

RED CHRYSANTHEMUM

PUNISHING  
*Miss Primrose*

PART VI

EM BROWN

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**PUNISHING MISS PRIMROSE  
PART VI**

By

**EM BROWN**

## Punishing Miss Primrose, Part VI

“I THINK IT TIME I repaid your favor of last night, Miss Primrose.”

The mantle of sleep still upon her, it took Beatrice a moment to comprehend what *his lordship* had said. He should have been asleep in his own chambers, but, still wearing his shirt and trousers from the evening, he had only divested his coat, cravat, and waistcoat. That he had started a fire in the hearth of her bedroom meant that he did not intend for her to return to sleep shortly. A rope dangled ominously from the top of each bedpost. On instinct, she attempted to clamber out of bed to put some distance between them, but he moved quickly and threw her back onto the bed. She struggled though he was a good seventy pounds or so heavier and had more than twice her strength. He straddled her hips and pinned her arms to the bed.

“And I thought you had learned your lesson on obedience,” he said, his grasp upon her rough.

“You startled me,” she replied, but the gleam in his eyes suggested he was not in a forgiving mood.

“I suggest you cease your defiance. You’ll not want to see the sort of punishment I mete out if I have to chase you about the room.”

Subdued, she made no further attempt to resist. Her heart thumped madly as she watched him grab two of the ropes and tie them about each of her wrists. She gasped when he secured the ropes tightly. She knew she had angered him last night when he awoke to find himself tethered to his own bed, but that had not stopped his arousal. And he had spent, albeit after a long while. Did he truly feel the need to avenge what had happened?

After binding the remaining two ropes around each of her ankles, he surveyed her. “Seem familiar?”

She had tied each of his limbs to a bedpost but at the level of the mattress. Her limbs were pulled toward the tops of the bedposts, a much less comfortable position. And he had been clothed, whereas she was stark naked. She wondered if he would apply the same salve to her that she had applied to him, one that reduced the sensitivity in

his cock and stalled his climax so that she could take him at her leisure.

“If you had not forced your attentions upon me in the library...” she tried.

He ran a hand over the swell of her breast. Her nipple hardened beneath his touch.

“Ah, but you enjoyed it. And spent most beautifully if I recall.”

She suppressed a groan at the truth of his words. Her body would not behave and adhere to any reason. It continued to be aroused by the insufferable nobleman. As if cognizant of this fact, he placed a hand upon her upper thigh and gazed between her legs.

“What a wanton cunnie,” he remarked. “Is it always so hungry?”

But for her concern as to what he intended to do with her, she might have been easily titillated by his attention there. Her cunnie pulsed, and she attempted to close her legs to reduce her exposure, but the ropes held her fast. He flicked the nub at the apex of her folds. She tensed against her restraints.

“How did the silver clip feel upon this little flesh?” he asked as he stroked it with his finger.

“Uncomfortable,” she answered.

“Arousing?”

She said nothing. He pushed the top part of his finger between her.

“Wet already? Or were you wet from before? Did you enjoy dining at my table wearing nothing but stockings and the chains?”

She cursed him in her head.

As if reading her mind, he said archly, “Some gratitude is in order.”

She stared at him. The man missed little.

“Thank you!” she cried when he prompted her with a pinch of her clitoris.

“For what?”

“For letting me dine...naked...at your table.”

“And for the jewelry.”

She nodded. Perhaps it was wiser to facilitate a quick end to his plans for the evening.

He returned to stroking her. “Did you like the way it looked upon your body?”

“Yes.”

“I want you to close your eyes and remember how you looked and how it felt.”

She did as he instructed and saw the thin silver chain dangling from her nipples, draping over her abdomen, and curving between her thighs. It clung to her by way of three small clamps affixed to her nipples and clit. His thumb rubbing against the latter, however, soon distracted all other thoughts.

“How is it you can become so very wet?” he marveled. “Is it because you are a most wanton wench, Miss Primrose?”

Delighting at the warm sensations generated by his fondling, she did not answer at first. He slapped the inside of her thigh.

“Yes!”

“Are you a naughty little whore, Miss Primrose?”

