with my Harcourt relations. Gideon's reappearance in my life seemed destined. I nodded my approval to the maid and stood up, shaking the folds of my drab black evening gown around me.

I was a free woman for the first time in my life. I grimaced in the mirror—at least until I was pushed into another marriage. I knew in my heart that Gideon would never hurt me and I was determined to enjoy him.

I came down the stairs and met my hostess, another vague relative, Lady Georgiana Woodson. She received me in the golden luxury of the drawing room. I gazed at her

pink high-waisted gown with deep envy and wished I had the funds to replace my hated black clothes.

Georgiana was newly married and considered one of the most dashing young wives of *the ton*. I had wondered why she was so insistent I attend her husband's hunting party but now guessed she had been put up to it. She gave me a conspiratorial smile as she held out her hand.

"Eden, my dear, come and meet the man who expressly ordered me to invite you to my home."

I forced myself not to smile when she towed me across the Turkish carpet towards an immaculately dressed Gideon. Gideon bowed low to me. I admired the way his dark blue coat slid over his muscled shoulders. A discreet diamond pin glinted in the snowy folds of his cravat. As he took my hand, I allowed myself one quick glance at the front of his tight biscuit-colored breeches, remembering what lay within.

I had bathed but his scent clung to my skin. I wondered if Georgiana would notice as my heart raced and my nipples tightened in anticipation at his appreciative lazy gaze.

Georgiana flitted away, apparently well pleased with her matchmaking, and left us alone. Gideon brought my gloved hand to his lips and bit down on my palm. I shivered and stepped closer. His eyes narrowed.

"So you have decided to be brave then?"

He turned me slightly away from the room, dipped his fingers inside my bodice and grazed my nipple with his thumbnail. "You must want me a lot."

I regained my breath. "I want to be touched, Gideon. In truth, after all those years with that old man, I deserve to be worshipped."

Gideon lifted his glass, toasted my show of bravado and led me towards the dining room. There were only four other young couples in the dark paneled room. Georgiana ran an informal house and I was able to slide into a chair next to Gideon.

The meal progressed at its usual gentle pace, only Gideon's presence at my elbow a distraction and a lure. He took every opportunity to touch me that was offered, opening my napkin for me and spreading it across my knees, brushing my hand as he helped me with my silverware. Soon my skin tingled and I became edgy with desire.

Georgiana dismissed the servants and dispensed with the custom of the ladies leaving the gentlemen to their port. Then, in flagrant disregard for propriety, she quit her seat to perch on her husband's knee. As the port and Spanish cigars circulated more freely, she shared her husband's port glass and kissed him quite openly on the mouth.

Gideon smiled as he observed my slightly shocked expression and murmured, "You have been away from polite society for too long, my love."

I had just begun to relax and enjoy my wine when Gideon winked at me. He moved his chair closer, slid his hand up my leg under my skirts and settled his fingers over my naked mound. I almost shrieked in a most unladylike fashion as he flicked and circled my swollen clitoris with his fingertip. I glanced wildly around the table, but nobody seemed to have noticed.

The desire to scream welled in my throat as Gideon pinned me back into my chair and slid one long finger inside me. I shot to my feet.

"Excuse me, Georgiana. I am a little...overheated." I gasped and aimed a kick at Gideon. "I think I'll take a stroll in the garden."

Georgiana waved a languid hand at me as her husband bent his head to her bared nipple and I made my escape.

The weather continued mild for spring and I paused to breathe in the sweet scent of herbs and early daffodils. Too late, I heard the dining room doors open and shut behind me and then Gideon stood by my side. I glared at him. He offered me his arm and an innocent smile and strolled with me into the shadowy green depths of the garden.

With suspicious ease, he guided me to a secluded, seductively lit arbor and gestured for me to sit on the rustic willow bench. I frowned up at him and demanded,

“You seem to know your way around this garden very well. How many other women have you lured out here to seduce?”

He came down on one knee in front of me. “A few. Why, does it bother you?” He cocked his head to one side. I studied his flawless profile and gave in to an overwhelming temptation to trail my finger over his luscious, warm mouth.

“A little,” I admitted as he began to fold back my skirts with practiced ease. “But then, I am scarcely your mistress, am I? And I cannot claim to be in love with you.” I pretended to pout. “You haven’t let me touch you or give you any pleasure.”

“No,” he said as he reached the apex of my thighs and pulled my legs apart. “Nor are you going to.” His mouth quirked. “Consider this my gift to you and just enjoy it.”

He took his gloves off and stroked me between the legs. My stomach tensed with anticipation. “God, you are wet again but, I think, a little tender. Luckily, I have just the thing to cool you down.”

He withdrew his other hand from behind his back and produced a large glass dish full of lemon ice.

“You forgot your dessert.”

I licked my lips as he moved to sit alongside me, leaving my skirts hiked up around my waist. He dipped his fingers into the shards of flavored ice and eyed me with great concentration.

“Your nipples look hot too, love. Lower your bodice and let me tend to them.”

I hastened to obey him and pushed my bodice off my shoulders until my breasts jutted out towards him. I gasped as his fingers massaged the ice into my nipples and leaned towards him. He reapplied the ice until my nipples stood rock hard and I was beginning to pant with desire.

He took my hand and pushed my fingers inside my tight sheath as he bent forward and sucked my right nipple into his mouth. I moaned as his hot wet tongue clashed and

fought the coldness of my nipple. I pushed my fingers deeper and felt the clench and release of my pleasure.

Gideon scooped up another handful of ice and crushed it against my well-sucked and warmed right nipple. Then he suckled the frozen left one. I couldn't stop coming as he repeated the process again and again.

When he paused and pushed me down onto my back, I could only gaze up at his lazy narrowed eyes with mute appeal. He smiled and balanced the half full dish of ice in between my breasts.

"Are you cooler now?"

I shook my head and his gaze lowered to between my legs. He scooped up a huge palm full of the yellow ice and pressed it into my pussy. I almost came off the seat as the exquisite coldness collided with the heat he had built within me. With a murmur of appreciation, Gideon knelt up and brought my legs over his shoulders. He used one hand to support my back while he poured the remainder of the lemon sorbet into my slick passage.

He pretended to sigh as he considered the fast melting ice. "Now, I suppose, you want me to lick it off."

"Yes." I tried not to sound too eager. My hips jerked upwards towards the tantalizing promise of his mouth.

"Ask me properly then."

I knew what he wanted me to say. He and Gervase had delighted in teaching me every filthy word in their vocabulary. They had made me use the words if I wished to see or discuss anything they had done sexually.

"Please, Gideon, I want you to lick my pussy."

His smile widened. "Ah, Eden, you remembered." He bent his head, his warm breath feathering my thighs. "Of course I will, love. Hold still now."

The next few minutes were so exquisite that I lost all sense of place and time. Gideon slowly lowered his head, his warm breath already sending sparks of anticipation through my stimulated flesh. His tongue felt rough against my icy skin as he slowly circled my clitoris. I clenched my fingers on the bench as he sucked my swollen bud into his mouth and held it there.

Still sucking, he slid one finger into my eager sheath and curled it around. The fragrance of lemon infused my senses along with the heavy scent of my own arousal. I dug my heels into Gideon's shoulders, trying to bring myself closer to his tantalizing mouth. It became difficult to breathe as his delicate rhythmic torture continued. I had to come or I would explode...

When I regained my senses, Gideon sat beside me, one hand on my bare stomach. I stared up into a darkened sky.

"Eden?" Gideon's voice was quiet. "Are you ready to come back to the house?"

I nodded and he helped me rearrange my clothing into some semblance of order although I was still sticky in places. We walked back towards the opened doors into the dining room. As we approached, Gideon laid a warning hand on the back of my neck and whispered close to my ear.

"I think Georgiana and her husband are still here. Listen." I slowed my breathing and made out the creak of a chair and the soft moans of a woman. Gideon tugged at my hand and we slipped silently into the shadowed room. Georgiana's skirts were pulled up and she straddled her husband. Her corset and bodice were undone, revealing her naked back. His hands gripped her hips, lifting and lowering her onto his cock.

I must have made a slight movement because Lord Woodson caught Gideon's eye and winked. Some unspoken message seemed to pass between them. Gideon placed my hands on the back of the chair at the opposite end of the table and lifted my skirts. His hand fumbled with the buttons of his breeches and then his cock sprang free and jabbed in between my buttocks.

Still holding Lord Woodson's heated gaze, Gideon pulled down my bodice and closed his fingers over my breasts. Lord Woodson must have whispered something in Georgiana's ear as he maneuvered her around so that she could see Gideon and me from the side. I tensed as Gideon began to thrust against my buttocks to the tempo Lord Woodson set with his wife.

"Don't pretend to be shocked, Eden," Gideon muttered. "You've always liked to watch."

He was right, damnation. I could feel my own excitement rising as I watched the others couple. Georgiana's small breast fit completely inside her husband's eager mouth as he suckled. Her hair tumbled in luxuriant waves over her shoulders as she rested her head on his shoulder.

Gideon continued to rock against me. Georgiana whimpered as Lord Woodson raised her up off his cock. He slowly pulled up her skirts and turned her until we could see her pussy poised over his shaft. Despite his wife's ecstatic cries, I noticed he wasn't as large as Gideon. He groaned as he brought her down over him in one swift movement.

Gideon brought his right hand around and plunged all four fingers inside me. Expert that he was, he tempered his strokes until Georgiana started to come. A moment later, he allowed us both to find our release.

Before I had scarce finished shuddering, Gideon picked me up and almost ran up the stairs with me to my bedroom. He was panting hard as he dropped me on the bed. I fought against his efforts to release me as I felt his dripping cock graze my thigh. I tried to pull him against me. In desperation, I moaned.

"Please, Gideon, I want you so badly. I mean I want your cock inside me. Please."

His expression changed and he pushed me back against the pillows.

"No. Think of me as just a pleasure giver. Not a pleasure seeker."

He buttoned his breeches over his still-hard cock with an obvious effort. "If you can't accept this, tell me now and I will not return from London at all."

I gazed up at his determined face and thought about the sexual delights I had experienced in the past day. Was I stupid enough to stop him when I faced another loveless marriage? No, I was far too selfish. I needed him.

"I am sorry, Gideon." I reached for his hand. "I promise that your virtue will be safe with me." His expression relaxed into his normal lazy smile.

"Good." He leaned over me and kissed my fingers. "For I have never had such an adept and willing pupil." He flicked my cheek. "I will bring you some pretty clothes from London, if you permit."

I nodded. Trust Gideon to know what I craved. He headed for the door and then turned.

"I have already spoken to Georgiana. She will arrange for you to be escorted to my house in Wanstead. It is more secluded and yet closer to London for when you have to go and meet with my father. Georgiana will pretend that you are still with her, should anyone inquire."

It wasn't until I extinguished the lights and lay my sorely overexcited body down to rest that I wondered how Gideon knew I had to meet his father. Too sleepy to care, I shut my eyes, tucked my hand between my legs and began to relive my amorous adventures.

Chapter Three

Two days later, as promised, I found myself ensconced in a luxurious bedchamber in Gideon's house in rural Wanstead. Pale silver draperies complemented delicate French furniture and gray silk covered walls. Despite the beauty, I paced nervously as I heard the sound of his boots ringing on the marble staircase.

I resisted the temptation to fly into his arms. Gideon was the more fastidious of the twins, while Gervase was the one who loved to touch and be touched.

While alone at Gideon's house, my thoughts turned increasingly to his twin brother, Gervase. It was he who had first discovered me watching Gideon make love to one of the dairymaids. I still remembered the flush of rage on his cheeks as he laid me over his knee and began to spank me. His anger turned to amusement when I turned my head in his lap and nuzzled his groin. My delight as he had sworn and got hard for me surprised and intrigued him as did my many frank questions.

In my room there was a portrait of the twins painted when they turned eighteen. I had spent most of the last two days studying it. The artist depicted the twins in profile, facing each other like a golden two-headed coin. Even at eighteen, I could see the differences in them which, if Gideon was anything to go by, had but accentuated over the intervening years. Gideon's face lacked the decision of Gervase's and he seemed to hide his true self under his lazy smile. Gervase stared boldly at his twin, a challenge in his eyes.

I turned my gaze from the portrait as Gideon came through the door and bowed exquisitely. A footman trailed behind him and deposited a plethora of boxes marked with a famous modiste's name on my silk-canopied bed. I squealed with delight and headed towards them. Gideon caught my arm, his eyes full of amusement.

“Not yet. You have to earn them. I’ve been thinking about you coming for me for three days flat now and I can’t wait another moment.”

I gave a shrug and an exaggerated sigh and led Gideon to the couch opposite the large gilded mirror on the wall.

“Take everything off, slowly. I want to enjoy it.” Gideon commanded and I was happy enough to oblige. I slipped out of my clothes until I was naked except for my stockings. Gideon didn’t take his eyes from me as he opened his breeches and began to caress his cock.

“Come here.” His voice was guttural as I walked slowly towards him. “Put one foot up on the couch.” I obeyed and his fingers slid in between my legs. I half closed my eyes and looked down at his straining cock, which seemed to grow bigger by the second.

“Christ, you are absolutely soaking and I haven’t even touched you yet.” He brought his fingers forward and showed me how wet they were then massaged the creamy fluid into his cock. “Show me how you come with my whip inside you.”

I smiled and took my time driving the whip handle in and out of me until I peaked and came with a satisfying rush of excitement. I caught Gideon’s gaze in the mirror as I realized that he hadn’t yet come.

“That was very nice, Eden, but I think that you need to stretch a little more.” He took control of the whip and pushed it back inside me. I struggled to watch as, with an abrupt flick of his wrists, he circled the whip handle with both hands and drove his two longest fingers down the sides of the handle and thus inside me, stretching me even wider. He began to pump his hands up and down, his thumbs pressed hard on my clitoris, more fingers holding the whip and plunging inside of me until both his hands encircled the width.

