

# Rogeringham

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## scipioparkins

Erotica / Incest/Taboo

Complete



**Rogeringham**

**scipioparkins**

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# Summary

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## Description:

Oh Dear! My bodice seemes to have been ripped!

# 1. Rogeringham

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## **Rogeringham**

Or “Oh dear! My bodice appears to be ripped!”

*This is a story concerning the relationships of an English aristocratic family sometime around 1810 (vaguely) — the time of the Napoleonic Wars. It could quite easily have been called Brotherton, or Sisterton, or more appropriately Motherton, if you were so inclined. It is a shameless effort on my part to use my vague knowledge of history and moderate story-telling abilities to cash in on the interest in the English Regency period off the back of the popular TV series of a similar(ish) name Bridgerton. At least there isn't an annoyingly condescending gossip columnist voiced by Julie Andrews, driving this one, the gossipers are there, they're just not controlling the narrative.*

*If incest or historical stories are not your thing (and it's long as well), you might want to look at something else. On the other hand, you could try it and see, after all, what's the worst that could happen?*

*Most of this was written before the release of the second season of the Netflix series, and watching it while I have been finishing this off has made me reflect on what I written so far, and so far, I am happy with the choices I have made. there were some tweaks, but not many.*

*All characters are over the age of 18, though references are made to the characters' younger selves, all of the sexual acts referred to take place when they are adults.*

*Some notes on pronunciation — 'Rogeringham' is pronounced "rogering 'em", the word 'mama' is pronounced 'mum-mah!' and the word "ma'am" as 'mam'.*

*It is a very long read, but I hope you will find it entertaining and worth your perseverance. And if you do enjoy it, please leave a comment letting me know what you thought.*

*Edit: when I first submitted this for publication, inevitably errors had crept into the text — mea culpa — I believe that I have sorted most of them in this updated version, though there may still be some errant commas, I would ask you then, gentle reader, to accept this as it is, warts and all, 'cos I ain't changing it any more.*

**1. *I return from Spain and set about my life's work...***

The little olive-skinned whore with the long tumbling mane of black hair and huge bobbies was energetically throwing herself up and down on my hard, throbbing prick, babbling away in Portuguese, throwing her arms about, while those glorious tits of hers bounced up and down in a mesmerising motion. It was a fabulous show and a wondrous fuck but something caught my eye, just past the rise and fall of her hips.

Barclay, my valet, looked in at me through the open doorway. That meant it was something important, he would never have interrupted us for anything trivial, his just looking in on us like that was the equivalent of a fan-fared entrance.

I let her finish and bring herself off, even though I didn't spend myself, and she sank down onto the bed beside me, murmuring soft words — still in Portuguese, but I was more interested in what Barclay had to say.

A half of an hour later, Barclay had begun packing my belongings, and I was on my way to my colonel's headquarters at the local fortress.



“It is a shame about your father, William.” Colonel Harris said, “My condolences. We were at school together, though he was a couple of years older than me. He was a good man.

“This must be a great blow to you, coming so soon after the er\_” He indicated his side vaguely. What he meant was the wound that I was recovering from — hence the little Portuguese whore doing all the bouncing up and down — from where a French Dragoon had tried to skewer me, raking his blade along my ribs, after I had been thrown from my own horse.

The colonel continued, “It would be entirely inappropriate to have a newly inherited duke fighting in the ranks, so I assume you will return home to set your affairs in order?”

I nodded. As far as I was concerned, I was done with being a soldier in Wellesley’s army. As the heir of Lord Henry Rogeringham, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton, I needed to make my way home to England, to my mother and sisters, and take up my duties there. Even as we were speaking, Barclay was packing my trunks, arranging the sale of items that were no longer required — such as my horses —

with my agent, and finding us passage for England as soon as possible.

“Leithbridge-Stewart of the Light Company has been after my captaincy for a while, I would like to let him purchase it, if that is all the same, sir? He is a good officer, and conducts himself well. He is also quite capable of taking up my administrative duties within the regiment.” As captain of the grenadier company, I had a role in the battalion’s administration as well as my normal duties. The colonel nodded his agreement.

“Well, you will be missed\_” he waved the letter at me, “Your Grace. But you should be gone as soon as you can.”

Three dreadful weeks later — including a full week dodging what was left of the French navy in the tempestuous Bay of Biscay — I was entering the stable yard at our town house in Mayfair. It was pissing down. It was late, and my horse — a pretty chestnut mare that I had bought in Portsmouth — had thrown a shoe, and was limping badly, so I had had to walk her the last three miles. Barclay was a day behind with my baggage, I was cold and my side ached, I wanted nothing more than a hot bath.

One of the grooms took the horse, and I made sure that he took care of her before I entered the house, making my way into the hallway.

I approached the drawing room, and as I reached for the handle, the door opened and I saw a young man standing in the doorway, looking at me in a mixture of surprise and challenge.

“Who the deuce are you, sir?!” He asked, seeing me dripping wet, my uniform muddy from the road and looking like I had been chased through every hedge from here to Portsmouth.

“And who the deuce are you to ask? *Sir!*”

“Do not take that tone with me, sir!” He said angrily, “I am James Barthomley, Esquire sir!”

“Well, Mr James Barthomley,” I kept my tone even, “I happen to be Captain Sir William Rogeringham, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton, master of this house and you sir, happen to be in my way.”

I was just about to advise the young man, who looked to be about eighteen, that as I had just arrived back in town and did not yet have the services of a second to call on, I would be most obliged if he would meet me to satisfy my honour in two days’

time, when he almost fell over backwards, fawning and apologising.

“Your Grace! Forgive me please!” He stepped out of the way, quickly and I was able to make my way into a room, that was apparently filled with women. More importantly, there was a large, roaring fire towards which I made my way.

The occupants of the room exploded in delight at my home-coming, and I was mobbed by the pastel and grey shaded community, before the chaos resolved itself into six female forms, most of them frantically scattered about — making space for me to sit down, and disappearing to summon servants.

The only one who did not move, remaining seated, and looking stunning, was my mother, Helena.

I stood in front of her and bowed. “My service ma’am, and my sadness at your loss.”

The lady who offered me her hand was actually my step-mother, and was as fine a looking woman as any I have ever laid eyes upon. Despite marrying my father and supplying him with five daughters, she had maintained her figure. She was tall, five feet and eight inches in height, with a good skin, and clear

grey eyes. She drank little, and like myself enjoyed most things in moderation and often walked in our grounds both here in Mayfair and at our family home in Buckinghamshire. Mother alone, of all of the women there, wore black as a sign of mourning my father. But it was a dress which fitted her form and although it was 'widow's weeds' that she wore, she was breath-taking.

I may have gazed just a touch too long or perhaps a little hard — which would have been understandable, because she was so beautiful, and because I was so enamoured of her. My father had brought Helena into my life not long after his first wife, my own mother, died, when I was three. To me, she was as much a mother as the one I had lost, though she was but fifteen years older than me. While she lived with us and before I left to go to school, she and I formed a deep affection for each other, as I did with the succession of sisters that she added to our family.

Despite eventually being sent off to school, I never lost my regard for my step-mother, in fact as I grew more aware of how the world functioned, I realised that among women she was an epitome, in character, in intellect and — I later came to

understand — in her beauty. In short, I fell into a deep lust for my step-mother.

Of course, it never found an outlet. My father was a jealous man, and a crack shot. I got shipped off to the army where I traded my way through various commissions over the years until my recent captaincy of the grenadier company, and senior captain of the 112<sup>th</sup> Foot, *The North Staffordshire Regiment*.

I have never wanted for anything, money has never been short, nor has there been any dearth of female companionship. I have been blessed with saturnine good looks, and, if I am honest, a couple of scars over the years have only served to heighten the strength of my face. Success with the fairer sex has never been a problem. Even conducting myself in war has come easily (I have made my way where other men have succumbed). But in all this time, the way that I felt about my step-mother has never lessened. I want her! I want her badly. Now, I decided, I could finally do something about it.

Do I sound callous, unfeeling? Racing home so that I can press myself upon the widow of my recently departed father, is that wrong? Who the hell cares? I am Sir William Rogeringham, and in this

household, I stand as God's appointed upon the Earth. This is now my house, and to a greater extent I can do what I bloody well want to.

My step-mother made room so that I could sit next to her and beside the fire. A foot-man removed the fire-screen which had been placed there so that the heat did not mottle my mother's fair skin, allowing the crackling flames to warm me. He took my great-coat and uniform coat to dry them and I surrendered my boots for slippers so that they too could be cleaned and dried.

Other servants fetched soup and bread and at my request, a tot of rum. My sisters sat quietly around me as I ate, waiting to ask their elder brother all about his time with the army in the Peninsular.

I took a moment to look around me, Helena, my step-mother, sat now upon my right-hand, beyond her, Charlotte, the eldest — four years younger than me. Across from Charlotte, and still as beautiful a pair of book-ends as you will ever see, the twins — Margaret and Louise, six years younger than I. Moving back around the circle towards the fire place, my eye fell upon the form of the elegant Caroline, five years my junior. Next to her was the still nervous looking form of Mr James Barthomley,

and next to him, directly opposite me, was the youngest of them all, the delightful, just turned eighteen, Hermione.

“Mr Barthomley?” He sat up straight as I addressed him. Respect, always an admirable quality, I thought, though I suspect (hoped) there was also more than a little fear in there. “I take it from your presence here, that you are calling upon my sister Hermione?”

Clearing his throat nervously, he nodded rapidly and told me that he was.

“It is late sir, and I have much to do now that I am home. You would be so good as to return in three days’ time at mid-day? I shall see you then. Am I understood?”

He got to his feet and nodded. He knew that he was being ejected but there was nothing he could do about it. “Yes, Your Grace, perfectly.”

Bowing all around him, he gave his goodbyes, first to my mother, “Your Grace.” And then he recited the whole list before leaving us.

Once he had departed, the questions began — was it terrible fighting the French? The worst thing about it, I said, was the damned marching,



constantly marching. “Lord Wellesley is a master of movement, he has the French *marechals* flummoxed, never knowing what he will do next. He manoeuvres his army so that the situation favours us and not the enemy, but he relies on the dusty feet of our men to make it work.”

“How long are you home for?”

“For good.” I said, “I am done with soldiering.”

“Do you hate the French?”

“Gracious! No.” I told Margaret, “Some of them, of those I have met, are excellent fellows, *gentils hommes*, and their soldiers are well schooled at war.

“But when you come to an actual battle, brother?” Charlotte asked wide-eyed.

“That is something that I pray you never ever see, but it was after all, what we are there for, and our men, though for the most part they are the sweepings from every lock-up across the country, our men fight well, indeed I would match them against any nation on the Earth.”

“You have been injured?” My mother regarded my face carefully.

“Several times,” I told her.

“This one,” I pointed to the short scar along my right cheek-bone, “Was a French *voltigeur*, one of their excellent light bobs, their skirmishers, who thought he had me.”

“And what happened to him?” Margaret asked.

“One of my men did for him for his impudence.” Her face paled.

Perhaps in an effort to veer away from death and injury, Hermione leaped in next, “Were there any women William, did you meet anyone special?”

“There is a veritable social scene about Wellesley’s headquarters. Wives. Mistresses.” I looked around at their scandalised faces. ‘And a whole host of women of lesser virtue.’ I told them, their faces shocked by this revelation, “But none for me.”

I did not mention the Portuguese whores who were constantly available, nor my adventures with other women, like a certain Elizabeth, Lady Dorrington, who engaged me to seduce her daughter. Arabella Dorrington was a very pretty young woman, with a great enthusiasm for carnal pleasures. It was something she got from her mother obviously, because her mother wanted to ‘try me’,

like you would a horse, before she would let me bed her daughter. Lady Dorrington rode me herself first, and it was an experience which was very pleasurable, especially so later, because after I had slept with Miss Dorrington, I slept with both women together in the same bed.

It was not a completely unusual experience, though perhaps at the extreme end of my adventures *d'chambre*. The situation in or about the army in Portugal — going into winter quarters in the prepared defences of *Torres Vedras* was unusual. Wellesley would take the time to repair and make his growing army ready to re-enter Spain in pursuit of Boney's Marshals. Because the officers and men often found themselves with time on their hands, time not in contact with the enemy, there was a strange energy about the place. Mainly it was because both officers and men had time on their hands. It was simply not possible to drill and exercise the soldiers all of the time, had it been I am sure there would have been less sexually driven behaviour, or perhaps there would have, I do not know.

A *soirée* — that most genteel of social occasions — could degenerate into an orgy at a moment's notice. An evening playing cards, once drink was

consumed would become openly lewd when the local strumpets were allowed in. Adultery was so common that some bed-hoppers associated with the army kept a ‘dance card’ of available officers. All sorts of sexual politics were rampant, daughters — and sons in some cases, were used as pawns in dynastic manoeuvrings, as lesser families sought to better themselves, or more renowned families sought to reverse failures by marriage. All of which was centred on young men who gave not a jot, knowing that a mere chance could end their lives in the line of battle, and who plunged themselves into the heated cauldron of sex and licentiousness with abandon.

However, I decided that a discussion of these things was perhaps not for my half-sisters, not tonight anyway.

“Enough of all that, my dear, dear sisters, I am home now and there will be time enough for your questions in the days to come. I am tired and in sore need of a hot bath, so if you will permit, I shall retire.”

A footman — who I discovered was called Henry — conducted me to my bedroom — ex my father’s. I stripped off my sodden clothes, bathed and because Barclay would not arrive until the morning, put on

one of my fathers' night shirts and a warm *banyan* dressing gown. My father was inclined to wear a bed cap, but I never took to the habit.

"Where is my mother's room?" I asked the footman.

"Her room is just along the landing, Your Grace."

"Ask her to join me, please?"

Moments later my step-mother entered. Her dressing gown was a rustle of pearl-grey silk, spreading around her.

"You wished to see me, William?"

Her hair was loose for sleep, and her face pale in the light of the lamps. "Yes mother. I wished to tell you how glad I am to be home and to see you, to see all of you, but you especially."

"I thank the Lord that you have been returned to us whole, William, or very nearly so." She smiled, and reached up, touching my cheek tenderly.

"Did you receive my letters?" I asked, I had written often. Mother nodded.

I went on "Do you know how very much I missed you?" It was my turn to touch her beautiful face,

tenderly. Deliberately. It was not the touch of a son, but the touch of a lover. “How many times I have imagined your face before me? Do you know that I have loved you since the day I first met you? Oh, how I have missed you, mother.” Freed at last, after years of confinement, the words tumbled out before her.

She looked at me, uncertainly at first, but then she said, “In all the time you were away I never stopped thinking about you. About my brave boy who had become a man, and now fought in the war. William, I dreaded opening each letter in case it told me you had been killed or worse, maimed. When I did open them and when I knew that you were safe, I would read them again and again.”

I embraced her, feeling her soft form through the silky material. I pulled her body against mine, in a manner unlike that of a son embracing his mother. Helena was now moulded firmly against me, my swollen prick hard against her belly. I noted that she did not pull away.

“I am home now and ready to take up my role as the man of the house.” I slid my hand down her back and rested it on the swell of her bottom. “To fulfil the duties of that role.” I told her.

She looked at me hard, scanning my eyes for a sign of my intent. Whatever she found there, her words surprised me. “Yes, Your Grace,” she said breathlessly.

I know many men who would have taken her there and then, mother or no. However, Sir Arthur Wellesley was not the only master of manoeuvre in the Iberian Peninsula, I had my own tried and trusted ways of seducing women I found attractive. I wanted my union with my step-mother to be willing on her part as well.

My hand still cupping her face, I looked at her, looked into her eyes. “Go to bed now mother, there is much to do in the next few days.” I was rewarded, I thought, with a brief flash of disappointment, but she left and returned to her own room.

## ***2. Settling In***

The next morning, I rose early as I would normally. With no Barclay there, I rang for Henry, bathed quickly, and rummaged through my father’s clothes to see if there was anything I could wear. My uniform was not fit for wear yet, still being damp from the previous evening. Fortunately, my father and I were of a similar size. I found some passable waistcoats, a couple of very fine shirts, neck cloths

and some decent breeches. My own boots had been dried by the fire and polished.

I spent the morning with the house staff — Mrs Ellis, a handsome woman, in her late forties — and Mr Dives — the elderly butler, going over accounts and because it all seemed in good order, I commended them on their efforts. The household was in a fine shape and the accounts were well kept. I had no doubt, that as with most senior servants, they supplemented their wages by helping themselves to some of the profits, but it appeared that it was kept to an acceptable level.

Mr Dives, advised me that the steward had been summoned from Rogeringham Hall, our country estate in Buckinghamshire, so that he could present the accounts. It would take him a day or so, but he would be here at his earliest opportunity. A message had been sent to Thomas Langton, the family's lawyer in Aylesbury, to advise him of my return, it was expected that he would arrive in a similar time.

Then just as Mr Dives and I were finishing, two things happened. Barclay arrived — I instructed the butler that he be given quarters suitable to his status. I also told him that he should take his time to get



settled, but that when he was ready, he should attend me.

The second was that my mother asked to see me.

I thanked Mrs Ellis and Mr Dives and dismissed them and sat my mother down on the couch next to me.

“William,” she began, “Last night\_”

“Yes, mother?”

“You suggested something\_”

“What was that, mother?”

“I hesitate to say it.”

“Why would that be?”

“It was a dreadful thing,” She looked flustered, stammering. “You... you said something, about us.”

“I believe I told you that I loved you, mother, that I have loved you for many years. That my love, my passion for you, has never waned even while I was away. Though there have been many women who sought my attentions, your attention was the only one I wanted.”

“Well, I love you too William, as a mother should.” She would not make eye contact with me, staring intently at some faint mark on her dress, flicking at it with her finely shaped fingers.

“But there was more mother, wasn’t there?”

“I do not know what you mean.”

“But I think you do.” I found her efforts to keep her composure endearing. “When we embraced last night, you did not resist me, but instead clung to me most welcomingly.

“It just added to what I suspected,” I informed her, “Married to a man twenty years older than you with a younger man growing up in the house as well. Oh, not at first when I was a child, but as I grew older, then I saw your looks when I came home from college or on leave. I knew mother.”

“What? What was it you think you knew, William?”

“That you regarded me as I looked at you. When you played parlour games with my sisters, when you played the piano, when you danced. I watched you move with grace, I heard you sing and it was the sweetest sound I have heard. To make you smile at

something that I said, or did, became my greatest joy.” I told her, holding her hand in mine.

“And I saw your regard for me, as we walked with my sisters, as I read, as I danced. I know you watched me, mother.” I lowered my head as I brought her fingers to my lips.

“I saw your eyes. It is a look I have become familiar with; it is a look that women have when they have love for a man.”

“B-But you said you have avoided women!”

My mother was desperate to change the subject. But I held her hand firmly, as I looked in her eyes. “I did not.” I told her. “I said that there were many women about but none of them were for me. There were some who wanted my attention, and some who received it, but they were merely lessons, practice, in preparation for the woman I desire most.”

“William, I do not think we should discuss this further.”

I released her hand and she stood, looking down at me. I said, “Discuss, mother? I do not wish to discuss this. Actions, as they say, speak louder than words, but worry not, I shall not force myself on you. I meant it — mother — there is no woman on

God's earth that I esteem more highly than you. I respect you greatly. But more than that, I love you, Helena. And we shall be lovers, if not eventually man and wife. And when it is time, you will come to me willingly."

"Until then..." I took her hand and kissed her finger tips again before leaning in and lightly bussing her cheek. "Until then, mother, I must be busy, there is so much more to do."

After that and before lunch, I went to see how the lame mare was progressing — the head groom had called the farrier. On examining her that morning they had found that the badly fitted shoe had caused a small but painful abscess under her hoof. He was astonished that she had carried me as far as she had. I told him that the mare had enormous character, I had seen that when I bought her. The head boy agreed. She was quickly becoming a favourite with all of the boys in the stable-yard.

The farrier had cleaned and trimmed the hoof back and drained the abscess and when that was done, they had been able to pack it with a poultice and then carefully removed all of her other shoes. It was important to keep the abscess from contacting the floor so they had fabricated a 'boot' to go over

the hoof and to keep it clean and out of the muck. The farrier was confident that she would recover fully but that she needed to rest and keep her weight off that hoof. This sounded like a good way forward and I told him to proceed as he was, giving him leave to do anything he thought fit.

Why so much concern for a mere horse?

Well, for a starter she was an elegant lady, with a good gait, and willing too. She had a lovely nature — apparently, she had been most cooperative with the farrier, when another horse might have been skittish and difficult. She was intelligent, a good size, not as tall as a cavalry charger, but not as short as a cob. She had a handsome face and her chestnut coat was like red gold, worth every penny of the price I paid for her.

I am not a great one for aphorisms and sayings, but I do believe that one should never beat a horse or cheat a whore. Both will serve you much better, and more willingly, if you treat them well.

It is a belief that I hold true for so much more than whores and horses, and it guides my life. I have seen officers who treat their soldiers like the scum of the earth — which they are of course, they mostly come from the failed and lowest of our society.

However, Wellesley never treats them as such. He cares for their needs, and he ensures that they are fed and watered, clothed and paid as and when they should be. Because of this the ordinary soldiers would move mountains for him. They march and they fight willingly, knowing that ‘Our Addy’ — as they call him — will look after them. It is an important lesson, and one of many that I learnt quickly. I have seen too many times the soundness of this philosophy not to believe in it.

I spent the afternoon with Barclay as we arranged my belongings, in my dressing room. Between us we cleared out what was not useable or suitable of my father’s clothes, and made a list of what I would need. I instructed Barclay to organise a tailor for me, the next day would be preferred. I allowed him to go so that he could set himself up, carry out the tasks I had set and rest from our arduous journey.

It would have been considered quite normal to have let Barclay go and leave him behind in Portugal like my belongings and horses. His qualities were such that I am sure that he would have soon found employment and a new master, but he has been my valet these past five years, and there was no chance in Hell that I would not retain his services in my civilian life. A gentleman’s valet is an

extension of his right hand, and Joshua Barclay is a particularly good one. Built like a prize-fighter, he has a surprisingly deft touch, whether it is shaving me or making an omelette; he sews, he reads and is well read, and he has the God-given ability to find whatever is necessary at damned-near any hour of the day or night. I look after Barclay because he looks after me.

There might be issues fitting him into the hierarchy of our staff, but I doubted it would come to much — Barclay can be most diplomatic when he has to, besides if needs be, I would release someone else before I would dismiss my man.

That evening, dinner was almost like a small gala to mark my return. Mother looked especially fine, in her close-fitting black dress that pushed her ample breasts up most enticingly, the train of the dress trailed behind her as she entered. Her hair had been arranged in a fashion that I have seen before — inspired by the scandalous Lady Hamilton, where two ringlets fell from her temples and framed her face. The rest of her hair was piled loosely on the back of her head, but it fell, artfully dishevelled, behind her back. The effect took years off her, and one might have supposed that she was no longer my senior but my contemporary.

All of the rest of that evening, I watched my mother, her eyes shone as the discourse went round. As we finished, I walked down the table and took her hand and we walked through into the parlour. My aim in all of this was to accustom her to my presence, to my contact with her, and my role as the chief male of the house, while hers was obviously that of the chief of the women of the house.

Once we had repaired to the parlour, we gathered — as we had when we were younger — around the piano. Charlotte, who is a most accomplished pianist, played and we sang, or rather my sisters did. My sisters and my mother sang, I feigned fatigue from my journey but in fact, I desired nothing more than to watch them all, especially Helena, as they stood in the light from the candelabras and the oil lamps, and raised their voices.

At least that was my plan, until eventually Hermione decided that it was my turn to serenade them, and she shuffled through the sheet music we had collected over the years before passing one to Charlotte. Their sparkling eyes and eager grins were the clue that they had something planned for me, and they all begged that I at least treat them to one verse.



In the face of their entreaties there was nothing I could do, and when Charlotte began the opening bars of Mr Handel's '*Have you heard my lady*', I realised I could turn the situation to my advantage.

Did you not hear my lady

Go down the garden singing?

I began, fortunately I have been blessed with a passable singing voice, not good enough to sing upon a stage, but neither is it offensive to the ear. As I sang, I sought to engage my mother's gaze. She had sung earlier, a new piece I did not know, but she sang it well in her pleasant contralto. Now I wanted her to know that I sang this entirely for her.

Blackbird and thrush were silent

To hear the alleys ringing

At first Helena sought to avoid my gaze, engaging in fiddling, as was her custom, with something in her lap.

O saw you not my lady

Out in the garden there?

Shaming the rose and lily

For she is twice as fair  
Though I am nothing to her  
Though she must rarely look at me

Suddenly my mother's eyes met mine and it was as if all of the others had left the room, and only Helena and I remained.

And though I could never woo her  
I love her till I die  
Surely you heard my lady  
Go down the garden singing?

And of an instant we had returned and we were once more stood with my sisters, there in our parlour, but not before I saw my mother's head dip slightly, imperceptibly, in recognition. She knew that my words were for her and her alone.

"Did you have a good evening, Your Grace?" In my room, my night clothes were laid out, then Barclay appeared with the decanter for my nightly rum ration.

"I did. Thank you, Barclay" I told him.

“A tailor has been summoned, Your Grace — he is highly recommended and will be here tomorrow morning at ten.”

“Well done, Barclay, you may retire now. I shall not require you again tonight.”

“Thank you, Your Grace, good night.”

After he had gone, I put my glass down and walked the few steps to my mother’s room.

I knocked, and heard her voice call for me to enter.

She sat upon a *chaise longue*, enjoying the fire before she retired to sleep. She wore her pearl-grey dressing gown, looking relaxed and yet still fully in control of this, her space. Her fine hair fell loose again and I could not help but think that she should wear it that way all the time, but knew better than to suggest so.

“I wanted to thank you for this evening’s supper, mother, and to say how much I enjoyed your company.” I told her as I seated myself upon a footstool beside her.

She looked at me, her eyes searched my face for something. It was as if she was waiting for me to

pounce, as if she expected me to seize her and take her there and then. I felt that perhaps if I had, it would not be unwelcomed but that was not what I had planned, and if I was correct, it meant that the plan was progressing nicely.

“How else would we celebrate your return? I only wish we could have made a greater effort. After all, not only are you returned safe to us from the wars but you are the new Duke of Norton, your accession deserves something at least.”

“Perhaps we should throw a grand ball then?” I suggested taking her hand in mine, she nodded. “And I can stand there and watch as all the people there look at me jealously, with you in all of your beauty, by my side, mother.”

She quietly scoffed at my suggestion, as I lowered my head to graze her fingers with my lips.

“Would they not remark on the difference between our ages?” She asked, “The new duke. A gallant soldier and his ageing mother?”

“Then I would be busy for days, calling out their honour one by one and fighting duels in defence of your impugned dignity.” I told her. “Had it been the first day I met you — when I was a child and you,

my father's new bride, fifteen years was an age between us, but now between two adults it is an irrelevance.

“And pffffh!” I snorted, “No one would see me at your side anyway, every eye there would be fixed on the beautiful lady.”

Helena pushed against my shoulder. “You are a sweet-talker William!” she told me. “Glib and cunning!” She laughed. But I noted that this time she took the compliment without any rejection.

“In that case, I shall thank you once again mother, and go to my rest.”

I think Helena had forgotten our kiss the night before, or that she was trying to avoid it, because she offered me her cheek. Instead, I took her chin gently in my hand and kissed her upon the mouth. It was a long kiss and full, as our lips pressed together. For a long count of several seconds, we remained so. Until at last, I stood.

She was flushed, and slightly breathless. In the open throat of her night-gown, I could see where the flush had spread.

Before she could say anything else, I had returned to my own room.

If my mother had followed me, I would not have been surprised, but she didn't, and I went to sleep that night dreaming of the rise and fall of that flushed bosom, imagining the swell of her breasts and my aching cock planted between them as I shot my spend off across them and her graceful throat.

I slept well.

### ***3. The re-discovery of my sisters...***

The next morning, I looked about me. It had always been my father's habit to breakfast behind his newspaper — the *Times of London*.

Not I. The chatter of my sisters as they breakfasted — eggs and bacon from our own farms, meant that I was home again, in the bosom of my family, and I was enjoying it immensely.

Henry appeared, to announce the arrival of the tailor.

He had been shown into the drawing room, the footman said, and Barclay waited with him.

“Mother? Charlotte?” They both looked at me. “As I am new back in town, perhaps you would attend me and advise on what would look good?” I asked.

I think that they were surprised, but only for a moment, as they both agreed quickly, much to the annoyance of my other sisters, who obviously felt left out.

I offered them both an arm and we proceeded through into the drawing room. Helena leaned into me and her arm in mine felt like it was supposed to be there. Charlotte, on my other side, also felt comfortable, as her arm laid along mine, and my hand wrapped hers. We had always been close when we were younger, though I was away from home much of the time. There was no difficulty between us as step-siblings; she always treated me very much as her older brother.

I ensconced the two ladies on a couch to one side while the tailor and his assistant took measurements. He showed me samples from his pattern books and materials. I referred them to Helena and Charlotte often. My reasoning being that they were familiar with current styles for a man of my new found status, and I was not. I warned them that I was not a fop or a dandy to be seen in extraordinary stripes or brocades, I wanted plain coloured materials — except for waistcoats — but with a sharp cut to the clothes.

My mother and my sister billed and cooed over swatches of material, discarding those they did not like and keeping those they did. With their advice, I would not look foolish when I stepped out. I also referred the patterns and styles to Barclay as well, he had an unerring eye for what looked good.

In the end, as well as the items that I had ordered, I purchased some of the clothes that the man had made previously and brought with him. They included a very nice great coat, of a dark wool, almost black in colour. My own soldierly great coat was acceptable but this was longer, to mid-calf, cut with more fullness in the skirt and the back seam was parted almost to the waist for riding. I also had a jacket and some breeches off him. He and his assistant left us with a promise to have the first items delivered in a week.

After the tailor was gone, the weather closed in again. November in London — windy, rainy and cold.

I ensconced myself in the sitting room with a book, the initial plan being to catch up on my reading in peace and quiet.

That was until my sisters found me.



I learnt several things that afternoon as they quizzed me about the Peninsular, Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Art of War, soldiers in general and Portuguese ladies and their fashions (that was a particularly short conversation) — in short, everything and anything.

The first thing that I learnt was that although I was now the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton, properly styled Your Grace, when being addressed, I was still just plain William to my sisters. In theory I was a man of wealth and power, second only in rank to a prince of the royal blood, but in actual fact I was still just their ‘big brother’. So much for the dukedom, and being God’s Appointed within this house!

The second thing I learnt was how much they had all grown. Hermione, in particular had suddenly blossomed. She had celebrated her eighteenth birthday in the summer but the shy, quiet child I had known had grown into a tall — easily my height, elegant and confident woman. Oh, she was still my darling Hermione, with her mother’s grey eyes and my father’s dark hair, but whereas before she would have probably sat at the back and listened, now she was one of the chief interrogators.

The twins were just as inquisitive, but their questions were less about the fighting, and more about the society that had grown up around the army. I tried to answer these questions as best I could while still trying to shelter my siblings from the more lurid details — the bed-hopping and adultery and so on. Even with my slightly vague answers, Margaret and Louise seemed to enjoy this window into my old world.

Caroline — dark-eyed, slim and the tallest of my five sisters, said little but one felt that she heard everything that was being said, and having heard it, noted it all, somewhere. She watched the play between us, her eyes darting between the speakers, sometimes frowning, sometimes pulling a face if she thought the talk was too gruesome (I was careful to avoid the goriest details because of their sensibilities), and sometimes clapping in appreciation of a joke or witty remark.

It had not really struck home, but it did as we talked. All of them were now of marriageable age, and they were all attractive young women, so why in God's name were none of them fighting off suitors with big sticks? I couldn't fathom it. Hermione had her young man to come calling, which reminded me

that we were due to meet tomorrow, but where were the others?

If my sisters had been anywhere near Wellesley's army, I reflected, they would have been very hot property indeed. They would also have been much more worldly wise. For a moment I day-dreamed about Charlotte, my eldest step-sister. Of all of my sisters, she is the one who looks like me the most. She has the same dark hair and complexion, and she has brown eyes like I do. She is a handsome woman, and when she sat next to me, I fleetingly wondered how she would be in bed, but even as I had that thought, I dismissed it, and concentrated on the questions I was being asked.

The third thing I learnt — watching them, remembering their habits and then observing how grown they now were — was how very much I still loved them all. I did not consider them to be my “step-sisters”, nor were they my “half-sisters”, though I may occasionally refer to them as such; I had the very same affection for each and every one of them as if we had all sprung from the very same womb. They were my sisters, and I, in turn, was their brother.

Up until when I went to school, we were always close, and we rattled around in Rogeringham Hall like peas in a drum. It was a fine place for a child to grow up, if we managed to evade our tutor or our nanny, there were places to hide, and explore, places to watch from and, if we managed to get out of the house, acres and acres of parkland to explore and roam.

In our games, I often found myself in the hero's part, the rescuer, or the knight, due to being the eldest and being male. It was a role put upon me from an early age. Not that the girls were shrinking violets in anyway, they matched my mischief blow for blow, but if we started to play out an adventure I was expected to lead. That also meant that if our adventures went awry however, inevitably it was I that took the blame. Either it was found to be 'my fault' (which to be honest normally, it was) or it was because I 'should have set an example', or because I stepped up to take the blame to save one of my sisters from punishment. Even that had its rewards, as the girls would comfort me — even little Hermione would smuggle food to me if I was being punished. (No one ever suspected her of doing this because of her complete and impenetrable air of innocence).

We never seemed to fall out for long. If harsh words were said, as children do occasionally, one of us, — usually Caroline — would act as an emissary between the injured parties and apologies generally followed soon after.

Even though I was torn from this demi-paradise with school and later college, my return to Rogeringham, and later to the Mayfair house, was always warm and welcoming, not just Helena, but all of my sisters wanted to know what had happened since I had last seen them, much like now.

And so, with ‘catching up’ the afternoon passed, and we got ready for supper.

#### ***4. Helena***

I decided upon an early night and went to resume my reading in my chamber. Barclay had laid out my night clothes and rum, so I enjoyed the peace and quiet.

I had been reading for no more than a half of an hour, when I heard my mother pass by on her way to her own bedroom.

I had not yet changed for bed, so after a short while, I made my way to her room, ostensibly to wish her good night.

Once again Helena sat in her chair with her favourite dressing gown covering her charms.

We talked for a few minutes and then she said. “I am curious William. The first night of your return, you told me of your desire for me, but then dismissed me. The next night, you treated me like a queen, even serenading me but then you made no move towards me, except to kiss me in an unfamiliar manner. I am afraid I do not understand your plan.”

Sitting on a foot-stool at her side, holding her hands in mine, stroking them and noting little sign of resistance to my touch. I told Helena, “It is quite simple, mother, I have declared my passion for you and the desire that accompanies it. I mean to make you mine but I would prefer that the choice to accept my worship and my love, is yours and yours alone. I shall not forcefully replace my father in your heart, instead, you will come to me of your own accord.”

Helena looked at me. “Ah!” She smiled, a knowing smile.

After a few moments she went on, “In that case, I have given much thought to your plan. In fact, I have thought about nothing else over the last few days.”

“And?” I asked.

“It is true, I do love you and admire you. And I can see that there are advantages to such a relationship, however wrong it might be, but I have demands...”

At that point I knew I had her. I kept my face still, hiding my exultation. “They will not go unfulfilled mother, whatever they are.”

My mother held her hand up to silence me, with a slight smile. “I have no doubt,” she said.

“Your father,” Helena continued, “As you know, was some twenty years older than me. It is the way of our society, that a woman often has no say in who she weds, especially when the man who takes her hand is rich and powerful. Women in these circumstances are propelled into a strange world. Often, they are alone — apart from their husband, with no friend, no peer, because the disparity between his and her ages means that willing as she might be, she has no connection with her husband’s friends and acquaintances.

“Thus, it was for me. Your father took an eighteen-year-old girl and made her a woman. I gave him children, though not the ones he wanted. For

him it was about more sons, and, instead, he received more daughters.

“Oh, he tried, but after Hermione he lost interest, in them and me. He threw himself into his ventures and while his fortune increased, his interest in his family waned to the point where he seemed like he wanted nothing further to do with us. You never lacked for anything — but he was never a doting father, your sisters became my sole responsibility, he would not consort with us though he retained a tight control of their futures. Your sisters lack husbands because your father denied me the ability to prepare them for and present them at court during the ‘Season’.”

The Season is the social frenzy that runs from March to July when girls come ‘out’ into society and having come out, they frantically begin the search for husbands.

Helena went on, “He also denied them their dowries. We lacked for nothing materially, but he kept us almost like he kept his wealth. It would be fair to say that he hoarded us, like we were part of his estate.”

She stood up and opened her dressing gown, exposing her nakedness. Her body was everything I



imagined it would be. Her fair, fashionably pale skin shone bright in the dimly lit room, the light from the fire flickering across her exposed flesh. Her breasts sat firm and full upon her chest with large nipples, that even in the warmth from the fire stood proud and her belly, despite her children, was flat and led the eye to the downy mound, in the shadows between her thighs.

“William, I shall give you everything you want — myself, in your bed, with all of my love, willingly...”

“If...?” I asked as I stood.

“You undertake to see that your sisters all have their dowries settled and assist them in making good matches next year.”

I took her in my arms, wrapping her in my embrace. She kissed me gently, not yet a lover’s kiss but full enough in the lips that once again, it went beyond the boundaries of that of a mother and son.

“I swear it shall be so.” I told her.

Helena drew her head back and looked at me, her eyes shining. “In that case...”

She drew me back towards her bed, undoing my waistcoat as she did so. Her hands were gentle but persistent, exploring.

I laid her down upon her covers and kissed her deeply, my hands sliding across her skin, her stunning nakedness.

Then I stood up, re-adjusting my waistcoat.

“No mother.” I said with a smile, as I backed away. “I said that you would come to **my** bed. Until then...”

I walked back to my room and undressed. Without donning my night attire, I climbed into my bed, wondering how long she would wait. Barely had that thought formed in my mind than there was a soft knock on my door.

“Come in!”

Her open robe framed her nudity, as she strode across the gap between the door and my bed. “You are a harsh master!” She said, with an amused smile, as she paused and posed with a bob of a curtsy before me, opening her arms with a flourish. “I present myself.”

I threw the bed sheet down, the room was well warmed by the fire in the grate, and moved myself over across the width of the bed. Helena discarded her dressing gown and climbed in next to me, still with a little half-smile. "Is this what you want?" She asked.

"More than you would ever believe," I told her. "And you? Is it truly your wish to be here?" I reached for her hand and began by gently caressing it.

My step-mother looked down for a moment as she considered my question. "Yes." She said at last. "Yes, it is.

"When you first told me of your desires, I was stunned," she said. "Stunned, and shocked that you would propose such a thing." I was, by now kissing her finger tips.

"I mean, yes, my beautiful boy grew to be a man, and such a fine handsome man. But despite the loveless marriage that mine had become, I never thought of a dalliance as many other women do, certainly not one between the two of us. But when you came to me and told me what you intended, well, it occurred to me as you said, that the difference between our ages is less than that between

me and your father when I first came to him, and you are correct, it counts even less considering that we are both grown.”

I nodded. “And there is no blood between us.” I reminded her.

“Some might still raise it as an impediment...” she suggested.

“Damn them to hell!” I told her. I placed my arm around her shoulders and drew her to me, at last feeling the warmth of her skin against mine, the softness of her breast as it touched mine. “The commons think nothing of this sort of thing. There was one woman who followed my regiment that was married to one of two brothers. When one was killed, she took up with the other immediately we reformed after the fight.

“And even should we not marry it would not be considered ill, that you still live in my house. You are my father’s widow after all, Lady Rogeringham!” I laughed, “And I swear I will be more of a husband to you than my father ever was.” And at that point I leaned in and kissed her.

As we kissed, I pressed my tongue towards her lips.

“What are you doing?” Helena drew back, a puzzled smile on her face.

“They call it kissing, mother,” I told her.

“I know what it is!” She laughed, “But your tongue...”

“Ah!” I smiled, “That is called *French* kissing... allow me. Relax.”

My step-mother is an astute woman, she followed my example and returned my exploration, like for like. Soon our tongues tangled sensually, as we explored each other’s mouth, and passionately too. Helena’s hands roamed across my body as mine did hers. I touched for the first time, the soft swell of her bared breasts, the prominent stud of her nipple against my palm. I roamed my other hand across her back and down to the globes of her bottom, those sweetly rounded cheeks.

She on the other hand, found what she sought between my thighs. And that discovery brought a look of delight and also a little concern to her face.

“Oh William!” She exclaimed. “Oh!”

“Is something amiss?” I wasn’t overly concerned, my parts are not massive, but they have brought a

smile of contentment to women's faces, so I know that they are adequate.

"No," she said hurriedly, smiling, but then her face fell. "And yes."

I waited. "You are much better equipped than your father was, very much so. But it is so long since I last laid with him, I fear I shall be too tight for this weapon of yours."

It was my turn to smile. And smile I did, as I kissed her mouth, and then each coral-coloured nipple, her pale stomach, until sliding down the bed I laid face to face with my prize.

Helena's jewel, the fortress I had set out to conquer, laid before me as if I was over-looking its defences, ready to carry them by assault. And what a prize it was.

Red lips blossomed at the base of her mound, swelling — even as I watched — ready for me. She had dabbed herself behind each ear with a drop of *eau de cologne*, but even with that sweet scent I could smell her arousal, sweet, sharp and musky waiting before me.

"William! William, what are you doing?" My mother asked as I lowered my head, and began to

press my tongue between her lips.

“Oh!” she gasped. “Oh heavens!” Her hands played about the sides of my head, at the same time trying to push me away and then to pull me forwards, into her.

I had learned how to stimulate a woman by cunnilingus under the tutelage of Lady Emma Garstang, a domineering woman, who demanded her bed fellows do as they were told. I played her games and was taught much in the process. Cunnilingus, or *gamahuching*, was one of the many lessons that I learnt, and learnt well, and in my head, I offered a prayer of thanks to Lady Garstang for teaching me.

Helena was breathless as I licked deeper and deeper, passing my tongue up and down the length of her quim. “Oh!” She panted, “William. Oh! OOOOH!”

I pressed my tongue against her little clitoris, which had emerged, flicking the bean-like organ. Again, and again, I attacked it, rapidly lashing it with my tongue, before tugging it gently between my lips.

“Williaaaaammmmmmmoh! Oh! Oh! Oh!!” The onset of her orgasm startled my mother with its

swiftness and, I assume, its intensity, as she thrashed about the bed. Her hands grasped great folds of the bed sheets in her passion and her head lolled from side to side. But most importantly of all, I felt the juices from her cunny flood my mouth, as her body shook and quivered.

Not hesitating — I was eager to at last consummate my years of desire, I slid up and into her. She was tight, tighter than some virgins I have known, so rather than a full-blown assault, my progress was more measured, and considered as I entered her. I sought accommodation, hers and mine, as I felt her hips shift beneath me, saw the look of concern on her face turn joyful as I sank deeper and deeper inside her.

“Oh Lord!” She said quietly, but with passion, “I am so full.”

“And I am not yet fully seated, mother.” I told her, before pressing home and doing just that, pressing myself so that my dark pubes tangled with her lighter ones.

She reached up and hugged me to her, forcing her beautiful breasts against my chest. “Sweet Lord Jesus!” She gasped.



“Oh, my dear mother!” I laughed as I lay on top of her, “We must work on your vulgarities! I cannot see us enjoying nights of carnal passion, if you constantly call upon the Lord Jesus. What would the vicar say?”

She looked at me, with an amused annoyance, “I am a lady of a certain station, the widow of a duke and mother to his successor. I do not have the vocabulary of a street harlot.”

Then she smiled sheepishly, looking completely adorable, “I do the best I can. If you want otherwise — you must teach me else.”

“Forgive me, I was making a jest,” I said as I kissed her, “I would not change you for the world.”

“Perhaps I am too old to change,” she said with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. “Now, take that magnificent hard cock of yours and fuck your mother, else it will be dawn and the servants stirring before we’re done.”

“Yes mother.” I said and began to fuck her.

It was plain that Helena was much out of practice, but thankfully fucking is one of those skills that once learnt, returns swiftly to a person, and soon she had raised her legs and wrapped them around

my back. Her hands clasped me to her, her fingernails raking my skin as her passion stirred again and again.

Several times she cried out quite loudly, once she even called on God and His Little Angels, and by this sign I knew that I was doing what I set out to do, making my mother my own.

I rolled on my back, not because my side was hurting — it did slightly, but it was quite bearable — no, I wanted to watch Helena, my mother, on top. I wanted to watch those jouncing bubbies bounce up and down, see those wondrous nipples bobbing before my eyes and then lift those same eyes to see the face of the woman I have loved for so many years. And I was rewarded in that, as I saw her face contort with passion as she caught her lower lip with her teeth, as yet again her spend drenched my cock and balls.

That brought me to my own cum. When I felt it stirring in my loins, I rolled us once again and took the final possession of my mother, shooting my seed deep inside her with a heartfelt groan of relief and pleasure.

Content that we had both come off, I rolled to the side, my cock slipping from her cunny, and lying

limp on my thigh. We were both panting with pleasure, from release and passion.

Suddenly Helena threw herself upon me, hugging me and covering my face in her kisses. Naturally I was unrestrained in kissing her back, but I was curious. Helena had come willingly to my bed, or so she said, but I was expecting some reservation at least. This new burst of passion was wilful and intense.

After a short time, it subsided and my mother laid back. I raised myself on my elbow and looked down at her. Her face, post-passion, was stunning, serene almost. The idealised image that I had carried in my mind of her through my school days, through my teenage years and on to manhood and into the army, was plain compared to the glorious picture before me. Lying next to me was a goddess who walked amongst us, a being of beauty and passion.

And then she smiled up at me.

“Well?” She asked, “Was I worth the wait?”

“Every single day of it and more,” I told her. “I cannot imagine my life being any more complete.”

“You have a smooth tongue on you, William, and you did not get it from your father.” She kissed me

gently on the mouth. Then she pulled back, a shy smile on her face, “Talking of tongues,” she said.

“Yes?”

“That thing you did before,” she lowered her eyes.

I slid my fingers across the slick, gooey lips of her quim. “Down here?” I said as I teased her clitoris.

“Yes!” She moaned, arching her back up on the bed. “Oh God!”

“What about it?” I asked as I lowered my head and kissed her nipples.

“A moment please?” Helena, begged me as her breathing returned to normal.

I kissed her belly, pale in the lamp light.

“Was it... this thing?” I asked softly kissing the dampened curls of her pretty quim.

“Oh my!” She gasped. “Yes!”

“What was it you wanted?” I returned to kissing her mons and thighs, anywhere but her ready, quivering pussy.

“Do it again?” She begged. “Please, William, do it again?” Her need was urgent.

“This?” I asked, as if I was surprised at her request.

“Yes!” her voice was a desperate squeak. “I have never felt anything like it, do it again, I beg you.”

“At your command, my love.”

I laid about her quim with a will. I actually enjoy cunnilingus and I have practised to be good at it. There is nothing more important in bed than the satisfaction of both partners, and with it being my mother, I wanted her satisfaction more than anything.

I felt Helena’s hands on my head again, and let her guide me, thus achieving my aim — her pleasure. But soon her hands lay limp on my head as she fell back on the bedsheets, enjoying the attentions of my tongue. At this point, I reached my hands under her thighs and lifted her legs up, raising my mother’s hips so that I could explore her more fully.

Her moans were deep and breathy, she groaned with pleasure, and writhed her hips in my face. I wasn’t the only one who enjoyed quim-licking, it

appeared. By now I was ready to fuck again, so I got up on my knees and placed myself behind Helena, my hand still diddling her cunny.

Lifting her leg, I slid into her from behind her bottom, sliding deep into her quim. Helena turned her head back and looked up at me, her hand toying with my nipples languidly.

As I fucked her, I teased her clitoris, and once again she shook as her spend came down, shaking her body. Finally, I was ready to cum myself, I turned my mother over, so she was on her hands and knees on my bed — the bed that had been my father's, and I shoved my cock deep inside her, spewing man-jism into the mouth of her womb.

Helena was still of an age where bearing a child was not unheard of, and the thought of her having my son, appealed greatly to me. I think she could have cared more at that point, as she gasped and panted vulgarities and tore at the bed-sheets. I was happy, more than happy, ecstatic, to be there fucking the woman I had devoted my whole life to, but the possibility of breeding her with the child of the new duke made it even more delicious.

My jism shot, and her orgasm done, we lay down and slept, for a short while, entwined lovers, naked,

with the bed-sheets half covering us.

With my torso uncovered as it was, Helena examined each and every one of my several scars. I reassured her that they none of them were of an issue any more but she spent several moments with her fingers on the still raw, red line that snaked its way along the bottom edge of my rib cage.

I took her hand in mine and kissed it, to stop her dwelling on what could have been, and we simply lay together.

*In the baking heat and the choking Portuguese dust. I looked up at the French dragoon in his bronze helmet with its long black mane, his long-tailed green coat with the red lapels. Try as I might, I could not bring my sword up, as his sabre sliced towards me. Lancing pain burned along my side as I fell to the floor, and as I lay there, I watched as he raised his arm to stab down at me again, unable to do anything to stop it...*

“William! William!” Helena was shaking me awake. It took me a few moments to realise I was no longer in danger, that I was safe and warm and in London, in my mother’s arms.

Her eyes were full of concern as she looked at me.

“It was just a bad dream, mother, a bad memory relived.” I told her.

I don’t know how long we lay like this but eventually I got up to use the *jaques*, letting my piss pour into the pot, only to look up to see my mother watching me. She needed to piss as well, so while she held the pot under her I walked over to the fire and stoked it up, placing some more coal onto the red-hot embers. As I took some of my father’s walnut rub tobacco and packed the bowl of a clay pipe, I sat down and watched my mother wipe her cunny with a cloth.