His caresses intensified.

“Y-yes,” she replied.

“A shameful doxy. A bawdy trollop.”

“Yes.”

“Say it.”

She stared at him. There was more than lust radiating from his eyes. Better to acquiesce to his demands, she decided.

“I am a bawdy trollop.”

“And?”

“A wanton whore.”

“And a wicked harlot.”

“And a wicked harlot.”

“A depraved slut.”

She swallowed with difficulty, but forced the words from her mouth. “A depraved slut.”

He rewarded her by sliding two of his fingers into her quim, rubbing that sensitive spot on the backside of her clitoris. Wonderful pulses radiated from there, making her shiver and writhe, though the ropes constrained her movements. As the pleasure deepened, however, expanding in depth and breadth, he withdrew. She gasped at the deprivation.

He walked over to the sideboard where he had placed a number of articles. “I have a number of items that will remind you of the Red Chrysanthemum.”

She knew he had had a trunkful of implements brought from the inn where she resided, the site of her vengeance upon Nicholas and

William Edelton, but it was not what she wanted to hear. At the Red Chrysanthemum, she was Mistress Primrose, a dominant one. She was not accustomed to being on the receiving end of the instruments in the trunk and upon the sideboard. Earlier in her sojourn with *his lordship*, she had tried to assert her customary position of Mistress Primrose, but he had soon made it clear he wanted no part of the submissive role. She tried to lift her head to see which of them he had brought out, but he held only a candle.

“I understand you are quite the artist, Miss Primrose.”

What the devil did he mean by that? she wondered.

“Your body makes for a lovely canvass,” he said, approaching with the candle.

She sucked in her breath. She had applied melted wax several times to Nicholas and William. She wondered how this man knew?

He ran his knuckles lightly and slowly along the side of her ribs, across her belly, and along the inside of her thigh. If he meant to drop the candlewax upon her, she would he did it soon! Instead, he lowered his head and captured one of her nipples in his mouth. He sucked it gently, then lapped it several times with his tongue. Straightening, he gazed at the extended, glistening nub. He rolled it between his thumb and forefinger.

“They are perfect little things for tormenting, are they not?”

She closed her eyes, remembering how she had tortured his nipples with licking, sucking, and biting. Her eyes flew open at the searing heat upon her belly. She cried out as the scorching liquid slid past her hip before hardening. The bleeder! He need not have poured so much upon her! He tipped the candle over her breast next. When it splashed upon the nipple, already sensitized by his mouth, she screamed. As he had predicted, her cry rang from the rafters. She gulped in the air.

“You’ll wake the dogs,” he said gruffly.

*Damn your dogs*, she thought but did not voice it aloud, knowing he would not appreciate such a comment. Her last invective had netted her several spansks while bent over the stone railing of the veranda. She gritted her teeth, dreading the next application of the candlewax. He held the candle over her other nipple but clamped a hand upon her mouth to muffle her scream before pouring. Her back bowed off the bed as the hot wax hit her, but she was more frightened than pained for he had lowered his hand before tipping

the candle over. If the candle had been closer, the heat of the wax might have burned her on contact.

All of a sudden, she was filled with fear that she would not survive the night.

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Holding the candle, Spencer paused. He looked at the hardened wax adorning her body. Against her darker, unblemished skin, the white wax had an erotic appeal. He thought about applying the candle to her cunnie. According to one of the reports Mr. Fields had submitted, Miss Primrose had ladled hot wax onto the cock and cods of his poor younger brother. Thus, he ought not hesitate to do the same with her. It was his intent, after all, to repay every bit of pain she had inflicted upon Nicholas.

He still had his hand over her mouth, and her eyes were wide with concern. He withdrew his hand and went to put away the candle. The patrons of the Red Chrysanthemum made use of a word that, when invoked, signaled to the dominant one that the pain was too much to bear. He had not set up such a word for Miss Primrose because he had not thought he could honor it, but he understood the wisdom of establishing such a mechanism.