I screamed as my sheath tightened and clenched and waves of pleasure crashed over me. I gulped in a breath, fearing I might lose consciousness. Mercifully he stopped moving the whip. I looked in the mirror and gasped at how wide he had made me. I

moved a fraction and another shudder ran through me. Gideon exhaled and removed his hands. I whimpered at the loss and strove to pull his hand back.

Instead, he gripped his shaft and pumped hard until he came with a sudden jerking stream of come. He removed the whip and studied my dripping pussy. I bit my lip as he circled my labia with his finger.

"It's all right, love. I'll give you something to ease the emptiness. Hold still." He withdrew a large linen handkerchief from his pocket and cleaned his seed and my wetness from between my legs and buttocks. His handkerchief was soaked by the time he finished. I watched in fascination as he twisted the fabric around and fashioned it into a fair approximation of a cock. I shivered as he pushed the knotted, wadded fabric deep inside me.

"Does that help a little?" I nodded and he took my hand and led me to the bed. "I have some business to attend to this afternoon. I suggest you sleep and I will see you at dinner." I could do no more than manage another weak nod in his direction as he headed downstairs. I curled up in a ball, forcing the handkerchief to remain in my still sensitive passage. Delicious shudders continued to torment my breasts and womb as I obligingly fell asleep.

Dinner was served in the smaller of the two dining rooms. Gideon had dismissed his staff so we ate alone without ceremony. Even so, the table could have seated eight and I felt a little overwhelmed. The dark crimson décor and portraits of Harcourt ancestors glowering down at me did little to increase my appetite. Gideon, normally the perfect host, seemed ill at ease, his attention on the clock or on the door. My efforts at conversation soon petered out. By the time we reached dessert I had given up.

I was not completely surprised when, sometime after nine, I heard a familiar if harsher voice ring out in the hallway.

"Gideon, where in hell's name are you? After leaving me desperate messages around half of London you should at least have the courtesy to be on your deathbed."

My gaze flew to the door where Gervase, Gideon's twin, stood framed in the doorway. He hadn't bothered to shed his cloak or his gloves and his guinea gold hair had curled in the rain. His face was harder than Gideon's and his stance more rigid. I glimpsed the muted sheen of his scarlet and gold dress uniform under his muddy cloak. His narrowed blue eyes flew past Gideon and settled on me. I stiffened at the arctic blast of his furious gaze.

He stripped off his gloves as he advanced down the room, his attention on Gideon who displayed no visible alarm. "Georgiana told me that you had a new mistress." He flicked a contemptuous glance in my direction, "Is that why you sent for me, to gloat?"

Before Gideon could speak, I leapt to my feet and came around the table to stand toe to toe with Gervase. I had to lift my chin to see into his eyes. Why did he suddenly seem so much taller and more threatening than Gideon?

"For your information, Gervase Harcourt, I am not your brother's mistress." My anger died a little at his skeptical stare. I forced myself to continue. "If you wish to inquire into what is a private matter between your brother and me, then I cannot stop you. I do not, however, have to stand here and listen to you malign me."

With a toss of my head I attempted to step around him. He caught my elbow and yanked me close.

"I was your first lover, Eden. Doesn't that give me any rights?"

His voice was deeper and harder than I remembered. The compelling charm underscored by the harsh tones of command. His arm muscles flexed under his coat as he easily fought off my attempts to escape him.

I cast a quick glance over my shoulder at Gideon who looked unsurprised at this revelation. A vague foreboding came over me as I took in Gideon's smug expression.

"You brought me here for Gervase, didn't you?" I whispered. Gideon bowed his head in acknowledgment. "You wanted him to find me."

Full of indignation, I again tried to slip free of Gervase's unyielding fingers.

"Your rights, as you call them, Gervase, ended when you went off to London and left me to the mercy of your father and a hasty marriage." I knew my voice was trembling but I could do nothing to control it. "What I choose to do with your brother in recompense for eight years of hell has nothing to do with you."

Gervase retained his grip as he shrugged out of his cloak. "Hell, Eden? You know damn well why I left," he roared. "You told me to!"

Gideon cleared his throat and brought a glass of brandy around the table to give to Gervase who continued to glare at me.

"Gervase," he said softly, "Father recently told me why Eden asked you to leave. Will you allow me to..."

Gervase shook his head, his expression menacing. "No, Gideon, let the black widow explain."

My indignation rose to new heights at his stubborn male perversity. "I told you to leave because your father informed me you were already betrothed and that if I kicked up a fuss he would disinherit you."

Gervase dropped his hand from my arm. I was at last able to stumble towards the door. My eyes filled with tears as I realized anew what I had been forced to give up. No wonder I had allowed Gideon to touch me. He was as close as I could get to Gervase.

"Eden, wait."

It was Gideon who barred my way this time. "Gervase and I didn't know what my father threatened. Gervase was told that you had chosen to marry a man who was wealthier than he was." Gideon stroked my cheek. "I have gone to great lengths to bring you together. You used to be such good friends. At least stay and talk to him."

I managed a nod and Gideon left, blowing us both a kiss over his shoulder. I turned back to the dining table. Gervase slumped in a chair, nursing the brandy Gideon had given him, one hand clenched in his hair. I took a step towards him, the swish of my silk skirts loud against the silence and the rain, which brushed the window panes.

Gervase lifted his head, his blue eyes full of the echoes of past pain. "I was never betrothed, Eden. My father lied to you. I am not that much of a bastard. I left because you told me to."

I regarded him steadily, my hands twisted together on the bodice of my dress. "And I did not forsake you for a wealthier man."

Our gazes locked, clung and his expression softened. Gervase raised his glass and toasted me.

"Well then, shall we agree that we were both too young and too easy for my father to manipulate?"

I took another step forward and then another. As I drew near, his hand shot out, curled around my waist and pulled me into his lap. With a sigh, I rested my cheek on the gold braid of his jacket. He groaned and bit my neck. I breathed in a waft of brandy and the hint of rain from his skin.

"Can we be friends again then, Gervase?" I asked, lifting my eyes to his and flinching at the rising frustration I saw there. He buried his hand deep in my hair.

"No," he growled. "Not friends. I have wanted to touch you like this for years, Eden." He bit a little harder. "I've spent more nights than I care to count dreaming of you lying beneath that old man. And too many mornings waking up hard and desperate to come for you."

I gasped as his hand slid up from my waist and brushed the underside of my breasts.

"You had nothing to fear, Gervase. My husband barely touched me. I thought only of you when he did." I shuddered at the memory. "It was the only way I could stop myself from screaming."

With a snarl, Gervase lifted me from his lap and swept the table clear. A cascade of fine crystal and china hit the floor with a crash. Thankfully nobody came running. He laid me down on the tablecloth and I opened my legs to him as he fumbled with his

breeches. I had but a moment to catch my breath before he was on top of me, his engorged cock pushing at my entrance.

He planted his hands on either side of my head, arched his back and drove into me with all his power. I caught my breath as his hard length settled deep inside my welcoming body. Thank goodness I'd removed the handkerchief. His first full thrust pushed me halfway across the table.

"Take more, Eden. I need you to take it all."

I managed to open my eyes at Gervase's guttural demand and looked down. If Gideon had sought to prepare me for Gervase, he had vastly underestimated his brother's size. A good three inches of Gervase's cock still begged entrance into my beleaguered body. God, but I wanted to take every bit inside of me.

I shut my eyes and lifted my hips off the table. With a triumphant shout, Gervase surged forward. His tongue thrust into my mouth in the same eager pattern as his cock. He allowed me no time to get used to his massive presence but began to drive into me with all his strength. I thrust back at him, eager to experience every second of desire, desperate for the smack of his flesh against mine.

He didn't slow his pace, each hard stroke of his cock bringing mindless pleasure and spiraling delight. My sheath tightened and tightened until I screamed with the intensity of it. I came so hard, milking his shaft, holding him deep within me that I tried to buck him off. He groaned and pressed me down onto the table.

He waited until I finished pulsating around him and then drew back one last time. He captured my face between his hands, not a hint of apology on his face for his rough treatment.

"This time must be for possession. The next will be for your pleasure."

He thrust forward again. My body urged him on, quickening again with his fierce intensity, igniting a sensual frenzy until I felt the hot welcome spurt of his seed deep inside me. He collapsed heavily onto my breast until his breathing began to even out.

Without ceremony, he picked me up, his cock still inside me. I wrapped my arms and legs around him and clung on. There was no one in the hall as he carried me towards the stairs. I felt him jabbing up inside me and I began to feel warm again. We were only halfway up the grand staircase when he grew even larger and every jolting step became a shaft of mingled pleasure and frustration.

My fingers bit into his shoulders, urging him to look at me, wanting him to stop. On the verge of coming, I managed to gasp his name.

“Gervase...”

He took one look at my pleading face and paused to turn my back to the oak-paneled stair wall. When he had me firmly wedged against the wall he removed his hands from my body and placed them on either side of my head. With a grunt, he straightened his legs and thrust upwards. My body crashed down to meet him, all my weight held and centered on his now engorged shaft. It was the most incredible sensation. I strained to meet every thrust until control left me and I moaned in ecstasy.

Without bothering to speak, Gervase picked me up again and carried me to my bedroom. He tossed me onto the bed and began to undress, his eyes intent on me, his cock rampant. He sat on the side of the bed and stripped off my clothes.

When I was naked, he pulled me to my feet and made me stand in between his thighs. I stared boldly back at him, drinking in the hard muscular lines of his body and the strength of his desire evident in his wet, dripping cock. In awe, I fell to my knees and opened my mouth to taste him. He groaned as I licked the drops of pearly fluid from the tip of his shaft and inserted my tongue into the wet purple slit.

He grasped my waist, lifted me and twisted me around until I crouched over him on the bed, my mouth still surrounding the head of his cock. He ran his fingers around the join between my mouth and the straining fullness of his erection.

“Please, Eden...”

With a purr of pleasure, I slid my tongue up and down, taking as much of him into my mouth as I could and caressing the rest with my fingers. He groaned in time with

my skillful mouth and grew and grew until I feared I might choke. I stopped thinking as he filled my mouth and his hips thrust forward in helpless response. I almost lost my rhythm as he pulled me astride his face and began to torment my swollen pussy with his tongue and teeth.

I sucked harder and faster as his excitement increased. I lost myself in the textures of his body and the roughness of his cock thrusting against the roof of my mouth.

"Damnation," Gervase swore. "I'm going to come if you keep this up. Do you want that?"

I kept on until he surged into me with a mighty roar. I kept sucking as a stream of his seed pumped down my throat. He rolled away from me and buried his head in his hands.

"Christ, Eden, I wanted this time to be for you." I smiled and licked my lips. The frustration disappeared from his face. He knelt up on the bed and faced me, hands on hips. He glanced down at his cock, which was already filling out again, and groaned. "I don't know what you do to me but I've never been this hard for so long or recovered so quickly."

I collapsed back against the pillows, legs open, and just looked at him. One of his eyebrows arched. "Ah, so I have to pay for my pleasure by pleasuring you?" I nodded and began to play with one of my nipples. He moved and within an instant crouched over me, his fingers taking over the caress.

"I wanted it to be slow this time. I wanted it to be like the first time. Do you remember, love?" Gervase brushed a kiss over my mouth. "I spent a whole day touching you until you were able to accept my cock inside you." He looked down as his cock stirred as if in memory and thrust upwards toward his waist. "Of course, I wasn't quite this big all those years ago or I doubt I would've fitted you were so tight."

I stirred at the memory of that voluptuous afternoon of my eighteenth birthday when Gervase had introduced me to sex without Gideon's knowledge. It had been his birthday present to me and had, of course, ruined me for any other man.

I reached out a languid hand and grasped his cock, enjoying the slick wetness and the hardness within.

“I am glad that you didn’t show me this before you took my virginity. I would have run away screaming, convinced it wouldn’t fit.”

Gervase grinned and removed my hand, making him look surprisingly like Gideon. “No, stop playing with me, it is your turn now. What would you like? My fingers, my mouth, all of me?”

“Yes,” I murmured, closing my eyes. “Surprise me.”

“Eden...” his voice held a warning note. “Open your eyes. I like to watch you come.”

I opened my eyes and found him kneeling in front of me, his cock hard and ready. He watched me stare at his cock and his expression changed. “Come here...” his voice roughened as he grabbed me around the waist and pulled me down hard onto his engorged shaft. I caught his shoulders for support as he began to move hard and fast. “I can’t be slow, damn you, when you look at me like that, I can’t.”

I didn’t care as he brought me expertly to climax then slid out of me. He turned me onto my stomach and arranged me on the edge of the bed. He spread my legs wide with impatient hands and stood behind me. He grasped my hips and jerked me back against him as he drove forward. We both groaned at the impact of flesh on flesh.

He withdrew and did it again and again until I thought the heat from my body would set fire to the sheets. Then, when my throat hurt from the screams I stifled in the bedclothes, he brought one of his hands around to torment my clitoris and thrust again until I came hard and long. Two of his fingers slid up my back passage and the excitement intensified as he worked my body into a state of near frenzy.

I couldn’t move as his flesh slapped hard against my buttocks and he grunted and bent over me. I heard myself begging him not to stop, begging him to go deeper and harder. He began to shudder and moan with every deep thrust and whisper in my ear.

"I love to fuck you, Eden. I love to make you come all around my big cock. I love you sucking me. Don't think you'll get much sleep tonight. I've years of dreams to make up for and I'm going to fuck you until I run out of come."

This last was choked off as I came hard for him and he joined me in a frenzy of bucking that left us both breathless and exhausted.