“And what, may I ask, are you watching?” She asked me as she slid the piss-pot back under the bed.

I leaned over and lit a spill from the fire, and touching it to the tobacco in the pipe, I puffed on it for a moment.

“I am watching the most beautiful woman in my life, possibly even the world, who I am totally devoted to — taking a piss and enjoying every second of it.”



Helena came and sat by me on the couch, still nude, and took the pipe from me, the smell of the walnut flavoured tobacco hanging in the room, as she took small delicate pulls of the smoke, exhaling those same small puffs, one after the other. I poured two measures of rum from the decanter and offered her one. She took hers and drank some of the measure.

“God’s Truth, William!” My mother exclaimed as she pulled a wry face. “What is this?!”

“Navy rum, it helps me sleep. I prefer it to the *geneva* that others drink. It is strong stuff, so sippers only, mother.” I smiled.

She paused, and laughed, “Look at me!” she said as she sat there, the pipe held in her left hand, the rum in her right, her right leg curled under her. “Here I am naked — pissing in a pot in front of my younger lover who is also my step-son, a lover who has treated my underused cunny to all sorts of lewd behaviour. And now I’m sitting, smoking a pipe and drinking rum like a bank-side harlot. How far have I fallen in just one evening?”

I took the pipe and drew on it, before blowing a smoke ring into the air in front of us. My mother’s remarks took my mind off the nightmare. “Oh

Helena! Beloved. That, tonight, was just the beginning. The world of the bed chamber is so much more than my father ever let you see.”

Helena took a sip from her drink, and pulled a wry face at the taste, “How so?” She asked curiously.

“The Church would have us believe that sex between a man and his wife is merely for procreation. The man lies on top of the woman and does his business, God forbid that either of them enjoy the matter.”

“And you’re here to give the lie to that?” She said, taking the pipe back, savouring the richness of the walnut in the tobacco.

“I am.” I told her solemnly. “Sex between men and women is a joy, when done right. A pleasure divine, diverse and interesting. With so many by-ways and hidden places to explore.” I took the pipe back, only to find that the coal had died, so I stood up and placed it on the mantelpiece, drank off my rum, and took Helena by the hand.

Drawing her up, I led her back to bed. My mother had a roguish look in her eye.

“Allow me to demonstrate.” I said, as I placed her on the bed.

I sat upon the bed, with the pillows piled up behind me, Helena sat in front of me, resting against my chest.

“And what are you going to show me now?” my mother asked. I just smiled.

I wrapped my arms around her, drawing her back against my chest. My spread legs allowed her to nestle in against my hardness, which fitted neatly between the cheeks of her bottom.

“Oh!” Helena exclaimed softly, wriggling against me.

“Concentrate, mother dear.” I told her, as I took each booby and hefted them, enjoying their fullness as I gently kneaded them with my hand. My thumbs flicked her nipples, causing her head to loll back against my shoulder as she moaned.

As she moved against me, her arse rubbed my cock, making it even harder. Her moans were breathless in my ear, as I slid one hand down her soft belly.

“OH!” Helena exclaimed, as my fingers sought out her clitoris, teasing it out from under its hood. I slipped my fore and middle fingers into her wet, sticky cunny, coating them in her juices, before rubbing her clit against her pubis.

“Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!” Her exclamations were a rapid litany as I vigorously rubbed her to another jerky spend, holding her tightly to me as her body bucked and jumped. Her titty jiggled in my hand as she continued to spend.

My mother leaned against me, nuzzling my neck, “Oh William!” she said softly, lovingly, before exclaiming, “WILLIAM!!!”

My finger pressed against her clitoris again, causing her to jump in surprise. Once again Helena’s body shook from her orgasm, and she pressed back against me. I breathed deeply of the combined aroma of her body, the dabs of cologne that she had used and the muskiness of my mother’s sex. A heady scent indeed!

My mother’s head lolled back against my shoulder as she finished cumming. “Ohhhhhwilliam!” She sighed.

“I never knew!” She murmured. “Such pleasure!”

“It is simply my way of worshipping you, mother,” I told her, emphasising the word mother. “A woman as wonderful, as beautiful as you, deserves no less than the greatest of pleasures.”

I felt her chuckle against my neck. “La sir! Indeed, that silver tongue of yours never came from your father! So smooth!” She said, “And so skilful!” She laughed.

I cupped her smooth bottom in my hands and lifted her hips off the bed, sliding myself down slightly as I did so.

Helena gasped as I lifted and turned her to face me, and she grasped my shoulders to steady herself. But as she felt my hard cock nosing at the lips of her cunny, she eased her legs apart, allowing me to slip inside her.

“Guide me, William,” she said as she looked down at me. “Show me how to do this.”

“Have no fear. I shall take care of you mother.” I emphasised the word ‘mother’ again, as I began to lift her and lower her down on my hardness.

“That sounds so naughty!” Helena laughed.

“Calling you mother?”

“Aaaaah!” She gasped, “Yes, as if we are committing an incredible sin.”

“It only makes it all the more delicious, do you not think?”

“Oh God! Yes! Fuck me William, fuck your mother hard! Make me your harlot, your slut, your roadside bitch!”

“Mother!” I laughed. “Do you kiss your daughters with that mouth?”

“A pox on you, sir!” She laughed back, by now her hair was disarrayed, and she looked every inch a wanton. “Just give me more of this wonderful prick!”

“As you wish mother.” And I began to fuck her in earnest, eventually turning her over again, this time lying her face down upon the bedding, with her arse up-raised. We fucked like this for a few minutes, until she stopped me, and turned around.

“Let me see your face William, this animal fucking of yours is indeed fun, but I’d rather gaze upon my brave lover.”

And like that, in a more traditional posture we fucked until I spurted up inside her lovely cunny.

I was done. I lay upon the sheets, watching her in the flickering fire light, as she got up off the bed.

“I must go back to my room now; else my maid Phoebe will be there to wake me...”

She lowered her face to mine, and kissed me tenderly. “Oh, my son, what wonders you have wrought this night. Debauching your old mother...”

I went to say something, to deny her age, but she stilled me with a single finger on my lips. “Do not worry, William, I shall be back.” She patted my limp cock fondly. “And between us, we shall seek a way for this to work.”

And she was gone.

Playing our lust out again in my head, I fell asleep.

### ***5. Visitors and a walk in the garden***

The next morning with all of my sisters once again assembled for breakfast, my mother and I behaved as if nothing had happened, except for one moment when she caught my eye and we exchanged one of ‘those’ looks.

From that I took it that she harboured no doubts about our nocturnal frolic, no misgivings. Certainly,

I had none, and why should I? It had been agreed to by both of us, her for her reasons, and me for mine.

It was a long morning, there were several early callers, including a young man — Captain Augustus Fanthorpe, from the War Office at Horseguards.

He was an envoy on behalf of a Lieutenant-General Sir George Bradley, the general officer currently in charge of recruitment for the army. The news of my retirement had reached the War Office a day or so before my own arrival home. Normally the retirement of a captain from a regiment of lesser seniority like the North Staffordshires, would be of little interest to their lordships, and they rarely get a visit from a highly polished and flashily dressed junior officer.

But that changed because of my title.

There were people in the government who opposed the war effort, and I think Horseguards thought that I would be a useful ally, either in the House of Lords or just in general. Anyway, I was invited to call in to meet and take tea with Lt.-Gen. Bradley. I asked the young man to thank the general for his invitation, but I told him that I would have to consider it. I excused my immediate attendance on the grounds that there were many things in my own



household that needed my attention before anything else.

Young captains, no matter how immaculately they are turned out, and he was a particularly shiny and well-polished individual in his dress uniform; do not argue with dukes, however much they would like to.

When he had gone, I asked that my sister Charlotte attend me. I was due to see Mr Barthomley, who wanted my permission to call on Hermione, at noon. On a whim, I thought to ask Charlotte what she thought of him.

“He is a nice enough, young man,” she told me, “He has a good income.”

“Do you think they would make a good couple?” I asked.

“He is sometimes a bit fiery,” Charlotte said after some thought. I knew this, for he had challenged me, in my own hallway, not knowing who I was. “Though Hermione matches him blast for blast at times.”

“Hermione?” I asked, “My sweet little girl?”

“Oh yes!” Charlotte laughed, “There is steel in that one that nobody suspected.”

I was intrigued.

“Don’t make the mistake of under-estimating her,” my sister went on. “Her sweetness outside conceals a strength within. Mr Barthomley may be getting more than he bargains for. That is...” Charlotte paused significantly. “... **if** a dowry can be arranged.”

“I have already spoken with mother about that. There will be no further issues in that matter.” Her eyebrows shot up.

Before Charlotte could say anymore, a footman announced the arrival of one, Mr James Barthomley, Esq., presenting me with his calling card on a silver salver. Charlotte took her leave and the footman ushered the young man into my study.

An hour later, I was done with my youngest sister’s suitor. I sent him off to see Hermione, telling him that he would be welcome to call but also that we would soon be leaving London in the next few days to go to our country seat, Rogeringham Hall.

No sooner had he gone, but that there was a knock on my study door.

“Come!” I called and Charlotte’s head appeared around the door.

“Well?” She asked.

I laughed. She sat down opposite me. “You could have warned me.” I said, shaking my head. Charlotte had been right — on the face of it, James Barthomley was a nice enough young man, and when we talked about his background it appeared that not only was his family well connected but they had used those connections to good ends and profited thereby.

However, if I had been interviewing him for a place with my old regiment, the North Staffordshires, I wouldn’t have given him very long indeed. His fashionably over-puffed attitude would probably have gotten him killed in no short order, and if the French hadn’t done for him, he’d have challenged a fellow officer who would have done the job for them. Basically, he was a pompous twit, and an ambitious one to boot.

“I thought it best you discover for yourself.” She laughed.

“Has he ever mentioned it to any of you?” I asked her.

“That he wants to marry the sister of a duke because it will further the familial connections? No. Not in as many words.”

I moved to sit next to Charlotte, “This is going to happen a lot, isn’t it?” I asked. “Many people will see you as nothing more than commodities, access to the family name?”

She nodded. “But that’s why I said Hermione will surprise you.”

I cocked my head to hear more.

“She knows what is and what isn’t, but she sees it as an opportunity. She actually has him twisted round her little finger. He will do anything for her. She does not torment him, as I suppose some women would, but she owns Mr Barthomley as if he were a pet dog. And I believe she will train him as one would a wilful puppy.

“Does that please you, that news?” She asked suddenly.

“Well, yes. It does. Though I am certain she could do better,” I told her. “She is pretty, and she obviously has a head upon her shoulders, so why should she not aim higher?”

“Despite his faults, she actually quite likes him,” Charlotte explained, “He is intelligent, well-read, and he does seem to be able to learn from his experiences. And, of course, he really would do anything for her.”

I nodded. If that was what Hermione wanted, then so be it. I then outlined to my sister what I had agreed with our mother, that all the girls should be provided for, though I did not tell her why I had agreed to it. This brought a smile, a close embrace and a kiss upon the cheek.

“But!” I went on. “It is too late for this Season; we must make ready for the next one.”

As I have already mentioned, the ‘Season’ in London is an horrendous series of social extravaganzas that lasts five months from March to July, at the start of which the eligible young ladies of society are presented to the queen, and then paraded at balls, and picnics in search of suitable husbands. It is an expensive meat market, where even the meat on display shows a distinctly predatory disposition. Everyone concerned pays through the nose for the latest fashions, and entertaining, and of course, ultimately it would mean — if we were successful — that each of my sisters would require a dowry.

This was what my mother had been looking for from me, and to which I had agreed. However, my interview with James Barthomley and my experiences in Spain had given me cause for reflection.

The next Season was not that far away — in the spring of the new year, it was time to head for winter quarters as Wellesley had done, to reform and prepare. The social season in London had already begun — it runs from December until the end of July, but I was less interested in that than I was in honouring my promise to Helena. In the country — at Rogeringham Hall, we would organise for the coming campaign, my mother would be head of logistics, ‘uniforms’ — ball gowns, that sort of thing. No expense would be spared. I also thought that we would indulge in a little training of our troops, my lady warriors. I would make sure that when they went into the field, when the Season opened, it would be the men — the prospective suitors — who were reeling in disarray and not the Rogeringham girls.

“Let us walk Charlotte, I must go to the stables and see how my mare is, and you can tell me more of your gossip while we do it.”

This brought another hug and kiss, “I have missed you so very much William.”

I kissed her back, hugging her warmly to me, “And I, you, too.”

The mare had been carefully re-shod all round and — the boot keeping the abscess off the floor — was walking much better as we walked her round the stable yard, though still favouring her leg slightly. The head groom was of the opinion that the man that had shod her last time had done it blind-folded. The farrier that we used, had taken his time and done an excellent job of it. I agreed with the grooms, who felt that the best course was to keep her rested and let her heal. Eventually they would bring her out to Rogeringham Hall in a horse drawn box, where she could spend the winter. She would need room to exercise, which she would not have in town. In Buckinghamshire she could have that.

I was hoping that she would heal, she was altogether too pretty not to ride about the Ton.

After I had seen the mare, Charlotte and I, took advantage of the pleasant afternoon and walked in the grounds. While we walked, my sister talked.

I listened

My sister is not an empty-headed chatterer, which was why I had sought her opinion on James Barthomley. She told me things that she thought that I needed to know — about her sisters, and their hopes and aspirations. My sisters were not, as I had thought, devoid of male companionship or would-be suitors. However, not being presented and the lack of a dowry precluded any conclusion to the matter. That did not stop them from knowing what they wanted. Margaret and Louise, she said, would probably seek to marry twins if they could, being twins themselves. They were wicked, she told me, often when talking to a man, one of them would pretend to be the other and then they would turn about, the discontinuity in their comportment and conversations leaving suitors baffled and confused.

Charlotte was of the opinion that Caroline disdained the young men she met because she looked for someone older, more experienced. Charlotte was suspicious that she had someone in mind already, but she thought that it was someone not in our social circle, hence the reason Caroline kept it close to her breast.

She talked too about our mother — mama, as Charlotte called her — and I found that both she and I felt the same about Helena — that she was still



young enough to enjoy her life and that there was no reason why she should not find satisfaction.

“Promise me brother, promise me that you will care for her. She needs it William, she deserves it.”

I nodded, acknowledging what she had said, but Charlotte was already chatting on. As she did though I noted how closely she pressed herself, and stroked my hand and looked into my eyes.

“And what are your hopes and dreams, Charlotte?” I asked.

For a moment, my sister dropped her eyes and then she looked at me, “Bless you, William. But I’m not sure that hopes and dreams are for me anymore.”

I stood for a moment. “How do you mean?”

Charlotte leaned in and hugged me. “I am too old for the Season now.” She smiled ironically, “They describe a woman like me as being ‘on the shelf’. I shall take a role as governess or teach at a school. I may marry eventually, but this whole carnival is not for me now.”

The sadness was there but well hidden, it was only because I had known her as long as I had, that I could see it. I was reminded of how strong a person

she really is, and how she had cared for the other girls as they had come along. She had played the role of ‘older sister’ all of her life. I love my sisters, as I have said, and it was my resolve, as I have said, that they shall go out of my care as prepared as they can be, and when they have gone to their new homes, I shall never cease to support them when I am needed. My sisters would be cared for in whatever way they wanted, and if this was truly what Charlotte wanted — which I doubted — then I would support her in it, but if it wasn’t, then I would do what I could to make it happen.

“Our father, eh?” I asked, intimating that it was his fault she was at this pass.

“Indeed!” She replied.

We started a second turn around the garden.

Suddenly Charlotte started asking about my ‘hopes and dreams’.

“To be honest with you, I have none at the moment.” I explained that I was still making the transition from army life back to that of a civilian. As I had told the captain from the War Office, there were many things I would need to deal with — for example, the seat in the House of Lords. Father had

never really done very much with it. I might take it up, I might not. There was also the running of the estate, an intricate arrangement of leases and tenancies, holdings and investments. However, I told her, my main task was to make things right for my sisters.

“Are you so eager to get rid of us?” She chided me.

“Hardly!” I laughed at the sad face she had pulled. “I love you all dearly. But, if, for example, you told me that you wanted to stay at home until you were an old maid or said you wanted nothing more than to run away and become a kept wife in an Ottoman *harem*, I should do the best I could to make it happen for you.”

“A harem, William?” Charlotte laughed at the idea. “I think I would make a good wife for a sultan; do you not think? All gauzes and waving fans, slaves peeling grapes for me.”

Suddenly she stopped her day dream and brought her piercing gaze onto me, “But talking of wives, is there really no one lined up for you?”

I shook my head. “I don’t think so.”

“Good!” She said emphatically, which surprised me. “You do realise that any woman who even looks at you, will face a hostile jury? She will have to be something exceptional before mama and our sisters will let her near you.” The ferocity with which she said this was unusual, in that Charlotte was usually the calmest of personalities, she was patient and tried to envisage everything before reacting. Almost immediately she looked embarrassed by her statement.

We embraced again. It was a very tender embrace, perhaps too tender for a half-brother and sister — let alone a brother and sister. “We all love you so very much William and I know that we are all thankful that you have been returned to us safe and healthy. Though that scar on your cheek does make you look more than a little roguish.”

While we were walking back into the house, I told Charlotte to let the other girls know that we would be repairing to Rogeringham Hall in the next week or so, and that they should begin preparations.

“And is there a reason why we should up-sticks and move this early before Christmas?” She asked with a strange sort of smile on her face.

“Apart from the fact that I have business there?” I asked. Once again, she pulled a slightly disappointed face.

“Very well then,” I went on, “I feel that I would like to spend time with all of you before you all go off and get married, and that we should do it away from the distractions of the town — in the peace and quiet of the country. Perhaps one last Christmas as a family? Is that sufficient?”

At this point Charlotte said something quietly to herself, which I almost didn’t catch “It is — if mama will allow...” Or at least that was what it sounded like.

I did not get a chance to clarify what she had said because a foot man announced the arrival of my lawyer and my steward from Buckinghamshire.

## ***6. The Lawyer and the Steward***

Mr Thomas Langton sat in my study with a pile of papers. He is an efficient man who at first glance appears to be brusque. He looks too young to be an experienced lawyer but he is an intelligent fellow and quite personable once you become more familiar with him.

My father's will was the first thing that he discharged, handing it to me so that I could read it and sign a receipt for it. Then we spent an hour going through various documents and deeds before our business was completed.

I was stunned when he stood up and gathered the rest of his papers and asked if there was anything else I required.

"No, thank you, Mr Langton, but I am surprised," I told him, "I was going to invite you to stay tonight and dine with us."

"Thank you, Your Grace but my wife is due to give birth any day now, and, by your leave, I would rather be there. I can get partway home tonight and arrive early tomorrow, if I leave now."

"Then begone sir, with my blessings!" I laughed. "I'd not stand between a man and his wife at such a time. Kindly convey my regards to Mrs Langton, and my deepest apologies for calling you away from her at this time."

I saw him out into the stable yard, "I intend to remove to Rogeringham Hall, soon, I will see you and your wife and family there. God speed, sir!" And with that he was gone.

I was with the steward, Alfred Dodgson, until quite late and missed dinner. Several times there were things about his accounts I asked him to clarify, and though the explanations seemed plain enough, once he was dismissed, I spent quite a long time re-reading the summaries of the accounts he had provided.

The steward was new — he had been in his role for perhaps a year, but though my late father was generally a good judge of character, there seemed to be something ‘off’ about him. Whereas Mr Barthomley was a twit, he was an open and almost unabashed twit, this fellow set my nerves on edge but for no reason I could put my finger on.

In general, as I have said before, the system in Britain — estates and houses like ours — works with a certain amount of skimming. The farmers raise so much, then declare slightly less. The steward then takes in revenues but declares slightly less and so on. Each person supplements his or her income, by the judicious deduction of the difference between the actual amount and the declared amount. It is a tradition as old as time and generally kept to a manageable level. Quartermasters in the army do it, for them it’s easy, but there is no man better placed for such everyday larceny as a steward. Of all of a

man's staff he is one of the most important, the most trusted. He controls the life blood of a house, what feeds the family, what powers its growth and life, and what would pay for my sisters' weddings. Our books were not bad and the Rogeringham estates were healthy and wealthy, but there was a slight dip in the rents in the farms tied to the estate that bothered me.

Mr Dodgson had advised me that he too needed to return to his wife that night, so he left me with the summary and went off to return to Buckinghamshire. After he had gone, Barclay brought me a plate with some bread and sliced beef. I asked him to look at the documents. As my manservant, he keeps my personal accounts. He read through them, then simply looked at me. His face was a picture of amazement.

"You see it too, then?" I asked.

"Yes, Your Grace. And begging your pardon but it looks kack-handed, not right." He said, indicating that it was sloppy in execution.

"A distraction?" I wondered aloud. Had the steward deliberately placed one obvious issue to hide something else. I assumed that it was a relatively new thing, instigated since my father's



death — he would have spotted something like that immediately. Whereas I, coming new to the situation, a beginner as it were, might miss it.

“I would assume so, Your Grace, either that or he is genuinely inept, which I doubt.”

There was something else going on, something more serious than judicious skimming.

I rang for a footman, Henry answered. “Has my mother retired yet?” She hadn’t.

“Ask her if she will attend me.” He went off to find her. Barclay asked if I needed him further. Dependable Barclay, tactful as ever but I instructed him to stay.

I showed Helena the account books. It was the first time that she had seen them. My father had died some three months previously, and the issue with the rents had begun just a few days after. During that time, she had had reports from Mr Dodgson, but she had not seen the ledgers. She assured me that there had been no report of any issues or irregularities.

My mother read through the accounts, and after a page or so looked up at me. Her handsome face was perplexed. She looked from me to Barclay.

“Do you see this too, Mr Barclay?” She asked him.

“I do, Your Grace.” He told her.

Helena looked back at me. “What do you intend to do?”

I sat back in my chair. “We are going have a ball.”

Helena looked at me, in surprise.

“We discussed it the other night, mother. To mark my succeeding to the title, and as a celebration of my safe return from Spain we shall throw a Grand Winter Ball, at Rogeringham.

“If you would mother, I would like you to go with the girls and begin the preparations.” Helena nodded.

“Barclay, you will accompany my mother, officially, you will be making ready for my arrival.”

“As you wish, Your Grace.”

“However, I would also like you to make discreet enquiries, if you would? Find out what you can about this steward and his work.” Barclay nodded. As I have said, my man can be most diplomatic

when he needs to be. “Until I arrive, Joshua, make your reports to my mother.”

With that concluded I retired for the night.

Later when the rest of the house was quiet and still, my mother came to my room again. Her pearl-grey gown slid to the floor as she climbed into my bed, her warm skin pressing against mine, her round bobbies dragging across my chest, her lips seeking mine.

I was more than ready for her; my prick was iron hard in anticipation. But no matter how much I wanted to just throw her on her back and plough deep inside her moist and welcoming lips, I waited and embraced her, kissed her and teased her, making sure that our pleasure would be mutual. I was eager, to be sure, desperate for her, but I was never going to be that man, the one who takes without giving pleasure, who plunders and leaves nothing. They call it fore-play, I understand, and it is a wonder; both parties may achieve pleasure enough before the deed, as it were, is actually done.

I was just about to begin my mother’s new favourite activity of cunnilingus, when she stopped me. Instead, it was her that slid down the bed, her

skin gliding across mine as she positioned herself near my hard cock.

Imagine my surprise when Helena actually licked the head of my prick. She was tentative at first, licking it as one would lick a fruit or something when one is not sure how it will taste. I propped myself up on my elbows so that I could see better. She pulled a fleeting wry face but then licked it again.

We made eye contact, and she pulled back.

“You seem surprised,” she told me.

“Oh! Indeed, I am!”

“May I ask why?” She asked, as she lay spread across my thighs, with my prick held possessively in her hand.

“Well,” I began, ‘My mother — the image of sweetness and light,’ I teased. “Who barely curses, and even in the height of passion calls out the name of God and all of His Little Angels, has without any preamble, or a by-your-leave, taken my shaft in her hand and put it into her mouth. So, yes, I am a touch surprised.”

“It is a fine ‘shaft’,” She observed, bending down and kissing it again.

I waited.

“Very well then!” She snorted, and her breath was warm on my prick. “After the pleasure you gave me the other night, I merely sought to return the compliment. This is not something I ever did for your father, but we were at a function at Madame Minette’s one evening. She had a reputation for a certain wildness with her being an émigré, and this one time, I was witness to a woman doing this...” she squeezed my prick gently.

“Sucking a cock?”

“Yes. They were in a side room and I had come out of another room, when I saw them, through a partly opened door. She — I didn’t recognise her, but Alexandra Minette was not above importing a few whores to get the party moving along, so I assume that she was one of them. Anyway, the girl was on her knees in front of the man, with his knees either side of her. And she had his shaft in her hands, stroking it, and rubbing it all over her breasts, before she began to suck on it. At one point she appeared to have her nose buried in his pubic hairs it was so far down her throat. And he seemed to be enjoying it

immensely. So, I thought that perhaps you would enjoy it.

“Have you had this done before?” She asked.

“Sometimes.” I told her. I did not tell her that several of the whores who frequented our regimental lines in Portugal had been so adept at *fellatio* that they could drain a man dry in the time it took for him to get his breeches fully off. I am not talking about the soldier’s women either, several of those that plied their trade among the officers were so skilled as *fellatrices* that getting ‘sucked off’ by them was almost as pleasurable as an evening fucking. (I concealed my experiences from my mother because being compared with others, especially when just starting out on an adventure such as she was, can be disheartening. I supposed that there would be a time when I would eventually tell her but it would not be tonight).

Having my cock sucked is something I have always enjoyed. I was overjoyed when Helena took my prick into her mouth again, surprised, but happy.

Her first action was to take my cock out of her mouth again. “I have to admit that I am not at all sure of what I am doing here.”

“Do whatever you find enjoyable,” I told her, “Just be careful that you do not blow into my prick.”

“Is that not a good thing?” She asked, and I could see an impudent little smile in her eyes.

“It is excruciating, or so I am told. And you would not want to see me in such pain, I am sure.”

Helena smiled, shook her head as if to say ‘certainly not’, then she scraped her teeth down the length of my prick. When I jumped, she gave a girlish giggle and said “Oops! I suppose I should not do that either?”

“Minx!” I snarled at her, playfully.

Soon my mother was sucking away on my cock as if it was the passion of her life. She applied herself to it with a will, experimenting on ways to lick it, or draw her tongue along it, to push it into her throat as far as she could without choking, trying to reach my pubes with her nose.

Soon, with a few gentle suggestions, she settled for what might be considered the classic method of fellating one’s partner. With her right hand she grasped the base of my shaft and gently but firmly friggid it. At the same time, she sucked on the head of my prick, opening her mouth as she lowered her

head and closing her lips tight and sucking as she drew her head slowly up.

It being such a novel experience, my own beloved mother whorishly pumping my cock in and out of her sweet mouth, it wasn't long before I could feel the spend growing in my balls.

I stopped Helena and rolled her onto her back. Kneeling next to her I pumped my cock with my hand to bring the spend.

Oh fuck! My hips pumped as I spent, spraying cum across her face and breasts. Once, twice, three times I shot jism onto her. Some landed on her mouth, but most landed upon her neck and across her lovely, lovely breasts.

“Gracious!” She exclaimed as I sat back on my heels. “That was... quite... er spectacular.”

Helena's finger touched the spend that lay on her face, bringing the same finger to her lips afterwards.

“It is a strange taste.” She said, “Neither particularly salty nor is it sweet. But neither is it unpleasant.”

I leaned down and licked some of the spending off her teat. Pushing the nipple with my tongue, I



cleaned that one, and then the other. “They tell me,” I said as I massaged the rest of the cum into the flesh of her breast, “That it does wonders for the complexion.”

Helena’s eyes were shut in bliss from my licking and massaging. “I will admit that I have heard this,” she said.

“But I understand that opinion is split,” I went on, “It may be the spend itself that does the trick, or it may be the effect of being well-fucked on a regular basis. Both views are popular.”

“Then having tried one side of the argument,” my mother said as she rolled on top of me and inserted my cock into her cunny. “We should at least explore the other side as well.”

And with that she started to ride me as if it was the most natural thing in the world for a mother, even a step-mother, to ride her son as if she were trotting out on Rotten Row on a morning constitutional.

I rested my hands on her hips, once again admiring her exquisite form, the breasts I had just licked my own spend off, with the long stud-like nipples, the smooth skin of her belly. I tightened my

grip on her and pushed my own hips up, meeting her descent in a slow, grinding fuck.

Soon, though, Helena began to bounce quicker, a rising trot, my own thrusts matching and my grip upon her hips firmer. After all I would not have my rider fall, and then find myself sold off as an ill-tempered mount. But I could feel my passion rising, I could feel the urge to take the bit between my teeth, and set the pace.

I threw my rider, pitched her off to one side onto the sheets.

Helena squeaked in surprise, as I rose up behind her and covered her. The squeak turned into a sly lascivious grin as she looked back at me and realised that I was intent on taking her.

I was taking her for myself, and there was nothing she could do to stop it. Not that I believe she wanted to do something about it, in fact doing something about it was the last thing on her mind. My mother had me exactly where she wanted me and she pressed her arse back onto my cock to show it.

For a moment, I looked at the brown pucker of Helena's arse, we had come so far in so short a time,

even *fellatio*, but that was a step too far, too soon. Instead, I set about pumping her cunny full of my seed, encouraged by her urging me on — in God’s name, no less — as I pushed her shoulders down into the mattress.

“Fuck me, William! Oh God, so full, yes! Yes! Yes! Oh, so much! So strong! Fuck your mother!”

On and on I drove into her. Pumping, pumping, pumping. I have no idea where that energy, that power came from. Love? Lust? A measure of both, I suppose. It surged through me — I **was** the Lord and master, and Helena was mine to be taken. It surged through my hips, a blacksmith’s hammer, pounding, pounding. It surged up from my balls — exploding, spraying, filling, escaping, dribbling.

As we lay entwined afterwards, it was as if Helena sought to burrow inside me, she pressed herself so close.

“I fear that I shall be fit for nothing tomorrow,” she laughed. “I can say quite truthfully that I have never been fucked like that, ever!” Her smile filled her face, her eyes laughed with pleasure.

I leaned over and kissed her lips, “Should we do more?” I asked. “We can if you wish?”

Helena pushed against my chest, laughing. “I do not know which is worse — that you are prepared to leave me bed-ridden, or that you could do it to me.”

“Anything you wish, I would do it for you.” I told her. “Anything at all.”

“I know,” Helena said, and her kiss was tender and loving. “And I thank you for it. But there is no need for you to leave me prostrated just yet.”

And so saying, my mother rose from our disarrayed bed and drew on her dressing gown. Even as she did, I saw the discomfort in her hips as she walked. Turning towards me Helena saw the concern for her in my eyes, but dismissing it with a smile and a coquettish tilt of her hip, she left and went to her own room.

I sat down by the fire, I found myself possessed of a strong feeling of contentment. I looked at the tot of rum that I had poured and decided that tonight, at least I did not need it. When I did sleep, it was deep and undisturbed until morning.

### ***7. Moving to the country***

I was surprised to find that my sisters took the news of our move to the country very well. Surprisingly well, in fact.

I had expected the departure from London — the Ton, as they call it, to the country to be greeted by dismay, after all, although it wasn't the Season there were still parties and dinners to be attended. But the house suddenly exploded in an excited chattering frenzy as outfits were selected and trunks were packed.

To avoid the worst of the preparations, I retreated to my study out of the way. And it was there that Hermione tracked me down.

I had not had a chance to talk with her since I spoke with her suitor, Mr Barthomley, and I assumed that she sought to rectify that.

This was, in fact, the case. Hermione wanted to know what I thought of him.

Hermione looks sweet and innocent, that is her stock in trade. Oh, for sure, she is definitely a Rogeringham, there is no mistaking that. She has my father's dark hair but the slim form of our mother and her eyes. Of all of my sisters you would look at Hermione and assume that butter would not melt in her mouth. She does not even try, but with her large eyes, and long hair which she rarely wears up, she has a positively angelic air about her. It has been that way since she was a small child.

However, as I discovered recently, Hermione is not all she appears to be. ‘There is steel in that one’ Charlotte had said, and talking to her it appeared that way. She was certainly astute, as she began with a question.

“You have misgivings about James?” She asked brightly.

“I will be completely honest with you — yes I do.”

“Yet you have given permission for him to see me more?”

I nodded. “I take it that that is acceptable to you?”

It was her turn to nod.

“Will you explain something to me, Hermione?” She nodded again and I asked, “What do you see in him?”

Hermione smiled her radiant smile. “He is sweet, William. Oh, he is a twit, as you would put it, and he is pompous, but he has a sweet heart, and even with the obstacles that were put in his way, he continued his courtship of me.”

It couldn't have been easy for the young man, especially with our father, "You genuinely like him?"

Hermione nodded once more.

"I see no reason then, why I should stand in your way. Be warned though, Hermione, there are few people on this earth that I bear as much affection for, as I do you. He only has to take one step out of line and I shall..."

"Please William?" My youngest sister came and sat beside me and hugged me, "Do him no harm until I have had my chance..."

I grunted my assent. "If you insist."

Hermione giggled and kissed my cheek. I find it hard to be out of sorts with her. Although I was still uncertain of the young man, Mr James Barthomley Esq would live — at least for a while.

With so many of us travelling, and because I wanted Helena to go ahead and start preparing for the Winter Ball, my mother would travel first in our landau with most of the girls. Barclay would follow along with them riding in a van with the staff that were going and all of the luggage. Charlotte and I would follow a day or so later in our brougham.

Normally I would have ridden the distance from London to Buckinghamshire, but this time I chose to travel with Charlotte.

At one point Margaret complained that she and her twin could ride with me and that the landau would thus be less crowded.

“The plan has been made.” I said firmly, using my ‘tone of command’ voice, “The four of you will travel with your mother, Charlotte and I shall be in the brougham.”

For a moment I expected resistance, but despite a sullen cast to her mouth, Margaret said “Yes, William.”

I kept my surprise to myself, and watched them into the coach. I wanted to wrap my mother in my arms and kiss her a tender goodbye. Instead, I settled for a peck upon her cheek and I waved them off.

Supper that night was just Charlotte and myself, and the dining room seemed huge compared to what it was normally. I sat in my now normal place at the head of the table and my sister sat beside on my right-hand side.

“So, brother.” She asked after the soup dishes had been removed. “Why AM I the favoured one?”



I smiled at the question. “Mother went ahead to start planning for a winter ball, and faced with the incessant quizzing from the twins and Hermione or Caroline’s meaningful silences, I chose you.”

She laughed. “Ah! I am the lesser of the evils?”

“If you wish.”

“Very well then. If you wish to have peace and quiet on the journey, I promise I will behave if you answer me a question tonight.”

I looked at her, and cautiously nodded my assent. Henry supervised a new, younger footman as he served our main course, medallions of pork with potatoes and late vegetables.

“You do realise that I am only four years younger than you? To all intents and purposes, I am a grown woman?”

I nodded again, it was true, although I still tended to think of them as girls, all of them including Hermione were grown women, something, I realised, I was having problems acknowledging.

“So, in all our conversations about your experiences in the Peninsular, why is there so much you avoid talking about? We were always honest

with each other as children, in fact we swore always to tell each other the truth, are we still children to you?”

I wiped my mouth on a napkin. “Forgive me, dear sister. There is much that is sordid and unpleasant and just plain ugly in the world outside of these walls. I merely sought to...”

“Shield us? Protect us?” There was no heat in her questioning and she took my hand in hers. “That’s always something that I have loved about you, William, you always look out for us. Father tried to do the same, I think, but instead he ended up jailing us here. Locking us away from the world, isolating us, because... because... who knows why?”

“Come now, you’re not totally isolated.” I reminded her. “You yourself told me that there were dances, and men who would come calling.”

“I did,” Charlotte admitted.

The young footman cleared the plates away. I did not care for a dessert dish, neither did Charlotte, so we went to sit in the parlour.

“There are many ways a person can feel isolated,” Charlotte told me, “Not simply by being locked away in a remote tower.”

“This is also true,” I nodded, “But I suppose, if I am doing anything, it is preserving my vision of my beautiful and loving sisters, the slightly vexing young ladies, that I grew up with.

“And yet, as much as I want to do that, I know that some of you will want to go out from here into the world,” I waved at the windows which fronted onto the street. “And I worry that you are not yet ready for that.”

Charlotte was looking at me with a mixture of surprise and admiration, but also a hint of mischief, as she asked, “And what **are** you going to do to prepare your sisters for the world?”

I had to laugh, “Frankly Charlotte. I don’t know. If you were part of a draught of new recruits, I would put you through your drills, and so discover what is missing in your knowledge; after that I would organise appropriate training for you all.”

“Well!” Charlotte smiled, “Then it is a good thing that we are the sisters of a duke and not ‘a draught of recruits’, that all sounds awful.”

“How very genteel you are, sister.” I laughed. She nodded gracefully.

“How then shall we achieve this?” She asked. “Hopefully something more suitable than marching and drilling.”

“I have ideas — the first of which is to discover what it is each of you really wants from the future. That is the key. Do you wish to find a husband? Or are you still considering the role of a kept wife in a harem?”

Charlotte waved the question away, as if to suggest that she had not yet decided which way she would go.

“Once that goal is clearly fixed,” I went on, “We move towards it.”

“I must admit William, you surprise me. That you care so much for us, unlike many men, who just dispose of sisters and daughters as they think fit without considering what the women think — that is no surprise, that is the you I have come to love,” she said, “You have always thought of us before yourself. But that you are also prepared to ignore what is considered normal in this and do what you think is right by us, then that only makes me love you more, brother.”

We spent that evening reminiscing about our childhood over a glass or two of a fairly decent madeira from my father's cellars — my cellars now. We talked about the people we had played with growing up, our tutors, and Nanny Quinn, who despite her ferocious bark, would happily — devotedly, sit with us all night if we were ill.

After that, the talk turned to past suitors, I talked about young ladies I had been interested in, and Charlotte about boys that she had liked.

It had turned nine o'clock and I was considering retiring for the night as I planned to depart for Rogeringham Hall early the next morning.

"Charlotte?" I asked, after some thought. "You asked me earlier about truthfulness — so I have a question, and I understand if you do not wish to answer..."

"Am I a virgin?" She asked me.

"Well, yes, are you?"

"I'd ask you why you wish to know, but I know you have your reasons. I have no maidenhead. That was broken when I was younger, riding in the park at Rogeringham. But I have not yet slept with a man.

“I suppose it would be pointless to ask you the same question, William.”

“But I shall still answer and say my virginity is long gone.”

“And yet,” she said thoughtfully, “There is no wife not even a fiancée. Is it true then, what we always wondered?”

“What was that?” I asked as innocently as I could.

“Mama?” she said simply.

“I don’t know what you mean,” I told her.

“Ahhhh — I think you do,” she laughed. “The slow smouldering looks, the envy with which you watched father... oh and the serenade the other night!”

“What of it?”

“We have often discussed it between us,” she confided. “Oh, to be certain, we know you love all of us, but equally we know that you save a special place in your heart for mama.”

“And if I did? What of it? It’s not like anything would ever come of it...”

“To be truthful with you William, why not? Mama is an attractive woman, and she has retained her looks well. And why should she not have pleasure after years of being married to father?”

“So, you’re saying — if I have an interest in my mother — my **step**-mother, I should do something about it?” I asked innocently. “But what of the age difference?”

Charlotte waved it away, “What I am saying brother, is that she deserves pleasure too. We all do.”

“Wait! You speak of pleasure, Charlotte, how are you aware of such things? Did you not say that you had not yet slept with a man?”

“Oh! Did I?” She said ingenuously. “Surely there are many pleasures to be enjoyed. And many of them do not include sleeping with a man.

“Heavens! Is that the time!” She said unexpectedly, “I should be away to bed, you did say that you wish to depart early, did you not?”

### ***8. An interesting journey with my sister Charlotte***

The next morning, I passed my small bag up to Henry, who would ride with us, seated up with

Hopley the coachman. Charlotte handed her travelling bag to him and then mounted the coach.

Soon we were heading west on the road to Buckinghamshire out of London via the Chilterns.

A long morning's drive would bring us to Amersham. At first Charlotte and I sat quietly, I tried to read, but it was so long since I last made this particular journey that I found myself engrossed in watching the changes in the towns as we passed.

Then as Charlotte was extracting a book from the small bag that she had brought inside with her, something fell out of it.

What rolled across the floor, ending against my foot, surprised me, it was some eight inches long, of pale polished ivory, and I could probably have just encircled it with my thumb and middle finger. I knew what it was immediately, and there was no reason at all why my sister might not own one. I had just not expected to see one here and at this moment.

"It is not what it looks like!" She said with a rush as she tried to stop me when I leaned forwards to pick it up off the floor of the carriage.

"Actually," I said, looking at it in my hand with a barely suppressed smile, "It appears to be precisely



what it looks like.”

“Very well!” She said huffily, as she took it from me “It is what it is, and it is mine! Is that an issue?”

“Not for me.” I told her.

“I suppose that you have seen one before?”

“Oh yes!” I laughed. “Smaller ones than that and bigger too.”

“Bigger?”

I held my hands some sixteen inches apart, and then circled both of my thumbs and forefingers together, to show the circumference. Charlotte’s eyes widened in surprise.

“No!!” She breathed.

“Aye!” I assured her. “A *godemiche*, of carved ebony wood, heavy and anatomically correct too, with pills attached.”

“Of wood?”

“Yes, as smooth as your fair cheek, my love, polished smooth and then oiled.”

“You touched it?”

I nodded, “And used it on its owner.”

Charlotte’s eyes were wide, to begin with, they expanded even further at that. “She took that size?”

“With no issue.”

Charlotte said nothing at this, merely putting the *dil doule* away in her bag, but I could see the conflict in her face. She wanted to quiz me more, but such a conversation with her brother would have been too unseemly. So, she settled for re-placing her bag safely so that it would not fall down again.

As she went to sit back down, a particularly deep pot-hole in the road jolted the brougham and pitched my sister almost onto my lap. For a moment we just looked at each other. I am sure she felt my cock lying along my thigh inside my tight breeches. I moved to assist her to regain her place next to me, but she stopped my hand.

Instead, Charlotte re-positioned herself on my thigh — and my prick — and arranged herself so that she sat on my knee, leaning in and across my lap. Even with her travelling coat, I felt her tight bottom, as she ended sitting on my hand. It was an instant of great moment. Sitting on my lap, as it

were, she looked into my eyes and with her slightly impish smile asked about the ebony *godemiche*.

Our brougham was made some thirty years ago. Unlike more modern vehicles, when the hoods are up it is a dark cave, with just the windows of the doors available for light. When the coach is in motion with the sound of the wheels on the road and the horses, it is necessary to shout at the top of one's voice for the driver to hear an instruction, but at least there is little chance of being over-looked or over-heard inside. We would have fair notice if the carriage were to stop, so we were quite private.

I was torn. I had never actually thought through my plan to prepare my sisters for the outside world. I just had this vague idea that I would — somehow. I would use my worldly knowledge to help them — somehow. But 'somehow' was as far as I had gotten the plan. Now here I was with my sister about to engage in a frank, sexual conversation, with her seated in an intimate position, talking about my own lewd behaviour.

And she hung upon every word.

I surprised myself by seeing the possibilities of engaging my sister, sexually. I felt that that Charlotte was attracted to me, I felt the same for her, so why

not, I asked myself? My conflict came from my growing relationship with her mother. Did I want to jeopardise that? I decided that I would see where it went.

I left my hand where it was, and reasoning that I might have to save her falling again, placed my other arm across her lap. She leaned in against me. It wasn't really that intimate, we both wore far too many layers, but I was enjoying the closeness.

It was obvious that Charlotte was still thinking about what I had told her, because next she asked "Would you tell me, brother, how it was that you encountered this monstrous ebony device?"

"Not long after I began my career in the army, when I was with the 45<sup>th</sup> in Jamaica, some of my fellow officers and I were visiting a brothel in Kingstown. And while we were drinking and consorting with the girls, the *madame* instructed one of them, a lithe black girl, to dance and entertain us.

"We cleared a space for her and one of the men who worked there played a guitar, and she began a sort of twisting turning dance. It was slow and sensuous, and well suited to her slim, and muscular figure. She had very long legs, I remember, and

would swing them high up in the air, while gyrating her hips.” Charlotte hung on each and every word.

“As she danced, she slowly removed her clothes — what there was of them, until she was naked before us.”

“And was she pretty, this girl?”

“Pretty? I think not, her features were too strong and she had a hard set to her face. But her bubbies bounced and jiggled nicely as she danced. One of the first things that I noticed was that she had no hair upon her body there...”

Charlotte gasped. “No hair?”

“Shaven.” I told her, “Smooth as a baby, I found out later.”

“And what about this thing,” she said, “This *godemiche* then?”

“She took a rest for a moment and at that point a servant brought the mighty weapon to her. It seems that this was some sort of party-piece of hers.

“I will admit that seeing it caused me to feel a little inadequate. It was everything I described. Fully sixteen inches in length, carved out of ebony, polished to a shine and oiled, with coconut oil. It

had a pair of pills carved at one end and a bulbous head at the other.”

My sister was devouring this story, enjoying every moment of it, and I could feel her moving against my thigh.

“My fellow officers began to wager that she could not possibly take such a device. Major Raine who was our senior, decided that as I was the youngest that I should referee the wager. ‘Ensign Rogeringham!’ He said, ‘You are excused the wager and will scrutinise the woman’s efforts.’”

“By scrutinise, you mean...?” Charlotte asked.

“I was to make sure that she did what she was supposed to and make sure that the *godemiche* was fully seated inside her.

“The dancer sat herself on a ratty old *chaise*. It was well-used, threadbare in places and stained with God-knows-what, but the *madame* of the brothel had dressed it up using scarves, so it looked far more glamorous than it actually was. Still, it enabled the girl to lay her naked body back on it and draw her right leg up, bent at the knee, toes downward, her smooth mound glistening with sweat in the warmth of the Kingstown evening.

“She grinned at us, her even white teeth gleaming in the light from the lamps, which also shone on her sweat sheened skin. Her grin got even wider as she placed the head of the *godemiche* against her wrinkled brown lips. She probed herself several times with it, placing the head just inside her cunny, just enough to dampen it with her juices.

“Once she had done this a couple of times, she took the wooden prick, and brought it to her mouth. The girl looked around her, her eyes wide in delight, but also acknowledging the lewdness of what she was doing as she licked the head with her long tongue, and enveloped it with her dark lips.

“‘Get on with it, woman, fuck yourself with the thing!’ Raine called out, breaking her lascivious spell.

“With a slightly vexed expression, the whore lay back on the chaise and bringing both feet up on to the couch, started to apply the wooden prick to herself.

“It was at this point that I began to wonder exactly how I would verify Raine’s wager. It was long certainly, but I wasn’t at all sure how long her cunny was, would she be able to fit it all in?

“Then I noticed that someone had graduated the *godemiche*, carving its length with lines around its shaft at what appeared to be one-inch intervals!” (This was how I was certain that it was sixteen inches, I told Charlotte).

“This was a show that the girl performed regularly?” Charlotte asked, “From the marks?”

I nodded, it was an astute conclusion, typical of my sister and one I had reached myself at the time.

“Slowly the black girl eased the huge wooden prick inside her, twisting her hips to allow her cunny to accommodate it, because it wasn’t just long, it was thick as well. She looked at me as she did it, her eyes shining, with amusement and lust as the faux-cock filled her. One inch, two, three and then four easily slipped inside her.

“The girl licked her lips and she began to work the ebony cock in and out, masturbating herself for our pleasure and her own.

“Then as her back arched and she gave a grunt of pleasure, she pushed even more of it inside her. Six, seven, eight, nine inches of the heavy black wood rested inside her slick cunny.



“Once again, she paused in her work, and drawing a finger through the juices that oozed from her cunt lips, the girl placed it in her mouth, sucking on it like a thin prick. She did it again and offered it to me. Her juices were *piquant* to the taste, sharp, and yet sweet. I licked her finger like a supplicant, she murmured something in a mix of English and Spanish, then drew her hand gently down the side of my face.

“The girl began to apply herself to the task in hand. With over a half of the wooden cock already seated the girl took hold of it by the carved wooden balls and pressed it home.

“Ten inches, eleven inches, twelve, thirteen and then fourteen. By now she had lowered her knees so that they splayed out to the side of her, and she was panting. She looked up at me as if to ask ‘is that enough?’ But Raine wanted the whole thing inside her, so I rested my hand upon hers and gently pushed. Once again, her eyes met mine and she nodded. Leaving my hand where it was, she began to diddle her own clit — I assume she was trying to make more juices to aid its passage. Whatever she was doing, it seems to have worked.

“She moved her hand back, so that it rested next to mine, and I felt her press on the end of the *godemiche*. I watched as the fifteen-inch mark disappeared up inside her. Finally, only the swell of the carved wooden balls stopped it going further and the mark for the sixteenth inch could be seen resting against her wrinkled, brown cunny lips. At this point the black whore lay back on the couch recovering her breath, her skin glistening with her perspiration, and she grinning widely.

“‘Done!’ I told Major Raine, ‘All sixteen inches sir.’ My brother officers began to settled their bets.

The girl lay next to me panting, the dark skin of her belly and small tits rising and falling as she recovered her breath.

“‘Finish her off, Rogeringham!’ the major roared behind me, ‘The girl’s done a good job! Only proper to bring her off.’