No. She deserved no such courtesy. Nicholas had a safety word, but Mr. Fields had reported that she did not seem to always hear it. When she did, and ceased her heinous deed, she would berate Nicholas for requiring the use of the word, calling him weak, a milksop, and a side pocket. Spencer reached for the flogger on the sideboard and sauntered back to the bed. The sight of her with limbs pulled skyward, her cunnie indecently exposed, heated his blood. He felt a little ashamed at what he was capable of and had to remind himself that Nicholas might not be the same man for some time because of her.

“Have you used a nine-tail before?” she asked, concerned.

“I served aboard a ship of His Majesty’s Royal Navy,” he replied. “The cat often saw the light of day.”

“But officers do not administer the punishment.”

“I was a boatswain’s mate for some time before ascending the ranks.”

She seemed incredulous. “You were a sailor? I thought you a nobleman.”

“My family did not always hold the esteemed position it does today. My father inherited the marquisal title from my third uncle. But what do you know of ships and punishment?”

“My father was a midshipman.”

“Is he still at sea?”

“I know not. I’ve not seen him in over a decade.”

“Your mother?”

“She ran off with my father. My sister and I were raised by my grandfather until his death.”

The loss of a man to support the family might explain her descent into prostitution.

“Why did you choose to be a seaman?” she hastily asked, as if avoiding further attention about herself.

He looked down at the flogger. It was a strange thing to hold while having a *tête-à-tête*, but nothing of his current situation was ordinary. “I did not choose it from desire. My brother was pressed into service. I took his place.”

He felt her gaze upon him.

“A noble act. Your brother is fortunate to have had your self-sacrifice.”

He glanced at her sharply. “Alas, I am not able to save him from all manner of treachery.”

He unfurled the tails and saw her look of confusion. She was no doubt wondering what she had said to alter his mood. He landed the flogger against her thigh.

“Ah!” she cried, mostly in surprise, for he used but half his strength.

“You are fortunate this flogger is devoid of knots.”

He lashed it against the side of her rump.

“Have you seen the back of a man who has been flogged at sea?” he asked as he flayed the tails lightly upon her ribs. “When it is done, he looks like a cut of raw meat.”

He whipped the tips against her breast. She gasped at the sting. He flogged her cunnie. She screamed and pulled against the ropes, making the bed creak. His cock throbbed. He struck her once more upon the inner thigh before lowering the nine-tail. He agitated his thumb against her clitoris until she relaxed. She was very wet.

“Would you like to spend?” he asked.

“Yes,” she murmured.

He worked his fingers into her. She groaned and made a sound like purring. As he fondled her, the heat inside his own body grew. The feel of her writhing against his hand, the sounds of her gasping and cooing, the sight of her flesh flush from where the flogger had struck were beyond provocative. He knew he could not deny his own need, but he was not done with her. He withdrew from her cunt and went to the sideboard, returning with two silver toned balls in his palm. The balls slid easily into her wet quim.

Taking a step back, he applied the flogger to her once more. Her body jerked, and she gasped at the sting, then moaned as the balls moved inside of her. He continued to land the nine-tails upon her. The balls must have been producing a pleasurable sensation for she had begun to rock her body to and fro. He turned the flogger around and rubbed the handle between her thighs.

“Oh!” she gasped. “Oh! Oh!”

“Do not presume to spend without permission or there will be hell to pay.”

He smacked the inside of her thigh with his hand.

“Please, may I spend?” she whispered.

He pressed the handle against the clitoris.

“Please, please...your lordship.”

“Is it customary for the submissive one to be allowed to spend before her master has done so?”

She grunted. “Then let me have your cock...please.”

With one hand, he undid his fall. His cock pointed hungrily at her. She moved her hips up and down in a thrusting motion.

“Please,” she urged.

He stroked his cock. “Be wanting something in your cunt?”

She craned her neck to view his cock. “If you would procure a sheath...”

But he had no patience to seek one. He slid the handle of the flogger between her slit. Her eyes widened, but he could feel the muscles of her cunt grasping at the handle as he withdrew it. He inserted it once more. Her head fell back. Her fingers dug into her palm as he fucked her with the handle of the flogger.

“Something amiss, Miss Primrose?”