He was true to his word. I woke from another hasty doze into the morning light to find myself sprawled on top of him, his cock still wedged inside me. I combed my fingers through his golden chest hair and purred my appreciation. "Gideon was large, but you are truly massive. How can this be when you are twins?"

Gervase grabbed my chin. His gaze was uncomfortably direct.

"You saw Gideon's cock?"

I nodded and his grip grew tighter. "Gideon fucked you?"

"No!" I pulled away from him, grabbing a sheet to cover my nakedness. "Gideon wouldn't let me touch him at all. He said he wished only to help me."

Gervase leaned back against the headboard and folded his arms over his chest. A muscle moved in his cheek. "And what exactly did he teach you?"

My gaze flew to Gideon's whip that lay in full view on the carpet. Before I could speak, Gervase leaned over the side of the bed. He scooped up the whip and laid it on the brocaded cover between us.

"Well?" Gervase asked.

I bit down on my lip as I focused on the whip. "You have to understand, Gervase, that I haven't been properly bedded by a man for three years. Gideon understood about my husband and offered to teach me ways to increase my own pleasure."

"With that?" Gervase pointed at the whip and I started to blush. He began to laugh. "Eden, after all we have done together, you are embarrassed to tell me that Gideon introduced you to the joy of sex toys?"

I blushed even more. Gervase caught my hand, his voice suddenly serious. "I should be thankful for Gideon's aid, if I were you. You would never have been able to take me with such expertise if you hadn't had a man inside you for three years."

Relief rushed through me and I managed to look directly at him. He smiled and drew back the covers to display his massive erection. He brought the whip handle alongside himself and pretended to frown.

"You won't need the whip again, Eden. I think I can fill you much better."

I nodded, dry mouthed as despite its soreness my body responded to his dominant presence. My nipples hardened into tight buds. I gently stroked my fingers over them, enjoying the anticipation. Gervase lay down on his back like a sultan and beckoned me forward. I crawled up his magnificent body until I sat astride him. His cock was so long it nudged between my breasts.

He slid a finger inside me to gauge my readiness and showed me it was soaked.

"You are always wet for me." He put his finger into my mouth and I sucked on it, enjoying the taste of my arousal. I squeezed my breasts together, trapping his cock, and bent my head to lick him with the tip of my tongue.

His breath caught as I came up on my knees and positioned him at the entrance to my passage. He caught my wrist and I stilled when I saw he held the whip. His thumb made lazy circles on my clitoris and his gaze was heavy lidded with desire. He whispered, "How about both? My cock and the whip?"

I gazed down into his eyes as he eased the head of the whip handle against the underside of his cock and clamped his hand around both. "Come on, then," he murmured, "let's see how you do."

Chapter Four

I lay back in the rose-scented water and relaxed my sore muscles as I watched Gervase shave. He had just quit the bath and was naked under his thin black silk robe. I enjoyed looking at him. There was not a single piece of fat on his lean hard body unlike Gideon who had begun to soften with his more indolent lifestyle.

There was a discreet tap on the door, and after a quick glance at me, Gervase bade the person enter. I relaxed back against the side of the bath as Gideon sauntered in and winked at me.

“Might I assume you two have made up?”

Gervase grunted as he carefully scraped his cut-throat razor over his chin. I gave Gideon my best smile as he crossed the Persian carpet to sit by the side of the bath.

“I thought we might spend the next few days together in London,” Gideon said as he crossed one elegant ankle over the other. “At my expense, of course. Eden needs a new wardrobe now that she is out of mourning and a few days to enjoy society.” He inclined his head in my direction. “And as Gervase wants to enjoy you, Eden, I suspect he will be happy to spend his leave with us. Are you both agreeable?”

Gervase grunted again, which both Gideon and I took for assent. My excitement must have shown as Gideon caught my hand and kissed my fingers. Then he reached for the washcloth that hung over the edge of the tub and smiled at me.

“Shall I scrub your back?”

I leaned forward and presented him with the graceful curve of my spine and he began to wash me with languid circular strokes.

After a while, Gideon inquired, “Might I massage your shoulders for you, Eden? You are probably a little stiff after last night’s activities.”

I pointed to a jar of rose-scented oil that stood by the bath and surrendered myself into Gideon's skillful hands. The scraping sounds of Gervase's shaving ceased and I sneaked a glance across to where he sat. His eyes were fixed on Gideon's fingers as they circled my naked shoulders and skimmed my collarbone.

"Lower."

Gervase's stark command sounded curiously hoarse and Gideon's hands stilled.

"Go lower, Gideon."

I sighed as Gideon added more oil to his fingers and massaged it into my breasts. Gervase swung around in his seat until he faced us. Gervase's cock had risen and fought its way through the confines of his robe. I moved my head slightly to one side and rested my cheek against the front of Gideon's equally straining breeches.

"Get her out of there, Gideon. Put her on the bed."

Gideon slid one hand down into the water and cupped me between the legs. I pressed against his palm, adding even more thick moisture with my instant excitement. He lifted me and laid me gently on the newly made bed. Gideon sat beside me and continued to massage the oil into my heated breasts.

Gervase quit his seat and stood over us, a dark powerful figure at the side of the bed.

"Lower."

He again directed Gideon who obliged by sliding his oil-soaked fingers down over my stomach to rest in my nest of curls. My eyes locked with Gervase's as Gideon pleased me, his thumb circling my clitoris, his fingers slipping in and out of me as I slowly grew hot and wet and ready to explode.

"Enough," Gervase growled with all the menace of the alpha male.

Gideon withdrew his hand just as I was about to come and, with a shrug in my direction, he relinquished me into Gervase's care. He hadn't reached the door before Gervase moved to cover me. He slid inside with one smooth movement of his hips. I

squeezed my internal muscles around his immense presence to hold him deep where I needed him.

"I'll expect you downstairs for dinner then." Gideon's amused voice floated over us but this time Gervase didn't even bother to grunt and I was too busy moaning with pleasure to answer him.

Sometime later, when we had exhausted our passions, I lay curled against Gervase's chest, breathing in his unique scent. Something Gideon had said floated into my mind.

"Do you have to leave soon, Gervase?"

Gervase shifted against the pillows and propped an arm under his head so that he could look down on me. He half-smiled at me, relaxing the strong line of his jaw.

"I have to go back to France, love. Don't you ever read the newspapers? Napoleon has escaped and seeks to re-form his armies and make himself Emperor again." His mouth hardened and for the first time I glimpsed the soldier beneath the sensualist. "I fear there will be a battle to end all battles before the year is out."

I came up onto my knees and stared down at him. "You will fight?"

His eyebrow shot up. "Of course I will." He swept me a makeshift bow. "Major Gervase Harcourt, at your service, ma'am." His gaze roved over my nakedness and he pretended to leer. "Definitely at your service."

His expression sobered as I reached out to touch his smooth cheek. "Some of our crack regiments have been sent overseas to America. We can only hope someone has the sense to call them back before it is too late."

I sat back and looked at him. How could he contemplate exposing his body to musket fire, swords and cannon balls without fear? With an inarticulate cry, I threw myself over him in a vain attempt to offer him my protection.

"I want you to stay here. I don't want you to die."

His deep laugh rumbled through his chest and he stroked my hair. "I appreciate your concern, love, but I expect to survive." He laid me back on the bed and leaned over me, his blue eyes intent. "There is another thing we need to discuss before I give in to my urge to fuck you again." He hesitated for a moment as if searching for the right words. "I have spilled my seed in you. You might bear my child."

Time seemed to stop as I fought to breathe and protect myself from his gaze. I'd forgotten that he didn't know of my deepest shame. I turned away and buried my face in the pillow. His hand fell heavily on my shoulder and twisted me around to face him.

I struggled hard not to give into the temptation to cry. "I do not think I can have children. I was barren during my marriage and my husband never let me forget it."

Gervase's hand gentled on my arm and he stroked my shoulders in reassuring circles. His next question was quiet. "What do you mean?"

"Your father arranged my marriage with Mr. Carstairs because I was young and because Mr. Carstairs desperately wanted a legitimate son. In truth, I have always wanted a family of my own. The thought of a child, even Mr. Carstairs' child, was a welcome one."

I bit down on my lip as I strove to give Gervase the truth. "At first, he was forgiving when I did not conceive. Eventually he began to blame me.

"Then, my husband, began to have difficulties in bed with me." Gervase nodded and I thanked God that I was with the only person in the world who would accept my telling of the story and with whom I didn't need to feel embarrassed.

"He couldn't get hard and naturally he decided it was my fault." I took a deep breath. "One night he slapped me across the face and said I had cursed him." I laughed with no humor in it. "Of course, because he had gotten angry he managed to get hard enough to force himself inside me. Unfortunately that made everything worse."

I sensed that Gervase had gone still. I could no longer look at him as I rushed to complete my sordid tale. I focused on his bare shoulder where a puckered scar spoke of an old sword wound.

"As he became ill and grew older, it became more difficult for him to perform so he hit me harder." I shivered and Gervase gripped my hand. "He broke two of my ribs once and then he started to..." I covered my mouth with my hands.

Gervase rolled me onto my front and ran his fingers along the faded scars that crisscrossed my back.

"I thought you had been beaten, but I wasn't sure who had done it to you. For all I know, it might have been my father." His hand stilled on my back and the warmth from his palm seeped through my shivering skin. "You said that your husband was failing in health, so who beat you?"

My throat dried and I tried to shift away, hoping that he would disappear or that some miracle would stop me from having to answer him. I was rotated onto my back with surprising speed. I still tried to avoid looking at him. He caught my chin in ungentle fingers.

"Eden, who beat you?"

I couldn't look away, even when his hard face blurred and dissolved behind my tears. "His bastard son." I tried to wipe away some of the tears that fell down my face. "I was always afraid that my husband would let his son bed me too, but he was too proud to resort to that, for which I am thankful."

My tears ceased and I could see Gervase clearly again. My breath caught in my throat at his deadly expression.

"What is his name?"

"Gervase..." I stroked his arm, his muscles were rigid with tension. "He is dead. It doesn't matter now. I was just trying to explain that I might not be able to have children."

"Not your husband." Gervase said through his teeth. "I want the bastard who dared to lay hands on you. I'll kill him." Gervase pulled me into his arms and held me so close I could scarcely breathe. I struggled until he allowed me to lift my face to his. I

kissed his mouth. The tension that radiated through him gradually disappeared. He kissed me back.

Gervase sighed. "You did not deserve this. I wish that I could take back the past miserable years and make them right for you. I feel so damn guilty."

I kissed him again and whispered, "You were not to know your father would discover us together or that Mr. Carstairs would prove to be a difficult husband. But we are here now until you must return to do your duty. Let us enjoy what we have."

He held me away from him for a moment and searched my face. His mouth settled into a determined line. "Only if you promise that if you do carry my child and I am still away that you will tell Gideon and he will aid you."

"I promise." It was a promise easily made and unlikely, to my abiding sorrow, to be called upon.

"Good girl." Gervase drew me beneath him and spread my legs. "Now, I have something to keep you busy until dinner time." He flexed his hips and filled me slowly, watching me the whole time. I drew my knees up to accommodate him and he whispered as he began to move with sensuous ease. "This time I will keep you safe, love, never doubt it."

For the first time in my life I tried to bury my fears and believe that the man who fitted against me with such perfect ease and who understood me better than anyone would keep his promise.

Chapter Five

"Are you ready, Eden?"

I drew in a deep breath and placed one gloved hand on each of the twins' arms. The ballroom below me seemed overfull and overloud to my provincial eyes. Only the comfort of knowing I looked my best in a soft mauve silk gown cut in the latest fashion convinced me to keep going. And, of course, the beauty of my two escorts, one in dark blue silk and the other in his best scarlet and gold dress uniform.

Gideon squeezed my hand as our plump hostess came to greet us and to exclaim over my appearance. As Gideon replied with easy grace, Gervase bent to whisper in my ear.

"I'll wager that we'll have all the hopeful bachelors and widowers swarming around us when they hear that you are available again. You know how popular a desperate young widow can be."

With surprising firmness, the twins cleared a path for me through to the edge of the dance floor. A stately country dance was in progress. To my surprise, I even recognized some old acquaintances. Gideon elbowed his way through the crowd to obtain some refreshments and the band struck up a waltz. Gervase bowed low over my hand.

"May I have the pleasure of this dance, Mrs. Carstairs?"

I gave him my best curtsy and slipped gracefully into his arms. My long white gloves showed to advantage against his scarlet sleeve and my body was so well aligned with his that we fell into step with great ease. For a while, I was content just to drift to the music and enjoy the sensation of being held in his arms. I glanced up to find him smiling at me.

"What is it?"

Gervase didn't answer as he negotiated us around a tricky corner and a couple who appeared to be dancing to a different orchestra.

"Gervase?"

He smiled then, showing his white even teeth. I felt a familiar lick of heat pool in my stomach.

"I was remembering learning to waltz together at Harcourt Hall when your hair was still in pigtails."

I smiled back at him as he executed another faultless turn. "I remember it too, I had the bruises to prove it. Gideon had the lighter touch and you trampled my feet unmercifully." I looked down at my unmarked lavender kid slippers. "I am glad to see you have improved."

"You can thank the army for that," Gervase replied. "The Duke of Wellington insists that his staff officers can dance properly."

His remark drew my eye to the number of men in uniform in the ballroom and my feet faltered for an instant. Gervase shifted his hand and rubbed his thumb against the bare skin above my glove as though he sensed my unease.

"I was thinking of something else. How long it will be before I can be inside you again."

I glanced around but nobody seemed to be interested in our low-voiced conversation. I smiled back at Gervase and licked my lips.

"How strange that we think so alike, Major Harcourt. I was just wondering why it feels so peculiar to have clothes on and not to have you buried deep inside me."