“The whore nodded when I looked at her, so, I took a firmer grip of the thing and worked it inside her. I was still mesmerised by how much of it was actually inside and also worried that if I pressed too hard, I would somehow impale her upon it and it would emerge from her mouth. She must have sensed my caution even as she was enjoying the

sensations and uttering all sorts of encouragement in a mix of English, Spanish and the local *patois*, because she placed one of her hands on mine and urged me deeper, until it found a resistance to its progress. At that point she pressed my hand back slightly, the message was clear — ‘no further than that’.

“Back and to it went. In and out, back and to, back and to, all the while the lithe, angular body of the girl writhed in pleasure. It gave me a strange sense of power, after all, it was the first time I had masturbated a female, and I began to experiment with my movements, shifting the weight of the heavy wooden tool so that it stimulated different regions of her cunny.

“I found the experience so interesting in a detached sort of way, that when the girl spent — with a great groan and a gush of fluids, adding more stains to the worn cloth of the *chaise*, it came as quite a surprise.

“My fellow officers had all but forgotten me — they were all interested in the women that were surrounding them, and I was at something of a loss, as I had now accomplished my own mission but the girl on the couch had other ideas, and she began to

undo the fly of my breeches, licking her lips as she pulled my cock out.”

“Dear lord, William!” Charlotte cried, “What an adventure!”

By now Charlotte had rested her hands on my shoulders and was holding onto me against the rocking of the coach. I felt that if I moved my head forwards just an inch, then our lips would touch, but unfortunately, I heard the coach slow and come to a stop.

“The Fox Inn, Your Grace,” Hopley announced, as I looked at him through the open window. Charlotte, concealed behind me, was making herself presentable. “The horses need to take their rest Your Grace, and it is blowing up black as a bag sir. It will rain, I fear and heavily. The road is bad as it is, sir, a heavy rain could make it impassable.”

“Very good Hopley, enquire if there are rooms available, one each for myself and Lady Charlotte and one for you and Henry. We shall wait out the storm if we can.”

He came back looking most upset. “They only have the one room, Your Grace, at least only one that would be fit for yourselves sir. Henry and me —

we're okay in the stables, but they're full up otherwise."

"Good man, Hopley, I'm sure we will cope." I said looking at Charlotte, "We'll take the room. Here's ten shillings, take care of the horses and then look after yourself and Henry, we'll see how this goes forward tomorrow."

Henry carried our bags into the inn where one of the landlord's boys took them to a nice enough room. Fortunately, there was a couch in the room. Charlotte immediately sat down on it and started to make herself comfortable.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Well, you are the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton, fresh come to your inheritance, it wouldn't be fitting for Your Grace to sleep on a couch..." She smirked.

I put her bag onto the bed and spread my travelling coat out on the couch to ensure it would work as a blanket.

"You shall sleep in the bed," I told her. "I have slept in far worst places than on a couch, this will do very well."

We dined in the inn's private dining room, and the food was excellent. There was a soup of late vegetables, some mutton and boiled potatoes with a thick, tasty gravy, and an apple pie — made with sweet apples, the last from the store cupboards — for a dessert. None of it was fine dining but all of it was warming and very edible. The cook was the inn-keeper's wife, and she seemed embarrassed when I asked to meet her. But both Charlotte and I praised her, and she seemed pleased when she left.

On returning to our room, I sat smoking my pipe and drinking a tot of rum, while Charlotte washed.

When she was done, I washed as she made ready for bed, and then I turned down the lamp so that it was just a dim glow.

“Have you really slept in worst places?” Charlotte asked as I settled myself, dressed in just my shirt and under-breeches, under the heavy coat.

“When it comes to picking billets, colonels, majors and captains all get their choice before an ensign. As the lowest of the commissioned ranks, you often have to stand watch, so you have to make do as best you can. But that is the trick of it — making the best of your situation. How is the bed?”

I heard Charlotte snuggle down in the sheets, “It is very nice,” she said with an audible smile in her voice. “It’s clean and it smells sweet and fresh.”

“Good night, Charlotte.” I bade her.

“Goodnight, William.” She said, there was a pause of a few minutes, when I thought that she was asleep, followed by “William?”

“Yes?”

“You know your story about the girl with the *godemiche*?”

“Yes?”

“Did you sleep with her? Afterwards, I mean.”

I chuckled. “Sleeping was the last thing on her mind. She was a whore, Charlotte, she earned her crust by fucking for money. If she was sleeping, she wasn’t earning.”

I heard my sister sigh. “What is the matter?” I asked.

Her voice was wistful, almost sad. “It sounds like you have had so many incredible experiences. You’ve been travelling, been in battle, your Jamaican harlot, it all sounds so interesting.”

“I’m lucky to have survived some of it,” I reminded her. “During the crossing to the West Indies, we could easily have sunk, and there were several times when French soldiers tried to end my branch of the Rogeringham line, long before I was ready for it.”

“But at least you have been there and done those things.”

“Some of them, I will admit I am not proud of,” I said, “But what use is an experience unless you learn from it?”

“And what have you learnt from all of your experiences?”

Charlotte’s question made me think for a moment. I had grown up desiring my mother, the goal of my adult life was to make her mine. As well as the art of war, I had learnt the art of love and explored the many ways in which men and women can be intimate. My aim in all of that had been that when I did at last lie with Helena — as man and woman, our pleasure could be the utmost in its nature.

So, what had I learnt? The first thing...



“William?” I realised I had not yet answered Charlotte’s question.

“I think the most important thing I have learnt is how short life can be and how one should take one’s pleasures when one can. Take love, for example, much pleasure is to be had from making love, but also from fucking for its own sake.” I said, as I cast my blanket — my coat — off and rose from the couch. I had made a decision. Walking over to the bed I lifted the covers.

Charlotte moved over, and I slid in next to her. She looked at me, as I lay on my side looking down at her. I stroked a hair off her face.

“You and I have been closer for longer in our lives, more than some men and women ever are.” I said to her. She nodded as we pressed together, I could feel the heat of her body through our night clothes. “So, I am telling you before any other, that I am completely devoted to our mother and would make her my wife if a way can be found. I tell you this, not because I think less of you, but because of our promise to always be honest with each other.” Charlotte nodded, happily, I thought.

“And because of that promise I will also tell you, that she and I have already shared a bed.” My

sister's eyes went wide in shock, and then she laughed.

"You dog, William! There I was urging you on, and you were already there!" She laughed again and pressed herself closer, I reached my arm around her and pulled her against me, as I moved down the bed.

"What of us then?" I asked. I decided that I was quite ready to have my sister if she so wished, as well as my mother, though how I would reconcile it with Helena was a bridge to be crossed when I came to it.

"I think that you are correct," she said. "Men **and** women should take pleasure where they can. I realise that I may have to marry in the future, but if I tell you that I love you too, William, and of all the men in the world, there is no man I can think of that I would like more to be my first, what would you think?"

"! would count it a great honour, Charlotte, if you are certain, that is?"

"Very much so." Her hand slipped from under the bed clothes and she touched my chest, tenderly.

"Here? In an inn?" I asked.

“Well, I would prefer a grand *boudoir* with attendant maidens seeing me to my bed — where you wait for me...” She laughed. “But as we are both here, now, it seems as good a place as any.”

I stood up and took off my under-breeches and my shirt, and climbed back into the bed.

Charlotte clung to me as I kissed her. I slid my hand up inside of her chemise, feeling the smooth skin of her thigh, and the soft hairs of her bush, as she rolled her hips and let me explore her freely.

Her eyes closed as my fingers sought her jewel, pressing down between her thighs. A tiny sigh of pleasure, escaped her lips.

Charlotte’s skin was smooth under my hand, her body well-toned, and as my fingers glided lightly across her flesh, her sighs of pleasure became a shiver that danced across her body.

“Do you have your toy, Charlotte?” I asked, cupping her breast and using my thumb, lightly flicking at her nipple.

“Yes,” she breathed, “But it never feels like this.”

“Show me.” I told her. “Fetch it from your bag.”

“We are going to...?” She asked nervously.

I kissed her on the lips and told her that we were. “But I want you to show me how you use it on yourself first.” My voice was soft and loving but my tone was sufficient that she knew that I was telling her what to do.

Charlotte drew her chemise up and over her head. Now she lay naked beside me.

Cautiously at first, her hand replaced mine on her right breast, her finger and thumb gripping the nipple between them, her other hand diving between her thighs. She tweaked at the nipple, whilst still cupping the breast, and diddled her cunny, before inserting the ivory *godemiche*. Her eyes closed and she gained an air of concentration, as her hands moved. Suddenly Charlotte switched her hand from her breast to her quim, pressing it down hard on top of the other hand.

Her thighs pressed together as she twisted and rolled on the bed, while a rosy blush grew on her chest. All of a sudden, she started to shake and tremble in an orgasm. I slid my finger in next to hers and finding her clitoris kept the orgasm roiling her until she fell back limp on the mattress.

I leaned down and kissed her. My sister smiled up at me, she could feel my fingers still in her cunny,

poised, not moving.

“Why did you have me do that?” She asked.

“At the risk of sounding dispassionate,” I said, as I lowered my head and kissed her nipples, “I wanted to know at which level I should start.”

“Which level?” She laughed, in mock indignation.

“Well...” I said with a meek voice. “Are you a blushing maiden? Do you need gentle touches? Or will you faint at the slightest feel of my hand upon your breast, and run for your mama when I offer my prick to you?”

An amused smile played across my sister’s lips, as my hand rested upon her belly.

“Or were you on a level with a Kingstown harlot who would only be satisfied with a huge wooden *godemiche*, and then need a dashing young soldier afterwards for dessert?”

“And which is it that you think I am, brother?” She asked eagerly, returning my kisses and stroking my chest.

“In truth,” I said, “Delightfully, somewhere between the two.”

“William?” Charlotte drew me closer to her, clutching me tightly.

“Yes?”

“Take me brother. Take me as hard or as soft as you wish. I am ready. I need you. Your words have excited me, your touch more so!

“This!” She reached out and took hold of my cock. ‘This is a wonder!’ She said, suddenly focussing on it, “It is both hard and soft at the same time!” Her warm hand fondled my hardness, making it swell even further.

“Now, take this and fuck me, brother, fuck the blushing girl out of me and fuck the woman in, before I use you like my ivory companion and do it myself.”

I laughed, as I moved over her, Charlotte was every bit as passionate as I thought she would be, her words showed it, her responses showed it, and she was ready. I slipped inside her easily. There was little resistance and as a result Charlotte felt no pain as I did. She did feel something though.

“Oooh!” Charlotte’s face was amused and surprised at the sensation. “It’s different from the *dil doule*. It goes in further!”

I helped her open her thighs by hooking my hands under them and bringing them up.

“MUCH further!” She observed, “Oh William! William, I **like** this!”

In a very natural way, my sister reached up and around my shoulders, bringing my head down to kiss her, but also helping me gain further purchase.

“Oh yes! This is so good.”

“This. Meets. Your. Approval?” I grunted.

“Oh, most definitely!” She laughed, as she picked up on my movements and began to match them. ‘The pleasure is... It is so... Oh my dear God!’ It appeared that Charlotte was having a problem expressing herself. “Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!”

Charlotte’s previous orgasm had been strong, rippling through and shaking her. This one also took her and shook her thoroughly. My sister bit her tongue to prevent herself from crying out too loudly, but her eyes rolled up in her head and her fingernails dug deeply into my back, while her hips twitched and flexed as if to draw me further inside her.

I did not come, but I paused in my thrusting, easing off my motion, as she lay there in a state of

orgasmic bliss.

Finally, she spoke. "I love you, William."

"And I love you too." I told her, pausing. Charlotte drew herself to me, clinging tightly to me.

"No." she told me. "I have always loved you as my brother, that will never change. But what you have done for me tonight, not only do I love you more, but you will always be the uppermost in my heart."

I kissed her.

"I know mama, will always be the foremost love of your life," she continued, "But I hope I shall always have a share of your love as well."

"You already do, my sweet," I told her and I meant it. "You already do."

There was a moment that I can only describe as loving, where we both held each other tightly, our naked bodies pressed together, then Charlotte smiled at me and said quietly, "Now finish fucking your sister, William. I cannot wait until I feel you spend inside me."

Her tone was imperious, commanding, leaving me with little choice but to fuck my sister. For a



beginner at the game of love, Charlotte was an excellent pupil. I put this down to her intelligence and the enthusiasm with which she embraced it whole heartedly. Soon, I felt my own cum build, and started to pump harder.

Charlotte felt something was changing and she lewdly encouraged me, “Shoot William, shoot your spend deep inside me!” She whispered in my ear.

“Fill my hole with your seed brother. Fuck me, William, fuck it up inside of me\_eeee!”

This last, Charlotte’s quiet squeal of passion, was said as we both felt my cock harden and jerk. My body stiffened as I exploded in my sister’s womb, and then as it repeated, I thrust her upwards several times.

I collapsed beside my sister, who lay quietly for a moment, her hair spread out on the pillow, her breasts rising and falling as she recovered her breath, her erect nipples, moving with each movement of her chest.

She turned to me and kissed me — once, “Thank you for making me a woman.” Twice — ‘I love you, William.’ And the third time — because of the

pleasure it brought, “It is SO much better than doing it yourself!”

I could not help but smile at the way this had all fallen out. Obviously, I had not set out to make Charlotte my lover, but, I thought, it would be a shame if this was going to be the only time that we made love. My sister was a delightful fuck, even now she was peeling back the blankets to expose my shrinking prick.

Taking it in her hand she toyed with it, moving so that she could see it clearly.

“When you shoot, you’re quite copious, aren’t you?” She asked, touching herself as she compared the mess that covered both of us.

“I have not spent these last two days.” I told her.

“Can you do it again?” she asked hopefully.

“Not immediately,” I said, as she wiped her hands on my chest, “I need some time to recover.”

Charlotte gave a little *moue* of disappointment.

“Truth be told,” I observed, “It is getting late anyway, and we should sleep.”

Charlotte nodded, as she traced the shape of the scar on my side. “You are correct,” she said wistfully. “But I see that I will have to negotiate an agreement with mama.”

“For what?” I laughed.

“To arrange with her that I can loan you on occasion.” She said simply.

“And it matters not, that I am the duke and your lord? Do I not get a say in this?”

“Oh no William.” She told me, with an amused smile. “None whatsoever.”

“And when you marry?” I asked. “After all, that is the ultimate goal in all of this, how will you proceed then?”

“**IF** I marry, then I shall simply arrange to visit you and be unfaithful to my husband, and cuckhold him.” She laid her head upon my chest, whilst still toying with my cock, in her warm hand. “Though to be honest I am actually reconsidering the idea of marriage. If I can find such pleasure at home, why leave?”

I could hear the jest in her voice and brought my hand down loudly on her exposed round bottom

cheeks.

“OW!” Charlotte exclaimed in mock indignation. “Why did you do such a thing?”

“Merely exerting my authority as the head of the household. If your wish is to be part of my *seraglio*, Charlotte, you must learn discipline suitable to your place.”

My sister grinned at me, and said “Yes my lord, yes my master.” Her lack of meekness and sincerity was plain to see. I kissed her again.

## **9. Onward**

I had moved back to the couch in the early hours, so that when the maid knocked with hot water for washing, all appeared as it should be, and Charlotte’s dignity was preserved.

During breakfast I called for Hopley, and he told me that the rain, which had been quite ferocious during the night, had abated but that there was still a great deal of standing water about. We should be able to proceed, he told me, but we would need to be careful in places.

And so it was that we continued our journey. We set off through Aylesbury town, and as Charlotte and

I talked, we found the brougham frequently slowing to a walk, and in one case because the road was partly washed away, Hopley asked us to dismount. He and Henry drove the short distance along what was left of the roadway, which was quite narrow for the wheelbase of the brougham. Then when it was safe on the other side, Charlotte and I easily walked the same path — a couple of yards — before remounting the carriage.

The inn had packed a hamper for us, and while it was a cold meal, it was excellent fare, and apparently Hopley and Henry also had had some food packed for them as well.

I was thinking about the night before, and enjoying the recollection, when I saw Charlotte watching me.

“What are you thinking, William?” She asked.

“Oh! Nothing much.” I told her. “Except one small thing...” She was intrigued.

“I just wondered how you know so much about love-making and so on.”

“But yet I was still a virgin?”

“Precisely!” I told her.

Charlotte rummaged in her bag and produced a small book, in a plain leather cover.

“Catullus?” I was surprised. It was a Latin text by the Roman author Gaius Valerius Catullus, a collection of his poems. My sisters and I had all learned Latin when we were younger, but I had never read anything by him, having studied Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* myself.

Charlotte took the book from me and turned to a page.

*“I will sodomize you and face-fuck you,”* she began, translating the text to English from Latin, as she read.

*“Bottom Aurelius and catamite Furius,*

*you who think, because my poems*

*are sensitive, that I have no shame.*

*For it’s proper for a devoted poet to be moral*

*himself, [but] in no way is it necessary for his poems.*

*In point of fact, these have wit and charm,*

*if they are sensitive and a little shameless,*

*and can arouse an itch,  
and I don't mean in boys, but in those hairy old  
men  
who can't get it up.  
Because you've read my countless kisses,  
you think less of me as a man?  
I will sodomize you and face-fuck you."*

It was bizarre indeed to hear my sister read this aloud.

"And how did you come by this?" I asked, still bemused by the lewdness of the passage.

"It was among some books that I found some years ago, I think father had put them down and forgotten about them. It was, you will appreciate, an eye-opener to possibilities, even if there was little chance of exploring them."

"Until I arrived?"

Charlotte kissed me. "But we shared so much when we were younger, William, I was certain you would not begrudge me your assistance. There are so many opportunities to explore. Do you not think?"

Sodomy? Face fucking? It all sounds very interesting.”

My grunt was non-committal. Charlotte’s revelation certainly did offer some interesting possibilities.

More importantly, when I considered it, I further realised just how much had changed at home, subtle changes, almost secret ones, but changes all the same. And I had just been caught up in one of them. I have previously observed to you that my sisters were no longer the girls I had grown up with, and they had their own interests that I needed to understand. Obviously in this case, the nature of the changes was a bit of a surprise, but oh well, I thought, worse things happen at sea.

### ***10. Rogeringham Hall***

So it was, with Charlotte reading excerpts from Catullus to me — in Latin — that we arrived a day later than we had intended at Rogeringham Hall, in the county of Buckinghamshire, just after four in the afternoon.

The older parts of Rogeringham Hall — the west wing — date back to the days of Good Queen Bess, Elizabeth I. The principle rooms are grand in



manner and yet comfortable. The eastern part of the hall was built a hundred or so years later, after the reign of Charles II and the growth in the family's fortunes. It is a house of which I have many fond memories, from growing up there and the games we played as children, riding in the great park and exploring all of the nooks and crannies.

My mother greeted me warmly and accompanied me to my room, where Barclay had laid clean fresh clothes out and was organising the hot water for a bath.

As I removed my travelling clothes, I sensed Helena wanted to say something. I stalled her by asking whether she and Barclay had discovered anything yet about Mr Dodgson. It had only been a day or so, so I didn't really expect anything but she surprised me by saying yes, they had.

First of all, she told me, the steward was not well-liked within and about the estate, and had angered many people with his authoritarian ways. She said that he often told people that he was acting in the name of the duke, and that his word was final. He had evicted several long-standing tenants, and brought in new people, many of whom he was quite friendly with. Instead of using local suppliers, he

sourced things from as far away as Buckingham itself, or even further. Furthermore, he acted very much on his own, with no communication about decisions.

Although interesting, and quite informative, none of this was particularly heinous, everyone has their own way of working, but something about the man had upset enough people that it had been brought to my mother's ears in just the short time since her arrival.

I thanked her and went to go and take my bath. "Is there something else, my love?" I asked.

"Did you and your sister share the same room, last night?"

"We did," I replied, then asked her, "What of it?"

"It is..." Helena stuttered as she sought the words. "She... She looks..."

I took my mother in my arms and hugged her to me. "I am going to be honest with you mother, last night I took Charlotte's virginity — at her request."

Helena's body went rigid in my arms and she looked up at me, aghast!

"But William, she is your sister!"

“And you see no irony in that statement mother?” I asked her, gently, “Three nights ago, you and I slept as man and wife, even though you are my step-mother. So, last night I afforded my step-sister the same pleasures as her mother.

“Charlotte and I have been close since we were children, and we have talked much since my return,” I told her, then I explained how Charlotte had challenged me about treating her — and my other sisters — as girls, saying that I should instead treat them as women. I told my mother that I thought that she was right in this, and told her of the conversation we had had, and how it had led to us sleeping together.

“If my deep love for you is based on my being infatuated with you from an early age,” I said, “Then my relationship with Charlotte is equally loving, but one based on our deep-seated friendship.

After a moment’s consideration Helena shrugged, conceding that I had at least part of a good point. “But why?”

I kissed her, gratified that she at least kissed me back in return. “You would need to ask Charlotte what her reasons were. In our talks yesterday, she expressed a curiosity about sexual relations that

would not be satisfied until I had shown her the same pleasures that you and I had enjoyed. She told me that there were few men in the world that she had sufficient trust in to assist her in this. It suited me to do it because she is both my sister, who I love very much, and my very dear friend.”

By now Helena and I were sat upon the end of the great four poster bed in the master bedroom at Rogeringham. She seemed to have calmed greatly. There was still some tension, but she leaned against me as we talked.

“We talked much about it today.” I said, “Charlotte has expressed her fears at being left on the shelf and becoming an old maid. She wanted to become a woman before she became too old.”

“But what if she does marry? What about her wedding night?” Helen asked.

I laughed. Charlotte had crossed that bridge already. “There are many reasons why a woman might not have a maidenhood, as you well know. Riding horses here in the park, would be one reason.” Charlotte’s use of a *dil doule* was another.

“Tell me mother, on your first night with my father, how did you feel?” I asked, a question that is

very rarely asked, I suspect.

“Scared,” she admitted, “Very scared but also excited, that I was finally going to become a woman.”

“And how was your experience?”

“I was filled with emotions,” she said, “This was, after all, all that my life up to that point was about — when my husband made me a woman. So, I was excited to be making that step forward...”

“But?”

“Also scared, because I had no idea of what to expect. Other than a few vague mumbles that my mother had given me as advice, I had no clue of what would happen, except that I was to lay there and let him take my virginity. Her advice on how it would happen was scant, to say the least.

“‘He will enter you with his manliness’ she had said, ‘his pleasure is paramount’ she said, ‘there will be pain but it shall pass’”

“And how was it?”

Helena shrugged. “I have had more excitement,” she said with a brief smile as she caressed my hand.

“Your father entered my room, complimented me on my beauty, and told me to undress. He left the room and when he came back, I was lying in bed, naked, waiting for him. He did not undress completely, stripping down instead to his shirt — I suppose I should count myself lucky that he took his stockings off for our wedding night. There were nights later on in our marriage when he didn’t.” Helena laughed at the thought.

“He climbed on top, and he shoved his prick in me. No kissing, not even an embrace, straight to it.

“Oh God, it hurt. I was a virgin, dry, and tight. It hurt going in, it hurt as he pushed through my maidenhead, and by the time he had finished pumping away, I was rubbed raw. I stayed in bed all of the next day. Your father thought it was because he had done such a magnificent job. It was actually because I could hardly walk because of the pain he had caused me.”

“Yet you did it again?”

“And again, and again, and again. Because I knew no better. No one prepared me William.” She explained, “No one told me what would happen.” And at that point I saw that Helena was understanding my thinking.

“And there you have the essence of my thoughts, mother. I shall never forget my first fight. We were on Guadalupe and facing a large group of rebels. Up to this point I had been merely conducting drills, we had seen no enemy action whatsoever. They emerged from the woods in front of us, a solid, intimidating mass of men, all driven forwards by their drummers! They bore muskets but they also carried many of their large cutters, *machetes*. We waited for their first shots — which I knew would come. Then I jumped like a rabbit when our own first volleys were fired. I didn’t know whether I was going to piss myself or what. Once the fighting began, I had no time to think, just follow the drills, as we were taught, but once it was all done, and we were safe, I realised that the fear had come from not knowing what was going to happen. At one point during the action, my lieutenant spoke to me — he said I looked at him like I was simple, uncomprehending. Such an experience is not uncommon, at least I was lucky that I was alive at the end of it to reflect on what happened.”

“So how does this relate to Charlotte?” Helena still sounded sceptical, but I could also hear acceptance in her voice.

“Not just Charlotte, mother, but Margaret, Louise, Caroline and possibly even Hermione. More than anything, I suppose, I would wish to remove their fear of that first night, and show them what to expect, so that they might make their situation better for themselves.

“My experiences have led me to believe that virginity is a greatly over-valued currency — a willing and capable partner who knows what she wants, and who can give me what I want, is far more attractive than a trembling maiden. However, while many men share my feelings, I understand that many others do not. If my sisters wish to be rid of their maidenheads and be ready for their wedding nights, knowing what is to come and be better prepared, then I will assist them.”

“All of them?”

“If they wish, I would not force myself on any of them. But I do not want my sisters to have to go through the kind of pain that you went through.”

“But why?”

“Because, mother. Because when I promised you that I would help you to find husbands for my sisters if they want them, I meant it. But when the



Rogeringham women descend upon the Ton for the next Season, they will not stand waiting for the enemy to approach, they will advance to the attack.”

Helena looked at me for a few moments, her face a picture of confusion.

“We — you **and** I — we shall ensure they have everything they need — be it experience, advice, dresses or occasions. They will not go into this unprepared. Rather than being merchandise to be picked over, they shall be the ones doing the picking and choosing.”

Helena’s smile grew slowly. “That is why you’ve brought us here?”

I nodded.

“So that we can make ready?”

“Yes.” I nodded.

“And not just so that you could sleep with your sisters?” She said slyly.

I laughed, and kissed her, “**That** was not a part of the original plan, but I shall not deny it, it is an attractive thought.”

“Am I not enough then?!” Helena kissed me back, open-mouthed and hungry.

“Mother — you are an exemplar among women, and my love for you is a thing they will make stories about, but I also owe service to my sisters, as I have done all my life. In fact, it was you that told me that they were my responsibility as their elder brother.”

“I did!” She said laughing. “I recall it clearly — you were seven and you took my words so seriously.”

“I did.” I said, “I still do.”

Helena had removed my neck-cloth and opened the neck of my shirt and she was kissing my chest. “I am still not certain about this development,” she said, “I fear it may lead to issues with suitors in the future.”

“In that case,” I said, “I shall simply challenge them, and if necessary...”

“No!” Helena cried, “That will not do at all. I will not have you coming home from Spain unharmed, to lose you in a duel.”

“I think you should trust my sisters.” I suggested. “Did you know that Charlotte regularly uses a *dil*

*doule?*”

Mother looked at me in surprise.

“She has an ivory phallus that she uses to masturbate herself,” I explained.

“She does?” Helena was clearly surprised by this.

“Indeed. She said that she thinks that all of the girls indulge in activities like this, in some form of another, but she could not be specific because she does not know the details.”

“Well!” Helena said in surprise.

“In fact, she said, and I am inclined to agree,” I told her, “I suspect that there is a high probability that at least one of them has lost her virginity already. I would suggest that it might be better to think of it, less of deflowering my sisters, as more schooling them in the Art of Love.”

Helena considered this carefully before she said, “Very well. But bear in mind — I am still the chief of your women and as such I shall demand the privileges that that position confers. All of your sisters are secondary to me.”

“Yes mother.” I responded.

By now she had the fly of my breeches open and was eagerly stroking my hard cock. “I missed this last night,” she growled. “I missed it filling me.”

Helena laughed at her own admission, “Just a week ago, if someone had told me that I would be deliriously in love with my son and his hard prick, or that missing just two nights of him fucking me would be the worst pain, I would have called them insane and had them banished to a bedlam hospital.”

She pulled her skirts up and straddled my hips, rubbing herself across my erect shaft, moaning as she did so. However, as pleasing as that was, I was only half-inclined to start a full-blooded fucking session. I was aware that we were meeting for dinner soon and also that my bath water was getting cold.

I lay back on the bed and rolled to one side, depositing Helena onto the covers. I kissed her tenderly and bade her remember what she had been doing so that we could reconvene later.

My mother gave a little sound of disappointment, a mew, much like that of a kitten. It was adorable, but the servants had filled the bath and I did not want to have to wait while more water was prepared.

## ***11. Preparing for the Winter Ball***

Dinner that night, our first of the stay at Rogeringham Hall was more formal than we would normally observe. I wanted to make it an occasion, and the staff performed well to make it so.

After dinner I asked that we all gather in the sitting room and explained about the coming Winter Ball. I explained that I wanted a grand affair with all of the local dignitaries, and as many eligible young men as they could think of.

I asked Charlotte and Hermione if they would supervise the guest list and the sending out of invitations, I told them if they needed a courier to use Henry. Margaret and Louise would be in charge of decorating the ballroom and hallways, and I told them that they could recruit whoever they needed from the stables and gardeners. I asked Caroline to create a menu for a grand buffet.

“What is it you wish me to do, William?” Helena asked.

“Supervise, mother. I would like you to offer guidance and suggestions as the girls put this together, but I would like this to be their crafting.”

“And what is your function in all of this brother?” Charlotte laughed.

“Mine?” I asked, “Why, I shall be paying for all of this.” I laughed.

The questions continued for a while — how many invitations? How much could they spend? Is there anyone that they should not invite? Thankfully, it seemed, the tasks I had set, had been acceptable and by the evening’s close I thought that the pathway ahead was clear and each person was comfortable with their role.

“I am curious.” My mother asked me later that night, as she lay upon my chest. We had just spent the best part of the last hour making passionate love and now we lay temporarily sated. “Why did you assign all of the tasks to the girls?”

I toyed with her nipple as I framed my answer, watching it swell so that it stood proud from the curve of her white breast, a coral-coloured stud of eager sensitivity.

“It is time that we see — that they see — what they are capable of,” I said. “It is about confidence. A person who is confident in their own ability may do anything they set their mind to. I believe that each of these particular tasks is well within their ability but next time we shall change them about and give them different things to accomplish.”

“Next time?” Helena looked up, with her hair framing her face she looked stunning and I was moved to lean forwards and kiss her.

One kiss became a second and then a third. Then a kiss became an embrace, and those embraces and kisses became more passionate, until after a while, we breathlessly separated and lay still again.

I returned to Helena’s question.

“The ball will serve several functions,” I explained. “It is not simply about the girls practising their skills, which is vital for them as women who will hold important places in society, but it is also announcing to the world in general that they exist. So, I want it to be grand and impressive, to get the attention of potential suitors. Once we return to London, or possibly before, perhaps at the turn of the year, we will hold another. We will get as wide a range of suitors as we can, so that each of my sisters can pick and choose as she wishes.”

Helena looked at me for a moment, “You have obviously given this much thought.”

“Last week when I was meeting with the Barthomley boy, I realised that one of the reasons he is courting Hermione is her connection to the

dukedom.” I laughed, “I don’t think he reckoned on Hermione though. Charlotte tells me that she has him well under control.

“I have no issue with connections,” I went on, ‘They’re the way our society works.’ If the first Duke of Norton’s daughter had not caught the eye of Charles II — and he had not used the connection to lend the king a great deal of money, which eventually secured him the dukedom — we would still be simple rural folk. But Elizabeth Rogeringham was nothing more than a pawn in Duke Henry’s plans. He pushed her into the king’s path, and after she had secured him his dukedom, he married her off to a vicar in Norfolk. “I do not see the lives of my sisters as mere connections for others to use. They all have their own desires from life. Even were they to say that they wanted to marry a shepherd boy, as long as it was the match that they truly desired, I would shift heaven and earth to make it happen.”

Helena looked at me, “And here I was, thinking that I was getting what I wanted.”

I nodded. “Growing up in the midst of a gaggle of women, I heard so many of their hopes and aspirations.”



“And you listened?”

“Yes. You put them under my protection on the day I wore my first pair of breeches,” I was seven, “Of course I listened!”

Helena kissed me passionately. “And that is one reason why I am so in love with you.” She paused, “Your Grace.”

I kissed her back, and soon my mother had climbed up on to my hips and was rocking back and to on my hardness.

She leaned forwards, filling my vision with her marvellous bobbies, I suckled on them eagerly, cramming each teat into my mouth and sloppily licking them. Helena shuddered at the sensation, thrusting herself backwards onto my cock, and forcing it up inside her as her spend came down. She jerked and bounced with its shocks, her lips now seeking my chest as she pressed herself to me.

Up until now, my sport with my mother had generally been respectful and loving. Well — as respectful as finally consummating years of repressed passion can be. But seeing her before me, beautiful and yet wanton looking, caused my passion

to swell greater and greater. I could see that she felt it too, as I rose up and laid her back on the bed.

Taking her thighs in my hands, I lifted them up so that her feet rested upon my shoulder. She had had a minor spend and was still groggy from it, so she looked at me confused for a moment, until I lifted her hips and plunged deep inside her.

“Oh William! Oh!” She moaned. “So deep! And — Aaahh! — so hard!”

There are moments in a man’s life when the savage inside us comes close to the surface. Rational thought steps aside and brutish lust takes its place. I have known this feeling in battle — a red mist that descends on a man, though being an officer, it is a feeling that must be mastered. But now, with Helena before me, her legs upon my shoulders and her sweet cunny full of my hard prick, I felt the brute in me rising again.

Faster and faster, I thrust, stronger and more deeply. Helena sprawled upon the bed before me, gasping, making half-words that turned into spewed obscenities that fell from her sweet loving lips. “Fuck! Aaaaah! Shit! Yes, fuck me William, fill me!”

I did my best to fill her, to shove my cock deep, up inside her, while she strove to close herself on me, tightening her grip on my thrusting prick.

Her legs fell from my shoulders and I pulled her up into an enveloping hug.

“Oh God! Oh God! Ohhhh, Willeeeeeeeeeeeeam!”

This last was a cry that turned into a scream, as she clung to me as if I was the last solid thing in her world, as I shot up into my mother’s womb, and we collapsed onto the bed.

“I think I might have woken the servants,” Helena said, with a wry smile.

“I think so too,” I told her, laughing. “Barclay will take care of that.”

“Your man knows about us?” She looked worried.

“Possibly. Probably. I should imagine it is a racing certainty, but even if he doesn’t know precisely what is going on, he will make sure that my privacy is maintained. Don’t worry my love,” I said, “He is discretion itself.”

Helena looked relieved, but decided it was probably best that she return to her own room.

As my mother left, I smiled as I heard her quietly say, “Goodnight, Mr Barclay.”

And his equally quiet “Goodnight Your Grace, sleep well.”

Moments later I heard his distinctive knock-knock, pause, knock-knock.

“Come!” I called.

“Is there anything Your Grace requires?”

I pulled my dressing gown on.

Initially I said, “No, thank you, Barclay.” but as he turned in the doorway to go, I said “Wait!”

“Would you join me in a tot?” I asked, indicating the rum, which sat on a side table.

I indicated that he should sit down and I poured us both a measure. I moved the small table next to our two chairs.

“Your health, Your Grace.” He said as I sat down opposite him.

“And yours, sir!” I toasted him.

“So, Joshua?” I very rarely use Barclay’s first name, mainly because his name is also his title, he **is** Barclay and his forename is effectively irrelevant, but tonight it seemed appropriate. “We have come a long way together, from the hills and forests of the West Indies, to the walls and lanes of the Peninsular to the mastery of a great estate. What do you think of the new billet?” I waved my glass to encompass Rogeringham Hall.

“We’ve had worse, Your Grace,” he said with a smile. “Much worse.”

“And are **you** comfortable, Joshua? Are your quarters suitable?”

“I am, and they are, thank you, Your Grace.”

“Good!” I offered him a top up. He declined.

“How have you progressed with your ‘discovery’?” Wellesley employed ‘discoverers’ in the Peninsular, intelligent men on fast horses, who sought out information on the enemy, often at great risk. Barclay was acting as my discoverer.

“Not much more than I told Her Grace, sir. The man is not well liked and overly tyrannical, but nothing especially concerning.” I nodded. I had come to this conclusion myself.

“However, there was one thing, Your Grace.” Barclay paused. “I was with Mr Dives this morning in the wine cellar...”

“How are you getting on with him?”

“Very well, Your Grace. Mr Dives is a most professional man, sir.” I allow Barclay to call me ‘sir’, rather than Your Grace, because of his position — he is one of the few people in the world, who is not family, that has this privilege. “He understands my role, and I, his. We are both very certain on that.”

I nodded, “The wine cellar?”

“I was thinking to find space for some casks of spirits — your rum, sir, and just to get a feel for what was available. So, we went with Mr Roberts, the cellarman to start looking through the stock. Some of it... Well, some of it seems to have been changed, Your Grace.”

I nodded for him to go on.

“In one example, there were supposed to be forty-eight bottles of a fifteen-year-old Madeira. There were four dozen bottles of Madeira, sir, but they did not appear to have been there for more than a couple of months, let alone a year or even fifteen.”

“Interesting. Were there any more examples?”

“A subject close to your heart Your Grace. Five cases of thirty-year-old port. There are five cases, certainly, but not from the producer that Mr Roberts’s cellar-book says they were from.”

“What did Mr Dives say?”

“He was most concerned, Your Grace, he could not understand what had happened or when it had happened.”

“What do you think?”

“I would say that the changes were recent... the last couple of months.”

“While Mr. Dives has been in London?”

Barclay nodded. “Mr Roberts has no accounting of the changes.”

“Thank you, Joshua, that is most interesting. I shall not need you again tonight. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight Your Grace.”

## **12. *Helena decides***

I had expected to have a leisurely start when I woke the next day, but a loud knocking on my door

interrupted that.

At my summons, Helena entered my bedroom, looking disgruntled.

“Damn you, William!” She said as she sat down upon my bed.

“Good morning mother, my love, how are you?” I asked.

“Grumpy!” was the return, though there was the hint of a smile behind her frown. “Yet again another night where I find myself awake all night because of something you have said.”

“And that was?” I stroked her hand where it lay upon my bed.

“Stop that!” She said, and pulled her hand away. “We need to talk.”

“Certainly mother,” I climbed out of bed and went over to sit by the fire. “What is it you wish to talk about?”

Helena joined me by the fire, she sat next to me as if it was the most natural thing in the world to do. “It is about what you said about your sisters.”

“And?”



“You are right.” She said, which pleased me. “I spent the night after I left you, re-living that first night with your father, over and over and over. The anxiety, the fear and — yes, damn you — the pain.”

“You are right, of course you are, my daughters should not have to go through that, no woman should.” She looked at me, “You have shown me how good love-making can be, and I cannot help but wish that my younger self had had that experience. So, after wrestling with my conscience all night — yes, if the girls wish it, you may — er — ‘teach’ them.”

“Do you wish to be present, mother?” I asked.

“Me?!” She looked shocked. “Why would I want to be there?”

“Well, for a start,” I told her, “I am still very much in love with you, and want to be with you at every chance that I can. But apart from that, I can only do so much. You have lived the experience, and can offer advice, share what happened to you, in a way that I cannot. You can offer hints and tips in a way that I cannot.”

“So, I would be present, conversing with my daughter while you deflower her?” There was a hint

of ironic humour behind the disbelief.

“If you wish. It is not an unheard-of idea.” I told her, as her eyebrows shot up. “I am aware of at least one woman who was there when her daughter became a woman. She encouraged her daughter, urged her on — I believe.”

‘I believe’? I know she did, she was urging me on at the same time, in fact. It was Elizabeth, Lady Dorrington to whom I have already referred, and the young lady was her daughter Arabella. Once the business of Arabella’s virginity was done, and Lady Elizabeth had me to her house again another evening, that time she had slid her *robe de chambre* off and climbed in with us. That was an incredible night, and the memory of it stirred things.

“Perhaps,” I said as I embraced Helena, “We could do it another way. Perhaps the three of us could dine together, and talk, and then you could leave me and my sister. I do not wish to make any of this awkward for you, for me, for anyone.” I leaned in and kissed my mother. I pulled her close to me, in part because I wanted her — there and then — but also because I would be able to tell from the way she reacted, how she viewed my proposal.

Helena laughed. “To have your cake and eat it too. You rogue!” But it was a light-hearted scolding. Helena pressed herself to me and returned my kiss eagerly. She could feel my erection beneath her, and her hand sought it out.

“Should we go somewhere more comfortable, and discuss this?” I asked between kisses. Lifting her as I stood up.

“Or we could just go to your bed...”

“And?”

“Fuck.” She whispered as I laid her upon the bed.

“You are making good progress on your profanities mother.” I told her as I lifted her gown, exposing her mound and its lovely dark furred cap.

“Kiss me there William. Please? Kiss my cunny.”

“For you, mummy?”

“Please?” She pleaded, “For mummy?”

I kissed her on the mouth. “Of course, mother.” Then I bent down, dove between her thighs and began to feast on her lubricious quim. Jabbing my tongue up inside her, taking her plump lips between

my teeth and tugging gently on them before swirling my tongue around and around her engorged clitoris.

Helena writhed in pleasure on my bed, grabbing at my head and pressing me tighter, until I felt my face washed in a spurt of her juices.

Her spend was my signal and I threw off my night shirt and knelt between her thighs naked and with my hard cock in front of her.

“For mummy?” She asked, her eyes shining in anticipation.

“For you mummy.” I confirmed with a growl.

“Fuck me then,” she said as she welcomed me with open arms and her thighs wide, and I plunged down onto her and slid up inside her.

“Oooh William!” She gasped, “Yes! Fuck me, fuck mummy hard.”

I pumped away. My lust for my mother was amplified by the memories of Elizabeth and Arabella Dorrington and the sensations that they had combined to work upon me. Helena’s hands clutched at me, her finger nails raking my back. As my body stiffened and my own spend came down, she pulled

me tightly to her and we kissed, passionately open-mouthed as I came inside her.

“You have made me a new woman,” Helena said quietly, as we lay still afterwards.

“I never knew such pleasures could exist,” she said as she rolled to her side and lay with her head on my shoulder, her hand lying upon my chest. “It has changed me; it has changed my life. I would be a poor mother if I did not allow my daughters to know such a world existed.”

“If they want the knowledge,” I corrected her.

“I believe they probably will,” she told me, her voice soft and full of love. “I like the idea of your intimate supper, and while I am not certain yet about being present, I will admit to not being totally opposed to it.”

I kissed the top of Helena’s head, and we both lay still for a few minutes before the rising tide of noise from a busy house reminded us that there were things that would require our attention and we would need to wash and dress.

“Before you go, may I tell you again how much I love you, mother?” I asked her.

Helena looked at me, a mischievous smile playing on her lips. “You may.” She said, “And I shall give you frequent and plentiful opportunities to do so in the future. In fact, I shall require it, if I am to share you with other women. I’ll have you know that I am a very jealous woman.”

At that point she laughed. “I wasn’t jealous before, you know William? Then you took me to bed and showed me your new world. Damn you, you wonderful charming rogue.”

The smile I wore when my mother left lasted all day.

That smile was made broader when I found that the chestnut mare had been brought to Rogeringham. Despite her long journey she was moving much more easily, and a rest in the country would have her fit as a fiddle by the spring.

### ***13. Preparations continue and an interesting situation emerges...***

The next few days at Rogeringham Hall were full of activity. My sisters set about their tasks with enthusiasm. The ball was set for a Friday in two weeks. Charlotte and Hermione spent two days writing out invitations, marking each one off a list

that they had all compiled. Henry set off on horseback to hand-deliver the notes to local dignitaries, while Hopley drove Charlotte and Hermione all about Buckinghamshire in the brougham, delivering certain hand-picked ones.

Margaret and Louise had, as instructed, dragooned members of the estate staff into their service and turned part of the stables into a workshop. At one point I saw a pair of lads carrying saplings in. But when I went to look, I found my way barred by the twins.

All of my amused raging about being the Duke of Norton, and ‘lord of Rogeringham Hall’ went unheard as Margaret and Louise steadfastly held their ground and prevented me from spoiling their surprise.

In contrast, Caroline actually did ask for my assistance.

Her approach to the menu was typical of her thoughtful manner. She consulted, she spoke with Mrs Ellis, the cook and Mr Dives, to discover the options she had available, rather than picking items out of the air. She reasoned that with the Christmas season and the time available this was a more sensible way forward. But then having heard the

available options, Caroline pushed and shaped some of them to put her own mark on the affair.

Caroline asked for my advice on the wines to use, so I called for Mr Dives and Mr Roberts, and the four of us went on a small expedition. After my conversation with Barclay the other evening, it was also useful for me to have a look at the cellars and the apparent substitutions.

My father had built his collection upon an already excellent wine cellar that he inherited from the 4<sup>th</sup> duke, his father, and it took up several parts of the extensive cellars at Rogeringham Hall. We were looking for a presentable selection, in sufficient quantity for the numbers expected. There were some interesting casks of French red, and some of white that I thought might be good, and we shared some of the wine between us and talked through what was good about it. The decision however, was up to Caroline, who after a few moments thought, made her selection and asked the cellarman to bottle sufficient of each one, enough for the guest list.

We looked at some of our champagnes as well, and having decided which of those we would use, we eventually arrived at the cases of port.



Roberts, the cellarman, was still unable to say when the change had been made. One of the bottles was opened and sampled, and while it wasn't the worst bottle of port I have ever tasted, in fact, in thirty— or forty-years' time, it would probably be a decent bottle, but Roberts swore it was not even part way as good a vintage as the ones that it had been substituted for.

I examined the cases themselves and saw a small wine merchant's label. Roberts wrote the details on a scrap of paper for me. It did not match any of the merchants we usually deal with.

We left the cellars to talk about Caroline's plans. I have a study at Rogeringham Hall, just as I do in the Mayfair house, and we moved there with Roberts, to agree his actions. Caroline gave me a list of some other beverages that she thought we would require, and I gave it to Roberts to organise.

Once Roberts had gone to set about his work — decanting and bottling alone would be several days' effort, Caroline and I sat and chatted.

She is, as perhaps I have already said, the tallest of my sisters, dark haired and pretty, she has her mother's grey eyes and is the most like her in the face. As we were bringing our conversation about

the ball to an end, Caroline surprised me by asking whether I was serious about letting her and my other sisters determine their own partners when the time came.

“I am,” I told her, “Do you have someone in mind?”

“I do,” she said thoughtfully, “But it is not someone that I think, even with your progressive attitude William, I would be allowed to marry.” Her tone was wistful, slightly sad.

“Will you tell me who it is?” I think the fact that I asked, and didn’t demand, surprised her, because she started at the question. Caroline looked at me carefully weighing what she was going to say.

“Would you be angry if I didn’t?” The question was tentative, uncertain. “I have my reasons not to, but the chief amongst them is that the person does not know of my affection, and I want no consequences on them in their innocence.”

“If this person does not know of your affection,” I wondered, “How will they know when to ask for your hand when the time comes?”

At that point thoughtful and considerate Caroline realised the flaw in her plan.

“Will they be free to make the offer?” I asked.

She looked embarrassed. In a movement very reminiscent of her mother, she began to worry at some tiny speck on her lap. “I am afraid I had not got that far in my plans,” she said when she looked up.

“Ask me about mathematics, William, or how to compose a watercolour of lilies,” she laughed, with a tinge of embarrassment. “I can answer with confidence, but in the affairs of the heart I am severely lacking in knowledge.”

She looked up at me, “Is it true what Charlotte says about your experience in this area?”

“I am not sure,” I replied, “What has she said?”

“How you have had many adventures in love as well as war.” Then she almost whispered, “That you and she — er, in the inn?”

I put on my sternest tone — Caroline being the most serious of my sisters, was always the easiest to tease — and asked, “We ‘er’ **what** in the inn?”

“I have had many adventures since I went from this house, and some before I left.” I told her, still maintaining my serious tone, even though I was

smiling inside. “But I am afraid that you will need to be more specific about the ‘er’ in the inn?”

I have never seen Caroline look so uncertain, normally her confidence comes from her gathering of the facts, now she looked lost. She examined the speck on her lap again. Her voice was quiet as she said, “She said that you — er that you made her a woman, William.”

“I did.” I said, “At her request.” Caroline looked up at that, and she saw that my sternness was just a mask, and that I was smiling broadly.

“William!” She said exasperated by my teasing. I walked round the desk and sat next to her, taking her hand in mine.

“I promised your mother, our mother, that I would do everything I could to prepare you all for the next stage in your lives, leaving here and becoming wives — if that is what you wish. There is so much to learn, but I think the most important thing is that you have confidence in yourselves — the confidence of the sister of a duke, a Rogeringham.”

“That is why you set us to make the ball come about?”

I nodded.

“So why did you sleep with Charlotte? How is that preparation?”

“She and I have talked much since I returned and regained some of the closeness we had when we were children. When we were over-nighted at that inn, we slept together because she felt that that was something lacking in her. Something that she wanted me to fulfil.”

“And if I was to ask the same favour?”

“If you asked, Caroline, I would do my very best to honour your request.” I said sincerely.

Abruptly, she stood up, which to be honest was not the reaction I expected, or frankly, hoped for. “I have much to do if I am to fulfil my share of the ball preparations,” she said, brusquely, as she moved towards the door. With her hand upon the door handle, she paused, and said more softly, “Concerning the other thing, may I think upon it? It is not a decision I want to rush into.”

“I would not have it any other way,” I said as I blew her a kiss.

As she turned, I saw her smile to herself.

Turning back to my desk, I looked again at the cellar book that Roberts had left with me. The wines which had been replaced had not been noted as 'removed' in the book as they would normally be, instead Roberts had diligently entered the new cases as a separate entry, not initially being aware of the removals. This may sound peculiar to some, but given the number of entries in the book, that some items got over-looked is easily understood. Roberts assured me that he had subsequently searched the cellars and the items were assuredly missing and not mislaid.

It might be asked why it matters? After all it was only five dozen bottles of port? With the other missing items, the amount missing amounted to probably twenty dozen bottles in all. To some it might not seem to be a big issue, but to put it simply, it was the principle of the matter.