“The b-balls,” she said through clenched teeth.

He ground the handle in deeper. Pumping it in and out of her, he could see her climax looming, her anticipation reaching a fevered pitch. Before she could overcome the peak, however, he abruptly stopped. She emitted a wail.

“Please, my lord, please let me spend,” she said when she realized his deliberation.

Ignoring her, he left the handle inside of her and stood back to admire the tails protruding from her cunnie. Walking around to the side of the bed, he mounted and straddled her torso. He pushed her teats together, surrounding his cock with their fullness. Slowly, he began to saw his cock between her breasts. Requiring lubrication, he repositioned his cock at her mouth. She took him in, and he groaned at the magnificent sensation. He held the back of her head and moved her up and down his shaft, but her movement was limited. Moving back, he resumed fucking her teats. His ardor already at the boiling point, he spent. With a roar, he sprayed his seed upon her, decorating her collar and neck. Some landed in her hair and beneath her jaw. He pulled himself from her and saw the remainder of his seed glistening upon her bosom. After a violent shudder, he climbed off the bed, replaced his fall, and resumed his place at the foot of the bed.

“May I spend now, your lordship?”

He looked at her cunnie, stuffed with the balls and the flogger.

“Not yet, my pet.”

He found her clitoris and stroked it while pulling and pushing the handle with his other hand.

“Oh God! My God!” she screamed. “Please! Let me spend!”

“No.”

“Please!!”

“No.”

But he deviously increased his motions. Harder. Faster. She strained but could not stem the tide. It slammed into her. Her wail pierced the rafters. His dogs, which he kept in the stable for he knew not how they would receive a stranger, began to howl. Her paroxysm shook the bed, and he thought she might break free of her restraints. She shuddered and trembled for quite some time, and the sounds from her were akin to crying.

While she recovered, he wiped the handle of the flogger, then retrieved the balls from her cunnie. He loosened the ropes and untied

them. Her wrists and ankles were red from where the ropes had chafed. He knew her limbs would be plenty sore. She was still breathing heavily after he had returned all the articles to the trunk. He was tempted to provide her a kerchief to cleanse herself but refrained from the courtesy, reminding himself of her set-down. Without word, he departed her bedchamber. She had spent without permission, but he would tend to that transgression tomorrow.

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Beatrice stared at the note his lordship had left her in the morning. The garments he had left upon the chair were those of a scullery maid. Though she preferred the attire to the chains and clamps he had made her wear yesterday, she was not happy to read his list of her duties for the morning, among them: scrubbing the floors, washing the bed linen, and preparing a light meal for the early afternoon. With an aggravated sigh, she helped herself to the breakfast he had left her. He must have boiled the eggs and brewed the coffee himself. She grudgingly admired his industriousness. She doubted few men of his stature would have known how to prepare a cup of tea if their lives depended upon it.

He had spared his brother a life at sea. Judging from his dispassionate tone, she did not think he spoke to win her good opinion. Indeed, she rather thought he would have cast aside any admiration from her as if it were the pox. Despite his treatment of her, she sensed he had a chivalrous penchant. The flogging from the night had hurt, but she was sure he was capable of inflicting much greater pain. She shivered as the memories taunted her mind. The pain and pleasure mixed together had been...exquisite. She wondered if he had decided to forego her punishment for spending without permission. And if he had not? She pressed her thighs together.

Finishing the breakfast, she proceeded to dress. The clothes consisted of her own shift, garters and stockings, stays that laced on top of her garments, petticoats, a drab and grey skirt, an apron, and...drawers. Beatrice held them up. She had never worn drawers before. They were quite scandalous. The drawers had a slit down the middle, she supposed for ease of using the commode. After donning the clothes, she wrapped her hair in a kerchief. The pattens that had been provided proved too small for her feet, so she slipped on her

own shoes. The skirts came to just above her ankles and revealed her worn and faded shoes.