Gervase sucked in a breath and under the pretext of a missed step let his lower body grind against mine. He was already aroused and frowned down at me as I continued to smile.

"Don't play games with me, Eden—unless you want to find yourself flat on your back in the next five minutes."

“And how would you manage that in such a public place?” I inquired sweetly. “Do you think we are invisible?”

The music ended and I sank to my knees in a graceful curtsy until my mouth was level with his groin. I blew a hot steam of breath out through pursed lips as I began to rise again. Gervase hissed a curse.

“Is that a challenge?” he murmured as he gripped my arm and towed me off the dance floor in the direction of Gideon who stood conversing with a lady with striking auburn hair. I came to an abrupt halt and bumped my hip against Gervase’s groin.

The lady slipped away before I could ask Gideon to introduce her to me, her posture stiff with annoyance. Gervase demanded Gideon’s attention.

“Dance with Eden, Gideon, and try to stop her seducing anyone, will you?” He glared at me, a distinct sensual provocation in his eyes. “She seems a little overexcited tonight.”

With a curt bow, he stalked off towards a cluster of red coats near the gaming room. I took Gideon’s proffered arm and curtsied to him as the musicians played the opening chords of a country dance. It took me a while to forget Gervase’s challenge and to notice that Gideon was unusually quiet. His attention seemed fixed on the woman with the glorious auburn hair who danced past us with another scarlet-coated army officer.

“Gideon, who was the lady you were speaking to when Gervase interrupted you?”

“No one of import, at least to you,” Gideon replied shortly, without a hint of his usual charm. “If she approaches you, be wary. She seems to think you are my mistress.”

“Ah, she is a friend of Georgiana’s then?” He nodded as the woman passed us again, her eyes flicking to Gideon’s in a distinctly inviting look, which he failed to return.

I sensed that I would get no further with Gideon and wisely chose another topic, which made the dance pass in a far livelier fashion until he escorted me to a chair on the edge of the dance floor.

To my surprise, Gervase proved correct. I was soon surrounded by a bevy of eager would-be suitors and a few old friends who wished to become reacquainted. The evening passed quickly until Gervase appeared at my elbow when supper was announced. In his usual forceful manner he rushed me through the line, collected our plates and two glasses of champagne and hustled me out onto the deserted balcony. With typical arrogance, he shut the glass doors behind him to discourage any other guests from following us out.

I sipped at my champagne and marveled at the freedom I had as a widow compared with an unmarried girl. I could never have been left alone with a man like this before, especially a dangerous, dashing man like Gervase.

I glanced at Gervase as he lit a cigar and leaned over the parapet to view the gardens below. His hair shone guinea gold in the moonlight and his six-foot-two frame showed to advantage in his formal dress. I wandered over to stand beside him. The urge to touch him too strong to resist.

Fairy lights had been strung along the pathways and several couples were taking the air. A light hum of chatter rose to our level like the babbling of a brook. After a quick look around I realized that we were screened from the majority of the house by the angle of the building and that we were completely alone.

I edged in front of Gervase and sank to my knees, my silken skirts billowing around me like a flower. He stared down at me as I released the buttons on his breeches and caressed his rapidly growing cock. I cupped his balls with one hand, took the rest of him into my mouth and sucked deeply.

“Christ, Eden.”

His breathing became ragged and his hips began to thrust forward in time with the movements of my mouth. “There are people down in the garden below us.”

I didn’t bother to reply. I was too busy enjoying the sensation of his cock in my mouth and the many many ways I could use my tongue, teeth and lips to torment him.

His fingers crept into my hair and he shuddered like a man possessed as he came down my throat in huge pumping waves.

I reached into his coat pocket and retrieved his handkerchief. I wiped my mouth and rose gracefully to my feet just as I heard the chattering voices of an approaching couple.

"Eden..." Gervase's voice was strained and full of promised revenge. I avoided his outstretched hand as I curtsied and then headed back towards the ballroom in desperate need of something less salty to drink.

Gideon handed me into the carriage with a flourish and Gervase followed me in. Gideon shut the door from the outside, leaving me alone with his brother. Gervase gave me a devilish smile as the carriage moved away from the well-lit mansion.

"So?" Gervase asked, "Did you enjoy yourself?"

I sighed and smiled blissfully back at him. "Yes, it was almost the perfect evening." I glanced up at him under my lashes. "Particularly my supper."

Gervase raised one eyebrow and beckoned me to sit beside him. "You enjoyed tormenting me, then?"

I didn't bother to reply, I just kissed him on the mouth. His fingers slid inside my cloak and unlaced my gown.

"Take this dress off, and your petticoats. We are going to have a little adventure."

Full of anticipation, I complied as Gervase fished a half mask out of his pocket and bade me put it on. For the rest of the journey he arranged me on his lap so that I straddled his cock but despite my urging he refused to undo his breeches. When the carriage stopped we were in a discreet street of fairly new houses towards Hyde Park.

My long cloak covered my lack of clothing. Gervase took my arm and knocked on a discreet door set in the basement of the white stucco house. We were admitted and

Gervase paused to remove his cloak, gloves and hat. While he conversed with the footman, I took the opportunity to gaze around the dimly lit passageway.

When Gervase returned to me, I grabbed his arm and hissed, "Is this a whorehouse?"

Gervase had the gall to laugh as he urged me onwards towards a staircase.

"It is a different kind of pleasure house open to wealthy men and women. The woman who opened it, Madame Desiree, wanted to create a place where anyone could come and act out their sexual fantasies in a safe environment."

I dug in my heels. "And what are we doing here?"

Gervase bent and kissed me hard on the mouth. "Doing what you love best, Eden...watching."

We mounted the wide staircase. I gazed at the crimson silk covered walls, which were but an insignificant backdrop for the erotic paintings and sculptures that lined the massive hallway. Thick rugs covered the wooden floors and in two corners of the receiving room, cushions were piled high and people reclined in the manner of a sultan's harem. A selection of couches and chairs filled the rest of the space. Some of them were already occupied.

My steps slowed again as I realized that Gervase seemed very sure of his way. He looked down at me and seemed to anticipate my question.

"Yes, I have been here before, but not for a long while, now come on."

I followed him towards the far end of the saloon where a set of double doors led into a long pink-carpeted corridor. Just before I reached the doors, I heard a moan and looked to the sofa on my left where a well-dressed woman sucked the breast of another woman. I looked closer and blushed to see that the first woman had her hand up the second's skirts.

Gervase stood behind me, his arms wrapped around my waist, and watched as well. His hand crept within my cloak and caressed the tip of my breast.

“Would you like to try that, Eden? I might be persuaded to watch if you wanted to experiment with your own sex.”

I tore my gaze away from the entwined pair and moved on, Gervase's hand at my elbow. The light in the corridor was softer and the thick carpet muffled sound. I stopped in front of the first door and read out loud.

“Tales from the Bible.”

I looked up at Gervase, full of curiosity. He kissed my hand. “Why don't we go in?”

He opened the door and ushered me inside. It took me a while to focus in the darkness as Gervase handed me into a chair and stood behind me. My gaze riveted on the center of the room where a naked, long-haired woman toyed with an apple. She didn't speak as she rubbed the apple over her body, concentrating on her nipples.

Gervase whispered in my ear, “We have arrived just in time for the beginning of the story. This must be Eve.” He bit down on my neck and opened my cloak. One of his hands fastened on my breast and the other slid between my legs.

He squeezed me hard, the gold metal of his signet ring cold against my already moist flesh. “Ah...my own Garden of Eden.”

I looked around but the rest of the audience was swathed in blackness so I relaxed into Gervase's touch.

There were muted gasps from the audience as a trap door opened in the floor and a naked man painted red with horns on his head slithered on his belly towards Eve. Gervase grazed my ear with his teeth and then murmured, “I wonder what he'll use for the snake?”

I shushed him as Eve gasped and sat down with her back to the fake glade of trees, her legs falling apart to display her shaven mound. The man stood over her and began to stroke his cock, which had indeed been painted to look like a snake. When fluid started to drip from the tip, he moved closer to Eve and brushed his erection against her closed mouth.

I began to feel warm and shifted slightly in my seat as Eve tilted her head back and allowed the man to push into her mouth. Her hand moved and jammed the apple between her legs in time to the devil man's thrust. Gervase breathed hard in my ear and began to push his fingers inside me to the rhythm being played out on the stage.

The pounding of my heart increased and I realized that the beat of real drums and the cries and groans of the rest of the audience were echoing it. The devil man's buttocks pumped and pumped until he was covered in a fine sheen of sweat. He roared out in triumph over Eve as he came into her mouth and she apparently came too, the apple all but disappearing inside her.

Lights went out over the stage area but there was no applause as the people in the audience concluded or commenced their own performances. Gervase removed his fingers.

"Come on," he said, "there's much more to see." He tugged on my hand and we left, almost tripping over a couple who had decided to fornicate in front of the door. I pulled my cloak around me as we paused in the quiet corridor, my mind reeling from the experience. I glanced at Gervase who was smiling and pulled him against me.

I stood on tiptoe in an effort to get his groin where I wanted it but I was far too short. Gervase grinned and lifted me until my thighs fitted around his hips. I reached down to unbutton his breeches but he stopped me.

"Wait a moment, love. I need to see how wet you are."

I waited with ill-concealed lust as he slid two fingers inside me and closed his eyes. He gave a sigh and shook his head as he lowered me to the ground.

"I'm sorry, but you'll have to get much wetter than that before I'll fuck you."

"Gervase!" I hissed as two masked couples passed us in the hallway and I realized we were in a very exposed place. I lowered my voice. "You know damned well that I am ready for you." I smoothed the front of his tented breeches with my palm. "And you are definitely ready for me. Is this some kind of game?"

"Why, yes. I always forget how astute you are, Eden." He kissed me thoroughly until I struggled to be free. "Consider it a lesson in patience." He watched me through narrowed eyes. "I want you so desperate for me that you'll beg for my cock, that you'll let me fuck you anywhere."

I stared at him and some part of me knew that I should slap his face and walk away. The treacherous wave of lust that curled through me making me wet and wanting told me otherwise. We would see who ended up begging.

"There is something else I think you will enjoy at the Shakespeare room."

I followed Gervase meekly down the corridor until we came to the right door. I sensed that the room and the audience were bigger as we eased our way into the darkness. He secured a chair and sat down on it with me on his lap, turning me until I straddled him and faced the stage.

The stage contained a large four-poster bed hung with silken draperies on which languished another fair-haired woman in a diaphanous nightgown.

"That must be a wig," Gervase whispered. He pointed to her crotch. "See? Her hair is thick and dark there."

A door to the side of the bed opened and a huge dark-skinned man entered wearing little but a loincloth and a ferocious scowl.

"Othello," I breathed as he brandished a handkerchief at the woman who played his Desdemona and she began to shake her head. She slid from the bed and clasped Othello around the knees, dislodging his inadequate loincloth. There was an appreciative feminine gasp from the audience when his enormous shaft was revealed. Somebody moaned.

Desdemona reached for him and rubbed and sucked him until he seemed twice as big. With a growl and another set of screams from the female element of the audience, Othello dragged Desdemona to the bed, bent her over onto her stomach and buried himself deep inside her again and again.

My throat dried as I watched the incredible flex of muscle and strength of the man's back. His muscles gleamed like polished ebony and his buttocks begged to be shaped and touched. A gush of wetness surprised me as my body reacted to his climax.

Gervase's amused voice startled me.

"You like this, don't you?" He brushed his fingers over my soaked pussy and I squirmed with frustrated desire. "Now wait and see what happens next."

Unlike the previous show, the actors didn't leave the stage when the lights were turned up. The Othello character moved to the edge of the stage with easy grace and was soon engulfed by a crowd of women who touched him everywhere. Several men clustered around Desdemona and touched her too.

"Watch," Gervase said again as one of the women, more daring than the others, fell to her knees and took the actor's cock into her mouth. I stared hard at him as his hips moved in time to her mouth and he began to sweat even more. Our eyes locked for a strangely intimate moment as he groaned deep in his throat and came into her mouth. He scarcely glanced at the woman who had pleased him or at the optimistic woman who was about to take her place.

In the background, I watched as another woman donned the Desdemona costume and laid herself out on the bed, her face flushed and eager. I leaned back towards Gervase.

"Does the Othello character do this all night to an ever-changing parade of Desdemonas?"

Gervase's hand tightened on my breast. "Why? Do you wish to take a turn? It could be arranged."

I wiggled harder on his lap, grinding my hip into his swollen cock and smiled. "No thank you. You are just as big as him and in my experience just as insatiable. Why should I bother?"

Some of the possessive tension disappeared from his face. He smiled back at me. "Why indeed? Except you'll not have me tonight unless you beg."

I slid from his lap, making as much of a meal of it as possible. He swore under his breath.

“There’s always Gideon’s whip.”

I returned to the corridor and Gervase guided me back to the main saloon, which had filled up considerably since our arrival. Several couples lay sprawled against the floor cushions or in the couches, most of them in a state of undress. The scent of sex mingled with women’s perfume, smoke from the fire and a buffet laid out in an alcove.

Gervase took my arm and steered me towards the food. “Have you noticed that only some of the women are masked? The rest are courtesans and thrill seekers who don’t care who sees them.”

I nodded as my fascinated gaze fastened on an acquaintance of my mother’s who was being energetically fucked by a man young enough to be her son. The long ostrich feathers in her hair swept down towards the floor and bobbed in time to the man’s staccato thrusts.

So engrossed was I by this spectacle that I did not at first notice the woman who appeared on Gervase’s right until he greeted her then turned to me.

“Mrs. C., I would like you to meet Madame Desiree, the clever lady who dreamed up this scheme.”