Looking at the details of the wine merchant I noted that they were based in Buckingham itself. I resolved that as things were progressing nicely with the ball, I would travel the fifteen miles or so to the town and visit the merchant. I picked up a pen and made some notes from the cellar book.

After some more consideration I rang for a footman and told him to ask Mr Dives to attend me.

#### **14. *A visit to a wine merchant***

The evening before, I had spoken with Mr Dives, about local Justices of the Peace, so picking an invitation out of the pile, I set off with Caroline in the brougham. Charlotte and Hermione were changed to the family's landau instead.

We chatted quite happily about almost anything other than the ball, though Caroline queried some of her ideas with me. I listened but earned her annoyance by throwing the decisions back into her lap.

"I would be quite happy to decide some of these issues," I told her, "But I really want you to be in charge of all of this, and for you to decide."

"But what if I spoil it all for you?" She asked, plaintively.

"You are doing very well so far. You have good people working under you, trust them. Tell them what it is that you want them to do and leave them to do it. I am sure it will all be quite superb." I took her hand, in her pale calf-skin gloves, "I have the greatest confidence in your choices, Caroline. Now

tell me what you know about this Justice of the Peace?”

Sir Arthur Walker, had been a justice and magistrate in Buckingham for about twenty years, Caroline remembered him as a serious man, but not unkindly. When I explained my mission that morning, she thought he would be a useful ally.

French general officers, or at least those that I have seen, are the most gloriously attired creatures in military history, with leopard-skin *shabraque* saddle cloths on their fine horses, nodding white plumes in their hats, *aquillettes* of gold cord on their shoulders, barrel-sashes, ribbons, golden stars and epaulettes dripping with braid made with 22-carat bullion wire thread. All of that gaudy finery serves one very good purpose — it signals to all and sundry that this person is very, **very** important.

I could never engage in such gaudy pomp; it is entirely against my nature. In this case, however, Hopley the coachman and two footmen (Henry and another), all in their livery coats, the brougham (with the Rogeringham coat of arms on the doors) drawn by our four matched bay horses, myself and my sister appearing at the home of Sir Arthur Walker sent a very important message — that His Grace, the



6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton, and his sister, Lady Caroline Rogeringham, had arrived.

Sir Arthur was most happy to receive his invitation, he and his wife, Lady Mary, a slim, handsome woman, would be most happy to attend, he said. But surely, he wondered, that couldn't be the only reason we had travelled out that morning.

We talked for a few minutes, and I realised we had met several times at Rogeringham Hall, though I had still been a child at the time.

"Perhaps there **is** something you could help me with..." I began.

The wine merchant's shop was just on Market Hill, in Buckingham town, almost opposite the Gaol. One of the constables that accompanied Sir Arthur, opened the door for us.

As the shop bell rang, and Charles Farley, a thin, pinched-faced man appeared.

"Good morning, Sir Arthur, sir, miss, how may we be of service?"

"Good morning," I greeted him, "Perhaps you can assist me? Some cases of port were recently

purchased from you and I wondered if you have any more?”

“Do you have the details sir?”

I placed a note of what was in the cellar in front of him, paying particular attention to his face.

As it was, I would have been convinced that everything was normal but for the fact that he licked his thin lips three times in quick succession, when he read what I had set before him.

He consulted a large ledger on the counter, “These were delivered to... er... Rogeringham Hall?”

“Yes, they were.” I said, “Though I’m not sure when.”

The man quoted a date about ten weeks previously, about a week after my father died.

“Very good, I wonder, do you have the name of the person who placed the original order?”

“It was the duke himself, sir, the order came from him.” He showed me the entry in the ledger *Sir Henry Rogeringham, D. of Norton*.

“On this date?”

“Yes sir.”

“And how was the order placed?”

The man removed a note from the ledger, “The duke himself, sir. Standing there, just like yourself, sir.”

“I would have been interested to see that. You see, he died a week before that date.”

At this point Sir Arthur asked to see the ledger. “It does indeed say, Sir Henry Rogeringham, Sir William.”

“Sir William?” The thin-faced man asked.

“Captain Sir William Rogeringham.” Sir Arthur told him. “6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton.” Farley’s face went paler than it had been before.

“And you did not think to question this man, Mr Farley? After all the old duke’s passing was the talk of the county.” Sir Arthur asked holding the note in front of the wine-merchant’s face. Farley shook his head rapidly, as if trying to shake something off his nose.

“What kind of man was this person?” Sir Arthur pressed him.

“Of about your height sir, and if I was to guess, the same age as Your Grace,” he looked towards me. I felt Caroline gently push against my arm.

I looked at her, and saw concern and some annoyance in her eyes.

“Was this a pure purchase Mr Farley, or was the transaction a trade?”

“I’m not sure what you mean Your Grace.”

“Did this counterfeit duke merely buy the items on that list or were they traded for other items already at Rogeringham?”

“It was purely a purchase, Your Grace.” However, all of the time Farley’s eyes were darting to the inner door, and his tongue flickered across his lips several times.

“Perhaps you would allow us to examine your warehouse?” Justice Walker ‘suggested’.

Farley paused for a moment, as he weighed his options. He could have declined but I assume that he realised that Sir Arthur and I would be back with more men to search with more insistence.

The wine-merchant opened the inner door.

It was not that great an effort to search the warehouse. His stock was light, lighter than I would have expected given that we were close to the start of the Christmas season, and spread out in the space. I found the cases of port covered by a canvas, Caroline discovered the cases of madeira that we knew were missing and soon, Sir Arthur's constables and Farley's warehousemen had moved them so that we had an area of the ware-house floor filled with wines that matched the list I had copied from Roberts's cellar-book.

"I will be frank with you, Mr Farley; this does not look good sir. All of this has been identified as having been removed from Rogeringham Hall, substituted for items of lesser quality. What say you?" Sir Arthurs' tone was cool, but filled with threat.

"I... I misspoke before!" The man stammered. "I for\_ forgot that I took these items in part payment for the order placed by the duke."

"Oh! I am sure that you can do better than that, sir!" the Justice laughed. "A blind man could see the quality of this stock, and you say you sent better to Rogeringham Hall? Is that so Your Grace?"

“The deuce it is!” I snarled. “How much did you give the imposter as well?”

“I gave him the difference in the value!” Farley babbled. “He told me that he needed money...”

“And you did not question why the duke himself would be coming round grubbing up money. Are you a fool? Or perhaps you were in league with him?”

All eyes turned to Caroline, upon her exclamation. It was easy to see that Farley was insulted to be spoken to in such a manner by a mere girl, though he was wise enough to hold his peace. Sir Arthur looked at her in surprise, but his smile showed that he was impressed. Myself? I thought that she hit the nail, squarely upon its head.

“Well?” Sir Arthur grabbed Farley by the shirt front.

“I swear I never saw the man before, Your Grace. But the chance to get my hands on such quality stock was too good to miss. It is the truth!”

“Is it really, Mr Farley? The truth? I doubt it sir, I very much doubt it.” For a brief moment it looked like the wine-merchant would protest Sir Arthur’s

accusation, on weighing his chances though, he thought better of it.

“However, as His Grace, the duke, has his property back,” Sir Arthur continued, “I think the first thing you can do, sir, is to bring all of this back to the cellar at Rogeringham Hall. And I think today would not be too early for that to happen.”

Farley nodded enthusiastically. “M-m-may I offer the stock that is already there as a reparation for Your Grace’s discomfiture?” He offered.

“Thank you very much Mr Farley. I will leave that up to my cellar man, if he thinks some of it is worth keeping, then we shall. Otherwise, we will send the rest back — in our own time.” I told him.

“Mr Farley,” Sir Arthur Walker began, “It is unfortunate for you to come to my attention in this way. Henceforth, you may want to consider how you conduct your business, and exercise a sight more caution.”

“Yes sir,” the visibly shaking wine-merchant said, “And please Your Grace, accept my profound apologies for your distress.”

And with that we departed his shop.

Caroline and I mounted the brougham with Sir Arthur to drop him back at his house, but not before the justice had detailed one of his men to discreetly observe the shop.

It was Caroline's suggestion, if the wine-merchant reacted to our visit in some way it would be useful to know about it. Sir Arthur would advise me at home if anything transpired. He thanked me for allowing him to assist us, "Always useful when the rogues put their hands up and identify themselves." He told us. And so, we set off back to the hall.

In the brougham on the way home, Caroline once again took my hand, taking my glove off, and draping the cape of her coat over it, she caressed it gently.

"When you were just our 'brother', William, I fear we did not respect you enough. I don't think most of us realised how seriously you took your role as eldest."

"Think nothing of it," I told her. "We were children."

"No. I did not realise until today how suited you are to your role as duke. So masterful and so adroit



at being both brother and lord.” She drew my hand to her, pressing it to her own breast.

“That was nothing really,” I told her, “A show of strength for that merchant.”

“But you handled it so well, it certainly didn’t look like you came into your role a few short weeks ago.” She paused, obviously preparing what she was going to say. “What we talked of yesterday, what you offered?”

“Yes?”

“I would like to avail myself of your skills... if I may?”

“Now?” We were only a few miles from Rogeringham Hall, ample time for many things, but perhaps not everything. In passing, I was also beginning to wonder about the choices my sisters were making about places that would be suitable for love-making. “I would prefer a more salubrious environment,” I told my sister, as I extracted my hand from her lap and reaching around, drew her towards me. I kissed Caroline gently on the lips.

“Your first time should be special, memorable, not a hurried tumble in a carriage. It would be much better in a warm bed-room, in a bed that does not

threaten to throw you to the floor with every bump in the road.”

My hand slipped up and around, under the cape of her coat again. I was able to feel the swell of her breast, and gave it a gentle squeeze. I leaned in and followed up this gentle *frottage* with another kiss. Caroline was a surprisingly adept kisser, in that, where her mother had taken a little time to adapt to French kissing, Caroline took to it almost immediately. Half-twisting my body to hers we were soon engaged in a passionate duel of tongues, almost equal to any I have had before.

The horses slowing to a walk caused us to break and split apart but as we did, I saw a wicked gleam in my sister’s eye that suggested she would be a fiery student when we convened our ‘lessons’ in a better setting.

When next I looked, she had returned to her usual calm demeanour.

As we dismounted at Rogeringham Hall, Barclay was waiting for me, he had a young man with him who was soaking wet. It appeared that he had ridden through the rain from Sir Arthur, beating us back to the Hall by cutting across country.

The constable had observed Farley leaving the shop, and followed him to a tavern where he thought he had seen the wine-merchant meet with a man who fitted the description of Dodgson, my steward. He had immediately reported it to Sir Arthur, who immediately sent word.

Barclay had organised the man a dry coat, a fresh horse and one for Henry and myself. We set off immediately.

It was getting dark by the time we arrived back in Buckingham and met Justice Walker at the tavern on Market Street.

Farley was denying everything, and as the constable had only glimpsed the man that he thought was Alfred Dodgson before he slipped out of a back door, there was little we could do about it. However, Sir Arthur thought that Farley probably deserved a night in the Gaol anyway so that was where he was sent.

It was too late on a filthy night by then, to return to Rogeringham, so I was invited to stay at Sir Arthur's house. Henry attended me.

We dined late, and I found Sir Arthur and Lady Mary to be excellent company. He was curious to

hear about the Peninsular, and I about the state of the county. After all, I was now part of the machinery that governed Buckinghamshire. Sir Arthur was keen that I be proposed to become a Justice like him and he spent some time explaining the responsibilities of the role, until Mrs Walker reminded him that it had been a long day for everyone.

Sir Arthur and I ended the evening, with a particularly fine sherry and some excellent *sobranie* tobacco. We just sat and enjoyed the rich sherry and the flavoursome smoke.

Finally, Sir Arthur said, “In all of the excitement of the day, I totally forgot to ask Your Grace, to pass my regards to your mother. It must be a great comfort to her having you home.”

At first, I wondered what was behind his comment, but decided that he was simply saying that my mother now had someone to lean on now that I was home.

“Ah! Thank you, Sir Arthur, but she has had my sisters supporting her,” I mentioned.

“And if they are anything like Lady Caroline...” he laughed, not finishing his comment. “I thought

that man was going to explode when she called him a fool.”

“If he had made a move, it would have been the last thing he ever did,” I told him.

“And he would have deserved it too.”

“What will happen to him?” I asked.

“I shall have him up before me tomorrow for a hearing, and if I do not hear what I want to hear, a month in gaol should be in order. What about you, what is your plan for your steward?”

“I think the first thing to do is to get him before me, after that we shall see.”

The next day, our horses refreshed, Henry and I rode back to Rogeringham Hall.

I took time to converse with the young footman. Often, I find that the best way I can measure people is by considering where I would fit them into a ‘notional’ regiment. The army has been my way of life for so long, judging a man by where I would place him in said regiment is, to me anyway, a good way to make sense of things.

Henry, seemed a steady sort, a couple of years younger than me, though this seemed a little odd for

a footman, he seemed to enjoy his role. He has a good brain, he reads, and can write, though he admitted that he needs more practise. He is quick-witted, and I was quite happy that he would have made a very good sergeant, possibly rising to the highest level of a junior officer in the right regiment. On his suggestion we rode home by way of the house of Mr Dodgson, the steward.

I wasn't entirely certain what I intended to do at the steward's house. So far, I had no proof of any actual wrong doings, merely circumstantial evidence, but it was some days since Dodgson and I had last spoken and I prefer to look a man in the eye when discussing such matters.

Alfred Dodgson was not home, only his wife and their three girl children. Mrs Dodgson was a pretty woman but she had sad, tired eyes and she had a harried look about her. Her daughters were attentive to her and nervous of Henry and myself. The Dodgson house was clean and tidy, the children were as well, but their clothes were worn and I assumed had seen better days. I wondered at the condition of them all, as I knew that Dodgson was paid a good wage.

Her husband, she told me, was in Aylesbury, as far as she knew, and she did not know when he would be home. I told her that I would like to meet with him at the hall as soon as he returned, she told me that she would tell him. Mrs Dodgson was respectful, and offered me tea to drink, but I could not escape the feeling that she wanted us gone as soon as possible.

As we bade her farewell, I realised that Henry was offering me some shillings. For a moment I looked at them.

“For the children, Your Grace, you said...”

Good man, I thought. I carry little in the way of coin, so I took the money from Henry as if it was my idea, and presented it to Mrs Dodgson.

For a moment her tired eyes lit up, “Thank you!” She said, “Thank you, Your Grace.”

“No need to tell anyone else about this.” I said, as I closed her fingers over the coins. “Some treats or something for your daughters.”

And with that we mounted and turned our horses to leave.

“Your Grace?” the woman called from behind us. “Sometimes his business takes him away for a couple of days. I do not know when he will return, tomorrow or possibly the day after.”

I turned my horse about, and thanked her. “Should you ever require anything, Mrs Dodgson, come and see me.”

She nodded.

Henry and I left.

### **15. *Supper for three... perhaps?***

My return to Rogeringham was not long after lunch time so I went to my study and Barclay brought me some bread, some ham and mustard, to make up for missing the meal. I asked him to reimburse Henry for the money I had given to Mrs Dodgson.

“Mrs Dodgson, Your Grace?”

I laid out for him what had happened, even telling him my observations about her.

“Since you first asked me to discover what I could about her husband, Your Grace, I have heard rumours that Alfred Dodgson is a man who — shall we say — indulges. I had heard that he enjoys a



wager but also that he is a heavy drinker, and people tell me that he has a heavy hand.”

“He hits her?”

“I understand so Your Grace, his boast is that he rules his house with ‘a rod of iron’.”

“Barclay?”

“Yes, Your Grace?”

“Am I less of a man, because I cannot stand men who lay hands on a woman in such a way?”

“I would offer to fight any man who dared to suggest that was so, sir, except that I know you would deal with the matter far more effectively.” He replied. “But if Your Grace was not there, I would gladly beat them to a bloody pulp on your behalf.

“There are some who say that women are merely chattels,” he went on, “To be done with as a man wishes. I suggest that Your Grace’s upbringing with a family of such formidable women as your mother and sisters, has opened your eyes to the error of that belief.

“As to whether you are less of a man? My answer is simply ‘no’, sir, you’re the better man because of

it. A man that beats a woman is a brute, and a man that brutalises a child is the lowest of the low.”

“We were all ‘corrected’ as children.” I told him.

“Yes sir, but sadly there are men who go beyond that. I shall ask Mrs Ellis’s deputy if there are any cast-offs that could go to the family.”

“Please do Barclay, I shall ask for my mother’s help as well.” Suddenly, I had an idea. “We have many tied cottages and estate workers; a gift is in order to all the families to celebrate Christmas and my accession to the title. Nothing extravagant, a goose or something like that?”

“It will be a near run thing in terms of time, Your Grace, what with the ball and all, but I shall engage Mr Dives and Mrs Ellis in this as well.”

I was entering the events of the last few days in my journal when there was a knock on my door. It was Helena, with Charlotte and Caroline.

Once again, I went through the events of the day before and those of the morning. Charlotte went off to help Barclay get his task started, which left me with Caroline and Helena.

I invited them both to dine with me that evening in my chamber, the huge space I call a bedroom at Rogeringham Hall has sufficient room for a table and a setting for four people, as well as my bed and other furniture.

They both looked at each other in surprise, though they both accepted without hesitation.

Caroline wondered what she should wear for the occasion, and before I could answer, Helena suggested something light, and loose. They then left to primp and powder themselves in preparation.

## ***16. An interlude for Education***

In between my return and the meeting with Helena and Caroline, and an intimate dinner with them that would — probably — lead to me taking my sister to bed, the vicar called to see me.

Rogeringham Hall has its own attached church on the edge of the Home Park, as most country houses do, and we share it with the village of Rogeringham. It is our personal place of worship, where the Rogeringhams are laid to rest — my father's tomb and memorial are there — and it is traditional that the duke and his family marry there.

The church of St Mary the Virgin, Rogeringham — or St Mary Rogeringham as it is known, is part of the Oxford diocese, and the Deanery of Buckingham. However, the duke traditionally has a huge part of the selection of the person who holds the living there. The current vicar, Dr Abraham Locksley DD. (Doctor of Divinity) is an old family friend. As much a diplomat as he is a spiritual adviser — Dr Locksley knows the game when dealing with a man who is as powerful as the Duke of Norton, I know he sometimes bites his lip to stop himself from saying things that he might have said otherwise. But a duke who can help appoint a man to a living can also ask to have him ejected, and frankly the sleepy parish of Rogeringham was a good one for a man who enjoys many of the finer things in life, and whose interest in antiquarian history is almost as great as his calling to God.

Dr Locksley's friendship with the family gives him access to our library and the collection of old family documents. The good doctor is steadily working through these and recording our family history in a series of monographs in the local history society's journals. It was a calling, he said, a great passion of his.

One of the footmen appeared at my study with Dr Locksley's card on a salver tray, announcing his arrival. I instructed him to show the vicar in, and then to bring drinks — Dr Locksley is fond of a sherry, which I opted for as well.

The vicar has always looked old, even when I was a boy, he seemed to be ancient, yet he still carried on. Now I am older too, he seems unchanged — he still looks old enough to have known Moses personally. We shook hands and he expressed his sympathies for my father's death and asked to be remembered to my mother. I asked about his work, documenting old sets of papers from the history of the county. Once we had done this and had a drink, it was time for business.

“Forgive me for my unexpected visit, Your Grace, but a matter has come up which I need to consult with you upon.”

Attached to the church is a small school for the village children to learn their letters. Most of the pupils are the children of farm and estate workers but some are children belonging to the house staff. The abilities of the pupils vary greatly and some eventually progressed to a further school. Girl children are allowed to attend but it is believed that

their education is less important than that of boys, so while they will learn their letters and reading, learning trades and crafts with their mothers is seen as a better education.

Dr Locksley managed both groups of pupils. The male children he teaches himself, but the female pupils are taught by a mistress, the Widow Greene. She had recently been ill, and it was felt that it was now time to search for her replacement. It was not an immediate requirement, Dr Locksley told me, but he felt that as he had the opportunity, he thought he would raise it with me.

I thanked him for his consideration, and said I would think about it. To be honest, I reflected to myself, I had no idea how I would add to the situation. But my offered input was enough for the vicar, and he took his leave.

At that point I went to take some rest and prepare myself for the coming evening.

I allowed the footmen to set up the table and returned to find Barclay supervising the laying of the cutlery and setting the wine to breathe. It was a marvellous table setting. Some of the silver was a hundred and fifty years old (anything older had been seized by the Parliament, during the civil war).

Rogeringham Hall has a fine collection of silver, and while most of it is reserved for more formal occasions, some of it is used on a daily basis. Barclay had laid out a simple setting in the way that he knows I prefer, but he chose some excellent pieces in doing so.

Normally, an informal, intimate meal such as this, would have seven or eight dishes per course. Even just sampling that many dishes would sate most people but it is my experience that eating a light meal before love-making is a better way forward. The senses are less dull and there is less inclination to doze.

The same can be said for drink. Too much, as Mr Shakespeare said, ‘provokes the desire, but takes away the performance’. With this in mind, I had Barclay select dessert wines rather than anything too full-bodied, and the ones he had chosen were excellent.

Soon after that, Helena and Caroline arrived. Mother as usual wore her mourning black, though the silk was shot with a blue that shimmered as she moved and it fooled the eye as to whether the dress was black or blue. Caroline wore a dark red, almost a wine colour, and it appeared that she had heeded

her mother's advice about dressing in a lighter manner, as when she moved, the material clung to her body and teased the shapes underneath.

Barclay served the meal, simple small dishes — a chicken soup with mushrooms, the main course was seared medallions of beef, sauteed potatoes and green beans, with a light gravy sauce, followed by honey cakes for dessert.

The conversation was light at first, then as Barclay cleared away the plates and took his leave, having made sure that all of the glasses were full, my mother asked Caroline how she was feeling.

I still find it easy to think of Caroline as a girl, despite the fact that she is twenty, nearly twenty-one. Yet when she took a sip of wine from her glass, placed it down on the table, and composed herself to answer, she looked less of a girl and more like the woman she is. It would have been easy for her to be nervous, uncertain, but there was none of that when she said, "I would rather know, how you are feeling mama?"

Helena looked surprised. "I beg your pardon?"

Caroline swirled her wine around gently in her glass. "Forgive me if this is indelicate," she started.



“I understand why I am here, William is going to be my ‘first’, and I hope to learn much from him tonight, but he is your true love and I wondered how you feel about me sharing his bed, if only for a night?”

For a moment Helena just sat there. “William is my ‘true love’?”

“Yes mama,” Caroline replied.

“Who says this?”

“We all do, mama, Charlotte, Hermione, the twins and myself.”

“All of you?”

“Yes, mama.” Caroline hurried on, “Let me explain. Since William returned to us, it is as if a weight has been lifted from your shoulders. You are radiant, mama and we feel that it can only be ascribed to William. Is it not?”

Helena examined her lap closely as she did in these cases. “It could be.” She admitted quietly.

“And that is a good thing.” Caroline re-assured her. “We all love William dearly. He is not just our duke but as children growing up, he was our leader

and our defender, our rock and our ‘salvation’.” Caroline giggled as she characterised me this way.

“Father was cold and remote, still we all missed him in our lives, you especially. Nothing makes us happier than seeing you with someone who pays you the attention you deserve and that which makes you happy, makes us happy too.”

Helena was speechless, “You all know?”

Caroline waved the question away. “We suspected it at first, then Charlotte confirmed it with William. But that is not the point...”

“It isn’t?” I felt it was time to add something to the conversation.

“No.” Caroline, looked at me. “You are both so very good for each other, setting any issues aside, we all believe it is a good thing.”

I nodded. “But if that is not the point, what is?”

“You.” She said with a broad smile, “And I, mama.”

“How so?” Helena asked.

“Are you truly prepared to share your lover, mama?” Caroline asked. “William is an honourable

man, I understand that as a man he has had many adventures and experiences, but we, his sisters, believe he is as devoted to you as he was devoted to us when we were younger. We also believe that you will be devoted to him in the same way.

“Are you prepared to share him with us, mama?”

Once again Helena examined her dress, but this time when she spoke, she spoke with more certainty.

“I am.” Her voice was calm but I could hear her decision as she spoke. “There are things you need to know before you progress on to your future. Things I didn’t know. And things that you will enjoy knowing.” My mother smiled girlishly.

“My future?” Caroline asked.

“As we have discussed,” I reminded her, “Whatever future it is that you choose.”

“Whatever?” She asked. I nodded.

“Tell me what things?” Caroline went on swinging her attention to Helena.

“It would be better if William showed you,” Helena told her with a smile, “Trust me.”

“Are you going to stay mama?” Caroline asked with a sly smile.

I wondered what was behind that smile. Helena considered her question for a moment before shaking her head. “No. I think not.”

She rose from her seat and walked around the table, “This journey is just for you two. Enjoy.” And she kissed Caroline’s cheek. “Enjoy.”

### ***17. Alone with Caroline***

Caroline topped up her wine, it was clear that she was stalling for time. As I have said, when she is in control of a situation, my sister is confident, almost aloof at times, but now she was nervous, though she did mask it well.

“What now?” she asked.

“Please? Come sit with me, sister?” I indicated the couch by the fire.

“Do I scare you that much?” I asked as we sat down, “I thought from our conversation yesterday that perhaps you were interested in this...”

“I am not scared of you brother!” Her voice was indignant. “There is no man that I trust more.”

“What then?”

“I am just nervous,” she said at last. “I have no knowledge of these things, of what to expect. Is it painful?”

I smiled, and nodded as I stroked her cheek. “There is some pain, but if it is done with care, the pain is fleeting and bearable. And if it is done right, the pain is part of the pleasure.”

Despite the wine being a lighter drink, Caroline was relaxed. She was enjoying the feel of my touch upon her skin and leaning her head into the caress of my hand. As a family we often hugged and kissed each other, so physical contact was not uncommon. Gently I drew her head to mine and kissed her lips.

“Mmmmmm!” As she had in the coach the day before Caroline melted against me.

Now, without the heavy travelling coat or the stiff bodice that Caroline had worn in the coach, I could feel the soft swell of her breast more easily as my hand gently caressed it. She was not blessed with a large bosom but rather with one that suited her physique well. She turned her torso towards my hand while still allowing me to kiss her mouth. I could feel her erect nipple pushing out through the

material of her gown. It was long and hard against my palm.

“Come.” I stood up and offered both of my hands to my sister, drawing her out of her seat. I guided her to the bed and sat her there while I turned down the oil lamps that gave my bedroom a warm golden illumination, creating a dimmer, but no less exciting, *ambience*.

Asking Caroline to stand, I moved around her, and admired her willowy form. She is almost as tall as me, but I was still able to kiss her cheek from behind and then kiss my way down her neck and onto her bared shoulder, eliciting a shiver of delight that caused her to lean back into me.

It appeared that my sister was quite the sensualist, as she responded readily to my kisses, and caresses. I was eager to see her naked, but I was not going to rush through the moment.

“Ohh! William!” She breathed, “Such sensations!”

“This is just the beginning,” I told her, as I undid the small button at the top of the back of her dress. I did not hurry, did not snatch or tear at her clothes. There are times for such behaviours, but for a first

time I will always, unless the circumstances suggest otherwise, make it as loving and gentle a process as possible.

Caroline's dress fell to the floor, revealing her form clad only in a fine silk *chemise*, which clung to her and if anything, only enhanced her appearance. The soft, thin material wrapped itself around her, showing every curve of her body, every swell and every peak, yet revealing nothing. I felt my cock begin to swell at the sight of it. I helped her step out of her dress, now on the floor, placing it on a chair, before undoing my own neck-cloth and opening my waist-coat.

She turned to me, placing her hand upon my chest and leaning in to kiss me. "Kissing is delightful!" she said, as our lips parted with a quiet sound. "Isn't it, William?" I nodded with a broad smile.

By now Caroline was exploring the contours of my body. I pulled my shirt over my head and Caroline gasped at the several scars that now marked my skin, especially the one on my side.

"Oh!" She gasped, her fingers gently tracing their shapes. "I hate the French!"

I laughed at this, “Why?”

“Because they tried to take you from us.” And she leaned in and kissed me fiercely. “My beloved, handsome brother. They are villains of the lowest order.”

“And yet!” I told her, laughing. ‘I am still here!’ I wrapped her in my arms and held her tightly to me. “And you are here and the French soldiers — who were only doing as they were told to do by Bonaparte — are many leagues away over the sea. Forget about them. Tonight, it is just us two.”

Undoing her hair, I let it fall loose. Then I slipped her *chemise* down, exposing her breasts, which were everything I had thought they would be — firm, high upon her chest, a pleasant handful with long nipples. I have heard some writers who describe breasts by comparing them to oranges or grapefruit; or worse, in terms of the various gauges of cannonball. Breasts are beautiful, they are probably the first things that we as humans fall in love with. They are a sensual delight for both the bearer and her lover, they are neither fruit nor projectiles. In all of their delightful shapes and sizes, breasts are wonderful.



I would spend some time upon these delights but I needed to see Caroline completely naked. I continued removing her *chemise* until I knelt before her, at eye level with her lightly furred mons, easily one of the prettiest I have ever seen.

I reached up and taking Caroline by the hips drew her towards me until I could kiss her cunny lips.

“Aahh!” The gasp of pleasure as I kissed Caroline’s quim was drawn out and full of joy. “Oh William!”

Caroline placed her hands on my shoulders and eagerly pushed her hips forwards. She had, I believe on Helena’s advice, placed a dab of *eau de cologne* on the swell of her mound at the base of her belly, and it was a sweet floral scent, but not as sweet or as pleasant as the aroma of her quim as I licked her lower lips from bottom to top. The shudder that ran through her, starting at her hips and running upwards was a delight. I felt her weight come on my shoulders as she supported herself.

Holding my sister’s wrists in my hands, to steady her, I stood up, and helped her step out of the *chemise* on the floor, and then gently pressed her backwards to the bed.

Caroline was a pliable, trusting doll, as I laid her down, her hips on the edge of the bed and began to devastate her pussy with my tongue.

I have mentioned before that I actually delight in cunnilingus, especially when the recipient is as responsive as Caroline is. Some women just lie there and allow you to proceed. Some are active and some are eager participants, pulling your head hither and yon, or trapping it between their thighs. Caroline was one of these last types, but without any selfish energy.

She moaned, she twisted, she thrashed, her spend came down, flushing my face with her juices several times, each accompanied by small orgasms of a short, sharp — almost momentary in nature, but no less powerful for that.

Eventually, I felt her hand press my head back, as she murmured “No more, brother! No more, please! I need to catch my breath!”

I helped her to move onto the bed proper and lay down beside her. A lock of hair had fallen down over one eye as she regarded me. “Oh, God, William! That was so good, it was almost painful.”

I smiled, tucked the errant lock out of the way and kissed her.

“I have never felt anything like that!” She murmured.

“That is just the start, my sweet!” I said as I reached for her breast and cupped it. I pressed my mouth against Caroline’s and sought to open her lips. As in our coach the day previously, she eagerly engaged my tongue with hers. Soon her arms were round my neck and we rolled across the bed, energetically kissing each other. Caroline, it turned out, is excellent at kissing.

But as much fun as that was, we needed to concentrate on what we were there for.

I rolled my sister onto her back and lowered my head to her breast in advance of moving down her body. Flicking her nipple with my thumb I began by kissing it tenderly, then sucking the teat into my mouth before tugging it gently with my teeth.

“OH!” She almost shrieked at the sensation. I took my place between her pale thighs. Caroline has never been a passionate horse rider like her sisters, preferring her books to a ride through the park, so I anticipated her needing a moment as I entered her.

Sure enough, her eyes went wide, as I reached her hymen, then she bit her lower lip as I pushed. Reaching round my neck, I felt her tense. She looked pained for a moment and then I was through. I had placed a cloth beneath us — it was already drenched in her spendings — and that showed a slight sign, and as the song goes “so, so the deed is done!”

I paused a moment, looking at her. Caroline looked back at me, her eyes shining, and with a broad smile, she said, “I don’t know what I was worried about!”

I slid further in and commenced to fuck her. I began with slow, easy strokes as she became accustomed to it, but as she had taken to kissing and cunnilingus, so she took to fucking. As I had anticipated, my sister was an adroit sensualist. We had started in the position of the missionaries, as it is sometimes called, but soon Caroline was shifting her hips, or moving her legs to explore and expand the sensations. She kissed me often and eagerly, hugging me tightly or gripping me with her hands, digging her finger-nails into my back, urging me on to greater efforts.

At one point I paused and looked at her, “Who are you and what have you done with my bookish sister?”

Caroline giggled. “I had not realised that it could feel this way. It is wonderful.”

I kissed her again. “Always remember this feeling.”

Caroline’s smile slid away. “It’s not like this every time?”

I shook my head. “Sadly, no. Not everyone enjoys or tries as hard to enjoy this. Which is why I say remember this feeling and always seek it out.”

Caroline looked thoughtful (very much a normal sort of expression for her) and serious. “Then you and I must practice quite hard while we may, so that I will have the knowledge to always achieve this wondrous state.”

I regarded her for a moment, it was a splendid argument and to be honest, I could think of no way to counter it. Not that I wanted to, unlike Helena — who was sensuous and loving, or Charlotte who enjoyed the sensations and having them done to her, Caroline seemed to enjoy sex with a joyous abandon. She was keen to explore, to enjoy and

understand what was being done to her and what she herself could do, but that analytical approach did not prevent her from enjoying it as well.

“I believe you were in the process of taking my virginity.” She reminded me.

“That is long gone, my love,” I informed her, “We were fucking, I believe.”

“Well then,” she said, “I believe we should get on with that.”

I have never been to bed with any woman who made me laugh as much as that night with Caroline.

We did finish our fuck, two or three times in fact, each one different — energetically, with intensity and the final time was a languid fuck with me entering her from the side with her leg upon my shoulder and me with my finger in the tight pucker of her arse. That took my sister by surprise at first but she soon realised that it too contributed to her sensational pleasure.

At last Caroline was sprawled on the bed, her head back, and her arms thrown across the sheets, as I steadily spent a huge load, the second one that night, inside her. Caroline had cum again, less vigorously than she had before but the spend that

ripped through her was a powerful one and it would be a moment before she recovered herself.

I got up and went to hand my sister a cloth with which she could clean herself. Not that she was particularly interested in it, at first. She lay limp on my bed, as if struck down by a swoon.

“My sweet,” I said softly, as I gently wiped the remains of my spend from off her pretty quim.

“Heavens, William!” she groaned, “I feel like I was ridden over by Mr Hopley and his whole team of bays.”

“I am sorry, my love.”

Caroline waved her hand, to dismiss my concerns, “Do not apologise, this is a most glorious feeling.”

She propped herself up on the bed, resting on her elbows, and watched me as I went to take my usual tot of rum. With her hair down, and her breasts sitting beautifully on her chest with their two dark nipples, my sister looked like she had undergone a metamorphosis. In a few minutes, an hour or so, the girl had become a woman. I do not believe it was anything I did, or rather, it was, but that was only incidental to the change that had taken place. I

believe that what we had just done had somehow unlocked the person that was inside Caroline — the woman I had had glimpses of in the last few days, and now she lay upon my bed, watching me, take a drink.

“Why do you drink that, William? It smells vile!”

“It is strong,” I conceded, “But it helps me sleep.”

“I was hoping that I would do that,” Caroline said softly as I slid back into bed beside her.

“Sometimes, I need a little more assistance.” I said as my naked sister drew herself closer to me.

“Do you dream?” She asked, “Is that why you need ‘assistance’?”

“You are altogether too perceptive,” I told her as we composed ourselves.

“You recall that first night I came home?” I said, and felt her nod beside me. “I said that I wished you never would see a battle...?” She nodded again.

“That is what you see?”

“Not every night,” I said, “And it seems like the farther away from the fights I get, the fears diminish.



But some nights they come back. On those nights the rum helps.”

Caroline reached out and enfolded me in her arms. She did not say anything, she just held me, and that warmth, at that moment was all I needed.

### **18. *Morning comes***

The next morning Caroline had gone when I woke, so I bathed and Barclay shaved me.

“Did you sleep well, Your Grace?” he asked.

“Yes, thank you, Joshua,” I told him.

I have never been exactly sure what Barclay knows about my nightmares or, when I think about it, how he knows, but it is a peculiar comfort that he does know. They say that something shared is something halved. I don’t know if that applies to nightmares, but knowing that somehow Barclay is aware, eases it somehow.

There is a great emphasis in our society on ‘manly values’, ‘taking it on the chin’, ‘playing up and playing the game’, ‘big boys don’t cry’. Even my mother’s enjoiner when I was a child to always be the one on whom my sisters could rely, their ‘shield and defender’, was part of it. This

philosophy was hammered into me all through my youth, at home and at school. And in many ways, these values are useful, particularly in war, it allows one to function in difficult circumstances. Keeping one's head, in times of turmoil. Incidentally, it also taught me how to be self-reliant, taught me that effectively there was only one person I could depend on and that was myself.

Latterly I now include Barclay in that trust, but there is only so much that he can do and when it comes down to the edge of it, one only has one's self to rely on.

So, with that background, I would have found it difficult to share these nightmares with anyone else, the dragoon, the visions that had me waking up sweating, looking at my shirt for the bloody rent torn by the French sabre. But conversely, growing up with my sisters, and sharing their lives, going to the brotherhood of a regiment, fighting alongside other men and living with them in the field, I have come to realise that no man lives his life alone. Some things may be shared with others. It is surprising how deep a secret may be shared in the small hours of the night on a wet sentry round.

In all our time together, Barclay has never judged me. Oh, for sure there have been the occasional raised eyebrows, a theatrical roll of the eyes or the occasional ‘sharply drawn breath’, but he and I look after each other. So, his understanding of the ‘ghosts’ that haunt me is a comfort, a shoulder that he allows me to lean on.

I am sure that he has his dark dreams as well, and if there ever comes a time when he needs my shoulder, for whatever reason he shall not find me lacking.

“One’s family can be a great comfort, Your Grace,” He said as he wiped the last traces of soap off my face, ‘Especially when we are troubled.’ He held the mirror up so I could inspect his work. “If I may — as well, Your Grace, you are blessed to have a family so loving as yours.”

Looking past the mirror at his face, once again I could see no judgement, no reproof. His comment was a simple observation, along with a gentle suggestion. I nodded slowly, perhaps I should tell Helena. At least Caroline now had an inkling.

The morning being fine, I went to the stables, inviting Charlotte to come with me.

Mr Peyton, the head stableman, was walking my chestnut mare — her given name was Mary, which was entirely inadequate for her, I had taken to calling her Naiad because of her beauty — around the yard. She stepped lightly, delicately but gracefully, as if she was allowing the earth to bear her weight, like one of the mythical *naiad* water spirits. I was very happy with the progress that she had made, but was not going to spoil it by rushing to ride her, which might undo all the good that Mr Peyton and the grooms had done.

Once we had done that, and Charlotte had given her an apple as a reward for her progress, we went for a stroll along the Yew Walk, that runs towards the village from the hall. My sister was telling me that she and our mother had talked about what happened at the inn, and that after some tenseness, Helena was comfortable with the situation. Charlotte told me that the conversation had been frank, mainly on her part, but with some revelations offered by our mother. Charlotte would not tell me what those revelations were, no matter how much I tried to wheedle them out of her.

The preparations for the ball were progressing. Charlotte was acting as my liaison with the twins — who offered nothing by way of information about

the decorations, simply saying that they were progressing satisfactorily.

Still, I learned much about what was being planned for the ball. For her part, Charlotte and Hermione had asked me some days ago if there was anybody that I wished for them to extend invitations to. I gave them some names, including Lady Elizabeth and Arabella Dorrington, from whom I had heard not a word, for some months and supposed her wed already. Caroline had finalised her menu opting to arrange the food in a *buffet* style, while the twins had prepared most of the decorations, all that was left was to put them into place.

We must have walked half-way to the village, without noticing that the sky was changing, talking as we were. Suddenly, it came on to rain. The spreading yew trees above us, did provide some shelter, but the journey back to the hall was a peculiar walk-dash-walk as we moved from tree to tree, until at last we could hurry the last few yards to the hall and the warmth and the dry.

Once, back at the hall, I spent the afternoon in a most pleasurable way. Helena and I sat in the drawing room — she with her needlework, and I

with my book. We said very little between us, enjoying being in close proximity with each other but also enjoying the silence, the slow ticking of the long-case clock, the spit and crackle of the fire. It was an idyll of domesticity. Peace before the approaching storm of the ball — the house would be in uproar for days before and after.

My mother and I took a light supper privately, and then I took her to bed.

We made slow leisurely love for several hours, no frantic bouncing fucks, just sensual, sensuous fondling, with bouts of intertwined love-making, exploring each other's bodies and what we enjoyed. This was interspersed with dozing, or drowsily talking. It felt so very comfortable that Helena only left my room when Barclay brought my washing water.

He held my mother's gown for her, helping her to dress. It was a simple thing and completely normal for Barclay to do so. Yet in that moment it felt like the world changed. Up until now, Helena had always sought to avoid the issue of our being together when it came to the servants. Barclay assisting her effectively recognised that she had spent the night in my bed, and at the same time it suggested that it did

not matter, to him at least. It also suggested that she was at ease with his presence.

### ***19. Mrs Dodgson comes to Rogeringham Hall***

“Mrs Dodgson, Your Grace.” Mr Dives announced the steward’s wife.

The woman looked terrified as he showed her into my study. She had a small bundle that she clutched to her breast and her three children huddled close to her skirt as she entered. Her large eyes looked around, taking in the wooden shelves and all the books, the paintings and the deep pile rugs, before she came to a stop in front of my desk and she and her three girls all bobbed curtseys.

“Mr Dives? Will you take Mrs Dodgson’s children to the kitchen and see if cook has something warm for them?”

With a nod from their mother, they allowed themselves to be shepherded away.

I drew up a chair for her and suggested that she sit down.

“What can I do for you today, Mrs Dodgson?” I asked as I sat down opposite her.

A whole gamut of emotions ran across her face, a handsome face that in the morning light through my window, I could see was marked by fading shadows. There was fear there, and a wide-eyed uncertainty, but there was also determination. Mrs Dodgson had obviously screwed her resolve up into a tight ball, clenched her fists and she had marched into my study for something. I was interested to find out what had brought her here.

“May I offer you a drink?” I asked gently, she was nervous, and started as I got up to go to the decanter.

“Thank you, Your Grace.” She took the offered glass.

I watched her take a sip and waited. The rich Amontillado sherry seemed to trigger something. Her faced changed and where there had been conflict, she now showed calm resolve. Mrs Dodgson placed the cloth wrapped bundle upon my desk.

“You asked what you could do for me, Your Grace, I think it is more what I can do for you.”

I was intrigued as she pushed whatever it was towards me.



“Alfred Dodgson is a good man deep inside,” she told me. “But he is a man of great passions and sometimes they consume him. They are demons that overtake him, Your Grace.”

“I can see that, Mrs Dodgson,” I touched my own face with my finger.

“Oh those!” She dismissed them, “I’m clumsy, I bump into things.” That she was excusing his behaviour made me very angry.

“I think you are too brave,” I suggested. I wanted to probe more about his behaviours, but I hid my feelings by reaching for the bundle.

“I know he has done things which are wrong, sir, but I offer these, to perhaps...” She paused, searching for the words. “Bring relief to his situation?”

With the cloth wrapping undone, I could see that the bundle contained two small ledgers. On opening them, they appeared to be duplicate books, one with the numbers that he had quoted to me and one with an entirely different set of figures.

“These are his accounting books?”

“I believe so, sir, yes. He keeps them meticulously.” She said, pointing at the first book, “That one is the one that he showed Your Grace and the rest of the world, and that one is his own private record.”

This was the proof I had been looking for, just a brief look at the End of Quarter totals, showed a difference of over three-hundred pounds in his favour, from just three months! This wasn't skimming, it was full-on larceny!

“Mrs Dodgson?” I paused and looked at her.

“Emily, Your Grace.” She said, lowering her eyes.

“May I call you Emily?” She nodded slowly, “I will be honest with you, if anything, this damns your husband even more than before. It will mean jail for him, and no short time either when he is apprehended.”

She nodded. Tears were forming in her eyes and her shoulders had begun to lower. “I had hoped that it might do him some good, act like a confession and earn him some good will.” She dabbed her eyes with a kerchief.

“But he threatened the children, Your Grace. I don’t care for myself, but my daughters...!

“When he heard that you had been to the house, he became very angry. He swore me to secrecy and threatened to hurt us all including my girls, if I said anything to anyone.” The tears that had been threatening, started to flow. But rather than break down, Emily Dodgson sat there crying, tear drops rolling down her cheeks. but yet still holding her resolute pose.

“Mrs Dodgson, you have my gratitude for this,” I held the ledgers up, “And I will find an appropriate way to thank you for what you have done.”

“It was not done for a reward, Your Grace, but to aid his case. Even though he threatened my girls.”

I nodded, though I would still find a way to thank her, “This cannot have been easy, so I will also say how much I admire your courage, Emily.”

She sniffed and then nodded.

“Do you know where your husband is now?” I asked her.

Emily Dodgson shook her head. “He went off in a rage but I don’t know where he went. He has

friends in Buckingham town, but also friends in Aylesbury too.” I looked at her carefully, but could see no sign that she was telling anything but the truth.

“Is there somewhere that you can go? Somewhere where he will not immediately look?”

“I have a cousin, the other side of Bicester, Your Grace. She will take me in.” I rang for Barclay, and told him that he was to convey Mrs Dodgson and her children to her cousin’s house in one of the smaller, less conspicuous carriages, (the landau or the brougham with the Rogeringham coat of arms on, would have caused too many tongues to wag) and see them all safely ensconced there. He would leave her with some money and the bundle of clothes that had been organised previously.

Helena joined us, taking great delight in fussing over the Dodgson girls. She took Emily Dodgson to one side and they talked for a few minutes before Barclay and Mr Hopley took them away into the afternoon. As she climbed into the carriage it looked like a heavy weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

As I watched them drive away, I realised that I was as angry at Alfred Dodgson as much for the way

that he treated his woman as I was for the fact that he was stealing from me.

“You’re going to look after her?” I didn’t hear Helena at first and she had to repeat her question.

“Yes. Yes, of course.” I told her, dragging my thoughts back to the here and now. ‘For her actions, her service, I shall.’ For a moment I was struggling to organise my words. “It is my duty to her.” I finally managed.

“You are a good duke, William. I am so proud of you.”

I took my mother by the hand and led her inside to the warmth.

Back inside I wrote to Sir Arthur Walker asking him to arrange for the arrest of Alfred Dodgson stating my reasons and the evidence, and sent it off with one of the grooms.

## ***20. Alfred Dodgson...***

As it turned out the letter to Sir Alfred was not necessary.

At Emily Dodgson’s request, Barclay had taken her and her daughters back to the steward’s house so that she could retrieve some of her belongings. They

had not been there more than a few minutes when Alfred Dodgson himself arrived, demanding to know why there was a carriage outside the house and ‘who had she spoken to’?

Barclay advised him that Mrs Dodgson was under my protection and that he was in no position to make any demands. At this point Dodgson attempted to assault my man.

Barclay, as I have mentioned, is built like a prize fighter. Normally he is a very gentle man, but he also has a straight right that seems to come out of nowhere, is as fast as lightning, and has much the same impact as being struck by a very large boulder. Alfred Dodgson, in his state of rage, walked straight onto the end of it, ending on the floor unconscious.

Barclay said that the house erupted in pandemonium. The little girls began to cry at seeing their father floored that way; Emily Dodgson, torn between her affection for Alfred and her relief that he had been stopped, broke down, and generally, he said, it was a bedlam.

Whilst Barclay was coping with that, Hopley drove the carriage straight back to Rogeringham Hall to fetch me.

Helena, Charlotte, Caroline and I all went directly to the Dodgson house. Henry followed with three or four of the grooms.

Whilst I supervised the confinement of Mr Dodgson in a small outhouse, and sent one of the grooms to Sir Arthur to update him on the development; Helena and my sisters sat with Mrs Dodgson and her daughters. Henry had the Dodgson's maid servant brew tea and then we left the women in the small sitting room, while Barclay and I searched through the papers in Dodgson's desk.

While most of the papers there related to the everyday matters of the estate, there were three title deeds which baffled me at first. They were for properties that appeared to have been part of the Rogeringham estate, but now were not.

An estate like Rogeringham owns many properties, some are tied accommodation for workers, like Dodgson's house, others are leased to tenants. However, these three farms — quite substantial properties at that — appeared to have been transferred at some point to Dodgson himself and leased to new tenants. Transfers and changes in leases are all normal parts of the working of an

estate, when conducted with the knowledge of the house, previously that would have been my father, and now it would be me. However, all three of these transfers were dated after my father died and before my arrival home.

In one simple and quite unlawful move, Alfred Dodgson had become a wealthy man.

It was a clever ploy. Only a full accounting of the Rogeringham estate based on the previous year would have revealed the changes that had been made. That full accounting would only have been done with the assistance of the steward, so it is possible that he could have kept this invisible by obfuscating the accounting. By leasing the properties, instead of occupying them, he could have profited greatly, possibly for the rest of his life. His efforts to conceal this, however, were clumsy, the obvious disparity in some of the rents, the inept business with the wines and his whole execution was so inept, that he failed right from the start.

Sir Arthur and his constables would arrive in a couple of hours and Dodgson would be removed to Buckingham Gaol, but still I had two major questions. How had Dodgson come up with this



scheme and how had my father employed someone so inept in such an important role?

He wasn't talking however, and sat there scowling at me. It would not be considered to be out of order for either myself or Barclay to beat the answers out of him, but although we discussed it, I decided that, though he fully deserved it, I could not justify it to myself, because his children were close by.