Taking the instructions with her, she first headed in the direction of the east wing before beginning her chores. Why would he not wish her to see the east wing? Did it contain jewels and treasures that he thought she might pilfer? As no servants remained, the curtains in the east wing remained shut, rendering the halls dark, but enough sunlight peered around the curtains and through the cracks that she did not require the use of candles or lamps. She opened doors to mostly bedchambers. In one particularly large bedchamber, she saw a painting similar to the one she had seen downstairs of a husband and wife. They both appeared rather stern, especially the man. She suspected him to be the father of his lordship as they bore much of the same features in the set of the jaw, the size of the brow, and the shape of the eyes and nose. The woman would thus be his lordship's mother.

Next, she wandered into the anteroom of another bedchamber. It, too, had a painting. Of a young man. Upon seeing it, her heart stalled. She stepped to the window and threw open the curtains, flooding the room with light. Her skin crawled. It was Nicholas Edelton. Or someone who bore his remarkable likeness. The man in the painting was younger, but the posture, with its subtle jaunty hauteur, was too familiar to her. How could this be? She recalled the painting in the other bedchamber. Nicholas looked nothing like the man in that painting. There might be some similarity to the woman, but not enough for her to be certain that a blood relation existed. But then why would a painting of Nicholas Edelton exist here?

She combed through the rest of the room. In the bedchamber, she found another painting of a boy beside his dog. The boy might have been a younger Nicholas. She found articles of grooming, clothes, and shoes. And a snuffbox. Nicholas was fond of snuff. He owned one just like the one she now held with an opal upon the cover. But the hinge on his had broken. Holding her breath, she lifted the lid. The snuffbox came apart in twain. The stays she wore suddenly felt constricting.

If this was the bedchamber of Nicholas Edelton, then who was *his lordship*? Was he an Edelton, too? Recalling that he reminded her of William Edelton, she now believed they were all of a family. Her heart began to race. Would Nicholas Edelton be expected here?

Would his cousin, William? His lordship had made no mention of them before. Did his lordship know that they had patronized the Red Chrysanthemum? Was it some fantastical coincidence that she should be servicing another member of the family?

No. His lordship had referenced Nicholas once before, the day he had presented his proposition to her and Madame Devereaux. But Beatrice could not recall his exact words. Her mind continued to swirl as she went to the next bedchamber, expecting to find a portrait of William. Instead, she found the portrait of his lordship. It was not the bedchamber she had seen him occupy in the west wing near her room. Judging by the articles and wardrobe, this was definitely his lordship's bedchamber.

She found no other rooms of interest and proceeded downstairs, where she came upon a music room, a study, a conservatory, and a parlor with several card tables and another painting above the fireplace. The husband and wife were the same, and beside them stood two young men, one of whom looked to be less than ten years of age, the other some four years older. His lordship and Nicholas Edelton. She was sure of it. They were *brothers*. Her heart stalled once more. What did it matter that they were brothers? she reasoned to herself. That was not cause for distress.

But her mind would not quiet itself. She went back into the study and opened the drawers of the writing table. She found a seal and correspondence addressed to His Lordship, the Marquess of Carey. The name was unfamiliar to her, but she now recalled Nicholas once mentioning a brother from whom he could secure an advance upon his allowance. She heard a sound outside and quickly closed the drawers. She hastened from the east wing.

Peering out a window, she saw no sign of his lordship. Perhaps she had heard an animal. With trembling hands, she pulled out his lordship's note. She had best attempt one of these chores before his lordship returned. She found the kitchen and decided to slice ham, bread, and cheese for a luncheon. While in the kitchen, she decided to make preparations for dinner. Finding root vegetables, onions, and dried herbs, she decided to roast a chicken. When Aunt Sophie could no longer afford to employ a cook, all the women in the household took turns preparing meals. The hard part was catching and handling the chicken.

The chores kept Beatrice busy, and though her mind would dwell on her discovery, she had no opportunity to worry herself overmuch as to its significance. She had finished scrubbing the scullery and was headed out to dispose of the dirty water when she heard a horse outside, signaling the arrival of his lordship. He had taken the horse into the stable himself. She dumped the water and returned inside. She found him in the vestibule to inform him that she had prepared a meal as requested. As always, he looked smart in his attire. He had on his riding boots and a tailored coat that fit tight about his broad shoulders, and he had done a tolerable job on his cravat.