I nodded my head at the woman in front of me, surprised by the warmth of Gervase’s tone. Madame Desiree seemed scarce old enough to have managed such an enterprise and far too beautiful to have the brains for it. Although we were similar in height and shape, her coloring was the complete opposite of mine. Where I was dark, she was fair, my eyes were green and hers were blue.

She held out her hand to me and after a slight hesitation I took it. She studied me closely and then glanced up at Gervase.

“I apologize for staring at you but you look somewhat familiar.” She laughed lightly at Gervase’s guilty expression. “Do not worry, my friend, your secrets are safe

with me." She patted his arm. "I am just glad to see you have brought someone special with you tonight."

She squeezed my hand. "Gervase and his brother were the first people I called upon when I needed to finance my house of dreams."

I nodded and withdrew my hand as she turned to pinch Gervase on the cheek. "Well, cheri, are you going to play your favorite part tonight or are you sampling new experiences with your new lady?"

For once, Gervase looked a little unsettled.

"We are alighting where the fancy takes us, Desiree. Have you any suggestions?"

Madame Desiree gave a soft laugh and blew us a kiss. "Alas no, my dears. How would I know your secret fantasies? The choice is yours, always yours."

I watched her drift away amongst her guests as Gervase busied himself at the buffet table. He headed towards a vacant couch and I followed, slapping away an amorous drunk's hand that crept up my leg. I let Gervase settle himself before I asked.

"What part do you always play, Gervase?"

He glared at me over the rim of his champagne glass and swallowed the contents in one gulp. He glanced around the room and returned his gaze to mine with obvious reluctance.

"Would you like to sit in my lap again, Eden? You can beg me to fuck you now."

I laughed, leaned forward and stroked my hand down the front of his breeches. "If you tell me what your favorite role is, I might just do that."

Gervase sighed. "All right." He grabbed my hand and marched me towards the pink carpeted corridor. He stopped outside a door marked "Here be Dragons" and drew me inside. Two characters already stood on the stage. A man dressed in the armor of a medieval knight, his face all bloody, and a woman in a linen shift.

I sank into the nearest seat and stared openmouthed at the woman. Whether she wore a wig or not, she bore a remarkable resemblance to me. Gervase swore softly beside me.

“Damnation, I thought she would have been replaced by now.”

I put my hand over his mouth as the woman helped the knight to remove his armor. Then he got into the large wooden bath and she leaned over him, soaking her thin linen shift with the water. She spent a long time washing him and caring for his wounds, stopping frequently to kiss his face and allow him to touch her breasts. Eventually, the knight responded by pulling her into the bath on top of him and making love to her.

I tried to imagine Gervase playing the wounded knight and found it all too easy. He was a soldier, well used to battle and well deserving of comfort. I turned to look at him and found his face unusually still as he watched the woman tend to her knight. Had he come here and thought of me? Had he wanted me to offer him comfort in the past war-torn years?

With aching tenderness, I drew his head down and kissed his warm generous mouth as the woman on the stage gasped and moaned her pleasure.

“Now, Gervase,” I whispered. “I’m begging you now.”

In answer, he swept me up in his arms and hurried me towards the exit. While we waited for his carriage to be brought around, he held me pressed against the wall, my face buried against his muscular chest. I could feel his heartbeat and the pulse of his arousal through the thin black silk of my undergarments.

The carriage arrived and he handed me inside with a terse command to his coachman.

“Drive around until I tell you to stop.”

Without further words, he opened his breeches and his cock sprang free. He dragged me astride him and, with a hoarse sound of need, entered me with one swift

upward thrust. I wrapped my arms and legs around him as I sought to adjust to his hard length. The carriage picked up speed and rocked me closer into his arms.

I purred with pleasure as he pumped into me, dug my heels into the seat and arched my spine. He kept up the demanding pace and depth of his thrusts until I came hard and wet around him. He gave me no respite but rode me through the pleasure until it began to peak again. His mouth latched onto my silken-clad breast and suckled me without ceasing.

I screamed then and he growled. "Yes, scream again, I want my coachman to hear you and get hard wishing he could have you."

I tried not to but Gervase was a demanding lover. My body lapped up the pleasure he gave me until I didn't care if the Prince Regent himself heard my moans of delight.

"Again."

He urged me on despite me begging him not to, one set of fingers twisting my nipple, the other rubbing my clitoris as he pounded into me. I came again, and with a groan he followed me into the realm of pleasure we had created together.

As I slumped, exhausted against his chest, he thumped on the carriage roof with his cane and we soon arrived at Gideon's house. Gervase gave me no opportunity to aid myself, he simply picked me up in his arms, carried me into the house and deposited me in my bed.

I watched with a ripple of anticipation as he stripped off his clothes and came down over me. He removed the wisps of lace and silk, which were all that remained of my underthings after his rough handling, and stared down at me. Leaning across, he brought a branch of lit candles closer to the bed.

"Open your legs, Eden."

I whimpered as his finger sought entrance to my swollen passage. He smiled softly, his face illuminated in the candlelight.

"You think you are too sore to take me again?"

I nodded as his fingertips dabbled in the thick and seemingly endless stream of his seed that ran down between my legs. "How long do you think it will take me to get inside you again?"

I shuddered at the feather light touch of his fingertips caressing me so carefully but didn't answer.

Gervase continued to touch and to talk.

"Do you remember when we met in the barn at Harcourt Hall farm? You had grown up considerably since we had last seen you. Who did you prefer to watch, Gideon or me?"

"You..." I gasped as he swirled his thumb over my clitoris, barely touching it.

"Why?" he asked idly. "What was it that I did that Gideon didn't?" Gervase slid downwards and commanded. "Touch your breast for me, Eden, while I attend to your pussy."

I tried to think back as Gervase licked his way up my thigh. The tip of his tongue flicked lightly against my engorged clitoris with masterly restraint. I stroked my nipple in time with Gervase's licks and started to feel warm again.

"Gideon never seemed to enjoy himself as much as you did. He seemed to make all the right gestures and then seemed disappointed or bored by the final act."

I squirmed as Gervase drove his tongue deeper and I felt myself opening up to him like a flower. He brought his dripping face up for a second and shook his head like a dog. His teeth gleamed white in the candlelight.

"How very perceptive of you, Eden." He glanced at the clock on the mantel. "Five minutes to make you soaking wet and fuckable, love. You are far too easy."

I tried to struggle out of his grasp as he knelt up to show me his straining cock. He laced my fingers with his and wrapped them around the huge base as he positioned himself between my legs.

“Don’t look so annoyed. I wasn’t trying to be insulting. After all, you do the same to me.” He glanced down at his cock and grimaced as he parted my labia and slid inward. “If you think that this is normal for a man after the night we’ve had, you will be sorely disappointed. I’ve never been this insatiable before, and like you, I will pay for it in the morning.”

The thick base of his shaft nudged my pussy. He groaned and ground his hips hard against mine. He chuckled into my neck. “Just be thankful that unlike me, you do not have to go on duty and sit astride a horse for four hours tomorrow morning. Promise me that you will not walk past headquarters tomorrow. God help me if I think of you then!”

Chapter Six

I sat at my dressing table and reread the note delivered to the house that morning. I was not surprised that the viscount had discerned my whereabouts. He always seemed to know my secrets. Rumor had it that his association with the Foreign Office during the war had resulted in a number of captured French spies and thwarted plots. Keeping an eye on one wayward female relation probably seemed easy by comparison. With a deep breath, I looked at my suddenly pale face in the mirror. The twins' father was back in London and wished me to present myself at his dwelling on the morrow.

My idyllic days with Gervase were drawing to a close. I was not sure whether to be glad or sorry. He had stirred unwelcome emotions in me that I had sworn to forgo. My hands clenched on the note and my green eyes darkened and reflected my anguish. I could not bear to be in love with Gervase again. I could not allow myself to be left desolated by his desertion.

I smoothed powder onto my face and rose to my feet, suddenly needing to be outside. A walk through the tranquil glades of Hyde Park seemed necessary to soothe my agitation and to give me time to formulate my plans for the future.

I strolled through the park. My maid followed at a discreet distance. I scarcely saw the beauty of the emerging leaves and the bitter, sweet, sharp colors of spring. Could I face another elderly husband after Gervase? Other desperate or clever women had chosen this route before me and seemingly felt no compunction in cuckolding their elderly partners with a succession of eager young lovers.

I shook my head. My experiences with Mr. Carstairs had made me wary of such an arrangement.

I looked up as a pigeon disturbed the leaves on a cherry tree. A fistful of pink blossoms floated to the ground around me like a shower of bridal confetti. What if

Gervase asked me to be his mistress and suggested he set me up in my own establishment? I came to a halt as a wave of misery washed over me. No, I could not accept that either, despite my desire for him. It would only prolong the inevitable heartache when he chose to marry some fresh-faced chit straight out of the schoolroom and discarded me.

I resumed my walk. The break would have to be complete for me to bear it. Tears threatened in the corners of my eyes as I contemplated the muddle I had created for myself with such blithe overconfidence. How in God's name could I have thought that going to bed with Gervase again would be anything but heart-wrenchingly wonderful? How could I have believed that I would escape unscathed?

"Excuse me."

I hastily wiped my eyes as I realized I had inadvertently blocked the path. I looked up to apologize and caught my breath as I recognized the hauntingly beautiful auburn-haired woman whom Gideon had warned me against.

She lifted one arched eyebrow and held out her gloved hand. A bronze-colored silk bonnet charmingly framed her pale face.

"I believe you are an acquaintance of Lord Gideon Harcourt. Is that so?"

I touched her fingers with my own as I made a brief curtsy and nodded. "Yes, we are old friends. My mother is his mother's second cousin."

She surprised me by slipping her hand into the crook of my arm and strolling beside me. "Well that is good. When I saw that you had been crying, I wondered if Gideon had been trifling with your affections." She shrilled a laugh, which was sharp enough to set my teeth on edge. "Gideon certainly doesn't visit my bed anymore but I am relieved to hear that he hasn't been breaking your heart in yours."

Despite the apparent ease of her tone, her fingers tightened on my arm. I was glad to exonerate Gideon.

"I am happy to reassure you that Gideon has always been the perfect gentlemen."

Her nails clamped into my skin and her voice came out in a hiss. "Oh yes, Gideon's always so perfect. Too perfect to allow anyone else to make a mistake."

I tried to ease out of her grip, alarmed by the feral glare in her yellowish eyes. She refused to release me. I looked around for my maid, caught her eye and beckoned her closer. I sighed in relief as my maid's presence seemed to release the tension in the woman before me. I made a point of stepping away and smoothing out my sleeve before I turned to confront her.

"Miss..." I stopped in confusion as I realized I didn't know this worrying creature's name. My breath nearly ceased as a flicker of triumph lit her eyes.

"You don't know who I am, do you?"

"All I know is that Gideon told me to keep away from you and now I understand why. You are clearly unstable." I gave her a sharp nod. "Good day to you, whoever you are. I shall definitely heed Gideon's advice from now on."

Her smile grew even wider, exposing her sharp pointed teeth. She began to laugh hysterically.

"Oh, God, this is wonderful. You really don't know who I am, do you?"

I refused to drop my gaze and she gave me a formal curtsy. "I am Lady Harcourt, Gideon's wife."

I pushed past her, my mind in turmoil. Her mocking laughter pursued me through the glade of trees and beyond the cast iron gates of the park.

I joined Gideon and Gervase in the dining room at the appointed hour, dressed in one of my old black gowns. I curtsied to Gideon, accepted an enthusiastic kiss on the cheek from Gervase and allowed them to seat me between them at the table.

Silence fell as the men attacked their food with their usual gusto. I tried to subdue the appalling suspicions my encounter with Gideon's wife had raised in my heart. After a while, when we were settled with our dessert and port, Gideon waved away the servants and we were alone.

I wiped my mouth with my napkin and received a glass of port from Gideon. I caught a searching look of inquiry from Gideon to Gervase and the helpless shrug of Gervase's broad shoulders in response.

"She seems unhappy with us," Gideon remarked.

Gervase half smiled. "I have not quarreled with her, if that's what you are implying." He gave me a sly wink. "She seemed quite well satisfied when I left her in bed this morning."

I half rose to my feet and glared at the pair of them.

"If you insist on speaking about me as if I were invisible, then maybe I will oblige you by retiring."

Gervase stood up, his intention to bar my way clear in his intense blue eyes.

"Eden, if you have something you wish to say, please say it." He spread his hands wide to include Gideon. "We are all friends here, we have no secrets."

"No secrets?" I managed a tight smile and focused my attention on Gideon who sat at his ease at the head of the dining table with his habitual air of distance.

"I too thought that we were friends but I find that I am mistaken. I met your wife in the park today, Gideon." I sought some reaction in Gideon's expression but nothing changed. "Do you remember her? The redheaded woman you warned me to stay away from?"

Gervase opened his mouth and made a sudden movement towards me. I stayed him with a gesture. "Your wife implied that you never bed her and it occurred to me that you never allowed me to touch you either." A muscle twitched in Gideon's cheek as I advanced towards him suddenly furious. "What is it, Gideon? Do you get pleasure from making women beg?" I shot a glance at Gervase. "Or in my case were you merely acting as a procurer for your twin?"

After a hasty shared glance, both men stared at me without speaking. I clenched my fists to contain the pain that threatened to rip through my heart. "Was that all it was? A

game to seduce the poor, desperate, pathetically grateful widow? Do you laugh about me behind my back? Do you intend to tell all your friends about me?"

I raised my chin and stared hard at Gideon. "No wonder your wife seems not to care for you. Have you shared her with Gervase too?"

The stem of Gideon's glass snapped between his fingers. Crimson port flooded the white tablecloth like new blood.