I walked through and looked into the sitting room. It appeared chaotic, but upon further examination I realised that my mother and Emily Dodgson were talking animatedly as if they had known each other many years. My sisters were engaging the Dodgson girls and there was much giggling and laughing between them. It struck me that it would be good for them not to spend the night under this roof after the events earlier. I suggested removing everyone to the hall.

I despatched one of the grooms back to the hall, requesting the brougham and instructing Mrs Ellis to prepare rooms for Mrs Dodgson and her daughters, for a few days. I gathered all of the papers I could see from Dodgson's desk and placed them in a satchel-bag.

The children and my sisters were packed into the brougham and sent off to Rogeringham Hall.

Barclay rode up next to the coachman and Emily Dodgson and my mother rode in the smaller carriage back to the house. Hopley would return for me as soon as he could.

I waited for Sir Arthur and his men, reading through the papers. I was no closer to understanding the puzzle, when the Justice arrived. I told him what had happened and wrote it all down for him, signing it in his presence.

It was as the constables were moving Dodgson out of the shed, that he struck one of them in the face with his fore-head and took off towards the nearby copse of trees at a rate of knots.

There was shouting, calling for him to stop, which he didn't, and then a musket shot, deafeningly close to me, rang out in the gathering gloom of the afternoon.

Normally, at the — surprising — speed with which Dodgson ran, in the poor light, I would have expected him to make the gloom, and cover of the woodland, but whether by bad luck or by ill-judgement, Dodgson made a swerve to one side —

in an attempt to avoid the ball. He tripped and fell, tumbling and striking his head against a stump. By the time we reached his body, Alfred Dodgson, steward of the Rogeringham estate, was dead.

### **21.... *and a revelation***

Sir Arthur apologised for his man's actions, and the constable was beside himself. He had, he said, attempted to warn the fugitive to stop. I accepted the apologies, but there was no need for anyone to apologise. I could not fault anyone's actions, and could not blame them either. Indeed, if it had been myself in charge of the constables, I probably would not have done anything different. If Dodgson had not attempted to flee then he would still be alive.

My problems were, however, doubled. Now I had no answers to my questions, but also, I had to convey the news to Mrs Dodgson and her daughters that her husband and their father was dead.

At this point, as the constables were placing Dodgson's body into their carriage to be taken to Buckingham for burial, Hopley appeared with the carriage. I instructed the Dodgson's maid, who had remained behind, to attend on her mistress at the hall the next day, secured the house, placed the satchel of

papers in the carriage and thanked Sir Arthur for his assistance.

It was with a heavy heart that I alighted at Rogeringham Hall. Emily Dodgson had been through turmoil enough today, for me to bring the news of Alfred's death would be difficult enough for her to bear as well.

I called for Helena and went directly to my study.

My mother saw by my face that things were not good as she entered. Her face fell as I told her what had happened.

"And are you alright, William?" She asked taking my hand.

"I have failed, mother. I failed Mrs Dodgson, and in a sense, I failed Alfred Dodgson as well. What the man did was wrong and he deserved to be punished for it. But I would not have called for his death. Will you bring Mrs Dodgson to me?"

"I shall stay as well while you talk to her?" I nodded my thanks.

I explained to Mrs Dodgson what had happened, and she sat and listened quietly. She did not appear to be distraught at the news, if I had been pushed to

say what she was feeling, I would have said that she was relieved. When she did speak next it was as if someone had thrown a *grenado* in amongst us.

“He was not my husband, Your Grace.” She said simply.

“I beg your pardon?” I could see the incredulity on my mother’s face as well.

“He was not my husband,” she repeated. “Alfred Dodgson was my brother.”

“The deuce, you say?” I said as I got up and walked to the decanter. I needed a drink, and sherry, even that fine Amontillado would not turn the trick. I poured myself a rum, and offered the women a sherry.

“May I have a tot of your rum, please William?” Helena asked. Emily Dodgson nodded her request as well.

“Perhaps Emily, you should tell us the whole story.” I suggested.

She took the whole tot in one gulp, shook as it burned its way down and sat up straight.

“I feel like I have had a huge weight lifted from my shoulders to be able to say this, Your Grace, but

Alfred was my brother and we were living as man and wife these last twelve years.”

“Please? Go on.” I reached out and took Helena’s hand.

“Alfred was my elder brother by a year, and we lived in Tring with our parents. When they died, we remained in the same house, Alfred took up the lease instead. While we had never been close when we were younger, Alfred began to act as the man of the house. He worked as a clerk, but in the evenings, he would drink with his friends. One night after he had been at an ale-house, he came home and demanded his rights.”

“As the man of the house?” Helena asked softly.

Emily nodded. “Exactly Your Grace. He came into my room that night and took me.” She choked.

“I had never even seen a man naked, let alone slept with one. I was thrown onto the bed and he took me like a whore. Oh, I fought and kicked against him. But as you are aware...” Emily’s voiced tailed off.

“The next morning before he left for his employment, he took me again, and as he left, he told me that from that moment on, I was his and his

alone, to do with as he pleased, when he pleased, and I was to accept that.”

I kept my expression neutral, and I noted that Helena did too. The difference between how our relationship had started and how Emily’s had begun was shocking, but we could not reveal that to Mrs Dodgson.

Emily’s glass was empty, so I offered her another tot. She went to drink this one back like she had the first, but I stilled her hand, and she sipped it instead.

“I think my eldest, Emily, was conceived that first night. I started the sickness and my belly began to swell. I didn’t know what to do. But Alfred solved it by moving us to Aylesbury. When we settled there, he told people we were man and wife.

“As I told you this morning, Your Grace, Alfred was a man with demons in him. Sober he could be the sweetest man alive and a hard-working man at that, but with drink inside him his temper came to the fore. He was ready with an open palm or even a belt.

“Grace, my second daughter was followed by Susan the youngest. I learnt to live with the situation, always fearing that we would be

discovered for our incestuous relationship. The beatings I could take, he never laid a hand upon the girls, but he often took his frustrations out upon me. I excused them, he worked hard and kept us fed. Then he secured the post of steward to Your Grace's father, two years ago. It was a big step up for us."

This gave me a chance to ask Emily about her brother. "And how would you describe his behaviour at that time?"

"I'm not sure, Your Grace." She thought carefully about her answer. "When Alfred first began to work for your father, he was diligent and well behaved — if I was to judge, I would say that he had a new purpose in life. He did still drink and sometimes he would come home from Buckingham or Aylesbury on the duke's business, and he would smell of other women. If I asked about it, he would dismiss my fears and promise me that soon we would be 'well off out of it'.

"What do you think he meant by that?" I asked her.

I cannot say for sure, but I think... "At this point Mrs Dodgson got up and went to the satchel with the papers. After rummaging through them, she handed me a hand-bill, a printed note about a meeting.



It announced a public meeting regarding the building of a 'trunk', an extension of the Grand Trunk Canal from London to take the waterway to Aylesbury. "Alfred's behaviour seemed to change after this, Your Grace."

Well, I thought to myself, this IS curious. It was well into the evening and Dives would be summoning us for supper.

"Will you be joining us for supper William?" Helena asked.

"But of course, we have guests tonight!"

Emily Dodgson, began to excuse herself, stuttering reasons why she should not.

"Nonsense!" I told her. "I am looking forwards to seeing you and your young ladies at supper."

"But, Your Grace!" Emily sounded urgent. "What I told you? About Alfred and me?"

"Mrs Dodgson — Emily — I believe if you look into every family, especially one like the Rogerings, you will find secrets similar to yours." I chuckled, "It is rumoured that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke had an overly fond relationship with one of his... well, you follow my drift.

“We are very good at keeping secrets, aren’t we, mother?” We exchanged an amused glance. “And as the only people who know about you and your brother are in this room, then I suspect that it is safe.”

Although she still looked uncertain, Emily allowed herself to be drawn away by my mother to prepare herself. I sat for a moment looking at the handbill, I suspected that it was the crux of the whole matter, but for the life of me could not see what it meant.

## ***22. The poet Catullus and his works — again***

The supper passed off very well, considering.

It is unusual for children such as the Dodgson girls to eat with the adults normally. Their meals would usually be taken in the nursery or in their rooms, not exclusively but most times. Emily, Grace and Susan Dodgson, were exquisitely behaved, my sisters had helped them to dress for dinner, and it was delightful to spend time with them. The girls’ mother was quiet throughout most of the meal, but given the circumstances that was understandable. The space of the conversation was filled however, by my sisters and her daughters, who seem to have become friends quite quickly.

After the meal, Emily and my mother went to sit and talk, and I retired. Thinking that I would be alone this evening, I intended to sit and read, so I was surprised when Charlotte knocked on my door.

“Hallo, my sweet, how are the invitations progressing?” I asked.

“Very well. We have had a great number of responses; everybody wants to be at the first ball of your dukedom.” She then said hurriedly, “But leave that aside, mama suggested I should attend you tonight.” Charlotte’s grin was positively feral.

Rogeringham Hall is built, perhaps intentionally, so that you could have fought a pitched battle in the West Wing, where my rooms are situated, and yet hear nothing in the East Wing where Emily Dodgson and her daughters were situated. My mother’s and Charlotte’s rooms are near mine, so I supposed Helena was intent on looking after our guests, hence her asking my sister to come to me.

I indicated the couch by the fire, Charlotte sat down.

“I don’t have any wine, merely some sherry...”

“Do you have any of your rum, brother?” She asked.

“If you wish.” I said as I poured her and myself a tot each.

“Your health,” I said as I drank off some of mine.

“Oh! Gracious!” Charlotte coughed and spluttered, “That is fierce! Warming, but oh Lord! William, it has claws!”

I smiled. “Does it help?” She asked, quietly.

“A little.” I told her, wondering once more, who knew what about my nightmares. “Though to be honest, the more I am here — in the bosom of my family, the better I sleep.”

Charlotte stood up and started to disrobe. “In that case,” she said, “It is fortunate that I have a bosom available for you, though sleeping is the last thing on my mind.”

It was so sudden, so abrupt, and to be truthful, so abruptly funny that I just sat there, open-mouthed, looking at my sister posing like a naked muse with her not unpleasant chest — my apologies, bosom — thrust upwards in the flickering fire light.

“Sodomy? Face fucking?” She said hopefully. “Please William? There is so much I wish to explore...”

I found it difficult not to laugh. There was my sister, properly styled Lady Charlotte Rogeringham, cheerfully asking me to fuck her face or sodomise her. I was beginning to wonder if this was all starting to go too far. But then again, it should be noted that she did say ‘please’.

“Very well. Now, Catullus! Do you recall the passage that you read to me the other day?” I asked as I led Charlotte to my bed. Much bigger than the one at the Fox Inn, I sat her upon the sheets and shed my clothes as I waited for her to recall the poet’s words. Charlotte thought very hard about it, ‘Pedicabo ego uos et irrumabo’ she said, “I — er — I will sodomize you and face-fuck you.”

“Perhaps a better translation,” I suggested, “Would be ‘*I will fuck you in the arse and in the mouth*’. While I think we can progress onto sodomy in a later lesson — it’s very much an acquired taste, so to speak. Perhaps we should work up to that, let us begin with you sucking my cock. Kneel there.” I positioned her on the bed and placed myself with my back against the pillows, so that she could fully access my erection.

I presented Charlotte with my rampant shaft. I was as hard that evening as I have ever been. My

sister looked eager and her eyes were shining as she took hold of it gently, gripping it at the base. Where Helena was tentative, Charlotte was eager, keen to begin.

“Mmmmmmmmm!” she groaned, as she took my dick into her mouth.

“Your eyes on me, Charlotte!” I told her, looking down. “Always keep your eyes upon me.”

From the excitement she had showed when she first translated the Roman poem for me, I inferred that Charlotte wanted this done to her, and not as my mother and I had done which was loving and as much for her pleasure as it was mine. No, my dear beloved sister wanted me to make her suck my cock.

I have met women who prefer to be the dominant party, and those who prefer to be the dominated. It appeared that Charlotte enjoyed a measure of both parts. Tonight, I decided, she would be the one who serves.

Charlotte laved my cock with her tongue, she ran her lips up and down the shaft, even licking it up and down. I showed her how to bathe my pills with her tongue, and suck each one into her mouth — gently

— at which point she also learnt that she could also hum at the same time to cause me pleasure.

I instructed Charlotte how she could insert my cock deep into her throat, how she could suppress the need to heave and how far back she could take it without gagging. When she raised her head for a moment to draw breath, gasping, with her face flecked with her own spittle and drops of my early spend, she looked at me. I could not read her eyes for a moment, but then she broke into a huge smile, sitting back on her hips.

“Did I do well brother?” She asked.

I nodded, and reached out to stroke her face, clearing the fluids away with a wipe of my hand. “Very well. Do it again.”

This time as Charlotte lowered her head, I placed my hand upon her head. Gently, but enough to give her guidance. Her efforts were more purposeful, after nuzzling and mouthing at and around my shaft, she began to use her hands, working with them and her mouth to pump my cock in and out. She would do this for a few moments, then press her head down further, trying to touch my belly with her nose.

I allowed her to do this for several minutes. It showed how good a pupil she is, I have experienced much worse than what Charlotte was doing. Still, I felt it was time to increase the intensity.

Charlotte paused for the briefest of moments when she felt me place my hands on either side of her head, but carried on. Soon though I began to push with my hips as she pushed her head forwards.

Charlotte drew her head back again, gasping for breath. Without taking her eyes off me, grinning, she lowered her head in a slow nod, as if to say 'do as you will, brother, I can take it'.

I got up on my knees, and pulled her head down, Charlotte had to use her hands to take her weight, all she had now was her lips and her throat. It would have been easy to be over-strong, to pummel her with my cock, to thrust too hard. Instead, I tried to match my moves to hers, and make it so that she understood how it felt when someone else was in control.

It was my pleasure, my movements that dictated the pace, my cock that controlled the sensations, but yet it seemed that my sister was relaxing into the activity, her body relaxed and even her breathing was more controlled.



I felt my spend begin, felt it in my pills, it wasn't going to be a huge cum, there had been too many interruptions on the journey, but Charlotte was going to receive a mouth full of my jism.

And receive it she did.

She gagged, her eyes bulged, but then she reached up and took hold of my cock, holding it in her mouth as she swallowed my spend.

We both collapsed on the bed, our limbs tangled, hugging and kissing. I saw that Charlotte had a streak of cum on her cheek, so taking it upon my tongue I offered it to her. She licked the offering up.

“So!” She began, “That is face-fucking?”

“I think your man, Catullus would have been much more heavy-handed in what he intended for Furius, but essentially yes. Did you enjoy that?”

Charlotte lay quiet for a moment, then she said, “There were parts of it that I found threatening — the choking and not being able to breathe, but the part that I enjoyed most is the part that I do not fully understand.”

“And that was?” I asked as I toyed with her bottom, running my fingers up and down her slit and

slipping them between her bottom cheeks.

“Surrendering.” She said quietly. “When you took charge of me, it was the most wonderful feeling in the world. I felt wanted, I felt like it was the place that I wanted to be most in all of the world. It felt right, William, it felt so very right.”

So, I was right about her enjoying subservience. “That was not ‘taking charge’ as some people would do it. In fact, it was quite mild. I would urge caution with whom you share that feeling, not everyone can be trusted to account for your feelings as well as theirs.”

Charlotte looked at me and smiled, “They would not be you, William. I cannot imagine surrendering control to anyone but you.” Even as she was speaking, she began to push her bottom back into my hand.

“So!” She said, “If that was face-fucking, we must now try sodomy, should we not?”

I laughed, but responded by taking my fore-finger and inserting it into her bottom.

Charlotte’s squeal was interrupted by the door opening and Helena entering into my room.

### **23. *Mother interrupts...***

My mother had obviously been to her room, as she wore her favourite grey dressing gown and a night gown, however she looked upset, discomfited.

Charlotte got up to dress and leave but Helena indicated she should stay where she was.

I got out of bed and went to her.

“I am not sure I can carry on doing this, William,” she said.

“Doing what mother?” I asked, though I had a good idea what she meant.

She waved her hands at me, and my bed and at Charlotte. “THIS! This incestuous bed-hopping of yours!” She touched my face with her cool hand. “I love you William, I cannot deny that, but I should never have succumbed to your demands and gotten into your bed.

“I spoke much with Emily Dodgson tonight, about her situation. Her life with her brother, what she went through. That poor woman — it — it was rape, pure and simple, William. It makes me doubt what we are doing here.”

By now I had enveloped Helena in my arms, comforting her agitation. “If I had marched into your bedroom on my arrival home and taken you without your consent, I would agree with you. If you were my birth mother, I would agree. If I did not hold you up as the most important woman in my life; if I did not worship the places where your feet touch the earth; if... if... if I did not hold your very nipples as sacred then I would agree...”

There was a pause as Helena regarded me, “My ‘nipples’? ‘Sacred’?” she asked sceptically. “**That** is the best you have?”

“I was struggling,” I admitted.

“It sounded perfectly acceptable to me, mama,” Charlotte said from behind me.

“If none of those things were true, Helena, I would agree with both you and Mrs Dodgson. There is no excusing her treatment at the hands of her own brother. Her rape, her enslavement and the brutalities he inflicted on her.

“But we, mother, you and I... have you not been given every choice? Have you ever been coerced, made to do things against your will? Every step you have taken on this road, has been your choice. Why?

Because I love you and desire you and wanted you to love me, but never to force you.

“I freely admit I sought to conquer you, but to conquer you only if you would allow me to.”

“But brother and sister, William, mother and son, it is not nature’s way!” Helena protested.

“Blood, my love, blood is the key! The only link between us is the man that you married. There is no impediment.”

“That may be true,” Helena conceded, “But there is blood between you and your sisters!”

“If I may mama?” Charlotte interrupted.

Helena looked at her, about to say something, but Charlotte hurried on.

“Do not let Mrs Dodgson’s troubled life reflect upon your own. What she has undergone is dreadful, but it does not reflect in any way upon our situation here.

“William is correct, what goes between the two of you is different — it was meant to be, almost like it was written in the stars.

“Between William and us, is problematic. But though I don’t think any of us knew it would happen, in our excuse I believe that there was an inevitability about it that none of us foresaw. Growing up as close as we did, as loving as we were, certainly on my part, I can think of no one I would have wanted more than William. I have no regrets that I took advantage of the circumstances that allowed it to happen, and I believe Caroline feels the same.

“We are going to go out from here, eventually to who knows what, at least we can be thankful that at this crucial step to our womanhood it was done with love...”

“And some pleasure.” I added. Charlotte nodded with a smile.

“And once we have gone out into the world, this story is ended.” Charlotte continued, “It will be a moment to be treasured, but a moment that is done.

“Do not let Emily Dodgson’s travails spoil your life with William, mama, enjoy what you have. Because what you have is precious,” she said, embracing Helena.

Helena thought for a moment, wrapped in both mine and Charlotte's arms.

"Both of your arguments have weight I am sure," she said, "I will have to consider them carefully."

I could tell that her earlier resolution was wavering, and I think Charlotte felt it too.

I kissed Helena, gently at first, then deeply, and her response was willing, as I felt her kiss me back. I then switched to Charlotte and kissed her the same way. She was also willing.

It may have been how close we were when we were younger, being of a like mind in many ways, or it may have been Charlotte's lascivious nature, but she then turned and kissed Helena in the way that they had both kissed me.

For a moment, Helena did not respond, drawing back her head and looking at her oldest daughter, I felt her weight against my arm, but did not prevent her from moving back. Then, in the same way that I had felt her weight shift backwards, now it shifted forwards as she pressed herself against Charlotte, Helena returned her kiss.

"Given what I have just said," she said, looking at us both, "I believe what I am about to do is very,

very wrong, But I am going to do it anyway.”

“William tells me that taking pleasure when it is presented is one of the most important things in life,” Charlotte told her mother as we helped Helena disrobe.

As we led her to my bed, I noted how similar she and Charlotte were physically. They were like enough, I observed, that they could have been sisters rather than mother and daughter. There were differences due to age in their bodies, but they were not that dissimilar. Helena’s bush was slightly lighter in colour, and a little thinner, but where Charlotte’s bubbies sat higher upon her chest, Helena’s had less sag than some women I have known who were younger than her.

“And what other things has William taught you, daughter?” Helena asked, “Apart from the sanctity of nipples.”

“Face-fucking!” Charlotte told her cheerfully. “Among other things,” she added.

For a moment Helena looked at her aghast, “Well perhaps we shall visit that in a short while, but tell me more about William’s views on pleasure.”



By now we were all in the bed together, Charlotte on my left and Helena on my right. I sat with my head propped up on the pillows, while they pressed themselves against my sides and conversed across my chest.

“William is less of a teacher, mama, and more one who enables.” Charlotte explained.

“What then does he enable?”

“Catullus, mother.” I threw in.

When Helena questioned it, Charlotte explained about finding father’s copy of the Roman’s poems, and what it contained.

“Dear God!” Mother exclaimed, “I don’t know which is worse — my daughter walking round reading Latin pornography, or the fact that it was your father’s. Perhaps if he had read it, I would have been less inclined to turn to his son for my affection.”

“That still would not have stopped me, mother.” I told her.

“I dare say, not.” She smiled. “But how does this dead Roman poet contribute to the debauchment of my daughters?”

“Curiosity.” This time it was Charlotte who responded. “I wanted to know what it was that he was talking about. William seemed to provide the best opportunity for me to learn.”

“And you showed her?”

“I did. Or at least I showed her a part of it. The second part is quite a step on from there and I was building up to it.”

Both sets of bobbies pressing against my body had me hard as a rock. Charlotte revealed my hard prick to Helena by drawing the sheet down and away from it.

“Watch this mama.” She moved to between my legs and enveloped my cock with the heat of her mouth. She pressed her face down until her nose grazed my pubes and paused there for a moment.

“Gaaah!” She said when she eventually raised herself up, gasping for breath. “Did you see how deep that went in my throat?”

Helena nodded, proud, but also slightly stunned, “And that is ‘face fucking’?” she asked.

Charlotte lowered her head again.

“No, mother, **this** is.” I grasped Charlotte’s head, and guided it up and down on my cock. Inflamed as I was, I began to jab my hips up, pulling her head down on to me. Helena reached out protectively, but Charlotte gently pushed her hand away. Still, seeing my mother’s alarm, I stopped.

“Did that not hurt?” Helena wanted to know.

“It was uncomfortable but it did not hurt, as such!” Charlotte grinned and shook her head, spittle drooling from her lips, the fine string connecting her mouth to the head of my cock. “William knows precisely just how hard to do it. And he would not hurt me anyway, would you, brother?”

I shook my head as I stroked her hair.

“I do not understand why you would do that, though.” Helena said, still trying to comprehend what she had just witnessed.

Charlotte pulled herself across me, incidentally trapping my still hard, and still unrequited cock, between her side and my belly. She embraced her mother and kissed her tenderly.

“It is the difference between Alfred Dodgson and the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton,” she said with a smile.

Helena began to nod her head slowly, thoughtfully. “So, what you are saying is that he did not do it because **he** wanted to, he did it because **you** wanted him to?” Charlotte nodded and slid back to my left, making my cock ache even more.

“But **why** did you want him to?”

“Because of who I am, mama. We have wealth, and power, and people defer to us, we have servants that answer to our every whim, but the price of all of that is that we are always at the top of the pile. I have discovered the pleasures of surrendering to someone,” She inclined her head to me, “and it is very enjoyable.

“That it is my brother makes it doubly sinful.”

Helena gave a rueful smile, “I understand that last part.” She said, reaching across and kissing Charlotte, and making my cock ache once more. “William emphasises it by calling me ‘mother’ when we are fucking,” she told my sister.

“The important thing,” Charlotte said, “Is that thanks to him, I know more about giving pleasure, and about what I like when I am receiving it.”

At this point Helena rested her hand on my prick. I have no idea why, but she did, and I groaned.

All of the back and forth across my hips, Charlotte's mouth, the naked breasts, the warm smooth flesh, had my poor pills turning blue. And I groaned.

"OH!" they both exclaimed. "William! I am so sorry."

If I had not had such a raging need, it would have been funny watching them both trying to get their mouths around my rock-hard cock, and moving their heads so that they could both get their lips upon it.

My next moan was one of relief, as first Charlotte and then Helena took turns to take it into their mouths and suck lovingly on my ducal cock.

I just let them do it, not pressing on their heads, or shoulders, but instead I used my hands to fondle their bobbies or cup their bums as they moved about on either side jockeying for position by my hips. I even slid my hands between their thighs and friggd their cunnies. This last thing seemed to work best, and soon I had two fingers deep in them both, working them in and out as my mother and my eldest sister worked my erection in and out of their hot, wet sucking mouths.

My impression was, and bear in mind that I was euphoric, and operating entirely by instinct by this time, such was the thrill of being pleased by two such sensual and sexual women, that they both learned from each other. Charlotte observed something that Helena was doing and improved upon it, and *vice versa*. They both began to use their hands along with their mouths, and that was the final blow.

With my fingers deep inside their cunnies, my spend arced through me. Charlotte who was sucking my cock at the time caught all of it, as I shot off into her mouth.

As I sank back to the mattress, I saw Charlotte look at Helena. Something, I have no idea what, passed between them, and Charlotte leaned forwards and kissed my mother with an open mouth.

I could hear the jism being passed noisily from mouth to mouth as the kiss continued. Lewd, lascivious, and lovely to watch, finally they were done. Their kisses were just touches of their lips now, as they gazed at each other, and then they moved to lie next to me.

Or rather Helena did, Charlotte stood up, "I shall go now and leave you two together. I love you

both,” she said as she put her own dressing gown on, and blowing us a kiss, she left.

#### ***24. Pillow talk, part the first***

Helena lay quietly for a while, her head on my chest, after Charlotte went back to her own room. I understood that she might need time with her thoughts, so I didn’t feel the need to interrupt.

Finally, she drew a deep breath, “I am done,” she said. “I am finished.”

“How so?” I asked, stroking her hair.

“I am finally debauched. Exchanging my son’s spend by kissing my daughter, with an open mouth, no less, it is hard to see how low a woman can sink, after that. Especially after I came in here ranting about our incestuous behaviours, to be seduced into such an act afterwards, I must be at the very bottom of the pit.”

Despite her words, she did not sound like a woman who was at the bottom of a pit of despair, in fact, if I had been asked, I would have said that she sounded rather pleased with herself.

I said so.

There were a few moments of silence, then Helena chuckled.

“Damn! You know me too well William.”

She turned so that now she was facing me. “Damn you!” She laughed, as she pushed at my chest.

“I never knew your mother,” she said, which I knew, “And that makes me sad, because it must have been from her that you got that silver tongue of yours. You probably got your quick wits there as well.”

“I learned how to love from you, mother,” I told her, filling my voice with sincere gravity.

“And **that** is precisely what I am talking about,” she laughed.

Helena pressed herself against me, “Talking to Mrs Dodgson, made me very sad, and more than a little angry too. I think that is why I came in here ranting.

“It’s true, this — us, you and the girls — does concern me, but, if I am honest, I think you have the right of it, about what you’re doing for your sisters. And I suppose I did consent to you ‘teaching’ them.



What Emily's brother did to her is awful and nothing at all like you and I."

"Was it not you that sent Charlotte here?" I asked, which earned me a well-deserved loud slap on the breast. "Dodgson was a brute, what he did to his sister is inexcusable, and I suspect that he is answering for his actions now, before He who judges us all. He was lazy in his crimes and he was even the engineer of his own demise. Emily is the wronged party in all of this, and she is to be applauded from the way she comports herself with dignity and pride. As I promised you yesterday, mother, she and her daughters shall want for nothing. I shall settle a pension on them, find some employment for her, and a dwelling — for life if needs be."

Helena kissed me, "You are a good man, William." Her eyes shone when she looked at me, and it filled my heart with joy. So much so that I could not speak.

"Now," she said, "If you are sufficiently recharged..."

Helena's words tailed off but the desire in her eyes was clear, so we spent the next hour or so fucking. She demanded that I show her as many

ways as I could, and I obliged. At one point I made my mother jump by kissing her bum-hole and licking all around it. She squealed in surprise and delight, and I spent the next few minutes frigging her with my fingers, while she presented her arse to my tongue. Finally, I slid a well-lubricated finger inside her.

Again, Helena's squeal of surprise soon turned to one of passion, as I moved my finger in and out of her tight orifice.

"Oh God, William! Is there no part of my body that you will not ravage?" She asked, with her eyes closed as waves of passion flushed through her.

"Your nipples are sacred," I told her.

"Damn you!" She laughed, "They need your attention as much as any other part of me! You have me in such a mess, I don't know whether I am coming or going."

"Then it is time that you were cumming, mother," I told her, and putting her onto her knees, commenced to fuck her.

The woman that enjoyed this dog-style fuck was not the woman I first took to bed a few short weeks ago. It was as if Helena's passions had been

unlocked, certainly she was more uninhibited. Now she growled at me, grasped at the sheets, thrust her hips back to meet my thrusts. I noted that she called upon the Almighty less now, as well.

When we both came, we collapsed into a tangled mess, both of us, too tired at last to do anything other than draw the sheets up over ourselves and sleep.

I found myself shaken awake an hour or so later, with Helena stood beside the bed.

“You were shouting,” she said concerned, “Not words, just a cry.”

She had a tot of rum in her hand, “Drink this.”

As I sipped the rum, she looked at the scar on my side. “It’s that, is it not?”

I nodded and explained the elements of the dream to her. The French dragoon and his sword. “My arm was numbed and I could not raise it to protect myself. He went to skewer me, but one of my soldiers stepped up and over me, deflecting the blow at the last moment and it scored my ribs instead.”

“And the cry out?” Helena asked.

“In the dream the soldier does not appear and the dragoon stabs down and I am helpless to prevent it.”

Helena sat beside me on the bed, drawing me to her and making soothing noises.

“I have heard you whimper in your sleep before, but said nothing.” She told me, sliding back under the covers. “I was about to go back to my room, but I shall sleep here tonight.”

Helena was warm and solicitous, and for a moment I was her brave boy again. And for a moment, it was good. But then I took a hold of myself, it was months ago, and a thousand miles away.

It’s just a dream William, just a bloody dream, I chided myself. I straightened myself up in the bed, and folded Helena in my arms, and like that, we slept until dawn, when Barclay’s knock-knock, pause, knock-knock announced his tactful arrival.

### ***25. Side-saddle and bareback...***

I was ‘banned’ from the East Wing from the Tuesday before the ball.

This wasn’t a major inconvenience, as all of my rooms are in the West Wing. The East Wing is where

the ballroom is, and several receiving rooms, as well as having its own quite grand entrance. I did note several of the grooms, who rarely come into the hall itself, carrying baskets and bags into the house. Inevitably each one would enter, look up the Grand Staircase at all of the weapons and armour, the old standards and the portraits, and their heads would sweep from the left, up and around and down to the right. Each and every one of them, like clockwork.

Several times two of them would man-handle tall shapes, wrapped in muslin to disguise them into the ballroom — though having seen men carrying saplings into the stables the other day, I assumed that that was what they were.

I retreated to my study and spent my time going through Dodgson's papers. The three properties he had transferred to his name were all in the Aylesbury area. This is not unusual, as has been noted already, the 'estate' owns properties right across Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire and, of course, in London itself.

The day before I had summoned Thomas Langton, our lawyer from Aylesbury. I had not called him about this particular matter before this, though he had been to Rogeringham Hall several

times since we removed here. I had wanted to settle this with Dodgson first, give him a chance to explain himself. Now it had gone beyond that.

On his arrival — after the usual greetings, enquiries after his wife and new young child, and the like, I went over the events at the Dodgson house, and explained what he had done. It was agreed that Mr Langton would take the deeds away and amend the ownership details and get them notarised.

Langton was curious about the circumstances behind the affair and he agreed to ride out to view the properties and serve notice to the tenants of the change of ownership. He was attending the ball and would make his report then.

I did see Hermione's young man around the house at one point, though he appeared to be avoiding me, as I did not see him at the mid-day meal. But not long after that, Hermione herself visited me and asked if I would ride with her that afternoon. Her exact words were 'Would I take her for a ride?'

I wondered if it was a *double entendre*, whether she was actually asking for one thing but meaning something else altogether. The problem is that, as I have said. Hermione is the complete picture of

innocence, so it was more than possible that what she said she wanted, was exactly what she meant. That, and she wore a riding habit as well.

I rang for a footman and despatched him to the stables.

The afternoon was cold, but there was a bright sun, the frost from the morning was fading but if the night was clear of clouds, it would be back by morning. Hermione rode a pale-coloured cob, with a bustling sort of walk, while I rode the hunter that I had been using for the last few weeks. He was a big old boy, steady and even in his pace, past his best days as a hunter, but an excellent riding horse.

We rode down the Yew Walk, with the low sun dappling the path and pooling between the old yew trees. From there we aimed to ride across the park, and round via the grand entrance gateway, round through the Home Coverts and back.

“Does it not feel strange?” Hermione asked.

“Does what feel strange?”

“All of this,” she waved her arm at the park and the bulk of the house sitting away to our left. “Being the head of all of this?”

“I suppose if I had just come to it as a boy, then yes, I suppose it would.” I reflected. “But the army and being away — out of it all, feels like it was all building up to it.”

“I have spoken with Emily Dodgson,” Hermione went on. “The way you have looked after her is good. I am sure the others have said that you will make a good duke, so I will add my voice too.”

I thanked her, then asked her why we were out riding this afternoon?

Hermione looked off into the distance, across the broad swathe of the great park. “James has been here today.”

I nodded, “I saw him.”

Hermione smiled, “He’s quite scared of you, you know?”

I nodded again. “And?”

“He is talking seriously about us and our future, I think he intends to ask you for my hand at the ball.”

“And how does that make you feel?” I asked, as we both came to a stop. Hermione looked ahead at our chosen route; her look was thoughtful as if making a very big decision.



“I need to ride very fast and perhaps take some small jumps,” she said as she pointed the cob’s head at the logs that had been placed for just that sort of exercise along the borders of the park.

“And then...” She said, with her usual air of innocence, “I need you to fuck me, William.” And she kicked the cob up to a canter, and took off along the track.

I thought perhaps she wanted me to catch her, but to be truthful Hermione’s cob would never outrun the hunter. Instead, I settled for riding behind her and watching as she enthusiastically put her horse at the jumps.

There are two small lakes in the Great Park at Rogeringham. By the side of the larger one, screened from the house by a patch of woodland is a pavilion. It was built when the park was re-designed by Capability Brown, and is a mixture of classical architecture — the front of it is modelled as a Greek portico in style, while the rear part is a brick-built summer house, and was our play house during the summer. We called it the Temple.

Hermione dismounted there and led me inside.

It was cold, it was years since there had been a fire in the hearth there, but there were still some couches there that we had used when we had been there in the past.

Hermione threw herself on one of these and lifted her riding habit. I was stunned to see that she wore nothing at all underneath. The fur on her mons was shaped, trimmed, a discrete triangle that pointed down between her thighs.

“I know what has been going on with Charlotte and mama...” she said.

I didn’t mention Caroline to her.

“... It is time that you added my name to your list.” And she began to frig herself as she lay in front of me.

“Would you not rather wait?” I asked, “These old couches are rather musty.”

“No!” She said simply. Hermione looked at me. ‘Please William, do it now. If James does ask for my hand at the ball, I want to be ready.’ She reached out her hand, touching my cock though my breeches. “Pleeeeee William?”

I freed myself from my breeches and moved between her legs. She reached up and pulled me down on top of her. “Come brother, what waits here is yours, it always has been. Take it.”

Well! That came as a little bit of a surprise. Not just the declaration, but also the passion in her voice, neither of which I had any previous suspicion of. Hermione, our little sister, our innocent, angelic sibling, now I realised that when Charlotte had told me that there was steel in her, there was, in fact, a great deal more besides.

It was a vigorous fuck.

Once her virginity had been sacrificed in our temple, with nary a flinch on my sister’s part, Hermione wrapped me in her arms, and brought her legs up around me and hugged me tightly to her.

“Oh William! Oh God. Harder, pleeease, harder! Yes! Yes! YES!!” My sister’s face was contorted in passion, I believe that if I were not still wearing my coat, I would have had new scars on my body from her finger nails. It was such a lewd experience — I have had few like it, that it was not long before I started to spend inside her cunny.

I felt Hermione's arms shift on my torso, gripping me tighter, as if she was trying to cram me inside her, as I filled her with my jism. Three, four, even five spurts of spend. Each time I spent, I thrust deep inside her.

Done, I withdrew slowly, Hermione seemed reluctant to let me go. When I bent to kiss her, I saw that she was crying.

"Shush! Don't cry, my sweet." I soothed her, "Was it so bad?" I joked.

"No!" She sniffled. Then she burst out, "I love you William, I have always loved you. If I could, I would marry you and be your devoted wife. This, this — I have waited for this."

I moved to sit beside her and drew her into my arms and up onto my lap.

"I remember one time," I said, "I was sent to bed without supper for some reason. You brought me food, walking up to my room as if you owned it, and no one suspected a damned thing. If I could take you as my wife, Hermione, I would. Remember this though, you will always have my undying love."

"You did not finish?" I asked.

Hermione tried to wave that away, “That is not important...”

“It **is** important, always remember that,” I chided her, “That is the whole point of this.” I told her, and took my hand and slid it up against her clitty. Among the now matted hair, amidst the gooey mess I had deposited there, I found the button of her clitoris.

“Ohhh!” Hermione groaned as I frigged her. “Oh lord! Oh God William... No, no, no! Aaaaah!” It did not take long before the cum rattled through her. She threw herself back against me, turning her head to kiss me, she hungrily chewed at my lips.

Abruptly she stopped kissing me and sat upon my lap, her face buried in the crook of my neck. “I really do love you brother,” she said softly into my chest.

“And I you, my sweet Hermione.”

She grinned at that, and as she did, I could see past her and through the windows, that the sun was racing towards the horizon.

“We should return to the Hall,” I said.

Re-dressed and re-mounted, neither of us appeared to be in a hurry and we walked the horses across the Great Park, directly towards the stables.

“Forgive me for asking,” I wondered aloud, “But why such urgency?”

Hermione looked at me with her large grey eyes, “After talking with James this morning, and his excitement, I feel like the future is rushing towards me. He is impetuous, and will charge into the arrangements. What we have done was so important to me — I have known that you would be my first for a long time, I was worried that there would not be time to do it.”

I chuckled.

“James is in awe of you, did you know, William?” she went on. “You scare him, but he has confided to me that he admires you. You are everything he aspires to be, he often talks about you, what you think and what you do. I think that you are the role-model he has been looking for.”

I nodded, “So, how will you fit into his world?”

Hermione reined the cob to a standstill. “I am a Rogeringham,” she said, as if that was all she needed to say. That simple statement of fact, the

invocation of our family name, and the power that the dukedom confers upon it, reminded me of an ancient queen — an Elizabeth or further back, a Boadicea, both women fierce, proud of who they were and strong. ‘James Barthomley could be an important man. Eventually.’ she said, “He has it in him. With me behind him, he **will** be. I will bring our name, and all of what it means to be a member of such an important family and use that strength to bring out his potential. Put simply, William, I shall bring class to an otherwise vulgar brawl!”

I laughed. Hermione was quoting an unknown officer who was asked what the role of cavalry was in warfare. She was not slandering James Barthomley as vulgar, or common, rather she was implying that being a part of his life and his progress in the world, she would elevate it above the ordinary. Not only was it an apt use of the quote but it confirmed what I had come to realise. It wasn’t steel in my little sister. It was diamond. Hard and beautiful.

It was another confirmation, should I have needed it, of the changes which had taken place in my sisters while I had been away. Perhaps though, not in Hermione’s case, I suspect that what I had

seen this afternoon had always been there — she had just hidden it all along behind her air of innocence.

I took supper with my sisters that night, and asked Charlotte to play for me in the drawing room. Charlotte played and we sang together, but as we did, as I looked around with my new vision of them, I no longer saw my sisters as the girls I remembered but as women that I loved most dearly.

I couldn't help but note that out of the women assembled — my mother, Charlotte, Caroline, Hermione, the twins and Emily Dodgson — I had slept with or been carnal with four out of the seven of them. Emily Dodgson was obviously off the dance card, so that just left the twins. Given the penchant that the twins had for games and intrigue, I couldn't help but wonder how that would play out.

My twin sisters were always mischievous as children, if there was a practical joke being played, generally they were the culprits. They rarely suffered the consequences of their jests because if a punishment did come down, it was normally me that bore it. I never resented this, most times I enjoyed the fun, sometimes I even encouraged them, and sometimes I was the victim. They were creative and



imaginative and between them they have a wonderful sense of timing.

We talked for a few minutes while Charlotte looked for some music. Whenever I asked them about their plans for the decorations, all I received were innocent looks, 'I'm sorry brother, what were you saying?' or 'did you say something William?'.

Very well, I thought, I give in, all shall be revealed on Friday evening.

I chatted with Mrs Dodgson, she had decided to continue to style herself that way because of her daughters, she seemed more contented, less nervous. I had the sense that there was still anger below the surface, though she was most careful to point out that what had happened was all Alfred's own fault.

Despite her existence with Alfred and raising three daughters, Emily Dodgson told me that she still read a lot. In particular she said that she had read much about the education of women. She had also read many women authors like Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay who talked about women's roles in society. She herself aspired to send her daughters to a school so that they would be more than drudges to their husbands. Having conversed with the girls, whom I found to be

thoughtful, articulate and despite the recent loss of the man that they called father, cheerful and easily given to laughter. I thought that this was a good idea.

At this point she blushed and stammered, “I do apologise Your Grace...”

I asked her why.

“Such ideas are not always well received — I did not wish to offend.”

I waved it away. “Any man in this family who held the view that women were in any way ‘weak and feeble’ or not born to make their own way in life, would deserve everything he got.” I laughed.

Her eyes got very wide, and she asked quietly, “Truly, Your Grace?”

“Truly, Mrs Dodgson.”

And at that point Charlotte demanded that I sing Mr Handel’s song again, and the conversation ended.

I slept alone that night. Helena had a headache, Charlotte and Caroline demurred, partly in respect of what my mother had said the other night. So, I retired and went to sleep early.

Unusually, when I did dream that night, it was not of Portugal, rather it was of Hermione, mounted and partly armoured — the panoply she wore left certain parts of her body exposed, and they jiggled and bobbed as she rode. She charged across the Great Park on a white war-horse, screaming and waving her sword about.

She was fearsome, I noted with some humour. Her serious face contorted with rage, as she focussed on some unseen enemy, but the bouncing of her bobbies up and down spoiled the ferocious image.

I got up and sat by the fire. I suppose that this particular dream stemmed from our conversation that afternoon, I saw her ready to conquer the world, on behalf of James Barthomley, and to be truthful, I was jealous of him, having her at his side.

I did not take my usual tot of rum but settled for a pipe of some of the sobranie tobacco that I had been given by Sir Arthur instead. I was in a thoughtful mood and reviewed recent events and the upcoming ball. I had to smile, at my introspection. One aspect of army life was that, despite the distractions of the social life, a good officer is a busy officer. There is always something that needs doing, even something as lowly as inspecting the night's sentinels.

My new life was far less frenetic, and definitely less dangerous, and I realised I was missing the constant activity of the army. True, there were the preparations we were making ready for the next Season, but I could see that eventually there might come a time when my sisters were no longer living with us. Once the steward situation was resolved, and there was just my mother and myself, I needed to find something to be involved with. I did not see myself as a farmer, but I supposed that I could find things of interest about the estate, and perhaps that would be something I could take an interest in. The main thing I resolved, was to find things to busy myself with.

My pipe done, I tapped out the dottle on the hearth and went back to bed.

The next two days passed quietly. On the first morning, the weather was mild and I took the opportunity to go to the stables and walk Naiad about the paddock on the rein. Not only was she coming along nicely but she recognised me on my arrival and cocked her head up in anticipation.

After a half-hour with her, I had the hunter — Cumberland, by name — saddled and went for a hack round the village and some of our farms. When

I was with the army and we were actively on campaign I would spend most of the day out of doors, under the sky. I was missing that a little, and needed to get out.

By happenstance, I encountered Dr Locksley walking through the village.

I asked if he was coming to the ball, to which he replied that he wouldn't miss it for the world and that Mrs Locksley had spent a fortune on a new dress. We stopped at the vicarage and he brought a cup of a very good ale out for me. I drank it, sat upon Cumberland at his gate, the old horse was very patient while I drank and we chatted.

“Did you give any thoughts to the position of teacher, Your Grace?” The vicar asked at last, I told him that I had an idea but did not want to commit anyone just yet.

He nodded and I gave him the empty cup back, and we progressed on.

The village that day was busy, and Cumberland and I slowly worked our way up the street exchanging greetings as I went. Many people recognised me and called out ‘good morning Your Grace’ and while I didn't know many people

particularly well, some better than others, I decided that I would know them better when I was done. These people did not owe allegiance to me, that sort of thing was many years in the past, but most of them were tenants or they dealt with the hall in some form of business. This meant that we were co-dependant, and their community was my community. I knew that most of my year would be spent in London, but I had been born in the village of Rogeringham, and spent my early years here, if I had a home anywhere, this would be the place.

The Grand Ball was for the ‘great and the good’ of the county and society in general, and of course, it was also an occasion to allow my sisters to ‘trail their coats’ before a selection of suitors. I decided that a smaller, more local gathering would be a good idea, for the villagers and other tenants, closer to Christmas itself, or perhaps between then and New Year.

With the village behind us I let old Cumberland extend his stride a little and we cantered along the heath and down to the ford. We walked through the ford, rather than the bridge, and onto the carriage drive and just as the rain began again, I walked him into the stable yard.

Changed and dried off, I sought out Mr Dives and summoned him, Barclay and Mrs Ellis and her deputy to the Drawing Room.

Barclay advised that the idea of a Christmas goose had been instigated and was progressing well, most people would receive the gift in good time. When I announced that I would like to host a Christmas Ball for the local people, their reaction came as a bit of a surprise.

I had expected a less than enthusiastic response, with the imminent Grand Ball and with Christmas looming beyond that, it would be understandable with the amount of work involved, but all of the staff seemed to be quite happy with the idea. When I asked Mr Dives why this was so, he suggested that after years of doing very little in the way of these things, the hall staff felt that this was what we should be doing. It allowed us to show what we could do, and to cement our position locally, a position that had waned over the years.

After they had all gone back to their business, I sat and wrote to a bookseller in London and asked if they would procure me some titles based on the conversation I had had with Emily Dodgson.

## ***26. The rain it raineth***

The rain which had started at the end of my ride, continued through the afternoon, so the plans that I had made were abandoned and I sat and read. I looked out of the windows of the library as it fell in sheets, driving across the great park.

The river at the other end of the park, where the bridge and the ford sit side-by-side, swelled even in the time I was watching it.

Charlotte came in to find me at one point, and we watched it together. “Do you think it will flood, William? It would be a dreadful shame if the guests could not reach us.”

“Hopley thinks not.” I told her. “He has a good eye for the weather. ‘It will rain until evening’, he told me, and then it will clear overnight, he thinks. Tomorrow will be dry. And even if the river does swell so that we can’t use the bridge, carriages may come in through the gate at the village.

“Speaking of the ball, is all ready?”

Charlotte said that it was, a small orchestra had been engaged, and some of the grooms and stable staff were going to be managing the carriages.

All in all, it sounded well in hand, and I said so.



## ***27. Having a ball...***

Barclay, in a nicely cut, black livery coat and gold brocade waistcoat, announced that it was a half hour past six o'clock, and that I was due to appear with Helena at a quarter before seven on the main staircase.

Helena was duly collected from her room and we made our way into the East Wing towards the top of the stairs there.

My mother looked stunning. She still wore black, as was fitting, but the black silk rustled as she walked, and it shimmered in the lights of the candelabra. Her dress had a fine silver trim and that complimented the silver jewellery that she wore, including some particularly fine diamonds, at her throat and in her earrings. To finish the look, she wore an understated but no less beautiful tiara. She was, after all, the widow of a duke and my father had provided her with some very expensive gifts.

My sisters waited just inside the upper floor of the East Wing, arrayed on either side of the hallway, Charlotte, Caroline and Hermione on one side, and Margaret and Louise on the other. Like their mother they wore mourning colours, though theirs were half-mourning — lilacs and greys. As we passed

between them, they fell in behind us and at a quarter of an hour before seven, we appeared at the top the stairs.

“His Grace, Captain Sir William Rogeringham, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton!” Barclay announced in his booming voice as I made my way down the staircase and stopped on the lowest landing, where the stairs turned to the right before the last flight down to the floor of the entrance hall.

Below me the space between the foot of the staircase and the entrance doors was full of a glittering throng. Just looking down I could see Sir Arthur and his wife, the vicar and Mrs Locksley, looking beautiful in her new dress, Mrs Dodgson and numerous other notables, from all parts of the county. There were more than just a few young men, in fact it looked like a veritable herd of them.

“Her Grace, Lady Helena Rogeringham!” Helena took her place upon my right-hand side, upon the first step of the upper flight of stairs.

“Lady Charlotte Rogeringham!” Charlotte came down the stairs to stand on the next step up from her mother — the aim was that my mother and sisters would be arrayed in all of their glory, up the staircase on my right.

“Lady Caroline Rogeringham!” Caroline moved down to stand next to Charlotte, on the next step up on her right-hand side.

“Lady Louise Rogeringham! Lady Margaret Rogeringham!” I smiled inwardly, someone had obviously gotten to Barclay, normally Margaret was announced before Louise. The twins took their positions in order to the right of Caroline. We had discussed whether they should stand upon the same step, but they had elected to each stand upon separate ones.

“Lady Hermione Rogeringham!” Barclay was mindful to not say ‘and finally’, Hermione hates that, and she took her place upon the step on the right of Margaret.

All eyes were looking at us as we stood there, overlooking the hall then someone started to applaud. I looked at Helena and saw that she was looking at me, and her eyes were shining with delight.