He looked over her appearance. "Is that blood upon your apron?"

She glanced down. "I took the liberty of starting a chicken for dinner, my lord."

He stepped toward her and removed a feather from her hair. "That was not part of the instructions."

"No, but dinner must be cooked."

He nodded and looked her over once more. "Have you finished everything on the list?"

"I have set some cuts of meat with bread and cheese in the dining room, and have the bed linen to wash."

As she spoke, she scanned his features and wondered that she did not take note of his resemblance to William Edelton earlier.

"Very good. Have you eaten yourself?"

"Perhaps later. Shall you require assistance with your dress, my lord? I am sure I could prove as sufficient a valet as you do an abigail."

He raised his brows but, upon examining her disheveled state, replied, "Finish your chores first. When you are done, cleanse yourself. You may discard the maid's livery. Then you may serve as my valet. I shall await you in my chambers."

Disappointed, she watched him walk towards the east wing. She was impatient to confirm his identity, and only he could do it. She had thought about surprising him with her knowledge. His reaction might tell her much, but then he might ask how she had known and guess that she had been in the east wing. He had not been forthcoming with who he was, and she wondered at the reason for

his circumspection. But she would have it out of him before the day was done.

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Spencer looked out the window of his study at the rain clouds in the distance. He could have eaten at the coffeehouse in town, but he knew he had directed Miss Primrose to prepare him a repast and would not have her efforts go in vain. She had not appeared resentful at having to perform the duties of a scullery or laundry maid. That she was industrious enough to catch and feather a chicken surprised and impressed him. Having once lived without his current luxuries, he appreciated the hard work.

Walking over to his writing table, he opened the top drawer to store the documents his banker had provided. He pulled out a letter he had begun drafting the day before. The sheet of paper was lying face down in the drawer, and he did not recall having placed it so. He put the letter on the top of the table to remind himself to finish it before the day was over. Shutting the drawer, he went to the dining room to partake of what Miss Primrose had prepared for him.

The morning away from her had been beneficial. He felt his humanity restored. Lust and anger were a dangerous combination in her presence. What he had done—dropping the hot candlewax upon her, flogging her breasts and inner thighs, and fucking her with the handle of the nine-tail—he had never imagined he could do. What sort of man was capable of such things? Worse still, what sort of man would then be excited by the truculence? But seeing that *she* was aroused had made the experience undeniably titillating.

He saved some of the food for her, finished reading *The Times*, and penned the letter to his colleague in the House of Lords. As he affixed his seal to the letter, he realized he had not had to pull the curtains open earlier. Had the housemaid forgotten to close them before she left? He would have to have a word with his housekeeper for the maid responsible, despite her fine references, was not one the better employees. She was pretty, however, and he suspected that her beauty had improved her performance in the eyes of her male employers. He had seen her cast flirtatious glances at Nicholas a number of times. That Nicholas, who never failed to notice a pretty

piece of skirt, had shown no interest in her was a testament to the influence Miss Primrose had over him.

Spencer headed upstairs to his chambers to await her. His body warmed in anticipation. Nor did he have long to wait.

“Enter,” he responded to the knock at the door.

Miss Primrose had on a thin silk banyan that hung *open* in front. He could see part of each breast, her navel, and that patch of hair between her legs. His cock was instantly erect. She must have bathed for her hair was wet. She had most of it wrapped in a turban.

“You made no mention of what I was to wear,” she said. “Your lordship.”

She slid from the banyan. Her nipples were adorned with rings of silver filigree. He resisted the impulse to grope and maul her. Instead, he turned to face the mirror. She came up behind him and assisted him out of his coat.

“Your lordship does not want for fine tailors,” she said.

He kept his gaze at the mirror and reached for his cravat.

“Allow me, my lord.”

He turned toward her and attempted to focus on something other than her nipples, but the dark brown coloring of her areolas still fascinated him, and her breasts had the perfect shape and size, being neither too large nor too small for her body. When his gaze did drift, it centered around her pelvis, upon that slight swell beneath the navel, and that thatch of hair covering the bliss below. She intended to excite him, he knew, or she would not have attached the jewelry to her nipples. It was futile on his part to resist, of course, but he did not want to give in too quickly.