"That's enough, Eden." Gideon flung the shattered glass at the wall. His voice was as cold as stone, his expression even harder. He half turned to Gervase. "Get her cloak, Gervase."

Gervase obliged and soon I was traveling in the carriage between the two grim-faced brothers, none the wiser as to my destination.

I was somewhat relieved when the carriage pulled up at Madame Desiree's House of Pleasure. Gideon caught my arm in an iron grip and forced me to keep up with him as we dispensed with the pleasantries and hurried through to the main door-lined corridor. The door Gideon opened and thrust me through bore the legend "Crime and Punishment."

Before I could ask, Gideon pushed me up against a window, which looked down into an opulent bed chamber. He stood behind me, his hands planted on either side of my head so that I could not escape.

"This is one of the more private rooms. We can see in but they cannot see out."

The room seemed modern and unlike the others where Gervase had taken me. My unease deepened when a footman strolled in and began to light the candles. A woman followed him in through the door, her glorious auburn hair loose, her voluptuous figure plainly visible through her silk nightgown.

Gideon stiffened behind me, but I had already identified the woman who claimed to be his wife. I could scarcely bear to watch as she approached the footman and cupped his groin in an unmistakable fashion. To my surprise, the footman resisted her attentions and when she persisted, he slapped her across the face. A red mark appeared

on her cheek. I realized with a cold sick feeling that he had truly meant to hurt her and that this was not make believe.

She fell to her knees and opened the footman's breeches. He made no effort to help her until she had exposed his erection and then he dug his fingers into her hair and held her steady while he plunged deep into her mouth. He came fast, forcing her head back with the depth of his thrusts until she seemed certain to choke.

I tried to turn away as she pleaded with him to touch her, clinging to his thigh until he kicked her away from him. Gideon refused to release me despite my struggles and Gervase remained out of my sight.

"This is how Caroline is, Eden," Gideon said roughly. "This is what my wife wants from a man. I refuse to hurt her and thus she brings her sadistic passions here."

I cringed back, although I knew that they could not see me, as another man entered the room. From his rough attire, I guessed he was a stable hand. The footman pointed at the woman who lay at his feet and the stable hand came and stood over her. I stared in disbelief as he too allowed her to suck his cock as the footman watched.

Afterwards, the footman spoke again, seemingly telling Caroline to remove her clothing. She complied with alacrity. I could not believe she enjoyed being shamed and abused by the two servants but her hardened nipples, flushed skin and languorous expression declared otherwise. She stood with her eyes closed as the two men circled her like two ravenous dogs, pinching her breasts, slapping her buttocks and pushing their fingers up inside her.

Her eager expression made me feel sick. I was immeasurably glad when Gideon released me.

"Christ," he muttered as he spun away and punched the door with his fist. "She has got worse."

I turned away from the window and buried my face in Gervase's jacket as the men behind me dragged Gideon's wife towards the bed.

Gideon leaned back against the door, his head tipped back, his hands hidden in his pockets. "When I first married Caroline, I thought she just liked to be bedded a little roughly and I was happy to oblige. But I soon realized she craved more pain and humiliation than I was prepared to give her. When I refused to aid her, she started on the household servants until it became well nigh impossible to keep male staff."

Gideon sighed. "I threatened to cut off her income if she persisted in bringing her perversions home and so she turned to this place. At least I know she is safe here."

"Why don't you divorce her?" I whispered to his averted gaze. "I know that it is difficult to achieve, but with your connections and money, surely you could manage it?"

Gervase drew the crimson curtains across the window as Gideon finally turned to face me.

"Do you think I have not considered it? It is not that simple. She is in a position to blackmail me if I divorce her and she is not very stable. I know she would not hesitate to expose me if she was driven to it."

Gervase put a hand on my shoulder as I stared dry mouthed at Gideon. He crossed his arms across his chest and smiled at me.

"Haven't you guessed? Gervase thought you had. It's quite simple really, I prefer men." He shrugged. "I can perform with a woman if I must. They can even arouse me," he bowed in my direction, "as you well know, Eden. For a while I tried to deny my true feelings and fucked every woman in sight. I also thought it my duty to marry and produce an heir." He frowned down at his boots. "That proved impossible when I realized Caroline was incapable of fidelity and that any child of hers would probably not be mine."

I could only nod as the thousand small unsatisfactory sensual memories we had shared fell into place.

"How did your wife find out?"

“I was indiscreet at a house party and she caught me and my lover.” He grimaced in self disgust. “Not before she had provided herself with two witnesses and extracted their written statements, of course.”

I moved forward impulsively and hugged him. “Oh, Gideon, you poor thing. What a horrible mess.”

I caught a flash of relief in his eyes as he set me away from him. Had he thought I would be disgusted by him?”

As I stared at the twins, an idea came to me which I hoped would wipe out the horrible images we had been forced to endure. I touched Gervase’s arm.

“Do you think that Madame Desiree could find us a private room?”

Gervase caught my eye and nodded. “Of course, love. Gideon and I are her favorite customers.” He raised an eyebrow at me. “What is it that you plan to do?”

I linked my arm through his and collected Gideon as we left from the room. “You told me that this is the place to act out my fantasies. I have one particular idea that involves you both. Will you help me fulfill it?”

The room Madame Desiree graciously lent us contained all the comforts of a lady’s boudoir and a bed big enough for an orgy. Gideon and Gervase stood by the fireplace and I walked across to hand them both a brandy. While they sipped their drinks I started to talk.

“I remember watching you both in the barn one afternoon when you did something I had never seen before.” I walked over to Gervase and unbuttoned his jacket, then did the same for Gideon. “You had one of the dairy maids with you, a favorite of yours, called Daisy. Do you remember her?”

A small smile curled Gervase’s lip. His eyes met mine in total understanding and apparent approbation of my plan.

"I recall her," Gideon commented softly as I eased him and then Gervase out of their shirts. I paused to circle Gideon's nipples with my fingertip until they hardened. I did the same to Gervase.

I turned my back to allow Gervase to unhook and unlace my dress and petticoats. I slipped my feet out of my shoes and began to work off Gideon and Gervase's boots. I admired the golden hair on the twins' chests and the sight of their cocks straining against their breeches. I made them stand close together so I could rub my palms over their flat furred bellies and firm muscled buttocks.

I took Gervase's hand and placed it on the lacing of my corset and rested Gideon's hand in the small of my back. With a murmur of appreciation, Gervase removed my corset and my breasts swung free. Before he could touch them, I headed for the bed and bade them sit with me.

I crossed my legs and sat up, one knee touching each of the brothers. Gervase's breeches had almost given way under the strain of his massive erection. Taking pity on him and Gideon, I allowed them to remove their breeches. I took off my stockings too, leaving only a thin band of black velvet sewn with pearls around my throat.

I stared hungrily at Gervase's huge cock and my body quivered with the thought that I would soon have him inside me. With a shiver of delight, I licked the tip of my middle finger and pretended to pout.

"Let me see if I can remember exactly what I saw. Gideon, you need to sit up against the headboard." He moved up the bed and spread his legs as I came towards him. "And Gervase? You need to be behind me."

Gervase wrapped an arm around my hips with a satisfied grunt. I could already feel his cock jabbing at my wet pussy, demanding entrance. I crawled closer to Gideon and licked my way around his taut balls, nuzzling his crisp golden hair, grazing my teeth against the soft flesh of his inner thigh. He shuddered as I took his cock in my mouth. It grew and thickened against my swirling tongue. Using the tip, I caressed the

sensitive slit at the tip of his erection. I took more of him and began to suck with a regular sliding rhythm.

Gervase watched me pleasure his twin, his fingers playing with my swollen bud until with a groan of savage need he thrust blindly inside me. His massive shaft thrust me forward, pressing Gideon deeper into my mouth as he followed my movements.

Gideon dug his fingers into my hair as I increased the pace. I grasped the base of his shaft, holding him still as I felt the first spurt of his seed. My needs narrowed to my desire to make Gideon and Gervase come together until all I could hear were the sounds of flesh slapping or sucking against flesh and the moans of three aroused people.

Gideon came hard and fast into my mouth just as Gervase released himself with a growl. My own climax followed with shocking intensity as I was buffeted between the two men's grinding hips.

For a long while there was silence as we strove to get our breath back. Then Gervase pulled out of me and I felt his seed gush down my thighs. His warm, strong fingers massaged the wetness into my skin. I closed my eyes when another set of hands covered in perfumed oil began to knead my breasts. Blindly, I reached for the bottle and began to massage my two men as well.

Soon we slid and slithered over each other's bodies like a family of playful sea otters. I drowned in the luxury of having two men to pleasure and two huge cocks to play with. Our play became more purposeful as slick fingers pushed inside my pussy, wet tongues licked my clitoris and I grasped and fondled taut buttocks, soft ball sacs and hard, hard shafts.

Gervase lay sprawled on his back. I crawled up him and lowered myself down on his cock. He kissed me hard, his tongue thrusting into my mouth as Gideon lay on top of me, his oiled fingers widening and stretching my back passage. I felt his cock slide a little way inside me. I must have stiffened. Gervase reassured me with his mouth and the subtle undulation of his hips. I relaxed against him. Gideon slid deeper.

"All right?" Gideon whispered as I grew used to the extraordinary sensation of arousal and fullness the twins had given me. I'd never felt so stretched and yet so fulfilled. Could the men feel each other through the fragile skin separating them? The indecent thought inflamed my heated senses and made me crave the erotic experience more.

I nodded and Gideon groaned and slowly thrust downward, his hands anchored on my hips as Gervase thrust upwards. I could do nothing but let the extremity of the sensation roll through me in ever increasing spirals of ecstasy. I started to scream long before they finished with me, my cries muffled on Gervase's oil-soaked chest as I shook with a never-ending climax.

We lay locked together for a long time. I even slept for a while, exhausted by my passions. I awoke to hear Gervase whispering fiercely to Gideon, "I'll not let you have her like this again, Gideon. She's mine from now on, do you understand?"

Gideon kissed my shoulder and slid off me, his reply equally quiet. "I know that, you fool."

I heard him slip on his clothes and leave. I whimpered and cuddled closer to Gervase at the sudden cold.

"Eden, we need to go. Wake up, love."

I opened one eye and regarded him. "Why can't we stay here?" I grumbled and Gervase laughed.

"Because I want to fuck you again and I don't intend to do it until you are in your own bed." I rocked my hips against him and he hissed a curse. His cock started to twitch and grow inside me.

"Why not here?" I kissed the corner of his mouth and he held me away from him. His shaft slid out of me with a soft sucking sound and I pouted.

"Because we need to bathe and get rid of Gideon's scent before I fuck you. You may think me over possessive but I need to make you mine again."

I reluctantly crawled to the edge of the bed and looked for my dress. "Then why did you allow Gideon into our bed?"

Gervase swung his legs over the side of the bed and picked up his shirt, his expression unreadable. "Because he needed you." He paused to pull his crumpled shirt over his head. "Because he is my twin." He stepped into his breeches and fought to close them. "And because I wanted to make sure you really preferred me."

I paused in my dressing, went over to him and put my arms around his neck. "And?" I inquired as he encircled my waist. "Are you satisfied?"

He nodded, his eyes intent on the knot of his cravat. I kissed him full on the mouth. "Thank you for allowing me to fulfill my fantasy. But it's always been you, Gervase, only you."

He grunted, picked up his coat and offered me his arm with a flourish. "All right then, we can stay here but first we must bathe and change."

I bathed alone and readied myself for my last night with Gervase. Tomorrow I had to meet with his father and find out my future but this night belonged to me. It was past midnight when Gervase returned, clad only in a black silk dressing gown, his golden hair damp from the bath.

I walked towards him, the transparent butter soft silk of my borrowed night robe hissing against my skin. He took me into his arms and turned me to face the mirror, his expression serious. I stared at his reflection, noticing how small I looked locked within his muscular arms and how safe I felt.

He whispered against my neck. "Bend forward over the chaise lounge. I must have you quickly."

I leaned forward and his cock nudged my labia and pressed into me. He grabbed my hips and pulled me backwards as he pumped forwards, making each long thrust as deep and as powerful as he could. I held onto the back of the couch and watched him in the mirror. The concentration and primitive lust on his face and the play of his muscles was so erotic that my sheath clenched again and again around him.

He slid two fingers into my back passage and then withdrew his cock from my pussy. I moaned at the loss but he shook his head and plunged his cock in with his fingers, his voice rough in my ear. "Here too, where Gideon was. No other man will come in you again, just me."

He groaned with each stoke and soon came, flooding me with an unending stream of his seed. My legs were trembling when he finally released me and led me over to the bed. He stretched out and lay down on his back and beckoned to me like a king.

Smiling, I knelt over him and he grinned.

"I sense that you are plotting something, Eden. You have an incredibly sensuous gleam in your bewitching green eyes." He raised an eyebrow. "What would you like to do with me? Now that I have gotten over my possessive caveman lust, I am all yours."

I took a deep breath. "Will you let me make love to you, Gervase?"

He regarded me for a long time, his eyes heavy with desire and something else and then nodded. "Of course." He drew his hands over his head and gripped the headboard. "If you truly wish to make this memorable, how about you tie my hands up here? Then I really will be unable to touch you."

The thought appealed to me as Gervase had known it would. I climbed off the bed to find something to bind him with. In a drawer, I found several wide black ribbons. I returned to the bed and used two of the shorter ribbons to tie his wrists to the headboard.

The third I kept in my hand as I knelt up to survey my captive. I leaned over and kissed him gently on the mouth, enjoying the roughness of his unshaven chin and the softness of his lips against mine. I began to work my way down his body, stopping to kiss and nuzzle and worry over every scar that marred his perfection. He spread his legs as I moved over his hard, flat belly, dipping my tongue into his navel, making him squirm.