I took Helena’s hand and we led the way down the stairs towards the ballroom.

The ballroom was magnificent, Margaret and Louise — and their small army of workers, had

excelled themselves. The saplings I had seen carried about, had been stripped of any remaining leaves and painted white, and they were placed in half casks, also painted white and covered in cloth. They had had silvered decorations hung in their branches and these shimmered and glittered as the air moved around them. White silk and other gauzier types of material had been draped around the room, and a banner with 'Rogeringham Hall — Grand Winter Ball' painted on it, had been hung at one end of the ball room. Some small statues were placed around the room which, along with the statuary that was normally in the ballroom, had been decorated with evergreens — holly and ivy strands and the leaves of these had also been painted to look as if they were frosted.

Once we, the family, had entered and formed the receiving line, then the guests would be announced and we would formally greet them.

I find this to be the most tedious part of a ball. It is bearable when waiting to be introduced but actually being in the receiving line — I would rather face a French column. Alone. But at this function, of all functions, receiving was something that had to be done, and I was going to have to get used to it.

Barclay would announce the guests, “Sir Arthur and Lady Hastings!” or “Deputy-High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, Sir John Fitzherbert, and Lady Fitzherbert!” as two examples.

They would first greet my mother, as was proper, because Helena was the hostess. After her, I would greet them and then they would proceed down the line, until they reached Hermione.

“Mr William and Eugenie Barthomley, and Mr James Barthomley.”

The elder Barthomley was a solid-looking little man, whose eyes darted around almost continuously. My impression was that he was evaluating everything, myself included. The young man’s mother was very pretty and very fashionably dressed and unlike some women who take the latest fashions, it suited her well. She wore her hair done up in a bun, which unlike the current trend in *coiffeurs*, was drawn quite tightly, emphasising the shape of her head. It made her appear to be quite severe and detracted from her face, which as I have said was pretty.

I noticed that when he actually appeared before me, Hermione’s young man looked like he would rather be anywhere else, but when he stood in front

of my sister his eyes lit up and if his face was anything to go by, he and she were the only two people in the room.

But then I heard Barclay announce “Sir Montague Fellowes!”

It was a name I did not recognise, I looked at Charlotte, who gave the tiniest shake of her head, as if to say that she did not recognise the name either.

“Thank you for your invitation, Lady Norton,” he said.

“Your Grace,” he acknowledged me, making a sketchy bow.

He was a slick kind of chap, immaculately dressed, with not a hair out of place, handsome but not a likable sort of face. In fact, I took an instant dislike to him. Something about the man was most disconcerting. Fortunately, the press of people entering, meant that he was whipped away almost immediately.

Emily Dodgson followed a few guests later, and I thought that she looked out of sorts. She and Charlotte — whom she resembled in physique — had coordinated to present her tonight, in black silk as she too was in mourning. I could not fault her

appearance, she looked quite stunning, but her face was shadowed by something that was troubling her.

“Elizabeth, Lady Dorrington and the Honourable Arabella Dorrington!” I felt Charlotte nudge me in the ribs.

Elizabeth Dorrington walked into the ball room as she did everywhere, as if she owned it, with Arabella next to her. Both women drew the eyes of everyone as they entered the room. Helena looked at me, a curious question on her face, then turned back as she accepted Elizabeth’s curtsy and grateful thanks for the invitation. I might be biased, but as handsome as Elizabeth Dorrington is, and she is accounted a great beauty, Helena is by far the more attractive of the two. Elizabeth has a slightly predatory look about her.

Still her curtsy and her simple “Your Grace” seemed genuine and warm, certainly her smile was.

Arabella, on the other hand fawned over Helena and her curtsy to me was overly low, needlessly so, her greeting was breathy and full of promise. It was obvious what she was offering, but to be frank, I wasn’t inclined to buy. Arabella is a lovely young woman, with an amorous nature and a very good body to match it, but sadly I have moved beyond

her. However, I found that I still had affection for her and her mother, so I was very glad to see both of them.

Receiving like this went on for a few more minutes until Barclay announced that it was time for gentlemen with dances — those who had already arranged them — to take their partners as the orchestra were about to begin. There was a tide of people moving towards the dance floor as those who had not pre-arranged, began to ask and couples formed for the first of the dances.

For myself, I have never been a dancer, preferring other pass-times, so Helena and I began to circulate amongst the guests, meeting them and greeting them without the constraining nature of the receiving line.

Some years later Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington as he was by then, described the battle of Waterloo in much the same way as one would describe a ball. One person cannot be everywhere or see everything, so that it would be impossible to describe everything that happens there. That Grand Winter Ball at Robergham Hall was neither as brutal nor as decisive as Waterloo, but it was an interesting event to be certain. I use the term ‘interesting’ in the Chinese interesting times sense.



Several times I noted the Fellowes chap in conversation with others. Nothing unusual, I hear you say, after all it is a ball, a social occasion. However, these conversations appeared serious, often furtive, with much looking about to see who was listening. Once, when we happened to pass closely, the two parties — Fellowes and a local gentleman who dabbled in various manufacturing processes, split apart and attempted to look as if they had not been speaking together.

Abruptly Elizabeth Dorrington appeared in front of us. After the usual, rather formal (for Elizabeth Dorrington), pleasantries, Elizabeth said, quite quietly, “If I may, Your Grace, I am surprised to see Sir Montague here.”

“Really?” I asked. “To be truthful, I am not entirely sure who he is or how he even secured an invitation.”

Elizabeth leaned in towards me and covering her lower face with her fan, as if making a *risqué* jest, said, “The man is bad news, avaricious, grasping and unscrupulous.” Then she tapped me with her fan and we both laughed.

As we progressed onwards, I looked at Helena but could not read her face, “What did that lady

say?” She asked.

“She was telling me something about one of our guests,” I told her, “It was very interesting.”

James’s father and mother were next, Mr Barthomley senior waxing lyrical about the ball and the ‘wonderful opportunity’ he had just been offered.

I congratulated him on his good fortune and asked him what it was that was so exciting.

“Why? The canal trunk, Your Grace! The amount of trade it will carry to and from London, any investment will be returned several times. It is certainly something you should consider.”

“I shall,” I told him, “I will give it some consideration.” By now my curiosity was thoroughly piqued. Helena, who had not left my side, sensed that something was amiss.

“I’m not sure,” I told her when she asked what bothered me.

“Sir Montague,” I indicated over my right shoulder, “Is doing business.”

“And?”

“I feel somehow, that it is connected with the title deeds that were stolen, and the death of Alfred Dodgson,” I told her.

Just then Henry the footman appeared. “Mr Barclay has instructed me to tell Your Grace that he has something which requires your attention.”

Helena and I slowly made our way through the crowd, towards the West Wing and my study, where we found Barclay waiting. With him was Emily Dodgson, who looked very dejected as she sat there, head bowed, with her hands clasped in her lap.

“Well?” I asked.

“Mrs Dodgson has some information Your Grace.” Barclay said, his tone was not accusatory but rather gentle and sympathetic.

“Henry, please locate Mr Langton and ask him will he attend me? Discreetly, please Henry.” I instructed him, though it was less for his instruction and more for Mrs Dodgson’s peace of mind. The footman turned and went to find the lawyer.

“Emily?” I said, sitting down next to her. “I believe that there are things happening around us, that I need to understand. Does your information shed light upon them?”

She nodded.

“Tell me?” I asked her gently. I have spent a great deal of time with Mrs Dodgson recently, and come to know her better. I was not of the belief that her involvement was nefarious. It may not be totally innocent but she was involved, and I wanted to know in what way.

Mr Langton slipped into the study quietly as she started to speak.

It appeared that Mrs Dodgson was having difficulty forming words, her eyes were full of tears. Helena leaned in and comforted her.

“Please forgive me Your Grace...” she eventually started.

I was about to say that I would, if I knew what she had done wrong, when she started speaking in a rush of words.

“Your Grace, and you, Lady Helena, have been so kind, please, I beg your forgiveness? It was on my invitation that Sir Montague Fellowes attended, he instructed me to facilitate it, he thought it would be ‘opportune’.”

I nodded that she should go on.

“Alfred got himself in trouble, he owed money to some men, which I knew. What I was not aware of was that they told him that they’d write off his debts if he could be of service to Mr Fellowes.

“He came to the house several times, even during the time your father was alive, and they would talk. I was never aware of what it was about but Alfred started organising things. I think that was when he appropriated the three deeds.

“A few days ago, I received a message from Sir Montague explaining all of this and telling me to secure him an invitation, else he would reveal to people about Alfred and I. I would be ruined, he said, and that a bedlam hospital awaited us...”

“I wish you had come to me, Mrs Dodgson,” I told her, “I promised to take care of you.”

I outlined to Mr Langton what she had told me and Helena about Alfred and the way he had treated her.

“Mr Langton will act as your lawyer now, so he cannot speak about any of this unless you tell him that he may.” She nodded tearfully.

“So, what does Sir Montague and the canal have to do with the Rogeringham estate?” I wondered

aloud. “I mean obviously the man has been monitoring Mrs Dodgson, and her whereabouts, which is suspicious to begin with, but why? And what does it have to do with the Aylesbury properties?”

“I believe I can answer that, Your Grace.” Mr Langton announced. “Mr Fellowes has invested heavily in the canal; he is one of the prime movers of the scheme.”

Now this was interesting.

Langton went on, “The three farms that Alfred Dodgson appropriated are all on the proposed route for the new trunk. I believe, Your Grace, that Fellowes was going to purchase them from your steward — at a reduced rate, though it would still be ample reward for Mr Dodgson, as well as writing off any debts he had. Then Fellowes would make his return on the money by selling parts of each property — where the canal would actually run — to the canal company.”

“The deuce you say!”

“As far as I can make out, Your Grace.”

“At least we have a clear view of what is going on,” I said. And it was true. This had been drifting

just out of sight since that evening in Mayfair, when I first saw the estate books. That Alfred had been working for someone else, as well as me, came as no surprise, as previously observed, the idea was clever but badly executed. If he had just sold the titles as part of general management of the estate, he could still have made money on them, but he got greedy.

“Mr Langton, as ever your assistance is exemplary, please stay close at hand, your services may be called on again tonight. If any of it concerns Mrs Dodgson, send the bill to me.

“Emily!” I said, “Would you and my mother like to go and repair your appearance?”

“Your Grace?” She asked in surprise.

“You have done me another service tonight, unwittingly, and perhaps for the wrong reasons, but I am grateful.” She looked at me in disbelief.

“I told you that I wanted to make things right for you. Swore it in fact. What kind of a man would I be if I went back on my word?”

Emily Dodgson sank to the floor in front me. “I don’t deserve this, Your Grace.”

I knelt down in front of her. “You may feel like that now, but from where I stand you are the victim here. And I intend to do something about it.

“This Fellowes chap has wronged me too, so this is a case where the enemy of my friend is my enemy as well — or something like that!” I waved my nonsense away with a laugh, attempting to lighten the air between us.

I drew her up to stand in front of me, ‘besides, I have plans for you, Mrs Dodgson,’ I thought to myself as my mother guided her out of the room, to go and repair her make-up.

“May I ask what your plans for Sir Montague are, Your Grace?” Langton asked, and as he did, I was suddenly back in the Peninsular.

Not physically, obviously, but in my mind, I was reminded strongly of the manoeuvring that Wellesley was so fond of. He often had a plan in his head — which he rarely shared with anyone else — but his plans were never firm, they were always flexible, based on opportunism. He would march his men around and about until the opportunity presented itself, at which point he would pounce.



My plan was simple — do this Fellowes down, in some way. Basic, I know, vague even, the essence was that I had to confront him. I would find a way to embarrass or challenge him somehow. At the same time, I was also trying to avoid spoiling the Ball that everyone had worked so hard to put together. At the very least Fellowes had cost me the services of a steward and Mr Langton's bill for the three title deeds. I did make some suggestions to Henry of a rumour that they might start spreading — regarding investigations into the canal company. Henry would make sure that these were repeated where guests could hear them. He went off with a broad grin.

While I waited for Helena and Emily to return, I asked Barclay to ask Sir Arthur to join me and when he did, I outlined some of what had gone on. When I told him what I had told Henry and why, he laughed uproariously. “That's what I like, Your Grace, dancing and entertainment!” He would field any questions that were aimed in his direction, knowing what was behind them, but being suitably enigmatic.

Helena brought Emily back to join us and I decided that an entrance was called for. With Helena on my left arm and Mrs Dodgson at my right-hand side, I made certain that she was seen with my mother and myself as we strolled into the ballroom

as if nothing untoward had happened. I could sense the resolve in Emily to carry it off.

The orchestra were happily playing for the dancers and those people that enjoy such things were... well, enjoying it.

As we entered, William Barthomley was just by the door, and I took a moment to suggest that he exercise caution in any canal investments.

“Anything specific, Your Grace?”

“Just rumours, Mr Barthomley, just rumours, but perhaps worth listening to,” I confided.

We moved around the edge of the dance floor, progressing in a stately, and highly visible manner, towards the room where the *buffet* that my sister Caroline had organised, was laid out. It was a magnificent table spread (Not that I ever doubted it would be).

Working with the kitchen staff and Mr Dives, Caroline had managed not just to present a *buffet* for the ball, but she had managed to show off Rogeringham Hall and its estate as well. From the hall’s collection of silver and crystal wares, to the *chinoise* porcelain serving bowls, all were immaculately presented for everyone to see.

Candelabra dotted the table, illuminating the roasts and other dishes scattered about, all set for slicing or serving and there was a myriad of complimentary side dishes, sauces and condiments. At one end of the table, a footman waited beside our massive silver punchbowl, to fill our cups with a dark red punch that Caroline and Mr Roberts had produced between them.

I made sure that both my mother and Emily had something to eat and then turned, to find Sir Montague Fellowes standing very close behind me.

“Sir!” I observed. I projected the air that I had observed in James Barthomley, a pompous twit. I assumed that Fellowes did not know me well, so I acted what I thought of as ‘fashionably’.

“Your Grace.” He nodded, with another off-hand bow.

“Remind me sir, your name again?” I asked.

“Fellowes, Your Grace, Sir Montague Fellowes, at your service.” I sensed that his teeth were gritted as he said it. He was a man that was used to being recognised and known for his reputation.

I considered for a moment, and shook my head, “No sir, I am afraid that I do not know you. Pray tell

me how you come to be here?”

Fellowes looked at Emily Dodgson. “I was invited by Mrs Dodgson, Your Grace.”

“The deuce, you say!” I exclaimed, and with that the opportunity I was seeking presented itself. “Well! That can’t be right! Mrs Dodgson is in mourning for her late husband. She only attended at my request. She would not have invited someone else.”

“Perhaps Mrs Dodgson is not what she appears to be, Your Grace.” So, he was going straight for the throat of it.

“Nonsense! Mrs Dodgson is a proper gentlewoman, sir. And it would be improper of any man to say different of her — at this awful time in her life.” I fired back, and then dropped any semblance of a ‘twit’ from my voice, as I looked him directly in the eye and growled. “Would it not?”

I have fought four duels. I won all four. I know a great deal about provocation and honour. Fellowes was now on notice. If he said anything more about Emily Dodgson, then he had been warned, I would be offended. That would allow me to challenge him, and he knew it.

For a moment, he thought about it. I saw his eyes as he looked — really looked — at the scars upon my face, and he realised that not only had I acquired those scars in battle, but that I had also survived those very same battles.

I saw the thoughts behind his eyes. He realised that I was not the fool he first thought me, and when the tone of my voice changed, he knew that he had been had. Sir Montague was a man who usually got his own way, he thought it was his right. However, when he said, “Of course Your Grace, my apologies. I was mistaken.” I knew then that he was also a coward.

“Shall I ask a footman to summon your carriage, sir?” It was time for Sir Montague Fellowes to leave, and he knew it.

He made a better bow this time, and left without saying a word.

I will give him credit. Our society is changing, and people of the middle classes are becoming stronger politically, William Barthomley being a good example. The aristocracy, on the other hand find themselves losing ground in many ways. Areas where typically they would take the lead, they are now being led, by the Barthomleys and the Fellowes

of the world. But still, one does not go up against a duke in his own house, unless one has a strong hand, or one is very good at bluffing. Fellowes was bluffing, he had thought he could face me off. I will give him this, the man had stones on him.

I would pursue Fellowes legally. I would not waste a duel on him, first because there is no honour in fighting a coward like that, and second, as I said, because society is changing. I would let Langton have him. We would sue him through the courts, and I resolved that if damages were received, some of them would be for Mrs Dodgson.

I turned to Emily, who looked like she was ready to fall down in a faint.

“Can I get you some punch, Mrs Dodgson? I believe that my sister and Mr Roberts spent a long time on preparing it. It is quite delicious.”

As I handed a cup of punch to Helena and then one to Emily, she said quietly, “I do not know how I can ever repay you, Your Grace.”

“I do not think repayment is necessary,” Helena leaned in. “William takes his role very seriously, he always has. This is what he does, I would just let him proceed and observe the results.”

Emily, like my mother, refrained from the dancing because of them both being in mourning, so they sat and they watched the ball together, and I think that they enjoyed themselves. There was a steady procession of people of all standings who came to give their greetings and generally be seen in close proximity to Helena. Emily looked well-suited to the role of companion.

I took another turn around the ball, and caught up with each of my sisters, who were all enjoying the attentions of the young men present, except for Hermione and James who still, for all the world, might have been the only two people in the room.

When I greeted them, the poor boy jumped a foot in the air. Yet despite my feelings about him, I could not fault his attentiveness to my sister. I had come to the conclusion that, if and when he did ask for her hand, then I might just allow him.

Margaret and Louise were giddy with all of the young men paying court to them. I complimented them on the decorations but I think their minds were elsewhere.

Arabella Dorrington was another one who was enjoying a great deal of attention from the young

men, in the short time I watched her she danced continuously.

“She could have been yours, Your Grace.” The familiar voice in my ear suggested.

“But then again,” Elizabeth Dorrington went on. “It was never going to be, was it? And now I have met her, I can understand why.”

I looked at her.

“Oh, don’t worry, Your Grace, I shall not say anything. After all, you know as much about me as I do about you.” She laughed. “Your mother is a very beautiful woman, and your devotion to her is obvious. Or it is to me, anyway.

“I understand, Your Grace,” She went on, “We had our pleasure, and no regrets. If I may be so bold, perhaps we can call each other friends?”

“I would like that, Elizabeth, you and Arabella, I would like that very much.”

By now it was past ten o’clock and people who had many miles to travel were beginning to take their leave of my mother.

William and Eugenie Barthomley came up to me, and the older Mr Barthomley was most grateful.



Apparently, William had heard a whisper from a servant, after my warnings, that the canal company was being investigated, so he had decided against an investment, and he told me that several others had decided against it as well.

My account of the proceedings has left much out. I had innumerable conversations with the guests, who congratulated me on my accession, or thanked me for the invitation. Several of them went on to voice concerns about things that linked us as landlord and tenant, or just as neighbours, but thankfully they were few and far between.

Most were just pleasant encounters, Sir Arthur Hastings made sure that I was introduced to the Deputy-High Sheriff and some of the other Justices. The Deputy Sheriff — the High Sheriff himself could not attend sadly, was quite keen to include me as a justice in the near future.

I was also able to return Dr Locksley's hospitality from a couple of days previously, by providing him with a cup of good Rogeringham ale. At my request, Mr Roberts had prepared a small keg for those that enjoyed ale rather than wine, Barclay brought us both a tankard of it and we stood and drank it like a

pair of old tapsters in a tavern somewhere. Both the vicar and I agreed that it was a very good brew.

I stayed up until midnight. By this time most people had gone and the staff were beginning to tidy the house up. The orchestra were packing up their instruments. My mother, my sisters and some others had moved to the drawing room, but for myself, I was ready to retire.

### ***28. After the ball was over...***

Barclay was in my room to put out my pipe and tot of rum, to make sure that the room and the bed were warm, and when I took them off, he would put away my clothes.

“Mrs Dodgson, Joshua? What was it that tipped you off?”

“While they were waiting to enter, Your Grace. It looked like Sir Montague wanted Mrs Dodgson to enter with him. I could not hear what he said to her, or she to him, but she pulled away and let others go before her.

“When I had the opportunity, I asked her if all was well.”

“And?”

“You would have thought that she was drowning and I had thrown her a rope, Your Grace. She told me that there were things you needed to know. The rest you are aware of.”

“Thank you, Barclay. Well done.”

As was usual, Barclay merely nodded. He paused for a moment. I waited.

“Yes?”

“You will require someone to tend your estate books, Your Grace. The young man, Henry, he has some learning, he is quick witted and trustworthy...”

“Let him do the job?” I asked.

“Temporarily, Your Grace, to see how he handles it.”

I thought for a moment. Actually, it was something that I had already considered, just a couple of days ago. “We shall approach him about it tomorrow.”

I paused for a moment, then asked, “May I ask why, Joshua?”

“He is a good man, and has demonstrated his trustworthiness recently, and I... I heard a whisper of something...”

I raised my eyebrow, this was intriguing, a ‘whisper’? I was curious.

“I would prefer not to say any more yet, Your Grace, until I know more myself. Suffice it to say, I believe he has better in him than a footman.”

“I shall talk to him about it.” Then as Barclay moved towards my clothes on the chair, to put them away, “Leave those till tomorrow, Joshua, I shall not need you again tonight.”

“Goodnight, Your Grace.”

“Goodnight, Barclay.”

It was late when Helena woke me from a deep — and dreamless — sleep, when she climbed in with me. I could sense that she was awake, and wanted me to be so too.

As we nuzzled, lazily kissing, her body pressed against mine, the question I had been half-expecting, emerged.

“That lady?” She asked.

“There were many ladies tonight, mother.”

“Lady Elizabeth and her daughter?”

“Arabella?”

Yes, “she said,” Are they friends of yours?”

“They are. I knew them in Portugal.”

Helena slid her thigh over mine, trapping my cock underneath it and against my belly, “She’s very — er!”

“Whatever she is, my love, she is nothing compared to you.”

“The girl is very pretty too.”

“I am not interested,” I told her, “They are just friends of mine from when I was just a lowly captain.”

“And I can fly around Rogeringham church tower,” she said indignantly.

“Tell me?” she pleaded, “Lady Elizabeth is so beautiful, and that daughter of hers! There was not a man there that did not have drool on his chin watching her when she danced.”

“Not I, mother, the only woman that mattered to me was by my side most of the evening.”

Helena changed her angle of attack. “This life of yours — in the Army, there were women there weren’t there?”

“Yes.” I said, “There were very many around and about the army. And I slept with and was intimate with some of them.” I told her that none of them were serious to me, because I wanted her. I explained how I used the opportunities presented to me to become a better lover, but only because I wanted to be the best of lovers for her.

“Arabella, was she one of them?”

“She was.” I placed Helena on her back and got up on my elbow, looking down at her.

My mother’s skin was pale in the dim light, I placed my hand on her breast, teasing her nipple gently. I wanted to tell her what Elizabeth had told me, about her understanding who I was truly in love with, but that itself would have raised more questions. Instead, I settled for “Elizabeth Dorrington is a very rich woman, she has buried three husbands and inherited all of their wealth. Arabella is the heir to that fortune, the man that

marries her will control all of that money and the estate.

“She is an amiable and very pretty young woman, and basically, she fucks like a wild thing. She will, when she chooses, make a man very happy. It could have been me, Helena. But I chose, and I still choose not to.”

I kissed my mother, deeply, “Do you see Helena, that it is you that I choose? It has always been you and always will be?”

Helena didn’t answer, instead she clung to me, tightly, crushing me to her, then kissing my face rapidly.

I moved down the bed, kissing her nipples and her belly as I did, until I reached her cunny.

Helena’s hands rested on my head, almost but not quite pressing me in to kiss her. It wasn’t necessary — I spent the next few minutes lashing her quim with my tongue, even lifting her bottom in my hands and kissing down to her bum hole. I wasn’t too inclined to fuck, but I wanted her to enjoy herself, and was able to lick her to a shaking spend.

It seemed to be enough, Helena welcomed me back into her arms.

In my head I had an image of us lying together in the dark. I could feel Helena's body against me — naked, warm, touching mine in as many places as she could. Our legs were entwined, and she rested her head upon my arm, her shoulder tucked beneath it. Her hair was loose and it fell on the pillow, and covered part of my chest. My arm curled around her shoulders and held her in place against me. It was perfect. A moment to be treasured. If you had offered me a *seraglio* of Arabellas, and Elizabeths, and all of their combined wealth, I would have told you no. I was where I wanted to be, with the woman I wanted to be with and being truthful I could not think of anywhere else, I would rather have been.

“Now, if you will please mother?” I asked softly, “It has been a long day, and I am very tired, may I sleep now?”

“You may,” she granted. “And while sometimes I may be fearful, and imagine all sorts of perils, know that I love you too, William.”

I tried to settle myself, but couldn't. I had to ask how Mrs Dodgson was.

“I think you have gained a devoted follower there William. I shall have to be careful.”



“Goodnight mother.”

## **29. *The morning afterwards***

My sisters were chatting about the ball.

I use the term chatting, I could equally have used the term gushing, or squealing, howling or cackling, any one of them would have been appropriate.

Margaret and Louise were going through their dance cards and comparing the young men on them.

Margaret would say a name and Louise would groan, “Dances like he has mud on his boots.”

Then she would say another name, and Louise would respond with a simple look, but a look that combined all the disdain and pity that a woman can muster. And so it went, one by one. Some young men got a positive comment off one sister, only to be struck down by the other.

Finally, they both said together, “Henry Walsingham!” and cooed like a flock of doves.

“How was your evening, Charlotte?” Caroline slipped the question in quickly.

Charlotte smiled enigmatically, “It was — er — Interesting.”

I said nothing, remembering our conversation in Mayfair when Charlotte had expressed little hope of romance, perhaps it was not so bleak.

“What about you, Caroline, how was it for you?”

She also smiled, but there was far less behind it. “I enjoyed myself,” she said simply.

It was my impression that Caroline was due for some teasing by the others, but for some reason, possibly my presence, they refrained.

I decided that it was time to go and do something else.

I sought out Emily Dodgson, and found her in the Long Gallery.

The Long Gallery is a hold-over from the days of Queen Elizabeth and before, it was built well before the Rogeringham’s became dukes. The long narrow room on the upper floor of the hall, linking the East and the West wings, was designed so that the ladies of the house could exercise by walking up and down it when the weather was inclement. Today, the Dodgson girls had set up some skittles and were bowling down the length of the room at them.

I paused for a moment, remembering how we had done exactly the same when we were children.

Mrs Dodgson turned and saw me, and her smile was radiant. When it wasn't creased by cares, she had a very pretty smile.

Emily curtsied, I waved her up. "May I thank you again for last night, Your Grace?"

"I believe my mother told you that there was no need for that."

"I would still like to."

"I think you already have." I laughed. I indicated a couch that allowed us to sit and still watch the girls playing while we talked.

"What you could do, if you would, Mrs Dodgson, is tell me more about Mrs Wollstonecraft."

"Your Grace?" The surprise in her voice made me smile.

"You mentioned her a few days ago, and the ideas we discussed intrigue me."

Emily was still non-plussed by my request. I explained that I saw changes in society, and that I was trying to understand them. I told her that I

wanted to know what to read. For a while we talked about what Wollstonecraft thought and Emily recommended “*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*” which title she would write down for me so that I would remember it later.

“And how would Your Grace, use this information?” She asked.

I indicated her daughters, who were setting the skittles up for another round. “Your daughters are clever girls; personable, and from what I have seen, very pleasant company. They have all of their letters, and they know their numbers. The only impediment to them progressing in society is education. Boys can be educated into senility if they wish, though I suspect that most, like me, want to be out of the school room as soon as they can. But girls, unless you have the opportunities that my sisters have had (to be able to read pornographic texts in Latin, I thought to myself) then a girl shall rise to be no more than a house-keeper at best.”

“A house-keeper is a very important role, Your Grace and requires many skills.” Mrs Dodgson offered.

“This is true,” I agreed, “And a poor choice of example on my part. Mrs Ellis juggles so many

balls, the woman is an absolute wonder. Rather, I suppose, I was trying to suggest that the opportunities open to a girl child are limited compared with those open to a boy.”

Emily nodded. This was, she said, exactly what Wollstonecraft was saying in her writings. At least, it appeared that Mrs Dodgson and I were reading from the same page.

I thanked Emily for her time — “I am at your service, Your Grace, in any way I may.” (Which I thought was an interesting turn of phrase), and I went to my study.

I called for Barclay and I asked that Mr Dives and Henry attend me as well.

After asking the men to be seated, I asked Henry to tell me about his education. He looked surprised, but listed his schooling, having been to a school in Oxford, up to the age of fourteen. I asked him to look at an account book of mine (Mr Langton still had the Estate books — both of them) and did he understand what was going on with them?

He said that he did.

“Would you consider becoming a clerk for the estate?” I asked. I preferred this to making him a full

steward, but if he began as a clerk and showed that he was competent, we could advance him in the post.

At first, he looked doubtful, but then, I think, he realised the advantages of the post, and he broke out in a broad smile. “Yes, Your Grace, I would very much.”

Rather than move him out of the hall, I asked Mr Dives if he would find Henry space to work in and better lodgings than his room with the other footmen. I also advanced him some money for clothing, as it would not be suitable for him to work in a footman’s uniform.

There was no word from Barclay about the ‘whisper’ but I was met soon after by Caroline, who embraced me warmly, much to my surprise.

“What did I do to deserve that?” I asked.

“I’ve just heard about Henry.”

“It seemed a logical step,” I replied but then asked why she was so happy.

“I have been tutoring him to improve his reading and his arithmetic for the last couple of years.” She

explained. “He had a great amount of skill but wanted to improve.”

“And do you think he has the potential to fulfil the role?”

“Very much so,” she replied, “He will probably do more, when he grows into it. But would you mind if I continue to tutor him?”

“If he wishes it, I have no objections whatsoever,” I told her. She nodded happily and went off to find her student.

### **30. *Sunday***

The next day being Sunday we attended church. While I am not an overly religious person it is important that we attend when we are at Rogeringham Hall, *noblesse oblige* and all that. After the service, Dr Locksley asked me if it would be possible to look at some documents about the 1<sup>st</sup> duke, that he was using for a piece for the local antiquarian society.

I invited him to lunch.

Over some nice ham and boiled potatoes, I asked about his work.

“I was hoping to see some letters that Sir Henry sent about his nephew and niece, Your Grace. They were reportedly living as man and wife, you know?”

I nearly dropped my fork. “The deuce you say, doctor! I knew that there were rumours but I did not know that they were living together as man and wife!”

“Oh yes!” Dr Locksley said, before hurrying on to say, “But their relationship is not what I am interested in...”

“But? Surely, that was — is — a terrible sin?”

Astonishingly Dr Locksley smiled, and wiped his spectacles. “You’d think so, Your Grace, would you not?”

“The Old Testament — Deuteronomy to be precise — would have it so for the Hebrew tribes. But for us gentiles it was not. Ancient kings and queens were at it all of the time, you know? The marriages of the pharaoh-kings of Egypt were incestuous more often than they were not. Even these days it is not uncommon for it to be found within a family. Some people hold that incest is a mortal sin in the eyes of the Lord, but it seems that many people do not.”



Was the vicar making a comment? “And you, doctor? What do you think?”

“I think from the church’s point of view it is more complicated than that. Christ teaches us that Love is the greatest of all things, so if a thing is born out of love, how can it be a sin?”

“But if such behaviour is so common, it must make the courts busy,” I suggested.

“Far from it,” he said, “There is no actual statute against incest in English law.”

“Good heavens!” Was all I managed to say.

“Quite!” He said, fixing me with his bright blue eyes. “However, while the act may not be a crime, the results are often terrible. For every act of love there are others. The girl violated by her father, thrown out of the house and a child born out of wedlock — lives ruined, Your Grace, needlessly. For the most part these girls — for they are the most common victims — end in the bedlam hospitals and asylums. They are confined with the insane, their children taken away from them, and the poor wretches are effectively forgotten, left to rot.

“If I were in a preaching mood, I would rail against the sin of lust, for that is the mechanism at

work in many of these cases. For every case where the parties involved live a contented life, there are many where the results lead to misery.”

I did not know Dr Locksley very well, but I have never seen him angry like that before.

“That is the true crime, Your Grace, that lives are wasted because of acts of lust.”

I placed a glass of the better madeira before him and he gulped it down, shuddering as he did so.

“Forgive me, Your Grace. It is a bad memory that haunts me.”

“Think nothing of it, doctor,” I told him, “We all have those.”

With that I showed him to the family papers in the library — he knew where they were better than I did, and I left him happily copying down details of my long dead ancestors.

I on the other hand, sat down and composed a letter to Mr Langton. I specifically asked him about the statutes about incest, emphasising that I was enquiring in relation to Emily Dodgson and her daughters, in particular and whether Sir Montague’s

“revelation” would affect her if it came out in court. With that sent off, I went to find my mother.

I wanted to tell Helena what I had learnt from Dr Locksley, but there was no opportunity to talk privately as Helena had taken the opportunity to invite William and Eugenie Barthomley to afternoon tea.

I was, of course, included in this, but I had not been to see the mare Naiad in a couple of days, so I took some time after I had sent off the letter to slip down to see her before going up to prepare for meeting Hermione’s prospective mother— and father-in-law. The mare seemed glad to see me but she seemed tired of being in a loose-box all the time. I asked whether she could be turned out into one of the home paddocks during the day? Which apparently was considered permissible. And the last thing I saw before I had to leave, was the mare kicking her heels up as she stretched herself and ran around the paddock.

### **31. *The Barthomleys***

For a simple tea it seemed almost as formal as the Grand Ball. Of course, in this society these sorts of occasions are often that way.

This was our first proper meeting with the Barthomleys. James had not formally asked for Hermione's hand in marriage at the ball as she expected. Not that she was unduly worried about that, the ball had been a huge occasion and there had been little chance for something like a proposal. Now we got to sit down and talk with William and Eugenie, and understand what they wanted from the relationship between the two young people. For myself, what I wanted to know was how Hermione would benefit from the arrangement.

James was there of course, but he might not have been for all the good it did, his eyes were only for my sister, and while she was absorbed in him, she was able to participate in the conversation without the appearance of 'dragging' herself away from something.

Eugenie Barthomley was dressed very smartly in a rich red dress, startling in a house where all of the women are wearing black or mourning shades. It was not, I think, intended as an affront to the house, it was simply, I believe, a choice that had been made. Certainly, I don't think Helena took it as an insult. But it did make me reconsider Mrs Barthomley.

I suppose I had looked at her at the ball and ticked her off as merely a ‘wife’; assigning her no other role, other than as mother of his children and lesser partner. She was pretty, quite well shaped, and she had a voluptuous sensuality that was quite attractive. The red of her dress emphasised the creamy swell of her bosom, of which there seemed to be quite a lot. But I realised that she also had a hard edge to her eyes and a firm set to her mouth.

Hermione was not going to have it all her own way with that one.

As I first noted at the ball, when I first met William Barthomley, it felt like he was continuously valuing his surroundings. The arms and armour in the entrance hall, the family portraits, even the furniture as we sat down, his eyes were everywhere. I would not have been surprised if he had picked items up to inspect them.

“May I ask, then William, what it is that you do?” I asked Mr Barthomley, while the women were talking about the quality of the cloth in Mrs Barthomley’s dress.

“We started out as millers, Your Grace, flour millers.” I nodded, “But then when my father died, I diversified and went into iron and steel making. The

wars with the French have been most lucrative for us, but there are other demands for metals such as the growing canal network and the industries that it serves.”

“About that,” I asked, “At the ball, you mentioned that you had been offered an opportunity to invest, pray, what was that about?”

A scowl crossed his face. “That might have been a good deal, if not for rumours about the justices.

“The man Fellowes suggested that there were deals — investments — to be made as part of a consortium buying up land for the canal trunk, and then selling it on to the canal company.”

“But surely Fellowes was part of the canal company, would that not be like selling his land to himself?”

Mr Barthomley looked at me, almost like one would when explaining something to a child. “It is sometimes done in business, perhaps it would be better to think of it as making the most of one’s profits, Your Grace.”

Given the opportunity and the constraints of the occasion, I would have preferred to have spent an evening playing cards with Mr Barthomley, I feel

that you learn so much more about a man that way, but already I had a strong impression of him.

Some commentators in the newspapers have described members of the emerging business classes as rude, *nouveau riche* with no manners or social graces, who only exist for their own avaricious growth. To many people they were comparable with the howling mob that had swept through France, during the revolution. I suppose that there are people like that out there who would see the world mined, processed and sold off to enrich themselves. I feared that William Barthomley might be that way inclined, he certainly had a great deal of that attitude.

However, I have also read that some people — some of these ‘industrialists’ — look past this and would see their fellow men uplifted off the back of what they themselves have achieved. Whether this was because of their religious beliefs or just their better nature, I do not know. For myself, I see such things as an extension of my role as duke — I have a responsibility to the people under me, who depend on me, to do the best for them, if I can make their lives better by my actions, then that is what I feel I am obligated to do.

The biggest issue here would be dropping my little sister into the world of the Barthomleys. She would, as she had suggested ‘bring class to an otherwise vulgar brawl’, and part of me thought that it would be them and their ilk that got the worst of it. But I feared it would be a high hill to climb, and I resolved that I would do what I could to make it easier for her.

The first part of that task was made easier by James Barthomley standing up, bowing in my direction and asking if he might humbly ask for my sister’s hand in marriage (polite round of applause and positive noises from the assembled tea-party).

I suppose that I **might** have brought a slight chill to the proceedings when I told the young man that I would consider it. I suppose that it had been thought to have been a done deal, certainly all present expected it to be so, but though the tone of the afternoon was less convivial after my decision, I was certain in my own mind that it was the right way to approach this.

For the rest of the afternoon, whenever I caught Hermione’s eye, I could see the bloody-handed warrior-queen of my dream, glaring at me. She was not best pleased with her elder brother. I decided that



it was time to excuse myself and go and see if Dr Locksley was still in the library.

He was not.

Instead, there was a note in the vicar's neat handwriting, thanking me for the access, and the conversation that we had had earlier.

I retired to my study, and it was there that Hermione found me some time later, presumably after the Barthomley's had departed.

It was easy to see that she was not impressed with my decision.

"Why, William? What do you mean by a *few days*?" She didn't shout, but her anger was clear, even with her level tone. "It's not as if you didn't know he was going to ask. Why do you need to 'consider it'?!"

I let my sister rant for a few minutes — I thought it best to do this — and she did rant.

"I have my reasons." I said simply.

I suspect that Hermione expected a fight, and not having one stopped her.

“**You** have reasons?” She exclaimed, “Well, perhaps **you** might explain them to the rest of **us**.”

“Sit down, Hermione!” I said, abruptly interrupting her flow.

She sat down.

I explained that my decision was all about her. She was sceptical, it was all under control, she told me. She knew what she was doing.

“That may be your view,” I said, “but I wanted to make sure of that before I assented.”

“You have James wrapped around your finger I believe?” My sister nodded. “But do you have his mother under the same sort of control?”

Hermione stopped, and looked at me. “His mother?”

I nodded. “If you and James are to have your own lives, his mother is the one you have to conquer.”

Now Hermione was listening. “What makes you say that?”

“Eugenie is a very fashionable woman, James’s father less so, this I observed this afternoon. She has the latest fashions, and wears a small fortune in

jewellery even for afternoon tea. She takes particular care of her looks and her physique, and she emphasises that in her attire. She is not simply a wife, Hermione, Mrs Barthomley is a force in her own right. If I were a betting man, I would wager that she is the one that drives Mr Barthomley onward, in the same way that you intend to drive James's career."

"If that is so, how does it affect James and I?"

"A woman like that would not simply let you be. She will be always interfering. I have met women like her before."

"And?"

"All I seek to do is give you a firm position. It was obvious from our conversation over tea this afternoon, that the Barthomleys see great advantage in your being the sister of a duke. They were mentally rubbing their hands at the possibilities." I told her. "Eugenie, in particular, seemed most enthusiastic about how they could go forwards after the wedding. I do not think that she would allow you — and James — to live your lives without constant interference. I would like you to be able to start your married life without having to fight your mother-in-law for everything. I think some boundaries need to

be set, to free you up to live your lives your own way. By setting down **my** terms in a contract — which bind you as well — when Eugenie seeks to push back, she pushes back against me, and not you.”

Hermione sat and thought for a few moments. “It would be better, would it not, if I were to prevail through my own efforts?” She asked.

“It would, I agree. Thus, your role in this, will be to charm her over to your side — rail against how your brother will not allow you to do such and such a thing, make her your great ally. I know you can do that. She will take your part against me, and support you. Use your wit and your guile to enchant her. Let her think your ideas are hers, so that she blesses your each and every endeavour.”

“And then?”

“I will be seen to allow you more and more freedom. Until you stand where you want to be.”

“And how long will all of this grand plan take?”

“Your wedding should, I believe, be a grand occasion, the dearly loved youngest sister of the Duke of Norton weds an emerging industrial power. It should be attended by the cream of London

society. I understand that there are enough Barthomley's to fill their side of any church you choose."

"You wish to hold it as part of the Season?" Hermione's expression was one partly of disbelief and partly of delight.

"Why should we not? Would that be acceptable?" I said as I walked to the study door and turned the key in the lock.

Hermione watched me do this, her smile changing through sly to feline delight. "That would be more than acceptable, brother," she said.

"I suggest we leave my decision for a few days, then I will ask James and his family to attend," I said, as I sat down up the couch next to her. She reached up to undo my neck cloth.

"Once **I** have announced the decision, **you** can engage Mrs Barthomley to help you obtain the wedding of your dreams. The pair of you can work together to convince me." By now Hermione had unbuttoned my waist-coat and opened the neck of my shirt.

"That," I kissed my sister's throat, slim and white.

“Should,” I slipped her dress off her shoulder, and pressed my lips against the curve of her neck.

“Get her firmly on your side.” I said as I manoeuvred Hermione onto her back on the couch and lowered the *decolletage* of her dress exposing her small but beautifully formed breasts, which I had not seen a few days ago during our tryst in the summer house. Her nipples were dark, round and studded with long tips.

“Now! Doesn’t this smell better than those musty old couches in the temple?” I asked.

Hermione nodded. “I was so angry with you, William,” she told me, “I felt like you had suddenly denied me everything I had worked for.” Her hand reached for my hardness, stroking it through the cloth of my breeches.

“You may rest assured,” I told my youngest sister, “That there is little in the world that I would deny you, if it was in my power to grant it.” I lowered my head to her breasts.

“Huhhhhh!” she breathed in sharply, as I tugged gently on her long nipple with my teeth. Hermione pulled me closer to her.

“What may I do to apologise?” She asked.

“An hour or two of this might be sufficient,” I said laughing. “Though sadly, we don’t have that luxury.”

Hermione pouted her disappointment. “Then we should get to our business promptly,” she said, pulling at her skirt and exposing her under-skirts.

“I hope one day, we shall get more than a hurried fuck,” I said, as I drew her under-skirts up and away from her perfect jewel of a cunny.

“That’s something I wish too.” She agreed as I slid my own clothes off.

“Oh!” She started, as I moved on top of her. “Fucking is the best thing in life,” she told me.

“I am told that it is very popular.” I said as I entered her.

Hermione was ready for me, I think that her anger had aroused her, certainly I slid into her easily, filling her as her tight cunny closed on my aching prick. I paused for a moment, savouring the sensation.

My sister looked up at me, wondering was there something wrong. I leaned down to kiss her, so that she knew that there was nothing to worry about.

“It is so much better without clothes,” she said, “There is so much more sensation! So many wonderful feelings!” She squealed.

There is something so arousing in watching Hermione’s beautiful, innocent looking face contort with passion. Her eyes close, and her brows furrow as she concentrates on what she is doing. At times she even catches her lower lip between her teeth, she is applying herself so much, it is quite adorable.

Soon her sighs became words and she started to urge me on with a surprising array of vulgarities.

“Fill my cunt, William, fill me up with your jism!” I wondered whether I should allow Hermione to teach Helena some of her swear words. “Your cock is so fucking hard! I love this feeling! Oh God, it’s so tight. I have never felt such a wonderful feeling!”

It was not a long tumble; I think both of us were far too ready for it. Although the opportunity came out of nowhere, we were both eager to engage in our licentious play.

I have always tried not to elevate one sister above the others, but Hermione, and her hitherto unspoken devotion to me, means that if I were to pick a



favourite, it would likely be her. I resolved that one night I would take her to bed, and we would fuck totally nude. It was as this thought flitted through my mind, that I came inside her.

As I spent, shooting the cum up into her, Hermione shuddered to her own spend. The radiant smile that spread across her face was a beautiful thing.

“Leaving this to go and live with James will be such a tear. I would let you fuck me every day, if I could, and if mama would let me.” She said impishly, as we dressed.

“What I would like to know,” I asked. “Is where you learned to swear like that?”

The impish smile turned into a grin.

“One of the benefits of being the quiet girl, that nobody sees,” she said, and it was true, as a child Hermione seemed to move about the house as if she was invisible. “I discovered the hay loft in the stables as a place to be alone when I wanted to be. But the stables below were also the place where the grooms and stable boys would take their conquests.

“I watched so many of them,” she said.

“And you never felt inclined to engage, yourself?” I asked.

Hermione shook her long dark hair. “No.” She was emphatic, “I told you the other day, that there was only one person for me.”

I kissed my sister, grateful for her devotion.

“How was it that James took my place in your affections?”

Hermione gave me a withering look, as if to say ‘Fool! He hasn’t!’

“Charlotte and I were out in the landau one day in Regent’s Park and he cantered past. The very next thing that I knew was that he had reined his horse about and walked beside us for a while. It was most strange.” she said. “Being the girl that people normally do not see, and being next to Charlotte who is usually the only person that people **do** see, to have someone pay such ardent attention was most unsettling.

“James is an annoying twit at times, but I was flattered by his attention. He has many admirable qualities, and he is not unpleasant to look upon, which was something, but with you unavailable, after much reflection it appeared the best option.”

“That doesn’t sound calculating, at all.” I remarked.

“Does it?” Hermione asked, “I suppose it does.

“I don’t mean it to,” she mused, “but when I considered my options — then James seemed to fit all of the categories that made him ideal for a suitor. And, well, I have come to like him. You will always be my first love, William, but James is an acceptable substitute.”

### ***32. After the meeting in the study***

There were knowing looks from Charlotte and Caroline, a slightly peeved look from my mother and apparent ignorance from the twins, when Hermione and I joined them for supper.

The first two I expected, my mother I was slightly relieved about, but the twins still bothered me.

Of all of my sisters, the twins were the two who would be most likely to initiate trouble, or instigate mischief. They were ever alert to possibilities, rarely missing anything, any event, occurrence or snippet of information.

It wasn't that I wanted my time with Caroline, Charlotte and Hermione known abroad, in fact I wanted the opposite, but if anyone should have known about it, or had an opinion on it, it would be Margaret and Louise. And yet they gave no intimation of any kind. I expected it to be teased and giggled about within the family, but it seemed — seemed, note — that they were unaware of what was transpiring behind their backs, or ignoring it.

I found both of those positions quite perturbing.

Still, I had to face Helena that night, when she eventually came to my bed.

“Hermione? As well?”

I held nothing back when I explained what had happened firstly in the summer house and then in my study. I told her all of my conversations with Hermione and my views on her young man, everything. Helena's lips were already taut as I spoke, by the time that I finished they were a tight line.

“Hermione is my baby girl!”

“I beg your pardon, light of my life,” I said, “Hermione is **not** a baby girl. She may look like an

innocent, even act like one. But she is a strong, wilful woman and she knows her own mind.”

“My baby girl?”

“Yes mother, your baby girl.” I went to the door and asked Barclay if he would ask Hermione to join us.

The only sign that my sister gave on seeing her mother in my room, in her dressing gown, was a slightly ironic tilt of the head as she curtsied.

“William.” She greeted us. “Mama.”

“Please, sister, explain to our mother what we discussed about your marriage to James?”

I discovered something else about Hermione that night, her exposition of what we had discussed, and the plan we had agreed was word perfect, dispassionate, almost cold in her delivery. But she left nothing out.

Helena looked at me, with a bemused expression. “Sometimes you think you know people.”

I smiled. “I understand completely.”

“You should know mother,” Hermione, suddenly said, “That William helped me with another

issue...”

“Your maidenhead?” Helena asked. “I did know.”

“I mean nothing against you, mother.” She said, and repeated to Helena, what she had told me about her feelings for me.

“And still, you wish to marry James?” Helena said with a wry smile.

“It appears I have no option otherwise.” Hermione answered her with an equally wry grin. “Although, I would still like to borrow William occasionally if I may, mama?”

“I shall consider it.” Helena told her, before telling her that she should go back to her room.

Hermione left, though she appeared unhappy to be doing so.

“Do you still consider her to be your baby girl, mother?” I asked once she had gone.

“Always.” She said emphatically. “Though to be truthful, I understand now what you mean. She **is** headstrong, is she not?”

“I believe that she is a force of nature,” I said and told her about my dream of Hermione riding across

the park waving a sword. Helena laughed.

“You may be right,” she said as we kissed. “I’m sorry,” she apologised after our lips parted.

“Why?” I asked.

“For doubting you.” She said, “I wondered what it was you are trying to achieve. I see now. I understand better what it is you are doing now and will support it wholeheartedly. Though I do wonder at how my daughters became the women they are, it seems as if it happened without me knowing.”

“Yes,” I said, “It took me by surprise also. But we have all changed since it was just us here, even you, Helena. But I do know one thing.”

Helena looked at me.

“We are all still Rogeringshams. And whatever changes are coming we will meet them and we turn them to our best advantage.”

“Do you think that Hermione wanted to stay here with us?” She asked.