She had his cravat undone fairly quickly for he had not chosen an intricate knot. He untied his collar and pulled it free. He had had plans for Miss Primrose, but now that she had shown up in the buff but for the banyan and nipple rings, he doubted that he would have the patience to broach them. He fingered one of the ornaments as she unbuttoned his waistcoat.

“Were these intended for such a use?” he asked.

“A friend of Madame Devereaux is a skilled jeweler who is exceptionally *creative* in his craft.”

His valet would have stood behind him to remove the waistcoat, but Miss Primrose remained in front of him as she pulled the garment down his arms. In doing so, she had to lean into him. He

could smell the soap she had used in her bath. His waistcoat stalled at his wrists, and she looked up at him, her lips tantalizingly close. He felt his breath catch. Why not take her now?

But she slid the waistcoat from him and retreated.

Admiring the article of clothing, she said, "How far you've risen if indeed you were a common seaman."

"My family was always of polite society and of a distinguished bloodline. My father was greatly esteemed. My service in the Navy was an aberration."

"I did not think a member of the gentry could be pressed into service."

He sat down on the settee nearby and propped one leg upon the footstool. She knelt and assisted him from his boots.

"My brother angered a press-gang. I know not the particulars, but they made him take the King's shilling."

"Your brother was not a landsman?"

"It made no difference to them, and they honored no exemptions. We had declared war on France."

"This was a younger brother you saved from service upon the high seas?"

"Yes," he replied, thinking that the Royal Navy might have been kinder to Nicholas than she.

She unbuttoned the cuffs of his pantaloons and worked off his stockings.

"Where is your brother now?"

"In Belgium."

She pushed aside the footstool and fit herself between his legs. His pulse quickened as she reached for the buttons of his waistband.

"Belgium? For what purpose?"

She had unbuttoned his fall and pulled out his stiffened cock. She closed a hand around it.

"For his health and well-being."

She rubbed her hand up and down his shaft. He watched her movement as if mesmerized, his cock relishing the smoothness of her hand. He inhaled sharply every time her thumb brushed the underside of the head. Leaning down, she licked and lapped at the area. She pushed her other hand into his pantaloons and gently tugged at his scrotum. He closed his eyes at the wonderful sensations created by her craft.

“Your brother is sickly?” she murmured against his cock, pumping her hand down his entire length.

“In spirits.”

“Oh?”

He gasped when she tugged a little harder at his sac, but it was a pleasant discomfort.

“And the company of a noble older brother or friends or cousin would not suffice?” she asked when he had made no reply. “Surely a day at the races, a good brandy, or a pretty wench would put him in good humor?”

She had listed some of Nicholas’s favorite pastimes, and he had attempted all of them without success.

“Some distance was required,” he said, then groaned as she varied her pumping motion with a spiral action.

“Distance?”

He gasped. She had pressed a finger between his scrotum and his anus. The firework of pleasure was unlike any he had ever felt before.

“Your brother enjoys traveling?” she asked as she continued to stimulate this marvelous place.

“Not at all,” he murmured as he closed his eyes and leaned his head against the back of the settee, surrendering himself to the waves of pleasure. “But I insisted he go.”

“Why?”

Her vigor increased. He gripped the settee with both hands. *Damnation, this was nothing short of marvelous.*

“Why?” she repeated, slowing.

His climax had begun to build. He needed her to increase, not reduce, her pacing.

“To free him from the clutches of a vile whore.”

She stopped altogether and seemed in deep thought, but she resumed her ministrations soon enough. He groaned when she put her mouth upon him. He was drawn quickly to the edge, his whole body tensing at the impending release.

“But you did not accompany him?” she asked in between long, hard sucking. She slowed once more when he did not respond.

“I had matters to attend,” he said.

She rewarded him by taking his cock deep into her throat before releasing him and asking, “Did you know this whore? Did you wish to sample her yourself?”

“Yesss.”

“And is she—was she to your liking?”