I avoided his erection and continued to slide my way down to his feet. After kissing and licking the arches of his feet until he pleaded for mercy, I crawled back up and sat

between his legs. With a wicked smile, I unfurled the black silk ribbon and held it taut between my two hands. My nipples hardened and showed through the silk as I rubbed it over my breasts. Gervase licked his lips, his attention riveted on the movements of the ribbon.

Then I took the ribbon and wound it lightly around his shaft, covering his flesh. His hips moved restlessly forward as I knelt up, took the end of the ribbon between my teeth and pulled it off in one slow spiraling motion. I did it again and again until the ribbon was stained with his semen and he strained against his bonds.

Leaving the ribbon wrapped tightly around his cock, I ignored his threats and sat facing him, my knees open and overlapping his thighs. Capturing his heated gaze, I stroked my clitoris with one hand and pinched my nipple between my finger and thumb. I rocked back and forth, enjoying the sensation of his coarsely haired thighs against my soft thighs and buttocks.

My excitement grew as lust mounted in his gaze and he was forced to watch me pleasure myself to a climax. His fingers flexed within his bonds. I knew he was trying to break free.

“Eden...” The words sounded as if they had been torn from his throat. “Fuck me, please.”

I shook my head and he growled an obscenity. This was my last night with him. I was determined to extract every sensual memory I could from it. Gervase didn't know it yet, but the sight of a beautiful, well-made man with a huge cock tied to my bed begging me to fuck him would have to last me a lifetime.

I unfurled the black ribbon with a flick of my wrist and tied it around my narrow waist. As Gervase watched, I brought the loose end from the back between my legs and secured it at my waist. I crawled up Gervase's body and knelt over his face so that he could see how the ribbon ran between my labia and covered my clitoris and my passage.

I slowly lowered myself down towards his mouth. With a groan he started licking the black ribbon. His tongue probed and curled along the edges, trying to get underneath it, but I pulled it tight.

In desperation, he rubbed his tongue and his unshaven chin against my clitoris until it swelled against the ribbon. Then he sucked both into his mouth, holding on with his teeth. As he pleased me, I arched backwards, put my hands behind my back and grasped his cock. The second I touched him, he came, soaking my hand. He cursed long and loudly.

I raised myself away from his face before he could attempt any punishment and smiled down at his maddened features. His jaw tightened and he whispered, "You little tease. Just you wait until I get my hands free. I'm going to fuck you until you beg for mercy."

I bent and licked his mouth and then bit down hard on his lower lip. "I plan on leaving you tied up all night, so think again."

I slithered down to where his seed lay in pools on his stomach and anointed my breasts with a generous handful until they gleamed and dripped. Then I trailed my nipples over his lips until he took them into his mouth and suckled me.

"See how you taste," I murmured as his cock rose against my naked back, nudging the black ribbon. "I want it all from you, tonight, Gervase. I want to suck you dry."

I braced myself on my knees over him. An expression of relief crossed his face. I lowered myself until the swollen, weeping tip of his arousal brushed against the black silk ribbon. He could go no farther. I moved my hips back and forth, enjoying the sensation and his obvious frustration. I angled my body and slid up and down the sides of his massive erection until he writhed in lack of fulfillment.

My body throbbed with the need to take him but I fought to control myself. I stared at Gervase who was covered in a thin sheen of sweat and even more desirable as a result. I put one finger between my legs and held the ribbon to one side. Gervase stilled

as I slowly lowered myself down onto his cock. I came instantly and had to force myself to pull up and away from him.

The expression on his face as I climbed off the bed was indescribable. He roared. "Come back here and finish what you started. Come and fuck me!"

I poured myself a large brandy and sauntered back towards him. "Would you like some of this?"

He shook his head. "No, damn it! I want to fuck you."

I sat down next to him and sipped my brandy. Gervase's lust filled eyes narrowed and he fisted his hands.

"What exactly do you mean, Gervase? You have already fucked me several times." I kissed him and allowed some of the brandy to trickle into his mouth. He smiled back at me, showing his teeth. I shifted away. His whole demeanor radiated a primitive rage.

"If I tell you, sweetheart, it won't be a surprise, will it?"

I finished my brandy and paused to unwrap the ribbon from between my legs, desperate to release the throbbing pressure. I quickly straddled Gervase and lowered myself down on him with a grateful sigh. Before I could raise myself up again, Gervase planted his feet firmly on the mattress and pushed upward until his whole lower body came off the bed. With a gasp, I struggled to right myself as he thrust higher and my legs slipped against his hips. It was as exhilarating as trying to master a wild horse. I struggled to stay on top of him as he fought to buck me off.

I knew I was doomed when I heard a harsh ripping sound and Gervase freed his right wrist. With a triumphant roar, he pulled out of me and pressed me face down into the sheets as he busied himself freeing the left.

"Now, my lady," he said breathlessly, "I have the upper hand." He rolled me onto my back and carefully removed the long black ribbon from around my waist. He ripped the ribbon in half with his teeth and dangled the pieces in front of my nose. There was nothing I could do to stop him looping the ribbon around both my wrists and securing

it on the headboard. He slid off the bed and went to pour himself a drink before returning to sit beside me.

“Open your legs, Eden.”

I did as he commanded, well past modesty now and eager to see what he would do with me. I sighed as his long fingers tugged at the soaking curls in between my legs.

“You are so wet that one might think that you had serviced an entire regiment tonight rather than just one man.” I shivered as he circled my swollen bud with the tip of his thumb. “I never imagined I would meet a woman, let alone a lady, who would be able to keep up with my sexual demands, but you not only keep up you exceed my expectations.”

He opened my legs even wider and settled between them.

“I think I will dry you off. And then we can start again.”

He took the corner of the sheet and wiped away the wetness. He even pushed the fabric inside me to make sure I was completely dried to his satisfaction. When he had finished, he bent forward and kissed me, his rich male scent filled my nostrils. The gentle brush of his cock against my belly made me melt inside.

After a long deep kiss, he sat back, glanced down between my legs and frowned.

“Eden, you are wet again. I’ll have to dry you.”

I began to sense the game he intended to play as he wiped me dry. He suckled my breasts until the inevitable happened and I grew wet and swollen with need again.

The rasping of the cloth became a torment and a punishment as I strove to remain unaffected by his caresses and kisses but couldn’t. I knew I would be wet again as he nudged my mouth with the wet tip of his cock but refused to go inside even when I opened my lips.

As his hand returned between my legs, he pretended to sigh as he drew forth more of my juices and sucked his fingers. I bit down hard on my lip and tried not to stare longingly at his cock as he regarded me.

“What am I to do with you, Eden?”

I refused to answer and he reached for the sheet again. My body squirmed away from him but he captured one of my legs under his heavy thigh. I closed my eyes and listened to the cloth brush against my skin until I thought I might scream.

“If you tell me what you want, love, I might aid you.” My eyes flew open as Gervase ran a hand up and down his cock. “After all...” He smiled at me. “It seems a shame to waste this, doesn’t it?”

“Yes.” I managed to choke out the words. “Yes, damn you. I want you to make love to me.”

Gervase’s expression changed and he reached up to release my hands. “That’s the second time you have said that tonight, Eden. Is fucking not to your liking anymore?”

As the silence lengthened, I silently berated my lack of control. I had promised myself not to mention the word love and had apparently done so twice. Gervase was no fool. I could not judge from his face whether the thought of lovemaking as opposed to fucking meant anything at all to him.

I managed to smile at him and hold out my arms. He came over me and slid into me. I held tightly to his shoulders as relief and pleasure rushed through me in unending pulsating waves. He might call it what he wished but I knew in my heart that I was making love.

Chapter Seven

I awoke before dawn and slid from the bed. Gervase lay sprawled on his back, an expression of deep innocence and contentment on his face. I bent to brush a kiss on his roughened cheek and tied one of the black ribbons in a jaunty bow around his softened cock. I stopped at the door to look back at him, knowing that this last sight would have to last me a lifetime. Tears crowded the back of my throat as I pictured the long lonely years ahead.

I blew him a kiss and then hurried home to dress for my visit with the viscount. His note had stated that I visit at my convenience but I knew he meant at my earliest convenience. While I waited for the appropriate social hour to call, I busied myself packing my bags and sending them to a posting house.

I was glad that neither Gideon nor Gervase were at home to see me leave. I doubted if I could have answered their questions with any equanimity. They knew me too well to believe any lies that I might have attempted. I cast one last glance around the sumptuous black marble of Gideon's hallway then squared my shoulders and left for Harcourt House where the twins' father was now in residence.

Viscount Harcourt saw me immediately and I was ushered into the red gold splendor of his study by a butler of truly awe-inspiring dignity. The viscount rose to his feet and bowed to me as he gestured to a straight-backed chair in front of his imposing mahogany desk. I arranged myself on the seat as gracefully as I could, clasping my reticule to disguise my shaking fingers.

The twins' father regarded me over the top of a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, which did nothing to dispel his air of authority or hide his handsome features. He was dressed in the latest fashion, not a crease visible in the perfect fit of his dove-gray jacket or a fold out of place in his starched cravat.

“Ah, Eden. Thank you for coming to see me.”

He smiled and his likeness to his sons became even more apparent. Where their hair was golden, his had faded to a dull straw color, their eyes were bright blue, his were a more cynical silver.

He set down his quill pen and steepled his fingers together. “I hear you have been enjoying your widowhood, my dear, particularly with my sons.” He shrugged as if amused. “It is a shame that Mr. Carstairs died so easily and failed you so badly in that area of your marriage.”

I stiffened in my chair as I registered the mocking tone of his voice. For a man who had been known as a rake in his youth, and worse, the viscount seemed to have changed his views.

I stared at the pile of books on his desk before I ventured a reply. I did not want to antagonize the viscount when he held my future in his hands but I refused to allow him to intimidate me. I lifted my chin, a false smile pinned to my lips.

“I appreciate your concern, my lord, but Mr. Carstairs was not a kind man and he perhaps came by his just reward.”

His silver eyes met mine and reflected my hint of a challenge. “Well, be that as it may, as a favor to your mother, I believe it behooves me to find you another husband.” His long fingers stirred some papers on the desk and he glanced down at them. “Unfortunately, Mr. Carstairs did not leave you well enough provided for to allow you to live alone. Of course, if you had had his child, the situation would be different.”

I bit down on my lip at this pointed reminder of my failure as the viscount continued speaking. “However, I do have some candidates in mind for you. One of whom my sons insisted I consider.”

I gazed at him in bewilderment and his lip curled in apparent surprise. “You did not know? I have had to listen to Gideon and Gervase pleading your case for the last month. Gideon appears to think I should allow you to marry Gervase, presumably because they still feel guilty about what happened to you when you were eighteen.”

I found my voice and looked straight back at him. "Perhaps it is right that they feel some guilt. They corrupted me and got off without punishment whilst I was forced to marry an old man."

The viscount sat back. "Do you expect me to feel sorry for you, my dear? It is the way of the world and you know it. You knew it when you allowed the twins to touch you when you were but eighteen and you knew it when you allowed them to touch you now."

I sucked in a breath and continued to gaze at him. He shook his head. "We stray from the point. Gervase insists he wants to marry you to make up for your years of torment, his words not mine, with Mr. Carstairs. Has he mentioned marriage to you?"

I shook my head, pride insisting that I stay upright in my chair and look my accuser in the eye.

"I wonder why not?" The viscount mused. "Maybe you have been foolish, Eden, and allowed him the freedom of your body without extracting any promises from him." He shrugged his elegant shoulders. "Why should Gervase bother to marry you when he has already had you?"

The deliberate crudity from a man who scarcely needed to use such language set my teeth on edge. I struggled to remember that it was not as he believed.

"No, my lord, Gervase has not offered me marriage, nor did I expect him to. I chose to share my body with him." I cocked an insolent eyebrow at the viscount who sat back as if amused. "Does it shock you that a woman might have needs like a man?"

The viscount smiled. "Nothing shocks me, my dear. I offer you my congratulations. Not many women in your position would be brave enough to turn down an offer of marriage. Not even one made out of pity. And make no mistake, what Gervase feels for you is guilt and pity." His eyes narrowed to the color of flint and he leaned slightly towards me.

"Let us take the gloves off and discuss this matter properly. I do not wish Gervase to marry you but not for the reasons you might imagine." He must have sensed my

bewilderment as he smiled again. "You are a beautiful and sensual woman. A woman who reminds me greatly of the twins' mother."

He folded his hands together on the desk and looked down at them. "I do not say that lightly. Louisa was the light of my life and if I were but twenty years younger I suspect I would be brawling over you myself." His mouth twisted. "But as I grow older and more aware of the fragility of life I have a strange desire to see my line established."

My stomach ceased to burn with nerves and instead seemed to fill with ashes as the viscount captured my gaze. "I want grandchildren, Eden. Gideon's wife is unstable, and God forbid I should wish harm on her, but Gideon swears he will not lie with her even to make a child." He sighed. "And that leaves Gervase."

His voice softened and I tensed my shoulders to repel his apparent sympathy. "You were married for several years to a man who was desperate for a child. He swore to me he would bed you every night until you gave him one."

He sat back. "You didn't conceive, my dear, and I cannot allow you to marry my son and threaten my chances for grandchildren. Gervase deserves children. He would be an excellent father. He might tell you that it doesn't matter to him but I suspect you know that for a virile man like Gervase it does."

The room blurred before my eyes. I realized that I had been weeping for a while as I listened to the viscount. He knew I was but a barren shell. He was right. I couldn't deprive Gervase of the chance of children. I fought for control as the silence lengthened, marred only by the ticking of the mantel clock. At length, an elegant hand appeared at my elbow and dropped a large handkerchief into my lap.