“I do. She wants to fuck in a proper bed, instead of a hurried partly-dressed tumble on a couch”

“Oh, my poor baby!” Helena laughed. ‘It will have to be arranged,’ she said. “But not tonight!”

We both disrobed quickly, her banyan dressing gown and night dress falling quickly to the floor leaving only her knee-length, white silk stockings on, before she helped me off with my waist-coat, my shirt and breeches.

I picked my mother up and carried her to my bed, laying her gently upon it.

Despite my time with Hermione earlier today, my desire for Helena was undiminished.

She surrendered herself to me and I took her fiercely. As we kissed, and fondled each other, tasted and caressed one another, Helena’s surrender became a need equal to mine, as she pulled and tugged at me. Soon I was inside her, and if anything, her urgency increased. She pulled me on top of her, wrapping her stocking covered legs around me, folding them over around my hips, and using them to pull me in towards her, each time I thrust into her. Once more I marvelled at the sensual, demanding woman that hid inside my outwardly unsophisticated, and if anything, rather staid, mother.



A woman like Elizabeth Dorrington, is an openly sexual creature. It exudes from her, in her style of dressing, her comportment, her manner. Everything about her says that she is a woman that not only likes sexual congress, but that she is an active partner. She also expresses a great deal of natural authority, in that while she appears to be a willing partner, woe betide any man who mistakes her for an easy one.

Helena on the other hand, is outwardly a model society mother, modest in her dress, modest in her behaviour and speech. My mother exudes ‘demure’ as her natural state. Make no mistake, she is loving and warm, and not in any way remote or forbidding. But there is a wonderful and wild sexual creature that lives inside her, though it is one which is reserved for only one person — and I am blessed that that person is me.

Helena’s finger nails dug into my back as if to punctuate my thoughts.

“Fuck me hard William! Oh! Yes! Yes! Oh God! Fffh!” she started, only to be shaken by the first of a string of small spends that rattled through her, once, twice, thrice and even a smaller fourth, that left her gasping for her breath.

“Oh God, William, if only I had known about this kind of pleasure...” Her words were cut off as I started to spend inside her, “Aaaaaah! God, fill me! Fuck! Oh God, shoot it up inside me!”

Her words of encouragement drove me on, and I did my very best to fill my mother’s cunny with as much of my jism as I could before I sank to the covers next to her.

A shared pipe of *sobranie* and a drink — Barclay had begun to leave out a decanter of something less fierce than my rum — had become part of our nightly ritual. Unless the night was very cold, we would not dress and Her Grace Lady Helena Rogeringham, widow of the 5<sup>th</sup> duke, would sit upon my couch by the fire, with her hair loose, and arrayed across her shoulders, her bare bubbies jiggling as we talked and laughed, and her cunny-bush peeping out from between her pale thighs, and she would look the perfect picture. I suggested that one day I would have her painted this way, captured in this glorious state — my Aphrodite of the bed chamber, because to me she was the embodiment of a goddess.

Tonight, Barclay had left a decent madeira, and it was as she drank a glass of this that Helena asked

what I had meant about changes in society. “Surely you don’t mean riots and executions like the French?”

I took a pull upon the pipe and blew the smoke into the fireplace. “The French,” I said, “Are much more fiery than the English. They will riot over a change in the weather, while we English will endure without comment.

“I do not see our *aristos* being taken to the gallows in carts to be executed. But I see instead a shift in the balance of our society.” I told Helena what I had seen of these changes and how the likes of the Barthomleys would bring them about.

“So, are people such as the Barthomleys our enemies?” She asked.

“I suppose that once upon a time we’d have led our ducal forces upon a crusade to drive such upstarts down and retain our power. We’d have killed their menfolk or sold them off as slaves, sowed salt in their fields and taken their women as concubines.” I smiled, partly at the thought of a woman like Eugenie Barthomley as a slave, to be called for and used at her owner’s whim and how such treatment would be anathema to her. “But

society is much more polite these days, and we no longer do that sort of thing.”

“My plan is to embrace them. They would use their connections to us to advance themselves, but connections work both ways, mother, we can use them too. More than that, we are leaders, we can lead the changes, influence them, and re-shape ourselves to be a part of the changes as well.

“Take Mrs Dodgson...”

“You could if you wanted to.” My mother said slyly, “She would be more than willing.”

“That is bye-the-bye, mother. Emily Dodgson is an admirably strong woman, but I am not sure that if she discovered our relationship, that she would understand our love compared to her own experience. And anyway, I have plans for her.”

“How then do you see Emily’s future?”

“You’ve talked to her, she is a fierce champion of the role of women, is she not?”

Helena nodded.

“I happen to agree with her. Women have a big role to play in the future, and an important aspect of that will be education.

“It is my hope that Dr Locksley will accept Emily Dodgson as the new school teacher here at Rogeringham school. I think he will. On top of that, I am going to offer to send the Dodgson girls to school, to pay for their education.”

I looked at Helena, she was looking at me with amazement.

“Is it too much?” I asked.

“No,” she said, shaking her head. “No, I think it is a wonderful idea, I am still wondering how this has all come about.”

“It seems like a fair way to make amends.”

“And besides,” I said, ‘It is not sufficient to order men to charge, a true leader will charge with them. So, it must be, if we are going to survive these changes with all of this,’ I indicated Rogeringham Hall, “Mayfair, our family, our lifestyle in fact, if we are to retain all of that, we must lead this particular charge.”

Helena placed her glass down and went back to the bed, lying on top of the turned back sheets, her stocking feet apart, her coral pink nipples crowning her full boobies as they sat majestically on her chest.

She looked at me from under her lowered brows, “Come to bed, my lord.”

“Yes, my lady.” I said as I walked to the side of the bed, my hard cock leading the way.

Helena placed her hand on my belly, and rolled onto her front, taking hold of my prick, she lovingly kissed it, licking it with her tongue up and down.

It was unexpected, and I felt the passion inside me rise.

Sliding onto the bed, I stroked her hair as she sank her mouth down the shaft. Because she lay at a right angle to my hips, I could easily reach her bottom with my left hand, so I started to frig her cunny with my fingers, sliding them in and out of her juicy, lubricious cunt.

Helena moaned round my prick in her mouth, and she rotated her hips round, thrusting them back at my probing fingers.

“Mmmmmmm.” She said as she paused for breath, looking up at me, “Oh Lord, William! Leave your fingers there — it feels wonderful.”

For the next few minutes my mother worked upon my prick, laving it with her tongue, plunging

the shaft down her throat, jamming it as far back as she could, or for as long as she could hold her breath. My other hand rested on her head, but I did not use it to force anything that she did. Helena was learning for herself what pleased me.

For myself, I took the finger that was buried in her cunny, and screwed it inside her bum-hole — causing Helena to squeak in surprise, and raise her hips to meet my hand. After a moment, however, she relaxed her hips and it was as if she had melted on the bed. It felt like I had unlocked something. As the surprise left her — and I slid a second finger into her bottom — Helena became a wild creature, sucking and licking at my cock, slavering over it, wanking at it with her fist, while poised — open-mouthed — over the end of it.

“Spend, spend, spend!” She breathed, willing me to orgasm, “Spend for me William. Let me taste that delicious white, creamy juice!”

Instead, and quite unexpectedly Helena received two blasts of my jism across her face and open mouth. It was a complete shock for her. She lay there non-plussed as I shot two more streamers of cum onto her beautiful face. It lay upon her eyes,

across her nose, upon her lips and even dripped from her chin.

I could not help but smile at her expression for a moment, before I moved down the bed and licked the cum off her. At one point I kissed her, and while I did so slid jism from my tongue into her mouth. She licked it up and swallowed it. When she had been cleaned of jism, we broke our kiss, and looked at each other. Helena was still shocked, that much was apparent, but then she started laughing.

“Every time, you beast! Each and every time we fuck, I think ‘he cannot debauch me any more’. I tell myself that my son cannot take me further into licentiousness. And each and every time you succeed in taking me further down the road to sexual depravity!”

“I can but try mother, I can but try.”

Helena rolled into my arms and we embraced lovingly. It was late and I was tired.

“We must try it up my arse soon! If those two fingers were anything to go by, it will be most exciting,” were the last words she said to me that night, and I recall thinking as I drifted off to sleep,



that I must make that happen for her, as soon as I can.

### **33. *Young men... everywhere.***

The last few days before Christmas were busy, with people coming and going to and from the Hall. Now that I was recognised as the duke, and people could put a face to the name, there were a number of issues with people wanting decisions, people petitioning me for things, and of course, rents and leases that needed attention. Henry the footman, now turned Clerk for the Estate, was present at most of these meetings and I was impressed.

Henry appeared to have metamorphosed. Where before he was a very good footman, invisible when needed, discreet and good at anticipating my needs, he brought many of those same skills to the role of clerk. He had obviously sat down and familiarised himself with the books and papers we had brought from Dodgson's. I could ask him something about a tenant and if he didn't already know it, he would have the information to hand very quickly. He was clear in his manner, and when he spoke, there was an admirable authority about him, as if he had been the steward for a while and was used to dealing with tenants as an equal, despite his relative youth.

The afternoons were clear and I would use them to spend time with my mare Naiad or Cumberland the old hunter. One afternoon Helena and I escaped the visitors — the place was being besieged by hordes of young men — the Ball had been successful in that respect, and she walked with me to the stables.

Though the day was cold, the sun was bright, and it was still, with little or no breeze. Naiad was in the paddock as I had asked, and when she saw me she trotted over to greet me. Her coat shone, the red gold bright in the sunshine and as she moved across the sunlight it seemed like the mare was bathed in a golden light, like a halo.

“She is everything you told me, William.” Helena exclaimed. “A very fine young lady indeed.”

Naiad moved towards my mother, looking to see whether she had any treats as well. Whisps of Helena’s hair had escaped from under her bonnet. I had never realised how much red there is in her hair, but like the golden-red coat of the mare, the sun shining through it brought the colour out. I was stunned, it shone like fire, and I stood there gaping in wonder at the beauty of it.

“William?” I heard my mother ask, and came to my senses, to see both Helena and the mare regarding me as if I was a simpleton. “Is there something wrong.”

“Wrong, mother?” I gathered my thoughts. “Nothing at all, except that I am rendered speechless by two of the most beautiful creatures upon the Lord’s earth.” Naiad shook her head loudly; my impression was that it was in disbelief.

“If I had not met this beautiful creature first, I might be offended at being compared to your horse,” Helena laughed. “But it so happens that I am happy for the comparison, and look forwards to seeing my son ride this handsome girl on Rotten Row, and watch the people of the Ton marvel at the grace of the pair of you.”

When we first moved to Rogeringham Hall, the peace and the quiet had been quite pleasant, a reaction I suppose to the hurly-burly of army life, it was a period of re-adjustment and I needed it.

Now I understood what the old ducal households were like. In the days of the Tudors and the Stuarts, dukes had courts with advisers, courtiers and all manner of hangers-on.

Now we seemed have platoons of young men about the place. There probably weren't that many really, but they did appear to be all over the house. It was as if wherever I went in the hall, I would find one of my sisters with several young men trying to impress her.

Charlotte, despite her misgivings, was being followed by four or five bookish looking young men. Each time I happened to encounter them they were engaged in deep discussions — sometimes it was poetry, sometimes art, and another time they were discussing the work of *M. Voltaire* (but never *Catullus*, which I found strange).

The twins had a larger court following them, eight or nine at least, though I believe that the faces actually changed from time to time, which indicates that there may have been more.

These young men were having a more difficult time of it than those following Charlotte. The twins were demanding, exercising their suitors in as many ways as they could imagine. They were having their young men sketch them, challenging them to write sonnets about them, even having them compose pieces on the piano in their name. This meant that at any time one could encounter a young man going

through all sorts of mental anguish as they sought to find an adequate rhyme or define a theme or a phrase of music, or just to draw the best line.

James Barthomley was there, lurking with Hermione, as he avoided confronting me. He and my sister had exempted themselves from the circus of suitors, they moved through it all totally absorbed in each other.

I even observed Emily Dodgson walking in the garden, in conversation with a gentleman. It was all very proper, my mother was acting as a chaperone, but I hoped that it would be a pleasant new chapter for her.

The only one of my sisters not besieged by suitors was Caroline. Alone of all of them, she avoided the crowds, preferring instead to be involved in my plans to distribute a Christmas goose to each of the estate tenants, and my planned Christmas party for the villagers and estate workers.

I found her in the library, writing out a list of names, in her neat handwriting.

“I know I said I would not press you, but I am genuinely curious. There are young men a-plenty

spread about the house. They are everywhere!” I laughed. “Except here.”

Caroline stood up from her chair, her hands clasped in front of her. “Please William, do not ask me for his name.”

“No. No, sweet girl, don’t worry.” I said gently, “I will not.” Her relief was obvious, I gestured for her to sit down again — feeling very formal as I did so.

“This young man is very special to you.” I suggested, Caroline nodded.

“He is, but he does not know that. And I wish to keep it that way, for a while at least, if you would please?”

I nodded my agreement, “You will need to say something eventually.”

She nodded.

“Caroline, I meant what I said, you know? Whatever you choose, I will support you. My only aim is for your happiness.”

I turned to go, “I hope he is worthy of you, sister.” Caroline nodded and I left her to her list.

### **34. *Another revelation***

The next conversation I had with Dr Locksley went off like one of Mr Shrapnel's exploding spherical case shells.

I had called upon him to discuss the appointment to the teacher's post. As old as the good doctor is, his wits are razor sharp. I attempted to discuss the matter without raising Mrs Dodgson's name but the vicar sliced through it all and asked if it were she that I was talking about.

"Would that be an issue?" I asked, wondering how much he actually knew, "I mean the circumstances around Alfred Dodgson?"

"I do not believe so." He said on some reflection. "As we discussed the other day, she broke no laws, she was the victim. Surely it is to be about God's work to care for her and to provide her with a living."

"If she will take on the position," I said.

"And speaking of which, I notice that you have made Lord Brunton's son your clerk. The boy was wasted as a footman."

“Henry? My clerk Henry? Is Lord Brunton’s son?” To say I was stunned would have been an understatement.

“Illegitimate son, his eldest.” The vicar corrected me, “His mother was a maid, but his father paid for the boy’s schooling and I believe he was instrumental in placing him in your father’s household. You did not know?”

I shook my head, “I did not. But certain things are becoming clearer. Thank you doctor, if you would, please, tell no one that you have told me this. It has been kept very quiet about the Hall, and I suspect that people have their reasons for doing so. I shall respect that.”

As I rode back to the Hall, I thought about what I had just learnt. This revelation was obviously what Barclay had heard about; Cumberland’s ears flicked back at the sound of my laughter. It wasn’t often that I learnt something before my trusty man-servant. Henry obviously wanted to keep it to himself, so, as I told Dr Locksley, I would respect that.

Once again, I reflected on the changes in my life. The army was easy. An order came down, I passed it on. We marched somewhere, we stood there. The enemy advanced towards us and we went through



the drills. The drills. You did what you were told to do in the way you were told to do it, and that was it. Obviously, it was often more complicated than that but that was what it all boiled down to.

Outside of the army was complicated, people would quite happily ambush you without even thinking about it, without even knowing that they were doing it.

It was all so disorderly!

I would adapt, I resolved, I would overcome. I'd survived the French; I'd be damned if I wasn't going to survive the rest of my life.

"Joshua?" Barclay paused in laying out my clothes for supper.

"Your Grace?"

"Did you hear any more of that whisper?" I really could not resist this.

"No, Your Grace." He looked at me, "You have though, I suspect."

I told him what the vicar had said.

"Lord Brunton, Your Grace?"

“Exactly!” I said, sliding my shirt on. “Say nothing, Barclay, the young man obviously has his reasons.”

“Yes, sir.” I knew that it would be so. “However, I assume that you know that Lord Brunton — Henry’s father — passed away at about the same time as your father.”

“He had a son to inherit?”

“Yes, Your Grace, Robert. I understand that there have been quite heated discussions about the will.”

“Thank you, Barclay.”

I have never known how Barclay obtains his information, but it is very rare that he is wrong in his intelligence. If Wellesley had had three or four Barclays in his employ, they could probably tell him what Bonaparte was having for breakfast as he ate it.

### ***35. A resolution for Mrs Dodgson***

After supper I sat with Emily Dodgson and I discussed my conversation with Dr Locksley.

“A school teacher, Your Grace?”

“The doctor approached me some days ago about a replacement for the current teacher. It struck me,

that perhaps you could take it on? Stay in your house, if you wish. If that is uncomfortable, we can find somewhere else. There will be a living attached to the post.” I mentioned a yearly amount.

“Added to that,” I continued, “I hope that a yearly pension of fifty pounds for the rest of your life, will be sufficient reparation for the loss of the girls’ father?”

Mrs Dodgson’s eyebrows went up. “That would be... er... that would be quite acceptable. But what about the... my situation?”

“There may be issues, I will not lie, if the full story ever emerges there will be whispers and the like. There is of course the court case against the Fellowes chap. But with my support and that of Dr Locksley, I feel we should have it all under control.”

“Dr Locksley knows, Your Grace?”

“I do not know what it is that he knows but I think it is less of a matter to him than it might be. I am hoping that you will at least essay this, and perhaps you can bring some of your ideas about the education of girl children to our village.”

“Your Grace?!” Emily sounded thrilled at this idea. “May I include my own daughters?”

“I did think about this,” I said, “I still feel obligated over the death of Alfred. I remember that you said you hoped that they would go to a school, would you mind if I offered to pay for your daughters to attend a school in Buckingham?”

“There is no need, Your Grace, you have been beyond kind to us. They can attend the school here.”

“I insist Mrs Dodgson, find a school which is acceptable and tell me.”

“Thank you, Your Grace.” The sense of gratitude in her eyes was obvious, but as Helena had observed there was also a sense of something more. “There must be some way that I can show how grateful I am, Your Grace?”

“Just your thanks are sufficient, Mrs Dodgson, there is no need for any more than that.”

I felt the disappointment in her, but things were complicated as they were, without adding to the issues.

### ***36. Henry's second Elevation***

For the next several days Rogeringham Hall was assaulted by my mother and Mrs Ellis the house keeper, as they supervised the cleaning of the hall

and the preparations for Christmas. I have seen brigade commanders operate with less skill than those two, as they supervised the operation. Everywhere was cleaned, washed and scrubbed. Dusters were applied with gusto to statues, busts, and ornaments. The footmen took down and cleaned all of the weapons in the main entrance hall. Rugs were taken out and beaten, and the marble floors were thoroughly mopped, turning them into skating-rinks.

I was firm that the study was not to be cleaned or decorated, so that I would have a refuge.

It turned out that I was not the only one. Barclay was drawn into the cleaning, but Henry Adams — his possession of a surname was a bit of surprise, as far as I was aware he was just Henry — was turned out of the room where he worked. He still had much to do to unravel the puzzle left by Alfred Dodgson, so I made space for him to continue working in my study.

It was pleasant to have him working there, and it was an island of calm amidst a turmoil of dusters and scrubbing brushes, even the suitors had made themselves scarce, though I did see James

Barthomley lovingly holding a ladder for Hermione while she decorated the entrance hall.

Then Henry received a letter.

One of the footmen brought it to him in the study. He read it, put it down, and read it again.

Finally, he came to stand by my desk.

“Your Grace, I believe I may have to submit my resignation.”

I looked at him. “Has something happened?” I asked.

“I have been left some land by my father, an estate near Stevenage.” He handed me the letter.

It was from a solicitor for the estate of Lord Brunton. His lordship had acknowledged Henry as his son in his will, and while this did not legitimize the young man, it did make him a landed gentleman. The solicitor advised that the property would be worth approximately two thousand pounds a year. Two or three hundred pounds a year would be a good living, two thousand pounds was a very good living indeed.

It was obvious that Henry — Mr Henry Adams now, was a little shocked. His life had changed in

weeks, days. From a footman, to a clerk to a landed gentleman. I rang for Mr Dives and asked him to bring some champagne, this deserved a celebration.

As we drank to his good fortune, I waited till he had finished. “Perhaps now would be a good time to talk to my sister.”

“Your Grace?!” His face was a picture and I was glad I had waited for him to finish his drink.

“I suspect you know what I am talking about, so I suggest that you and she have a conversation about — well, about things, and then come and see me.”

“Your Grace?”

“Don’t just stand there gawping, man, I believe you will find her in the drawing room. Go on!”

Caroline was my next visitor.

“What have you just done?” She asked, as she burst into the study.

“May I select from a list of items or was there something specifically?”

“Henry has just been to see me,” she said.

I nodded, “I sent him to you.”

“Why?”

I poured a glass of the now flat champagne and offered Caroline one. “Correct me if I am wrong, but the person whose name you declined to give me when I asked about romantic interest was Henry’s. You — despite all of my assertions — had decided that you could not do anything about it because he was a servant. The last thing you wanted to do was embarrass him, or possibly anger me because I might object to such a marriage.”

Caroline hesitated a moment and then nodded.

“You fell in love with him while you were tutoring him — though, having worked with him for some days now, I have found no evidence of any deficiency in his abilities, so I assume his ‘need’ for more tutoring was a way for you to spend more time with each other.”

Caroline looked up at me, hope in her eyes.

“Lord Brunton could never legitimise Mr Adams, his eldest son. Even if he did, Henry could not inherit the title, not while there was a legitimate heir. His solution was to will Henry a substantial estate, a good living. Sadly, it doesn’t raise him to the peerage which would have made him an even better



candidate for you. **Not** that that is an issue, to me anyway.

“However, he is now a landed gentleman, which as far as I am concerned, completely clears the way for you and he to move onwards.”

“And do I not have any say in this?” Caroline asked.

“Absolutely,” I told her, “It’s all about you, as I have always maintained. But I think you have an open door before you, Caroline. It is up to you; do you wish to go through it?”

“I need to think about it, this is very sudden.”

“I understand that, but I warn you. Do not take too long. A personable young man like Henry with a living like that, I suspect he will be **very** popular?”

Caroline stood up quickly, “You’re right, William, damn you. How did you know it was Henry?”

“A simple deduction, really.”

She smiled, “You are too damned clever!” She said, “But then you always were.”

After Caroline had gone, Henry returned. He looked nervous, (Do I frighten all of my sisters' suitors? It must be my collection of scars) but he was schooling himself to act in as normal a manner as possible.

I pretended to be reading as he gathered the documents he had been working with into a neat pile on the table.

"Huh \_ erm!" Henry cleared his throat.

"Yes, Mr Adams?"

For a moment Henry looked non-plussed, not knowing what to say to that. "Your Grace, I \_ I \_er."

"You wish to discuss my sister with me?"

"Yes, Your Grace. The problem is that I don't know where to start."

"I have given this some thought, Mr Adams, may I make a proposal or two?"

Henry nodded.

"Firstly, there is obvious interest between you and my sister. But both of you seem intent on dithering about it, so I suggest that you take a few days and decide what you want to do.

“Secondly, in order to facilitate this, I make you this offer. That you resign your post of clerk and instead, you become my assistant, with the responsibilities of the steward. Your new living is good, but you are too damned useful a man not to have about, and it will supplement your new income until circumstances dictate otherwise. Is that acceptable?”

“Yes, Your Grace, it is, thank you.”

“Thirdly, I suggest you make an agreement with Caroline for a moratorium on other suitors. There are many of them about at the moment, it would be a shame for someone to slip in and steal her from you.”

I didn’t really think that that was likely, but it was just an extra push for the two of them.

“Please join my mother and I for dinner tonight, Mr Adams?”

“Thank you, Your Grace. But I must decline.”

“May I ask the reason?”

Henry indicated his clothes, by which I assumed that he meant that he did not think his attire was up to our standards. “I am afraid that my recent

elevation has happened with such speed, that I need new attire. This is perfectly acceptable at the level of the clerk of your estate, Your Grace. But if I am accepting dining invitations...” He let that tail off to silence.

“Please, Mr Adams, do come tonight,” I asked, ‘It will be quite informal, so have no worries on that account. As for attire, how would it be if I made a further advance on your salary? Tomorrow you can summon a tailor.’ I suggested, “You are now a gentleman of standing and an important man at Rogeringham Hall, I am more than happy to assist in that and I am sure Caroline would be willing to offer her opinions and assist you in dressing in a more fitting manner.”

“Thank you, Your Grace.” Henry’s shocked expression was fading. He smiled at the thought of having Caroline assist him with the tailor. “That \_ er \_ that sounds like a good plan.”

I had been tempted to invite Henry to dinner with all of the family, but the sudden transition from servant to clerk to his current status would take some adjustment for him, within our family and the house in general. There were already going to be interesting conversations with Mr Adams in the

future, very little goes on in a house like this that the servants do not know, even with someone like Barclay as your door warden. But I thought it would be sufficient to celebrate Henry's good fortune, and the possibilities for him and Caroline, to begin with.

There was a muttering among my sisters at my decision to limit the supper to just Helena, Henry, Caroline and myself. It appeared that at least Hermione took exception to it. However, I was firm and we four, sat down in the dining room to eat.

"I suspect that your head is spinning a little with the speed of all of these changes in your life, Mr Adams." Helena observed.

"It is indeed, Your Grace," he answered her. "The biggest change is that last week I was simply Henry, to everyone. Now I find that I am **Mister** Adams."

"That is only fitting," Caroline told him, "You have status now, you should be treated appropriately." I smiled at Caroline's fierce advocacy, and wondered whether Henry had any idea what he was letting himself in for.

"I fear it will take some time to adjust." Henry replied. "Though His Grace suggested that you,

Lady Caroline, would assist me tomorrow, if we can get a tailor to attend, perhaps?”

Caroline agreed readily.

And so it went through the meal, much of the conversation was about how Henry would progress. What information we had about his living suggested that there was not a great deal that he needed to do, but he would have to attend there some time, at least to oversee its running.

I suggested that if Henry decided to pick up the role of assistant, he would be able to do both, spending time here at Rogeringham and in London and at his estate, as and when he needed.

“You will be very busy, Mr Adams, at least until you marry and start to raise a family. I take it that you do intend to marry...” Helena asked.

A silence descended on the table, and both Henry and Caroline studiously avoided looking at each other.

“There is some way to go, I think, before that, mother,” I suggested.

“Why?” Helena would not be deterred. “The attraction between you is obvious to anyone with

eyes...”

“Except me,” I suggested.

“But even you worked out what was going on, William.” Helena went on, “What has happened, is almost like a story, as if the world has aligned for you. You should not wait.”

“I think that Mr Adams...”

“Lady Caroline, please call me Henry.”

“Very well,” Caroline responded, “I think that Henry has much on his plate at the moment...”

“If I may, Your Grace?” Henry addressed my mother, “This is, as you have said very sudden, and more than a little over-whelming. His Grace was not the only one who was unaware of Lady Caroline’s feelings for me. It is true I have strong feelings for her as well — feelings I never imagined I would ever be in a position to address. Now that I am in such a position, I need to see the way forwards, so I beg you all, please allow me some time.

“However, His Grace did make a suggestion earlier.”

Caroline nodded eagerly waiting to hear what he had to say. “Until we know what we intend to do,

while we \_ we are still talking about this; that we \_ we \_ er...”

“I believe what Henry is saying is that I suggested that it would be sensible, while you are deciding how you both wish to proceed, for you to avoid engaging with other people. If the issues between you are irresolvable, then all the wagers are off, but it would be a shame to complicate things by involving someone else.”

Henry smiled, “Quite so Your Grace. If that is acceptable Lady Caroline, I think that is a good idea. At \_ at least until we know.”

Caroline nodded her agreement.

“Then it is agreed?” I asked. “Good! Because it would be a shame to spoil Christmas.”

### ***37. Another conversation with Hermione***

After dinner, I was reading in my room when Hermione came to find me.

That my sister was angry with me — again — was unmistakeable. It adds a strength to her face that makes her look older than her eighteen years, and makes her achingly beautiful too.



“May I ask, Your Grace,” she said, the irony heavy in her voice as she emphasised the style ‘Your Grace’. “Why the newly elevated Henry is invited to an intimate supper with you and mama, and James isn’t?” She ranted on for a few moments, complaining that I was favouring Henry and pushing him and Caroline together.

“James has demonstrated his intent and asked for my hand, I think the least you could do is invite him to dine with you.” She finished, her face red with emotion.

“Very well.” I told her quietly.

“I beg your pardon?” I think that that was the last thing she expected me to say, that she was expecting an argument or a ploy to delay it.

“I said, very well. I shall invite James to supper.”

It seemed as if she wanted to say more, but did not know what it was she wanted to say. Finally, she blurted out indignantly, “Good!”

“SIT DOWN, HERMIONE!” I said firmly. She had been striding up and down my chamber as she harangued me, now she sat down next to me.

“I have explained that this is less about you and James and more about your situation, I thought you understood that.”

“I did. I do.” She said, calmer than before. “I just worry that he will take fright before we return to London.”

“That is a good point.” I told her, though I was still convinced that she could do so much better. “Is he still scared of me?”

Hermione nodded, “He is and he isn’t. He still admires you greatly, but he prefers to avoid being where you might notice him.

“But still he is firmly committed to you, is he not?” She nodded.

“Caroline is in a more precarious position. She liked Henry but thought she could do nothing about it. He liked her, and he also thought it was impossible. Then he inherited. Now they need a push to actually get them together and talking.

“I was going to invite James’ father and mother to dine with us before New Year, and announce my decision, so how would it be if I invited James and yourself to dine with your mother and I, tomorrow night?”

“That would be wonderful, thank you William.” Hermione turned to me and embraced me warmly, so warmly in fact that I felt her lips seek mine, as she attempted to kiss me open-mouthed.

“I believe that your mother would have something to say if we were to let this go further,” I said, stopping her, but not yet ending our embrace.

“Oh, I think she would not mind...” Hermione said impishly.

“What would I ‘not mind’?” Helena said entering my room.

Hermione leapt up. I remained seated, amused by my sister’s reaction.

“Well?” Helena asked as she seated herself where Hermione had been, next to me.

“Nothing mama,” the fiery beauty that Hermione had been a few moments ago suddenly became my baby sister again.

“Hermione!” Helena began sharply.

“Yes, mama?” She replied, meekly.

“You are a woman now, start behaving like one.”

“Yes, mama.”

There was a twinkle in Helena’s eyes as she spoke, even though her tone was stern. “Am I correct in thinking that you wish to spend the night with my son, in his bed?”

“I do, mama, if I may?”

“That is a sinful thing to contemplate,” my mother told her daughter, “A hurried tumble in a summer house, or a study, one could perhaps excuse as emotions run rampant, but a pre-meditated night of passion in his bed, that is different. What do you have to say for yourself?”

I almost believed Helena myself, as she kept her face straight and her tone forbidding. What happened next came as a bit of a surprise.

Hermione threw herself onto the floor at her mother’s feet, embracing her lower legs and burying her face in Helena’s night-gown.

“Please, mama? Just this one night?” She begged, “I have been in love with William all my life, please allow me this one night? I will have to go from here before too long, and it is my hope to lie with him as a woman lies with her man — yes, mama, I know

that he is yours, and always will be, but allow me this one night, please?”

It was heart-breaking. I knew that Hermione’s feelings ran deep, I hadn’t realised how deep they actually were. Neither, I suspect, did Helena.

She raised her daughter up and gently touched her face. “Oh, my sweet, sweet girl! How could I deprive you of such a heart-felt desire?”

Then Helena’s serious face broke into a broad smile. “It was always my intention to give you your night with William, but because you pled your case so beautifully, I will grant your request tonight.”

Hermione’s expression ran through a gamut of emotions — tearful pleading, bewilderment and finally disbelief as she realised that her mother was toying with her.

“Mama! Shame on you!” She upbraided her mother, ‘Playing with your daughter’s emotions in such a way! That was so naughty!’ But she laughed admiringly, “But so skilful as well, that is a skill I must master.”

Hermione stood up, and walked towards my bed, removing her dress and under-slip as she did. She

drew back the sheet and naked, paused, looking back at us.

“Well?”

Helena poured herself a glass of wine — Barclay had left out a *rioja*, a pleasant, sweet red wine, “Well, William? Go on.” She said, as she sat down.

“And what are you going to do, beloved?” I asked.

“I? Why I shall watch!” And she arranged herself as if to make herself more comfortable. “And perhaps offer suggestions.”

Hermione looked horrified. “Mama?!”

Helena finished her glass of wine and stood up to leave. “Oh, do not worry, sweet girl, I was joking — again.”

She paused as she passed me, kissing me passionately with a full-mouthed kiss, as I stood there half-dressed. Helena cupped my pills with her soft hands. “It is Christmas Eve tomorrow night; I hope my present will be a good one.”

“The very best, mother, the very best.” I told her.

Once she had gone, I turned to Hermione, whose temper appeared to have died away completely and who looked once again like the innocent angel everyone took her to be.

“You may cease that.” I told her, as I removed my breeches.

“Cease what, brother?” She asked.

“That butter-would-not-melt-inside-my-mouth look. I realise now that you have had us all fooled right from the outset. You are a minx, Hermione, a vixen in human form.”

“But you still love me, William?” she smiled shyly.

“More than ever, my sweet.”

“As much as you love mama?”

“I believe you know the answer to that, my sweet.”

“Perhaps, I hoped...” she said as she looked down and away from me, coyly.

“Eek!” I made her jump when I softly kissed the bare nape of her neck.

“That you responded so is a mark of the passion within you.” I told her, “Your body brims with it...”

I turned her round and embraced her, feeling her warm skin pressed fully against mine for the first time. “... shall we let some of that passion out?”

My sister nodded slowly as I embraced her, my hands sliding around her as I pressed up against her back.

“Yes please, brother.” Her words were a whisper, almost a prayer, as I kissed her again.

Previously, when we had had congress before, we had moved straight to the deed, enjoyable but hurried. Now was the time to begin slowly.

So, I began to explore Hermione’s shoulders with my lips. Gentle, brushing kisses on her skin, my hands exploring her belly and sliding upwards to cup her breasts. As I have said before, Hermione is not bountifully endowed in the same way as her mother, or even Charlotte, but what she does have, although small in size, are beautifully formed and they are crowned with dark nipples that sit proud and erect as her passion mounts. She pressed them into my grasp as I cupped them, and explored them.



Abruptly Hermione turned to face me, twisting in my arms, her arms encircled my shoulders, her belly pressed against my cock.

I lowered my head towards her lips, my thumb and forefinger holding her chin, tilting her mouth up to mine. Hermione closed her eyes, and she leaned against me, melting into my arms. Soon I was probing between her lips with my tongue, Hermione's arms held me to her, as much for her own support as anything, my sister seemed weak at the knees.

I laid her upon the bed.

Moving away from her mouth, I kissed her chin, her neck and moved down to her breasts, across her belly and down to her sweet quim.

“Yessssssssssssssssssssssss, William!” She hissed, as my lips closed on her nubs. Hermione's shoulders swayed from side to side as she rubbed her breasts across my face, causing me to nip at them as they moved in front of my mouth.

She thought it an amusing game, making me work for her pleasure, but her position beneath me on the bed, meant that it was easy for me to pin her shoulders and still her motion. This caused her to

sigh with disappointment until having suckled both breasts I slid further down her lithe, slim body.

Hermione gave a quiet little shriek of pleasure as my tongue slid across her lower lips. Her thighs came up around my ears, in an involuntary reaction, and her hands fell onto my head, pressing me to her. Delightfully trapped in this way, I lapped away at the flow of juices from her quim. Hermione was most prolific in the amount of spendings that she made, and I probably could have drunk at that particular spring for several hours, so much did she produce, and so much did she enjoy the pleasure of my tongue, as she rolled around beneath me in pleasure.

We sported like this for a time, not caring how long we did so, until after a series of spends, my sister lay back upon the pillows and begged me to stop.

“William, please?” She begged, “Please stop! Stop! I fear I shall die with the pleasure of it, stop.”

Of course, I stopped, and moved up beside my sister, who pressed against me, in a languorous stretch not unlike that of a cat. A smile spread across her face, as she touched my bare chest, tracing my nipples with her soft hands.

“Such a feeling!” She whispered, “So much pleasure! I did not know it could be so.”

I kissed her lips, enfolding her in my arms.

“I will need to train James in these skills,” she said after we stopped kissing.

“He may turn out to be a skilled lover,” I suggested, “At least he should know how to fuck, but for the rest of it you will need to educate him.”

Hermione groaned in pleasure as she rubbed her nipples against my body. “If he wants to fuck my cunny, he will need to make sure that I am ready,” she declared. “I love fucking, but I love the rest of it as well.”

“There is one thing that will always get his attention,” I told her. Hermione looked at me. “Learn to do it well, and your hold on James’s heart will be absolute.”

“You mean sucking his prick?” She asked.

I was stunned, once more Hermione had proved how little I knew her.

She looked at me with her grey-eyes twinkling. “Do not forget brother, that I am the girl who

nobody sees, who goes where she pleases and sees all.”

Laughing at my surprise, she told me, “I observed a maid and one of the footmen together. He wanted a hasty fuck, but she told him that they had no time, and instead she took his prick in her mouth and brought him off that way.”

Hermione moved down to my hips, and looked down at my rising cock, “Now, if I remember correctly...” And pulling her long, fine hair back over her shoulder, she bent forwards and drew my cock towards her mouth.

She was tentative at first, hesitant, but steeling herself, my sister placed a kiss on my cock head. It was a motion that reminded me of the first time that her mother had also hesitantly approached my cock, in almost exactly the same way. Hermione assessed the taste, dismissed it as no matter and then lavished kisses all over my prick.

My sister was eager, loving my cock as if it was a cherished possession. Her warm hands pressed it against her face, rubbing it across her cheeks, smoothing her soft skin against the hot flesh of my member. After a few moments of this, she placed my cock on the soft pillow of her tongue, and all I can

say is that it was glorious. She worshipped it, adored it, gave it all of the love which she possessed, and which she felt for me.

I reached for my sister's head, but she needed little encouragement, her mouth was wet, a heated inferno, as she raised her head up, sucking, and down using her lips to stroke the flesh. With each move Hermione gave a heart-felt moan of passion, a moan that I felt through every fibre of my member.

I have had my cock sucked many times and by many women, some have been less than enthralling, work-a-day gamming, many have been more skilful, delivered by mistresses of the skill that coaxed my spend from me and made me feel grateful for the privilege — but none have been anywhere near the level of adoration which my youngest sister delivered that night.

If I had had any doubts — any at all — of the depth of the feelings that my sister had for me, they were banished as she worked away at coaxing my cum from me. I showed her how to use her hands to frig my prick and play with my pills. In return she let me use her mouth like I would her quim. In a way I felt sad, that such deep feelings between us would, in effect, go unresolved. Oh, for sure, we had

already consummated our love, once in the Temple and again in my study, we were consummating our love again, right there and then, but had Helena not already held my heart tight locked and bound, I wondered what might have come about.

There was another aspect to this as well, where I had fallen in love with my mother years earlier and I had seen her in many different situations and experienced many aspects of her character, with Hermione it was a new discovery. My innocent, quiet sister, the one who had followed me around when we were children had grown and blossomed — though ‘blossom’ suggests a pretty blooming flower — into a beautiful, strong — majestic — woman. She was no little flower any more, and as she gave off sucking my cock and climbed up onto my hips, before impaling herself there, I saw that the warrior queen had come to my room that night. Elegant, lithe but still strong, and yes, I would say regal, in her manner, she ground herself slowly up and down upon my erection, coaxing it to a finish using her hips and cunny instead of her lips and fingers.

We did not speak. We grunted, we panted like animals, we moaned and sighed. Half-curses and

near swears, touches and caresses were all we could manage between us.

At last Hermione sat down upon her hips, relaxing her pale, muscular thighs to sink down onto my cock, before reaching up to cover my hands, which held her breasts, with hers. With a great groan and a shudder that shook her hips, my sister spent hard. Indeed, had I not been holding her by the teats she would have fallen.

But I was not done, I was close to spending and it felt as if it was more than just a need to spend, it almost felt like my own act of worship of Hermione.

I placed my sister on her back and entered her, easily, she was so wet. Still though, she was tight and I was so very close. So close, in fact that I pushed no more than a handful of strokes before my cum came down and I was flooding Hermione's quim with my jism.

I collapsed upon the bed next to her, speechless with the effect of my spend — it had been that powerful.

I opened my eye to find that the fearsome queen had left us, and my adored sister was once more in

my bed, regarding me with her bright, sparkling grey eyes. I reached my hand and stroked her soft cheek.

“I’m sorry.” I told her.

Hermione looked at me wondering why I was apologising.

“I wish that I could have returned your love the way I should have.” I explained.

My sister leaned forwards and embraced me tightly and for a time we just lay like this, each of holding the other tightly, savouring the closeness.

Finally, Hermione kissed me and leaned back, “I realised that it was never to be years ago.” She said, “You were away in the army and as well as that, the fact that you were devoted to mama was apparent to all of us. I came to realise that even though you love me, it would never come close to the way that you feel for her.”

“Still,” I said, “I’m sorry you had to suffer all of those years...”

Hermione gave a little giggle, “It is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved you at all, William.” She quoted, ‘And besides, you are still my brother,’ and just for a moment I saw the imperious



Hermione peep out from her beautiful eyes, “And in thrall to me for as long as you live.” Then she was gone and my sister returned.

“This is true,” I laughed. “I am devoted to you and will remain so as long as I live.” I said sincerely, before continuing, “Just as I am to your sisters.

“And your mother.”

We laughed together at that, and Hermione pressed herself against me, stretching along my side in a most loving way, her warm skin against mine, her left leg over my thigh, her fingers caressing my chest.

“Fuck me again, William, let us not waste one minute of this night. Fuck me, please?”

When asked like that, what is a man to do?

And so, we fucked the night away, once, twice and a third time more I spent myself, making up for lost time with my youngest sister, and I am proud to say that Hermione was well satisfied with my efforts. She came many times, though whether it was my efforts or my sister’s innate sensuality I know not, I hope it was me. But by the small hours of the morning, I was done. Exhausted.

Once more we found ourselves entwined — too tired to do anything other than sleep, but even as sleep claimed me, I heard Hermione softly say that she loved me. I told her that I loved her too, but I do not think she heard me, because already she was making soft buzzing noises on my shoulder.

“Goodnight my princess.” I said into the quiet darkness.

### ***38. An affair of Honour***

It being Christmas Eve, I went to the stables with a Christmas box — a purse actually — for the grooms and the boys of the yard. It was traditional, and I would have sent one via Mr Hopley normally, but I was pleased with the work they had done with the mare, and so I felt they had earned it this year. I decided to take it personally and Mr Adams accompanied me in his capacity as my assistant.

The stable lads all knew Henry from his footman days and made great congratulations on his good fortune.

On the way back to the hall, Henry asked if we could take a turn around the gardens.

I assumed that that meant he wanted a conversation that would not be interrupted.

I was correct.

“Your Grace, may we speak as man to man?”

I looked at him. His tone was strong, assertive, but I could see from his hands that he had gathered himself for this.

“Of course. No style now, just Henry and William.”

“Thank you, Your... William.”

He coughed. “As you have observed I am very much in love with your sister and once I am clear in my path regarding my life, I will ask you for her hand in marriage.”

“And I will be more than happy to give it to you.”

“Thank you.” He paused for a moment. “There are things, William, things you learn or hear when you are below stairs, things I need to clarify with you.”

By ‘below stairs’ Henry meant as a servant. I had been waiting for this conversation. “Things?” I asked him.

This was a more serious Henry. In just those few moments his nerves had gone. “May I ask, William,

about your relations with your sisters, and Lady Caroline in particular?”

“You may, but I want you to understand I tell you this because I respect you, and I want my sister to be happy. In fact, that is all I have ever wanted, and the reason why I have done what I have done.”

“So, it is true then?”

“If you mean, did I sleep with my sisters — and, to be perfectly clear in this, am I sleeping with my mother? Then yes, it is true.”

Henry nodded. After some moments to digest what I had said, he replied, “The problem is that I have mixed feelings, William. I will be honest with you, I am in no position to call anyone out for who they have slept with, because of my birth, but I am conflicted, by what you have said. I have such very deep feelings for her.”

“And I respect those feelings, Henry, I can think of no one better for my sister.” I told him.

“When I returned home,” I continued, “I expected to find the girls I had left behind me. Instead, I found grown women, women with their own minds and feelings. I also discovered to my

great surprise that they were sexual beings with all sorts of desires and wants.”

“So how did you proceed?” He asked.

“I did what I have always done for my sisters, I let them have everything they wanted. When we were children, if I was able to do anything for my sisters I would. Now, that I have the resources that I lacked then, if there is something I can do for them, I will. I always will. If it is in my power to do something for them, no matter what, I shall do it.

“My father had allowed their lives to stagnate,” I explained how — but not why (the fact that I was sleeping with Helena was enough at this point) — I had agreed to get them presented at court and that I would settle their dowries, and in general get them prepared for the return to London.

“The question of dowries agreed and the promise of the new Season was easily settled, that’s where you come in — you and I will manage the purse for all of this.” I told him, ‘But there were other things my sisters wanted from me.’ I could have explained all of the circumstances behind what had happened, but did not feel that it was necessary. “Which is why we are having this conversation.”

Henry nodded.

“I will tell you this as well, Henry, when I asked my sisters about their desires, Caroline told me that she was not interested in the Season, she told me that she already had someone she liked, though she would not say who it was.

“It is obvious, now, that she meant you and that in her mind at that moment — and subsequently — there was little or no chance that anything would come from it.

“But I shall tell you this in confidence, Henry, and that way you will understand that I mean what I say about giving my sisters whatever it is that they want, if I had known then who it was, I would have sought some way of accommodating you both.”

“Truthfully?”

“Aye, I swear.” I told him. “Henry, I love them all so much, I always have. If Caroline had told me that she wanted to marry you as you were, I would have tried to make it happen.

“Is what I have said going to change how you feel about Caroline?” I asked, “If so, then you should say so now and we can proceed accordingly, if not then perhaps we may call the matter closed?”

Henry nodded as he considered what I had said, then he said, “Before I say anything... I need... I need to know, William... I need... are you and Lady Caroline done? Is it over between you?”

I looked at him. “The answer is no, it isn’t, and yes, it is.”

His face was a picture of hope and dismay. “I will never be ‘done’ with Caroline,” I told him, “Because she is my sister and I will stand up for her as long as I live. Just as I will stand up for you if you take her for your wife.

“I suppose,” I continued, “That I should also say at this point that if you ever wrong my sister, or hurt her in anyway...” Not that I thought he would. “Wrath of God, hell and damnation, that sort of thing, just so that we’re clear, yes?” He nodded.

“If you mean, will I be an impediment to you and her?” I continued, “Never. It is not ‘over’ between us, Henry, because it was never begun. I helped my sister to do something that she wanted to do. I hope you can understand that. Ask her about her reasons someday — you may be surprised what she tells you. I was.”

Henry considered what I had said for a moment. “My father loved my mother, you know?” He said suddenly, “But his family constrained him. He had to marry someone else, but he never stopped loving her. He had no choice in the matter.”

I understood that constraint, the strictures that society puts upon us, I was coming to understand them very well. I was blessed, in that while I had constraints on me, I was very much in charge of my own fate and that of my sisters.

“Well,” I told him, “Tonight I will offer a prayer of thanks to your father for your inheritance, it has made the path for you and Caroline that much easier. You will be coming with us to Midnight Service tonight?”

“If I may?”

“Of course! If you do not come as my assistant, then attend as an escort to the Lady Caroline. The Yew Walk to the church is particularly dangerous at night,” I said with a laugh. “There are bandits, footpads and brigands, even a dragon that waits to snare unwary travellers, or so I have been told.”

Despite his laughter at my joke, I could still see conflict, uncertainty, in his face and said so. “What



will it take to resolve your worries? An affair of honour?”

Henry looked at me bleakly, “I am no swordsman and a poor shot, and besides I am not sure how Lady Caroline would feel about me if I accidentally killed her brother on Christmas Eve.” He added.

“You seem a handy lad though, Henry.” I pointed at his hands. “Let’s trade a few punches and then call it quits — whoever wins?”

“Now?” He asked, aghast.

“Can’t think of a better time, clear the air between us,” I said, as I removed my jacket and waistcoat and placed them on a nearby stone bench. “Come on!”

I’m not bad with my fists, I’m no Barclay, but I am no slouch either. Henry is slim for his height, though still well put together. I thought we would take a few swings at each other and bow and say ‘done’.

“Should we not have seconds for this?” He asked.

“Not for this, this is just for our satisfaction. You take the first swing.”

I have no idea at all why I do these things.

I had intended for Henry to win, I would take a blow, a tap, I thought, and concede — that sort of thing. But there is obviously more to Mr Henry Adams than it appears. His right hand connected with my face, travelling like a cannon ball.

I was not acting when I rocked back on my heels.

“Your Grace!!” He exclaimed, “Oh God, Your Grace! You’re bleeding!” I could feel a trickle down the side of my face.

“Well done Mr Adams,” I conceded, “First blood to you, I yield.” I reached out my hand to shake his, and felt the world give a small lurch sideways.

“Bloody hell, Henry! That is one splendid right hook you have there.”

Henry seemed more concerned for me than he did for congratulations. “Let me get you inside, Your Grace, and someone can attend that cut.” He gathered up our coats and waistcoats and we went towards the Hall.

Before we went inside, I stopped him. “You’re a proper gentleman now, Henry, you’ve just fought your first duel over a woman. From the power behind that punch, I believe that your feelings for my sister match those she has for you.” I offered

him my hand to shake fair on it. “Is this matter squared between us now?”

Henry nodded as we shook. “I believe so, Your Grace. Certainly, no word of it shall ever come from my mouth.” And with that we both walked back to the hall.

Where Caroline immediately upbraided both of us quite royally — for fighting like school-boys.