He was going to spend in her mouth once more. “Yes. No. That was not my purpose.”

“It was not your intent to fuck her for your own? To wallow in the same depravity as your brother? Were you envious of him?”

Her hands plied him with feverish intensity.

“No! I mean—meant to—give her a set-down.”

His muscles contracted, his orgasm upon him, but before he could spend his seed and expel the tension, she squeezed his cock and covered its head tightly with her other palm. Stunned, he stared at the constriction of his ejaculate as a strange discomfort replaced the expected euphoria. He thrust his hips, hoping to move his cock and reclaim his orgasm, but she held fast till it was certain the wind had left his sails. When she removed her hands, only a little of his fluid seeped out. She rose to her feet, her lips a grim line. He was too shocked to move.

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Beatrice trembled on the inside, perhaps outwardly as well. A small voice questioned the wisdom of what she had done, though it was not certain he knew she had intentionally deprived him of the ecstasy he was expecting, but she was too livid to care. He had intended to provide her a set-down. Her. A set-down. On behalf of his brother! She almost laughed at the offensive absurdity of it. She wanted to tell him as much, but would he be humbled by the truth or would he prove as callous as his brother and cousin?

Muttering an oath, he looked up at her. She considered feigning ignorance at what had happened but doubted she could sound sincere.

“And have you accomplished your set-down?” she asked with as much nonchalance as she could muster though she quaked inside.

“Not yet...but what interest is it of yours?”

“Am I not myself a vile whore and thus a kindred spirit of hers?” she could not resist.

He narrowed his eyes at her. He reached for his now softened cock as if to ascertain it had sustained no damage.

“What manner of set-down do you intend?” she inquired.

He searched her face. “What did *you* intend just now?”

She bit her lower lip. A poor lie might prove as revealing as the truth.

“My lord?” she stalled.

He stood. His hand shot toward her and grasped the back of her neck. She gasped at the uncomfortable grip.

“That was no accident,” he snarled. “You’re much too skilled a slut. I know your tricks. I know how you torment men, how you deny them.”

“How? How do you know?”

His nostrils flared, and she wondered if she was dealing with more beast than man.

“It is of no consequence,” he said. “I will have satisfaction.”

He pulled her head into him and crushed her mouth with his. She flailed in surprise and attempted to push him away. She wanted him to admit who he was, admit that he thought her the vile whore. She wanted him to speak the set-down he intended. But the more she struggled, the harder he ground his mouth into hers as if he meant to swallow her whole. His breath was heavy upon her face, and she wondered if there would be enough air for her. He released her head in order to contain her hands.

After Charlotte’s rape, she had attempted to learn what a woman could do to defend herself against assault. Recollecting, she brought up her knee. It struck him in his bollocks. He roared but did not release her. In dismay, she realized the imprudence of her action for it only angered him further. He glared at her, then threw her to the settee. She fell upon it with her face in the pillows. His hand pressed upon her back, pinning her down. She felt him upon one knee between her legs, one of which dangled from the settee.

“Brute!” she spat before anger and fear threatened to close her throat. He was no different than Nicholas and William. And she had, foolishly, thought he might be of better character.

He pushed her into the cushions. “Did you not agree to be my whore for a sennight? Did you not take my money willfully to be my slut?”

Though it was futile, she persisted in her struggles, detesting the fact that he was stronger than her, but most of all, fearing that she might suffer a similar fate as her sister—at the hands of another Edelton. His hips leaned toward her and she felt his erection against her rump. Panic set in. She had denied him his satisfaction, and now he meant to take it.

“You’re of the same despicable mettle as your brother and cousin!”

She felt him stiffen. Realizing she had said more than she ought, she ceased. She was aware of the blood pounding her ears. She could not see his reaction and desperately wanted to know what he might be thinking, if she had infuriated him further or if she might have surprised him enough into releasing her. His hand upon her, however, remained. After what seemed an eternity, she sensed him bending toward her ear.

“You went into the east wing, didn’t you?”

His ominous question made her tremble, and she wished she could transport herself elsewhere in space or time. If only she could be anywhere, anywhere but here with him.

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