I drew in several slow breaths, blew my nose and lifted my head to find the viscount watching me.

"You may rest easy, my lord," I whispered. "I never intended to entrap Gervase. I wished only to enjoy my widowhood for a short while until you found another elderly husband to stifle me with."

The viscount met my gaze, a hint of respect and understanding in there which nearly made me cry again. He glanced down at a list of names on his desk.

"As to that, they are not all elderly," he said gently. "Some are even men with young families to raise who would love the care of a new mother."

I gathered my courage. "If I accept what you say about Gervase, will you allow me some element of choice this time?"

The viscount folded the piece of paper and handed it to me with a wave of his hand. "Of course. I would have allowed that anyway." He hesitated. "And time to make that choice if you so desire it."

I nodded and he passed another heavier package across the desk to me. "I have made arrangements for you to reside at this cottage on my estate near Brighton. All the men on your list will come and visit with you, at your invitation, over the summer. Perhaps by Christmas you will have made your decision?"

I stowed the bulky papers away in my reticule and knew that when I left Harcourt House I would be escorted with considerable speed and every luxury to my new home. I drew in a hard-won breath.

"I don't think I can face Gervase again." I tried to laugh but my voice shook. "How can I ask him if he wishes to marry me and then decline his offer all in one breath? Can you give him my apologies?"

The viscount bowed. "Of course. I would not expect you to deliver such news in person."

I got to my feet, suddenly desperate to be away from all the Harcourts and their compelling charm. When I reached the door, the viscount asked, "You love him, don't you?"

I turned to face him. "Yes, too much to saddle him with a barren wife."

He released his breath with a gentle sigh. "Godspeed then, Eden, and thank you for your understanding."

I stepped out into the brightness of Hanover Square and made my way to the discreet closed carriage that awaited me. I smiled at the footman who assisted me into the carriage and slammed the door. A sharp pain under my ribs made me breathless and I had to suck in great gulps of air. I wrapped my arms around myself and allowed the sway of the carriage to rock me. Tears came and my heart shattered into a thousand pieces as I drew further and further away from Gervase.

Chapter Eight

I swore in an extremely unladylike manner as a closed carriage swept past and doused me in filthy, muddy rainwater. Two months had passed since my flight from London. I glared up at the sky. It was supposed to be summer. The changeable weather suited my troubled mind. When I set out to walk to the vicarage the weather was mild and the skies clear. Now, as the heavens opened, I regretted not accepting the vicar's offer of a ride home in his carriage. At the time it had seemed pointless to expect him to harness his horses for a journey of less than ten minutes. Now as sullen rain filled clouds gathered in ever darkening ranks, I hurried to find my way home.

At last, I ran up my flower-lined path, head lowered against the buffeting wind and straight into the hall calling for my maid. There was no reply as I shook out my sodden cloak and kicked my ruined kid slippers aside. A welcome light in the best parlor beckoned me through the darkness. I entered the room and struggled with the ties of my bonnet.

My fingers stilled on the doorknob as I took in a pair of muddy army boots planted on my hearth. I slowly looked upwards. Gervase stood with his back to the small fire absorbing all the heat. In the confines of my thatched cottage, his rain-dampened hair brushed the oak beams that crossed the white plastered ceiling.

"I sent your maid home."

I could only stare at him like a simpleton as I tried to see his face from beneath my dripping bonnet. He looked desperately tired. Shadows made harsh purple streaks under his eyes and he was unshaven. My fingers itched to smooth the furrowed lines from his brow. I remained frozen to the spot.

With a final tug, the ribbons of my bonnet snapped. I pulled the sodden confection from my head and looked around the neat, well-ordered room for a place to deposit it.

Gervase seemed to have taken up all the space and all the available air. I took two hasty steps backwards.

“I will go and make some tea.” I gestured to my bonnet. “And find somewhere to hang this. Excuse me for a moment.”

I escaped into the kitchen where my maid, Katie, had left a good fire burning. My teeth chattered as I struggled to locate the teapot and the necessary items for the promised cup of tea.

“Your hair is wet.”

I spun around with a gasp as Gervase tossed a cloth at me and gestured to my head. With murmured thanks, I went across to the fire and sank down onto my knees. I started to unpin my hair then thought better of it as I sensed Gervase come up behind me. I patted my fringe and side curls into some semblance of order and turned to make the tea as the kettle hissed to the boil.

Gervase waited by the door until I had the tray ready. He picked it up without a word and carried it through to the parlor. He built up the fire as I lit more lamps and closed the velvet curtains against the miserable gray skies.

At first I could do little more than sip my tea and enjoy the warmth of the fire. I sought desperately for something to say to Gervase. I hadn't seen him for two months. His reappearance in my life was so unexpected yet so secretly longed for that I had to pinch myself to make sure I hadn't conjured him out of my fevered imagination.

As I pondered what to say, Gervase broke the silence.

“Are you not curious as to how I found you, Eden?”

I could only nod, a polite smile on my lips.

“I wasted over a week searching for you in Glasgow without any help from your husband's family. When I returned, your mother was most helpful in securing your direction after my father swore he could not aid me.” His mouth tightened. “It didn't

occur to me that you might hide right under my bloody nose on my own father's estate."

I offered him some milk for his tea. He declined with a shudder. "Wherever did you go on such an unpleasant day and why the hell didn't you take your maid?"

I bristled at his abrasive tone. "I only went to the village church to help with the flowers." I had no intention of revealing that I went there most days to pray for his safety. "I was invited to lunch at the vicarage. I walked home from there."

Gervase's frown deepened and he opened his mouth. I quickly spoke over him. "The vicar did offer me the use of his carriage but it scarce seemed worth the wait when I could walk home in ten minutes."

Gervase growled. "How old is this vicar?"

I lifted the teapot to refill my cup and directed a blistering stare at my tormentor over the top of it.

"I am not one of your new recruits, Major Harcourt. You have no right to interrogate me."

Gervase crossed one booted foot over the other and stretched out his legs until he deliberately brushed my skirts.

"So he's young then." His eyes lowered to my bodice. "I am surprised that he did not offer to walk you home in the rain. He would have enjoyed the view."

I followed his gaze downward to my soaked bodice, which clung to every curve of my breasts and clearly displayed my nipples. Gervase tutted and shook his head. "Still no proper corset, I see. Are you disappointed that he didn't escort you?"

He leaned forward to pour himself another cup of tea and drank it down in one swallow. I attempted to pull the fabric of my gown into a more modest position.

Gervase gave a dry laugh. "Don't bother on my account. I've been hard since you walked into the house."

I gave up the attempt to cover myself and sat back in my chair, watching Gervase with all the caution of a mouse cornered by a tomcat.

“What I would really like to know, Eden, is whether my father was right. He insists you never intended to marry me, that you were using me for your own sexual gratification whilst you waited for the right man to come along.” He placed his cup with great precision into its saucer and stared at me. “Well?”

I cradled my cup, glad I had something to hold onto. “I am sorry if my answer disappoints you, but your father is right. That was my intent.”

“I don’t believe you.”

I stood up and banged my cup down on the table. “Why not? Do you think you are so irresistible? I don’t recall you asking me to marry you or stay with you. You seemed more than content to take what I offered without any promises. The only reason you have hunted me down now is hurt pride.”

“Christ, no!” He dragged his hand through his curling hair and glared right back at me. “I came because I wanted to talk to you, because you left me so abruptly and because...” he hesitated. “Because I wanted to see you again before I leave for France.”

A glut of tears threatened to choke me as I heard the concern in his voice. I turned abruptly away.

“I notice that you did not come to inquire if I were breeding.” I clenched my fists. “Well, surprise, surprise, I am not.”

Gervase gave a quiet laugh. “Ah...so that’s how he did it. The clever old bastard.”

I turned in confusion as he advanced towards me, the smile lingering on his lips.

“I have just realized how my devious father persuaded you to abandon me again. He used your fear of being barren.” He held out his hand. “What else did he say? Some drivel about wanting grandchildren?” He snorted. “He has a daughter, you know, and I do not see Gideon’s wife enjoying a long life if she continues to pursue her current obsessions.”

Horrified by my own stupidity, I tried to push past him. He caught my elbow and I had to stop.

"I told you why I left, Gervase. You were just available to me when I needed a man. There is no more to be said."

"You are lying."

I raised my hand to strike him. He captured my wrists and dragged both of my arms behind my back. He easily encircled my wrists with one hand. I tried to calm my breathing as Gervase urged me even closer. My breasts brushed his chest, tightening my nipples every time I inhaled.

"Most men would love to have a woman who doesn't want anything from them except sex," I said wildly. "Why can't you accept that it's over?"

"Because it's not." Gervase spat out the words as I struggled against him. "I wanted to ask you to marry me the first moment I saw you again but you didn't seem to want anything from me but sex. At first, I tried to pretend that that was all I wanted from you too, but my heart knew better." His voice gentled. "Can you imagine how I felt when the chance to amend for my past mistakes fell into my lap and you seemed happy to forgive me?"

I brought my chin up and stared into his intent blue eyes. "You are lying now, Gervase. You never spoke of love, only of lust."

He gave a strangled laugh. "Eden, give me some credit. No self-respecting nineteen-year-old boy would have spent a whole day preparing you to take him inside you without loving you. Every other woman I touched at that age was lucky to get more than five minutes of self-indulgent sex from me. You were always different. You were always special. It was always love."

I wanted so desperately to believe him. I gave in to the temptation to rest my forehead against his embroidered waistcoat and then summoned all my strength to push him away.

"Go away, Gervase. I do not want this."

He caught and held my fingers. "I am only going to ask you this once," he said abruptly. "Will you marry me?"

I shook my head and refused to meet his eyes. His fingers settled under my chin and forced me to look up at him. Still holding my gaze, he reached into his pocket and produced a crumpled piece of parchment. I tried to snatch it from his grasp. He held it at a safe distance.

"Where did you get that from?" I cried. "It belongs to me."

"I found it while I waited for you to return."

Gervase opened the parchment with a disdainful flick of his wrist. "This is, I presume, a list of potential husbands supplied to you by my father?"

I could only stare at him, my lips firmly shut, and watch the anger build in his suddenly arctic blue eyes. With a muttered oath, he released me and crossed to my desk. He plucked my quill from its inkstand and spread the parchment out onto the blotter. I clenched my teeth as the pen screeched and scratched across the face of the list. He held my gaze as he held the parchment aloft. Ink slid and dripped onto the carpet. Despite the mess, I could clearly read his flamboyant signature scrawled over the other names.

"Does this make it clear to you?" He spoke through his teeth. "If you marry anyone, it will be me."

I backed away from him, one eye on the door.

"You are no gentleman, sir. If you were, you would take your answer and leave me in peace."

He leapt for me as I attempted to flee. I found myself pinned against the door.

"You are right," he said almost soundlessly, the soft hiss of his breath warm against my throat. "I am no gentleman. I have a special license in my pocket. You'll marry me tomorrow in London in front of my father and Gideon and then you'll accompany me to France."

I struggled to breathe and his arms relaxed a fraction of an inch.

"You'll stay close to me until I go into action and you'll sleep alongside me wherever I tell you to." His tone grew harsher and he fought to pull up my skirts. "I'll want to make love to you all the time. When you are my wife I'll take you whenever I want to." He ripped off my undergarments and threw them to the floor. "You'll forget what it's like not to have my cock inside you and you'll want it as much as me." He braced me against the door and tore open his breeches. His penetration was fast and rough and drove me against the door.

I gasped as he pressed deeper and harder, and gloried in the feel of him and the sense of completion. With a sob, my hand curled into the crisp golden hair at the nape of his neck. He shuddered.

"This is how it will be from now on, Eden. I'll be inside you whenever I can and you'll not refuse me whether we're surrounded by the whole of Wellington's army or in the middle of a dinner party." With each word, he thrust deeper and deeper. "Some days, I'll not let you out of bed at all and you'll lie there naked and wet from my seed just waiting for me to fill you again."

He increased his pace and I locked my heels in the small of his back to hold him inside me for as long as possible. I screamed into his warm generous mouth as I came. He followed me with a final bucking of his hips as he strove to drive even deeper. As I collapsed against his shoulder, he put his hand around my ankles and held me locked against him.

He smoothed the tangled hair from my face and looked down at me, his voice gentle and hoarse.

"I told you that I'd not ask you again, but you will marry me. I might be killed in this battle and my father's dynastic ambitions mean nothing to me." He cleared his throat and pressed on. "I want you with me as my wife. I do not care if we have a child. I just want you."

I kissed his mouth and his face lightened. He wiped the tears from my cheeks with fingers that shook and began to smile.

“I forgot to mention, in my passion, that the same rules apply to you too, love. Whenever you want me. I am yours.”

His simple words conjured up a thousand enticing prospects for sensual mischief. I smiled back at him.

“Whenever I want you?” I asked. A hint of caution entered Gervase’s blue eyes and he nodded. I squeezed my heels hard into the small of his back and felt his cock jump inside me. I caught his bottom lip between my teeth and bit down with exquisite care.

“How about now?” I whispered as his tongue thrust into my mouth and stopped me from speaking. Then he pulled back. His blue eyes searched mine, his expression vulnerable.

“Only if you tell me that you love me. Only if you want to make love and not just have sex.”

I kissed him full on the lips and wound my arms around his neck. “Oh, I love you, Gervase,” I murmured against his mouth. “Love me back...”

About the Author

Kate Pearce was born and bred in England. She spent most of her childhood being told that having a vivid imagination would never get her anywhere. After graduating from college with an honors degree in history, she ended up working in finance and spent even more time developing her deep inner life.

After relocating with her husband and family to Northern California in 1998, Kate fulfilled her dream and finally sat down to write her first novel. She writes in a variety of romance genres, although the Regency period is definitely her favorite.

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