Barclay washed my face to see if the cut needed more attention. It didn’t, like many such wounds it bled much from a tiny nick. It was closing even while Barclay cleaned it but he dabbed it with some alum salts — which stung like buggery — to close it anyway. I suspect that Henry suffered worse than I did, as my sister took him off to ‘talk’ to him.

However, when we assembled later to go to the church, I felt from the way that they behaved with each other, that some things had been said and understandings had been reached. Certainly, Henry looked much less conflicted than he had earlier. I did resolve, however, never to let myself be within reach of the right hand of Mr Adams if he was ever angry at me.

### ***39. Christmas Eve pt.1 — Midnight Service and afterwards***

The day of Christmas Eve continued into Christmas Eve proper as it had all that day, cold, overcast and still.

The procession that formed in the courtyard of the Hall to proceed down the Yew Walk to the village gate looked like an immaculately presented wagon-train. The women, all dressed for the cold, wore cloaks or coats and shawls, and they all chose hats that covered their heads warmly. Each of them, their hands encased in gloves and fur muffs, formed a perfect shape with their wide dresses and narrow shoulders.

There were mutterings from my sisters about the availability of carriages which were not being used, but I would have none of it. In fact, I had been asked by some of the house staff if they could join our cavalcade, so I made it clear that I welcomed anyone that wished to attend and walk with us. By the time we were set to start our walk to the church — about a quarter past the hour of eleven o'clock, we had quite the procession, and some of the stable lads, by their own initiative, organised and carried lanterns for all of our benefit.

“Tell me again, why we are doing it this way, brother?” Charlotte asked as she walked on my other side from Helena.

“*Noblesse oblige*,” I laughed at her puzzlement.

“Simply this,” I clarified. “When was the last time father spent any time with the villagers or his tenants?”

Charlotte still looked puzzled. “I cannot say.”

“Precisely!” I said, “We spend so much time showing ourselves off in London, we forget where we come from and where we live.”

Charlotte nodded. And we looked back — Mr Adams was escorting Caroline, the twins had several young men attending them, and of course James, now confirmed as Hermione’s fiancée, stood upon my youngest sister’s right-hand side. Behind them, there was a trail of people and lanterns. “Are you creating a new tradition?” Helena asked from behind my right shoulder.

“Why not?” And I led the column down to the village.

I mentioned earlier that I am not a hugely religious man, but there is something quite magical

about a candle-lit church at midnight on the eve of the Saviour's birth.

We filed into and filled the family pews — those seats in Rogeringham church that are exclusively for our family's use, and I do mean filled. With all of the heavy outdoors clothing there was little room to move in there, just enough to sit, to stand and to kneel. At least the full church was warm.

Dr Locksley appeared to enjoy the larger congregation. He led the service with a happy smile upon his face. He gave a short address, where he emphasised that Christ's main teaching had been Love. I think he mentioned it four or five times. We sang carols, and gave the appropriate responses. Henry, who stood just on the other side of Helena, sang with a pleasant tenor, and James Barthomley surprised me with a rich baritone, that one would not have expected when looking at him. With my mother and all of my sisters — most of whom are contraltos, it combined to make, as they say, a joyous noise.

The journey to the church had been purposeful, we were going to church service, after all. The journey back to the house was more festive, as people chattered, and laughed and I heard several

voices raised in song, though not all of them were carols, if truth be told.

Suddenly as we got close to the Hall, the chatter was hushed as everyone came to a stop. In the gaps between the yew trees, flakes of snow could be seen in the lantern light. Further out beyond the trees, out from their shelter, the snow could be observed to be falling with purpose.

For a moment we all stood in the silence and watched the snow fall. But it was getting thicker so I urged everyone on to the hall.

When we arrived back there, Barclay, Mr Dives and Mrs Ellis had gathered those staff that had not come with us to the church in the ballroom, and we all — family, staff and even suitors, drank hot mulled wine, (some of the lesser wine from the wine merchant in Buckingham, but because of Mr Roberts' skill it was very drinkable) and we all wished each other a merry Christmas.

#### ***40. Christmas Eve pt.2 — Of cold cream and another new tradition***

It was late when I finally went to my room. I found Helena there already, sat at the window watching the snow fall in the park. The ground

outside was already completely white. My mother sat there, in her pearl-grey dressing gown, her hair loose upon her shoulders, and she seemed lost in her thoughts.

I waited for a moment before I disturbed her, so taken was I by how beautiful she was.

“It will be a good depth tomorrow,” I said eventually.

“I miss the beauty of snow when we are in London.” Helena said wistfully, “It falls, and within a few minutes it is grey or slushed by the carriages, this is something to be enjoyed.”

“I would much rather watch it from indoors than toil my way through it from guard post to guard post.” I handed Helena a glass of wine, while I sipped my rum.

“Involving the staff tonight was a good idea,” she said, quietly.

“It’s traditional, I read it in one of Dr Locksley’s antiquarian articles.” I told her.

“Traditions are good.” Helena said, as the snow still fell outside.

“Change can be good too.” I suggested.



“Yes,” my mother agreed, “And there have been many this year...”

“And some of those have been very good.” I finished for her.

“I have a present for you,” my mother said, and handed me a small ceramic jar.

I turned and looked at it in the dim light from the oil lamp, the light from the window was too dim. The label announced that it was Cold Cream. I looked at Helena.

She took it back from me and rose from the chair. Making her way to my bed, she shed her clothes and climbed in, still holding the jar.

“Well? Do you want my arse?”

AH! Cold Cream! Oil! GREASE! AH!

I finished sliding my breeches off.

Helena looked nervous; resolute, but nervous as I slid into the bed next to her. The last thing I wanted to do was to make this an unpleasant experience for her, so we began by kissing. Actually, that was pleasant enough, my mother was particularly loving, and our kisses were playful at times, until I positioned her on her hands and knees.

I took a few moments to kiss the small of her back, and down across the cheeks of her bottom — small and neatly formed. Finally, I took my thumbs and parted them, exposing the sweet little pucker.

I had had one or even two fingers inside her before but this time I intended to go beyond that. Scooping some of the lavender scented cold cream onto my forefinger, I gently massaged it into the flesh of her bottom, pressing my finger into her anus several times, and I was rewarded with Helena pushing back at me. At the same time my other hand was diddling her cunny, playing with her clitoris and stimulating her passion. Certainly, Helena was panting and writhing her hips as I coaxed an orgasm from her, causing her to send a stream of spend across my bed sheets.

“OH! Oh dear!” She said, “I didn’t mean to do that!” I kissed her, to say ‘not to worry’ and to disguise the fact that while she came so energetically, I had slipped two fingers inside her bottom.

Which she discovered when I started to move them, caressing her with them, and rotating them inside her anus.

“Oh fuck, William! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!” She gasped; her profanities quiet but deeply felt. “Fuck! That feels... Oh! Ooooooohhhhhhhh!” My mother reared back on her knees, holding on to me, and resting her head on my shoulder as she gasped. I felt her relax as she came twice more, small explosive spends that actually made her bite my shoulder.

Another scar, I thought, well, one more for the collection.

I withdrew my fingers and used them to scoop more cold cream onto Helena’s bottom and placed a little on my cock, which by now ached to be about its work.

With my hand on Helena’s hip, I guided my prick towards her *culo*, as the Spanish term it. Despite my fingers being there previously, it was a tight fit. As I pushed past her ring, I felt my mother stiffen. The oil in the sweet-smelling cream did its job, and I slid slowly, slowly inside her.

I stroked Helena’s back, urging her to push back against it, and help it inside. She did so, pressing her arse back into my groin, and suddenly I was buried in her, to the hilt.

“Aaaaah! Oh, sweet Jesus!” She groaned, “I am so full! I thought it would hurt more. Ahh! Yessss!”

This last was hissed as I started to move my hips, back and to, sliding my prick in and out slowly.

“Oh! Oh! Fuck! William! Oh! OH!” Helena wriggled and twisted against me as I fucked away at her arse, frigging her cunny as I did so, and tugging gently on her nipple with my other hand. She was deliciously tight, her bottom hole snug around my cock.

“I — ah! Thought this — ah! Might be worthwhile. I didn’t \_ Ah! Oh! Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck! I didn’t imagine it would be this good. Oh, William! I feel so full! My handsome love, fill my arse with your seed.”

I have never heard Helena say the word fuck so much or be so vocal in general. She sat back and upright, impaling herself deeply as she sat in my lap. It allowed her to turn her head and kiss my mouth, allowing me to play with her bobbies. It is a mark of the level of our passion, so inflamed were we that we kissed and chewed and bit at each other’s lips, while I was quite brutal in the way I squeezed and mauled at her breasts.

I pushed Helena forwards and down, so that she rested her head and arms on the bed and I took hold of her hips and shoved away at them.

When I did spend, I jerked forwards and bent over her, my hips jutting forward, and cum shooting inside her anus. Through my cum I heard my mother gasping as she fell forwards.

I withdrew, my limp cock slick with grease and jism. I got up and wiped it with a cloth.

When I turned back to the bed, Helena was watching me with an expression that reminded me of a very happy, satisfied cat. A cat that had not just eaten a canary but polished off the cream for dessert as well.

“I am leaking too!” She grinned girlishly.

She wriggled her bottom as I wiped her anus. “Oh!” She gasped, as I cleaned around the gaping eye of her sphincter.

I placed the cloth on the side table and poured us wine, handing it to her in bed.

“Happy Christmas,” I wished her.

“Perhaps we should make a good arse fuck another Christmas tradition,” my mother laughed,

before toasting my Christmas wish with her glass.

I sat beside her, cross-legged on the bed, wrapped in the bed sheet, while she covered her nakedness in a blanket.

“Perhaps, indeed!” I suggested as I leaned forwards and kissed her. “But tell me, would you only do that once a year?”

Helena wriggled her bottom again, obviously she wasn’t completely comfortable. She pulled a wry face, as she reached over and placed our glasses on the bed-side table. “It was intense, I will admit that,” she said. “I am not sure though I would do it every time we made love.”

“Once a week?” I wondered, laughing, “Once a fortnight or just once a month?”

Helena pushed at me, laughing at my efforts to calendar our anal sex. I don’t know why but we both found that hilarious and ended rolling on the bed — still wrapped in the bedding — like two chortling, giggling children.

After a few minutes, we calmed and lay there looking at each other.

“Nine.” Helena said.

I looked at her wondering what she meant.

“Nine years of Christmases without you here.” She explained. “I have missed you so much, and at no time more than this.”

I extracted my arms from the wrapping of the sheet and pulled her to me. “Imagine how it felt for me,” I said plaintively. “Living the austere military life — barracks and drill, sentries and saluting. Separated by the wide seas from my loving family — my sisters and my loving mother...”

From the look that my mother gave me, it was clear that she was less than sympathetic. “With your wines and your roasts in your officer’s mess, and the ladies all fighting for the attention of the handsome young soldiers.” Helena laughed. “From the little you have told us; it is obvious that you led no monkish existence...”

“Shame on you, lady,” I scolded her, “To mock me so...”

“Which was confirmed in the letters that you sent home.” She finished, ignoring my scolding.

“True,” I conceded, “But... but life **was** hard away from home...” I complained, half-heartedly. “I missed you all so much, and you especially,” I

finished, my voice lowered, though we were the only two there, our heads bent towards each other.

“Kiss me, William.” Helena said quietly, “Kiss me and convince me that you did indeed miss us.”

All those years of absence went into that one kiss. It was true, that soldiers away from home will put in the utmost effort to celebrate, and there was in truth no real reason to be on your own, but I did miss my family, Helena in particular, and it was that that fuelled my kiss.

Our kissing led to us rolling across the bed again, this time with Helena enfolded in her blanket in my arms. Soon, however, she fought her way out of her wrappings, so that she could utilise her own hands to touch me, feel me, pull me to her, to stroke me and caress me during our love-making.

Once she had extracted herself fully from the blankets, Helena climbed up on top of me and rode my cock to an energetic spend — rocking back and to, as she milked my cum with her action, clenching her internal muscles to draw the jism from me.

That done, and it being very late on Christmas Eve, or to be more precise, it being early on Christmas Day, my mother drew the sheet and the



blanket on top of us and we nestled down to sleep together.

#### **41. *Christmas Day***

Christmas Day dawned with the snow still falling, though not heavily.

We rose, washed and dressed and gathered for church, though this time, Mr Hopley and his assistants took us in the landau and the brougham. We had Mr Barthomley and Mr Adams accompany us, and a young man who escorted both of the twins.

After church, we reconvened in the parlour and exchanged gifts — nothing too ostentatious, we each gave little gifts — after all, if you have riches and privilege, what more do you need? I gave presents that people would remember me for. To each of my sisters I presented a piece of jewellery, a memento of my love for them. Charlotte and Caroline each received necklaces, and Hermione a locket — for which she immediately demanded a miniature portrait of me, which Caroline agreed to paint and I agreed I would sit for. The twins received matching jewelled combs like the ones I had seen in Portugal, which they insisted on wearing for the rest of the day.

I gave Helena a pendant, a piece of crystal with a lock of my hair embedded in it. I had it made some years ago, but kept it to give to her when the opportunity presented itself. This appeared to be that opportunity. She immediately removed the pendant she had been wearing and replaced it with my gift.

For myself I received several gifts which my sisters had embroidered — shirts mainly, all beautifully worked, and the twins — who are most capable at that sort of thing — wrought a selection of neck-cloths, which are always acceptable.

My mother presented me with two gifts. The first was an elegant long-stemmed pipe, of the kind known as a church warden, with a walnut wood bowl and an ebony mouth piece. It was not a large pipe, but the bowl was big enough for our customary night-time smoke and it was decorated with a fine silver wire. The other present was a locket with a miniature of herself, a most accurate likeness, that Caroline had painted. It was not intended to be worn around the neck, but I told her that where-ever I travelled, it would be somewhere about my person.

That afternoon we played parlour games, blind-man's-buff, what-am-I, pin-the-tail-upon-the-donkey, and charades. We sat down to a Christmas

feast, which I, as the head of the house, gave thanks for and then we ate.

It was very much a traditional meal, with a large fat goose as the centre piece, beef, venison, pork, and all of the trimmings — roasted and boiled potatoes, sprouts, peas and carrots. The wine flowed and we enjoyed our meal. It ended with a tray of mince pies. It has long been a Rotheringham family tradition that everyone present takes a pie, and gifts it to the person on their right, so I gave mine to Charlotte.

Afterwards my mother, my sisters, our guests and I gathered at the piano in the parlour and we sang as Charlotte played.

After spending Christmas away from England for so many years, on nights in barracks, or doing rounds of the sentries, this was what coming home meant to me. That Helena was a part of it, increased the joy I felt, but having my sisters about me as well, even though they might be going their own ways in the coming year, meant that that Christmas was likely one of the best I have ever known.

Eventually, after we had all eaten our fill, drunk our drinks and laughed and sang and danced, it was time to retire.

I bade farewell to our guests — the vicar and his wife, Emily Dodgson and her daughters, (who had moved back to their own house on Christmas Eve) they were conveyed home in our brougham. After that Helena retired for the night, then my sisters each gave their farewells and went to bed. I shared a final brandy with Mr Adams, Mr Barthomley (who seemed more confident in my company, though that may have been the quality of the port that he had consumed) and the young man who had been the twins escort (for the life of me I cannot recall his name), before they too, went to their rooms.

Finally, I ascended the stairs — slightly drunk, full, tired and very, very happy.

Helena was already in my bed when I got there. She was in the same mood as I was though, and instead of a frantic coupling, we kissed and cuddled, and then had a slow, sleepy fuck before falling asleep, together.

## ***42. Boxing Day***

The next day, being the 26<sup>th</sup> December, or Boxing Day, our sleep was not disturbed by Barclay's usual knock-knock, pause, knock-knock. If Barclay hasn't brought my washing/shaving water, I usually wake about the time for Reveille —

I wish I didn't, but years in the army will do that to you. However, Barclay, like the rest of the servants, had been given the day off today, and my mother and I both slept through, past our usual times.

When we did wake, it was to a bright light coming into the room through the gaps in the curtains.

I did not move at first, except to prop myself up on my elbow, I just looked at Helena in the clean light of the new morning. She lay next to me, still asleep, her hair spread out across the pillow. Her face was calm and her breathing shallow and almost silent, motionless apart from fact the gentle rising and falling of her breasts. It seemed unreal — normally my mother would be back to her room by now, and here she was, as if she belonged there.

Which she truly did, of course.

For a few moments, it was as if any impediments, any of the proprieties which govern our society did not exist, that she really was my wife. I knew that there were no rules against us being man and wife, not in law. But I was now coming to recognise that marriage to Helena might be more of a pipe dream than a possibility. I had not taken into account how such a move would affect our position and status. It

was still my goal to spend my life with her, but the choices that we make affect other people and sometimes we have to choose one way when we really want to choose another. Even so, looking at her there and imagining her as my wife made my heart ache. Deuce! It felt like it was meant to be.

Lost in my musings, I realised that Helena was looking back up at me, her beautiful grey eyes watching me watching her.

She reached out and touched my face, and as if she could read my thoughts, Helena said, “We will find a way to make this work out. You are already more of a husband to me than your father ever was.”

She sat up and it was all I could do not to lower my head and suckle on her newly revealed breasts. When I moved my head, she brought her hands up and shuddered as if being tickled, “Please? No! I need the pot and we should rise.”

While Helena was relieving herself into the chamber pot, I opened the curtains of my room, and the reason for the brightness of the light was revealed. The clouds of the previous day were gone, and the morning sun shone down upon a blanket of snow that was fresh fallen in the small hours of the night. The great park at Rogeringham Hall extended

before me, smooth and glistening white. No foot print marred the covering, no wind whipped across its surface, just a field of pristine white, reflecting the sunshine. The trees around the house were stark and black, countering the acres of whiteness, and a cloudless blue sky looked down upon the scene. It was a sight to take your breath away.

I had to tear myself away from drinking in the beauty of the morning to wash and dress. I assisted Helena in washing. Barclay had left us a pitcher of water next to the fire; it had retained some warmth, and it was certainly better than using cold water. Helena put on her night gown and her banyan to go to her own room to dress, then I washed, shaved and dressed for the day.

Mrs Ellis, the house-keeper, had assigned one cook to work today on the promise of two days off in return, so we had a buffet style breakfast, and an idle sort of day ahead of us.

I intended to spend the morning in my study, I had discovered that my father had several interesting books on new ideas with regard to science and engineering. I assume that he had acquired them because he saw something of potential use. In fact, Henry and I spent the morning talking as I

rummaged through the books. I did not discover anything useful but the conversation between Henry and myself more than made up for that.

We had a long and very involved discussion, and it was very much one of equals. I found it very easy to ignore any social differences between Henry and myself when we talked. I have remarked before on his intelligence and his ordered mind, qualities which made him an excellent footman but otherwise were largely wasted in that role. This suited him much better, as, because of these valuable qualities, I found I was able to explore my ideas with him, and due to his perception — or perhaps because of his experiences — when Henry commented on something, he often added a new perspective or a new approach.

The main aim of our conversation was the task of getting our accounts and management back into order. I found the accounting system commonly used vague and annoying. Put simply, what monies went into the system were not what always came out. It disturbed my sense of order. It was not the actual method of recording and accounting that was at fault. But the actual management of monies, within the estate. What went in should be equal to what came out, however altered. It should be possible to



say ‘well, that sum went here’ and ‘that money went there’. Instead, we had amounts that disappeared along the way. It was disorderly. I did not like the vague amounts that made up the estate, I wanted to know exactly what monies were where, so that when it was called upon, it could be precisely located.

The upshot of our discussion was that we both envisioned that Henry’s role — as it had been, as my steward, would expand. It was, we agreed, more than just the Buckinghamshire properties, there were those, but there were also my father’s commercial and industrial interests, and the London properties. Henry suggested an office in the village to act for the whole estate, with several staff to support him. Good book keeping is essential, and should be done from a central place, and as accurately as possible, so I thought that this was a good suggestion.

“What about the skimming?” I asked. It was endemic to the British system, and it was this that made a precise accounting such a nightmare.

“Pay better.” Henry said bluntly. “Ensure that everyone is paid a fair wage and that it is clear that skimming is considered to be theft.”

It was an interesting idea and I said that I would consider it. And I would, but I had had another idea,

and one that I hoped would help in several ways. I wanted to start employing old soldiers when I could. My reasoning was that they were often people who were deserving of employment, who were disciplined of habit and, if they were physically capable, were used to working hard.

To be sure, there were people who had not followed the colours who were fully deserving of employment, and who were equally competent. But the number of ex-soldiers one saw upon the streets of the city and the lanes of the countryside was growing. Not all had been as fortunate as I, so doing this was important to me. My plan, such as it was, was to staff an estate office with these men, and find other projects where I could make use of them.

### ***43. A fight with snow balls***

After our luncheon of hot soup and bread, I walked to the stables to see Naiad, and Cumberland. They were indoors because of the snow, and though Naiad would have been happier out in the paddock, a stall inside was the best place for them when the snow was on the ground.

As I was walking back to the house, I heard shouting and squeals coming from one of the side lawns.

Walking around the corner, I was confronted with a pitched and dreadful battle.

It appeared that some of the stable boys and grooms had launched a surprise attack upon some of the maids, who had been attempting to form the shape of a man out of snow. Snow balls flew thick and fast, people dodged and ducked, but the stable boys were deadly in their intent.

Some of the younger footmen had attempted to intervene but they were too few and their efforts were uncoordinated.

“HOUSE!” I roared, raising my arm (as if I had my sword with me, old habits and all) getting the attention of both footmen and maids, “HOUSE STAFF! FORM ON ME!”

As I stepped forward, I immediately drew shots from some of the grooms, until they realised who they were aiming at.

My first throw in return caught one of them square in the chest, throwing him backwards in surprise. But it set the limits — I was a fair target, and sure enough they started to focus on me. With fewer shots going towards them, the footmen, and some of the maids rallied around beside me.

“We start at this end and roll up their line,” I told them. ‘Thank you.’ This last was said as two of the maids started to make snow balls and hand them to me. “NO QUARTER — ASKED OR GIVEN!”

It was a simple tactic, instead of trying to fight all of their line at once, we struck the end nearest to us and over-whelmed it.

The grooms and boys aimed mainly at me, fighting back fiercely. I took several direct hits, including one to the jaw which stung like hell. A lull fell on the proceedings — after all, it’s all fun and games until someone has the duke’s eye out, but my return shot ended that. No hard feelings. Deuce! It was just too much damned fun!

The fight was ferocious, even drawing spectators to the windows of the hall over-looking the lawn. Snow balls flew left, snow balls flew right, and snow balls flew through the centre. At one point I noted that the smallest of the maids threw huge round snow balls that she arced across the battlefield with deadly effect. She never threw but that she hit what she was aiming at. There were cries and laughter — mostly laughter, both sides gave as good as they received.

It could not have been much more than twenty minutes, certainly it was less than a half of an hour that we fought there, the battle ebbing and flowing across the lawn, trampling the snow into hard-packed, slippery ice. Soon however the combat just petered out, I had forgotten how exhausting a bloody good snow ball fight can be.

The grins on the faces of the combatants were a delight to see, everybody had fought as hard as they could for ‘House’ or ‘Yard’, honours were pretty much about even. The boys, the maids and the footmen stood around going over their actions, sharing their ‘war stories’ and there was much gentlemanly shaking of hands, mine included.

Hopley, the coachman appeared. He had arranged for hot cider to be served in the stable block for everybody and “Would Your Grace, care to join us?”

“I would, thank you, Mr Hopley.” His Grace replied.

We sat in the warm stables, on chairs and benches that had been dragged from all over. All of the horses in their loose-boxes peered over the doors to watch us chatting and getting to know each other, myself and my people. It is usual for the staff to return to their homes for Boxing Day. But many of

those there were from London, so that it wasn't feasible for them to be with their families and I made a mental note to make sure that they had that opportunity when we returned to the Ton. I did very little talking — the hot spiced cider, the comradeship and the general excitement of the afternoon loosened everybody's tongues and all that I had to do was listen. I knew most of the faces, now I was able to attach names to them. The small maid with the fine over-arm lob was Emily, and the lad who looked after Cumberland was Thomas. Matthew, another one of the stable boys, who I knew already, was the boy in charge of Naiad. He and Mr Peyton, the stableman had taken excellent care of the mare and the lad asked me if he would be allowed to start riding her for exercise in the paddock. I suggested that if he could get Mr Peyton to agree, and he was very careful of her, then he could start.

After a half of an hour or so it was time for me to leave them to it.

I had enjoyed the afternoon immensely, the snow balling, the conversation and the cider, all of it. But our two worlds — those of above and below stairs — could only interact for so long. I had been a visitor and they had made me welcome, allowing me to be part of their holiday fun and games. It had been

enjoyable, but now it was time for me to leave so that they could continue to enjoy themselves without having to watch what they said; they could drink, and flirt and just enjoy the rest of their day's holiday.

The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent in a very social manner. The kitchen had laid out a cold buffet of meats, various cheeses and bread, and there were *pâtés*, and vegetable dishes all served cold to reduce the work for the cook.

We were joined by Emily Dodgson and her daughters, Henry Adams and James Barthomley and a selection of young men, who were all made to perform in games of charades, or by singing current popular songs. The twins played several of the tunes on the cello and violin, but Charlotte bore the greater part of the effort and seemed to enjoy it, because her eyes shone at the end of the evening when we all applauded her. I insisted that she take a bow as well.

Helena departed upstairs for bed and after I had seen Emily and her daughters off with Mr Hopley, some of the more local young men away to their homes, and all of the guests that were staying, upstairs, I repaired to bed as well.

Helena was waiting for me, but again it had been a long day — I really had forgotten how tiring a

snowball fight can be — so we embraced each other closely and went to sleep.

#### ***44. Another Ball?***

The ball that we held for the estate people and villagers was a much less ‘interesting’ affair than the previous, grander event, and from that point of view, it was much better.

The receiving line was much more enjoyable, that much I can say. There was no grandness, no styles — all the announcements were “Mr George somebody”, or “Henry Jones and Mrs Anne Jones”. People came forwards and the bows and the curtsies seemed eager and warm. It felt like people wanted to meet us, to see us and be seen by us. Despite the distance between us, socially, I found myself quite liking these people.

As far as I am aware there was no intrigue, no one was challenged to a duel and certainly there was no need to summon a lawyer, although mine **was** there, with his wife, and they enjoyed themselves immensely. I felt no urge to spread rumours of investigations about anyone. Instead, everyone had put on their very best clothes, drink flowed, music played and food was eaten. The dancing was less intense, it was less courtship and more simply



dancing for the pleasure of it. The dances themselves were less modern, and the musicians played more traditional tunes, and there were smiles and often laughter, as people tripped out their measures.

At one point I stood to listen to the sound of the people talking in the room. Not what was being said, it would have been impossible to pick the words out of so many different conversations, instead I listened to the tone of the voices themselves. It was a higher pitched, happy sound, interspersed with outbursts of greeting and frequent laughter.

I believe that a grand society ball, like the one we had thrown before Christmas, is nothing more than politics dressed in its best clothes. People are formally polite and enjoy themselves in a guarded manner. Our less grand event for the villagers was no less well-dressed but it was more to do with people enjoying themselves at a social occasion. For sure, there were heated moments but the footmen — led by Barclay — were genuinely adept at dealing with them and no one ended up in the snow outside.

One of the things that Helena noted while she and Emily Dodgson progressed around the ball, was that by-and-large most people treated Emily quite

courteously. They extended their sympathies to her for her loss — and to my mother as well — but more importantly, Helena said that she did not feel any animus towards Mrs Dodgson in any of the conversations. She did not seem to be excluded socially in any way, because of her brother's actions.

Helena sensibly saw this as an opportunity to bring Emily and Dr Locksley together to discuss the teaching role. She left them to talk but said that they were getting along very well.

For myself, I lost count of the number of times I shook hands with people, and swapped greetings. I think that if I had shared a drink with everyone who offered me one, I would have been the person that the footmen carried out, but most of the people recognised that, and I did hear one person say as I made my way onwards that I lacked the 'side' of my father — meaning that my father could be stand-offish — and that I was much more approachable.

At one point I found myself standing next to James Barthomley without him noticing. When he did realise that it was me, he nearly leapt out of his skin.

It was hard not to smile, instead I simply wished him the best for the coming new year; with

Hermione, the poor chap was going to need it.

At another point, I ended up standing with Caroline and Henry. I couldn't help but think that they looked like they belonged together, and they both looked perfectly suited to the setting.

"This must be accounted one of your better ideas, William." Caroline told me as I watched the dancers.

I nodded and said, "I hope so, people seem to be enjoying themselves."

"The geese we sent out have been very gratefully received, Your Grace." Henry told me, "I think it was unexpected and timely."

"Let's talk about it... tomorrow, at least." I said, "Tonight is for enjoyment. But! Before I do anything else, remind me when we do sit down together, yes, I definitely think we need some assistants for you, and they should most certainly be old soldiers who can do the job.

Caroline stared at me. "William?!" She asked.

"It was just a thought we had, Henry and I," I said, "A good one."

Caroline leaned over and kissed me on the cheek. "It sounds like a very good idea, William."

I left them together, and walked off.

At this point I realised that I actually was a bit tipsy, probably more than just a little bit. And with the complete certainty and utter confidence of the tipsillated, I made my way onto the dance floor. Signalling the orchestra to quiet them, I found myself in the middle of the party-goers.

“On behalf of my mother, and my sisters — and myself, of course — we would like to thank you all for attending tonight.” Applause.

“The late duke, my father, was not a great enthusiast for this sort of thing, I, on the other hand, am. So, I am very happy to see you all here and that you are enjoying yourselves and I hope that we can do this again sometime.” Applause and some laughter.

“Gatherings like this are so important in communities like ours, to grow the bonds between us, the bonds which sustain us both. It is only by standing, working and — yes, playing together that we thrive and grow.” Applause.

“I have tried to get around to meet as many of you as I can. If I have not, I apologise, it is something that I will try and remedy in time. For

now, though, please enjoy the Rogeringham hospitality, because I am drunk and I am going to bed. Happy new year!”

Cheers, applause, laughter and oh my! — a loud voice from the crowd, “Three cheers for His Grace, the duke! Hip-hip! Huzzah! Hip-hip! Huzzah! Hip-hip! Huzzah!”

It was a happy Captain Sir William Rogeringham, 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton, that made his way to bed that night.

#### **45. *A conversation with the twins***

I asked my twin sisters to attend me in my study. I felt that it was time that I spoke to Margaret and Louise, on the subject of suitors. It was a cold early-January day, and the recent snows had been replaced by intermittent rain, so we all tended to avoid going outside.

“William, you wished to speak with us?” Louise said as they entered.

“Yes.” I said, and indicated that we should move to the seating by the fire. There was a tray with a bottle of a very good Amontillado sherry and glasses on a side table.

“This looks very formal William.” Margaret observed.

“I do not wish it to be so,” I told her, “In fact I hope it will be the opposite, just a friendly chat.” I continued as I poured us each a drink.

Sitting down I looked at them both.

Up to now the twins have managed to avoid any major scrutiny in this story. It has either been about my mother, or Charlotte or Hermione or Caroline. The twins have been mentioned in passing but I have not spent much time discussing them, apart from mentioning their mischievous nature.

If you spend any amount of time with my twin sisters that mischievousness is the thing that most people notice first. It often comes over, as far as I have observed it, as a bubbling humour. There is very little malice in them and while they can often be sarcastic, they are never cruel. Having said that, sometimes my sisters’ idea of what is humorous can be wearing on the spirit. Once, they sewed up the pockets of all of my waistcoats. It was funny the first time I discovered it, less so the fourth and fifth times.

Having said all of that, they are much more than their jests and their pranks. Both girls take after their mother, with their grey eyes and fine, brown hair. Slightly shorter than me, they are of good physical form with proportionate physiques, that are nicely shaped, curving in in the correct places, and out where it is appropriate.

They are almost identical, but there are signs by which you may know them apart. Margaret has a tiny mole on the front of her left temple, and Louise has a small scar — next to her right eye, both of which conceal with powder when they are made up. Margaret is the older of the two by a space of some ten minutes, but Louise has never recognised that as an impediment.

They are less academically inclined than Caroline, less inclined to lead than Charlotte and lack the air of innocence that surrounds Hermione. And yet they are both charming, and witty and knowledgeable. Margaret plays the violin well, and Louise accompanies her upon the cello.

All in all, although they seem to have been passing characters so far, the twins are as much members of my family as the others, and I love them as much as I love Charlotte, Caroline and Hermione.

Which brings us to the place we are now.

“You are going to ask us about suitors, are you not?” Margaret asked.

“I am,” I said.

“Are you going to proposition us?” Louise asked brightly.

Have I mentioned that of my five sisters they also the most direct? Where many people would be tactful when asking questions such as these, Margaret and Louise will just ask straight away. Fortunately, this happens mostly in family situations and rarely in social occasions, but they can be quite abrupt in their questions.

In this case, however, it also opened the door for me.

“I don’t ‘proposition’.” I told her. “I have offered my services in most cases and surrendered them in one. However, the other situations are not to be discussed\_”

“But!” Margaret began.

I held my hand up. “They. Shall. Not. Be. Discussed.” I told them firmly. I could see the questions that were ready upon their lips to be asked,



but they could see, in turn, that I was serious in my intent not to discuss the others.

“Let us start from the beginning,” I went on, “tell me what you want from this coming Season? How do you envision your futures?”

For the first time I can ever recall, both of them appeared non-plussed. Neither of them appeared to know what to say, until Margaret asked “What do you mean?”

“It’s quite simple really,” I replied, “As you know, I promised our mother that I would ensure that all of you will be presented at court. But that is just the start of the affair. You must have plans for your lives? I want to help you achieve whatever it is that you want to do, and it would help me to know what those plans are. Do you wish to marry? Or do you wish to remain as you are?”

“Hermione has her plans, Caroline and Mr Adams are talking around their relationship, how do you see the opportunities offered by your presentation?”

Once again, I was treated to the unexpected sight of both of the twins unable to speak. I took a sip from my sherry and waited.

“Did the Grand Ball not provide some potential suitors?” I asked.

“There were some admirable young men there, but none that we would like to engage any further than we have.” Louise advised me.

“We have made some new friends, but none yet that we would allow as suitors.” Her twin continued.

“We feel it is better to examine all of the possibilities before making such a big decision.” Louise finished.

“What concerns us most \_” Margaret started.

“Not ‘concerns’, rather, what intrigues us most.” Louise interjected.

“Yes, that is a much better word, thank you. What intrigues us most is what has happened between you and our other sisters and how does that ‘help’ their futures?” Margaret finished, and Louise nodded her agreement.

It was like conversing with one person, equipped with two heads. Fortunately, I have grown up with this, Margaret and Louise have talked like this all their lives.

“I have already stated that what has happened between the others and myself, is not a topic for discussion in any way, shape or form. However, I will tell you why it happened,” I told them.

“It was suggested that my experiences of the world in general, could help you as you move to womanhood, and what is expected if and when you marry.”

Both women looked at me blankly. Nothing was said, but the overwhelming impression that I got was that what I was saying was flying straight over their heads.

This was confirmed when Louise asked “What do you mean ‘when we marry’? What sort of thing will happen to us?”

Well, this was awkward. But it was also suspicious.

My sisters — up to the point I arrived home — might have been described as cloistered, to coin a phrase. They were kept close to home because of my father’s decisions. They might have been kept away from the world, but they were not unworldly — Charlotte and the writings of Catullus being a good example and Hermione in the hay loft being another.

We have lived most of our lives on a country estate, and in London we live cheek by jowl with the great unwashed. Nature, and human nature is everywhere. It is hard to avoid seeing sights even on the streets — well, perhaps not actually upon the streets but certainly it was hard to grow up not knowing what a man and woman do when they congress.

That Margaret and Louise might somehow be naïve, ignorant of the facts of life, never occurred to me, and to be truthful, I found it hard to believe that it might be so.

“What do you mean ‘when we get married’, William? What will happen to us?” Louise asked softly. And at that point — with just the tiniest of glints in her eyes, I knew I was being played.

They were very adept at this form of teasing. One would see an opportunity — in this case playing ignorant about what passes between a man and a woman; and the other would take it up seamlessly, no word being exchanged between them, it was instinctual.

“I believe that our father used to chastise you by confining you to your room and saying that naughty girls do not go to dances.” I said sternly, and I looked at their shocked faces.

“My dear sisters,” and I said that in a sweet tone, before I reverted back to a sterner tone. “This coming year is not one of your games. It is not a jape or a jest and it certainly does not resemble a joke, in any way, shape or form. This is one of the most important things that will ever happen in your lives, and I am deadly serious about ensuring it is successful.”

I did not raise my voice, neither did I get angry, but I made myself perfectly clear about how serious I was. “I cannot do anything without your complete cooperation, however. Whatever it is you want, whatever your desires, I will try to make them happen for you, but you must assist me.”

The playful, slightly predatory looks that the twins had worn were banished and instead they sat up and they became attentive.

“If we did not want to marry but chose instead to live our lives out as sisters and companions, could we do that?” Margaret asked.

“If you wished.”

“If we wanted to set up in our own home in London, could we do that?” Louise queried.

“That would also be possible, if it was something that you wanted,” I replied. “Is it likely that you would want that?”

The twins shared a look between them and turned to face me.

“It is not that we do not love you and mama\_” Margaret began.

“Or Charlotte or Caroline or Hermione\_” Louise continued.

“We love you all,” Margaret added quickly.

“Very much.” Louise emphasised.

“It is simply, that for a long time, Louise and I \_” Margaret went on.

“Have felt like we would like to live in our own house with our own rules.” Louise finished.

I thought for a moment. The idea was not outlandish, I was aware of other people who did this. But knowing my sisters, and with a growing recognition of the responsibilities inherent in the title of duke — and the reputation of the family name — I had to wonder whether turning my sisters out into society was an entirely good idea.

“I believe that it would be possible to set you up in a house of your own.” I told them.

They both beamed at that.

“But my first question would be — who will pay for it?”

“Pay for it?” Margaret asked.

“Why...” Louise suddenly realised that the answer she had been about to give was no answer, and it died on her lips.

“**If** we have a suitable property where you can live, there will still be upkeep to be paid out, servants and carriages and clothes are not free. And if the estate has no suitable property and we have to acquire one — that is an additional cost. Do you have an income to pay for this, or will you be dependent on the Rogeringham estate?”

“But did you not say that you would try to make it happen?” Louise reminded me.

“I did, indeed,” I conceded, “And if that is indeed what you want, then I shall do it...”

“But?” Margaret said slowly.

“Exactly!” I said quietly, “But.”

I had not raised my voice at all in this conversation, though my tone was still stern, slightly cold. I was quite prepared to fund their idea but I felt that I would need to retain some measure of authority. Not control, that would mean having to supervise them all the time, but some form of sanction would be useful. “What you ask is certainly something we can do, the ‘but’ is the question of how will you fund your lifestyle? It seems that you are asking to live in one of our properties and have us fund you as well, while at the same time rejecting us as your family and turning your backs upon us? Well? Are you?”

The twins looked hesitant, uncertain of what to do and what to say next. This was not normal; my two quick-witted sisters do not usually find themselves on the wrong foot.

“If you were, that is something that I would have to give some consideration before I agreed.”

“It was only an example, William,” Louise said plaintively. “We were just attempting to discover how far you are prepared to go.”

“We were just testing you, brother. Turning our backs on our family is the last thing we would do.” Margaret sounded genuinely upset.



“Please don’t be angry with us?” Louise begged, plaintively.

“We’re sorry.” They both said together.

I laughed. Loudly. And at that moment they realised that they had been played in their turn.

“Oh! William!” Margaret scowled, while Louise batted at me gently with her hand. “That was cruel!”

“Ha! The biters bit!” I laughed. “I have waited for so long to turn the tables on you two!”

“Now can we talk seriously about the future?” I asked as I poured a second drink. I offered the twins one but they declined.

“I think the problem, dear brother\_” Margaret started

“Most cruel brother.” Louise added.

“Beloved brother,” Margaret corrected. “The problem is that we have never really given it much consideration.”

“We have everything we want and need here,” Louise clarified. “A home, a family, servants, and no need to do anything but enjoy life.”

“No one demands that we be anything other than what we are.” Margaret admitted.

“And that in itself is not a problem.” I told them. There are many women in our society, women of a certain social stature, on whom life makes no demands, other than to be — well — women of a certain stature. They attend balls and dances and just are. “If that is how you wish to lead your lives, I see no issues.”

“Good! Then that is settled,” Louise announced. “We can enjoy the Season and not worry about having to find a husband.”

“But,” Margaret went on, finishing the last of her sherry and putting her glass down. She moved to the couch next to me and turned to face me, her eyes eager and shining. “What was that you were saying about your expertise?”

I dismissed Margaret’s query with a waved hand, “If you are not looking at marrying there is no need to discuss it. Perhaps another time.”

“No! No, William.” Louise moved to the seat on my other side, “We’re curious — what was it you were going to say?”

“Nothing of import really. You may go now. If you are set on remaining single, and becoming spinsters, there is no need for us to discuss this further. I have things to do, letters I need to write.”

By now both of my twin sisters had their hands on my arms, one upon the right and one upon the left; they were leaning in towards me.

“William?!” They sounded so forlorn at being dismissed.

“This has been a pleasant conversation, but it is done now.” I could see their growing annoyance, they were obviously curious, possibly even interested in my ‘talk’, but I was inclined to make them work to get me to continue.

“Please, William?” Margaret said, begging me to tell them what I was going to talk about.

It was time to get some answers.

“First of all,” I said solemnly, “I need to know whether you are virgins or not?”

“Why ever would you need to know that, brother?” Margaret asked, and she sounded uncomfortable as she did.

“Several reasons,” I told them. “It is of no matter to me whether you are virgins or not. It would be hypercritical of me to criticise anyone for having sex before marriage. But some men still value a virgin wife, and in the unlikely case that you may want to marry, I will need to know whether I am going to have to duel an angry husband when he finds his new wife is not a blushing maiden.

“It is important, as well, that I understand how you intend to live your lives. If you remain under a Rogeringham roof, maintaining the family name is very important in these changing times. Open debauchery and licentiousness are not going to help, unless precautions are planned and taken.”

“So?” Louise began, “Are you saying that you would not mind if we were not virgins?”

“I believe that I am.”

“And are you saying that if we were indulging in acts of love, you would allow us to carry on?” Margaret asked next.

“In effect, yes.”

“And your biggest concern is that we keep the family name out of the scandal rags and the gutter?” Louise continued.

“Precisely.” I replied, “So, I ask you again. Are you virgins?”

Once again, my sisters were silent, but this time, it appeared to be while they were considering what I had said. Then they looked at each other, and they reached one of their unspoken agreements.

“I am,” Margaret said quietly.

“And I am not,” Louise added.

This surprised me slightly, I had imagined that if either of them was not a virgin, it would be the other way around, Margaret has always been the more adventurous of the two, though only by a tiny margin.

“Would you like to know the circumstances?” Louise asked, hopefully.

“Only if you wish to tell me.” I replied.

Margaret had reached out and she rested her hand upon her sister’s arm, as if in support.

“Am I going to be forced to duel someone over this or have someone apprehended?”

“No brother!” Louise said quickly, “What happened was as much by my actions as it was

anything he did. So, I will not name him, or give you any indication of where it happened. Promise me that you will not press this matter, for I fear that you will kill the poor man, and that he does not deserve.”

“Proceed then. I will decide when I have heard your story.”

“No, William, you must promise me now.” I have never seen this side of Louise. I hesitated a couple of moments so that it looked like I was considering.

“Very well then, I promise, no retribution.” I said at last, both of my sisters smiled. “Tell me your story then, sister.”

She began telling me that she would not be saying anything about when and where this had happened except, she said, that it had happened the previous summer. She was also very vague about why it happened, but reading between her words I intimated that the twins had been at a garden party and chanced on a young man who — they said — was needed to settle an argument between the two of them.

That assistance came in the form of the young man revealing his genitals to them.

The three of them sought out a secluded location — a summer house I believe, where they could see if anyone was approaching with sufficient time to cover up their activities. The argument between my sisters was about the amount that a young man's prick would grow when aroused.

I reasoned to myself that this was one of the flimsiest excuses I have ever heard, but then Margaret spoke up.

“You may or may not believe us, William, but that truly was what the argument was about. The gossip was that the young man we were with, was possessed of a particularly fine penis, which was one of the reasons that we approached him.”

“There were other reasons as well,” Louise added, “But if we tell you them, you might guess who it is.”

“So, you approached this fellow and asked him to settle your wager by taking his cock out. How did this lead to you losing your virginity?”

“It transpired that he really did have a very fine prick, that grew considerably when it was caressed by a girl's hand. And the wager was satisfied —” Louise told me.

“But it would have been a shame to leave him suffering so.” Margaret said, with a wistful sigh.

“As I was the winner of the wager, it was decided that I should do something about it.” Louise announced.

“So, you got up on board and fucked him?”

Louise nodded.

“Until he spent?”

She nodded again.

“I take it that it was far from satisfactory?”

Both girls looked at me in surprise. “How did you know?” Margaret asked.

“From the way you touched her hand in sympathy when Louise admitted she was not a virgin, that suggested that it was something that had not gone well, or that it was something she regretted.

“Also, it is not uncommon for a young man, especially if they are inexperienced, and have been over caressed — teased, as some would have it — to not last long when fucking, leading him to spend quickly which leaves the young lady with an unfulfilling experience.



“My conclusion is that you lost your maidenhood for nothing and regret it deeply.”

Louise nodded.

“Now, I shall say this very carefully, and remember that I love both of you very dearly.”

They looked at me curiously.

“How foolish are you? To give up your virginity so lightly, what were you thinking?” I did not shout nor let any anger into my voice but I needed to get over to them how disappointed I was. “I told you before that I have no issue with you losing your virginity, it matters no which-way to me.”

I reached out and put one arm around each of their shoulders, pulling them in towards me, “But my sweet loves, you must be so careful in what you do.

“You,” I looked at Louise, “Your first time should have been special. A casual tumble in a dressing room is all well and good for an aspiring young officer, but you are the daughter of a duke.

“And imagine if you had fallen pregnant?” I said, “If that had come out into the light, how could you be presented to the queen?”

Almost as one, both of my sisters expressed their apologies. “We are sorry, William.”

“This is the reason you are loathe to let us live on our own?” Margaret asked. My sisters may be pranksters and sometimes sarcastic, but they are just as astute as their mother and their other sisters.

“It was one reason,” I told them, “I worry that someday a prank will blow up in your faces — just as that one might have.”

As one, again — and I have absolutely no idea how they do that — Margaret and Louise leaned in and kissed my cheek.

“We love you too, dear brother.” Margaret told me.

“And we apologise if we have caused you concern.” Louise continued.

“If we behave ourselves over the Season, would you re-consider allowing us to live apart from the family?” Margaret asked.

“I would, but you must demonstrate that I can trust you when you are out of my sight.”

Both girls sat upright facing me. They crossed their hearts and promised that they would do

everything that they could to build up that trust.

Did I believe they would try? Yes, I did, the twins would work very hard to gain my trust.

Did I think that they would behave, especially when they were out of my line of sight? Did I hell.

Both girls leaned in and Margaret first, followed by Louise, gave me very unsisterly kisses, before Margaret rested her hand on my cock. “Perhaps then brother, you could settle a small wager.”

I laughed. This was exactly the sort of prankish behaviour that I expected from the twins. But then I felt Margaret actually fondle me through the material of my breeches, her hand gently manipulating the hardening flesh of my prick. The teasing look upon her face suddenly became a curious fascination. Louise too began to examine what her sister was doing, her hand joining in as they both explored my cock and balls.

“You may have settled it already, William,” Louise told me.

“It certainly feels bigger than the last one that we saw.” Margaret added.

“And that was accounted a fine one.” Louise reminded her.

“Then this must be a **very** fine one.” Margaret concluded.

I was very conflicted. I really was not certain as to whether it would be a good idea to let it progress further, but I was also curious as to how far my sisters would actually go.

I soon found that out, as Louise’s fingers tried the fastenings of my breeches, opening the front, Margaret assisting her. Soon she was tugging my shirt lap out of the way, to reveal my hard cock.

Margaret gasped. “This is definitely a much finer prick than the last one, sister.”

“Much better, see how thick it is!”

“And longer too.” Margaret observed.

“It is soft and warm in my hand,” Louise noted, “But also so hard!”

“So very, very hard.” Margaret marvelled.

“There is no need to be so lavish in your praise, sisters,” I told them, though their words were enjoyable, I needed to bring them back to the reality

of the situation, "It is nothing exceptional, either in length, or girth."

"But it is such a handsome one, it is smooth and fits our hands so well."

"It bothers me when you mention its smoothness, was the example you examined not so?"

"It had a certain roughness about it," Margaret told me.

"And it definitely was not as pleasing to look upon as this one of yours, William."

Their constant stroking and fondling were having the usual effect on my prick, and rather than stain my breeches, with great resolve I recovered myself and did up my fly.

Both of my sisters pouted in disappointment. "Perhaps we should have asked William to settle our wager," Margaret suggested.

"I believe that I was in Portugal battling the French at the time," I reminded her.

Louise nodded, "Still, it is a resource we should bear in mind for the future."

"Indeed!" Margaret agreed eagerly.

“With one important provision to remember,” I told them, they looked at me, as I indicated my prick. “This is not mine to use willy-nilly. Or rather it is, but it also belongs to your mother. And you would need to get her approval before you do anything with it.”

“We would ask mama nicely,” Louise said, wistfully.

“Ever so nicely.” Margaret added.

“Be that as it may, you would still need to ask.” I stood up and offering my hands, drew my sisters up off the couch. As I ushered them from the office, I told them, “I am glad that we have an idea of how we will proceed. You will behave yourselves this Season and we shall look at establishing you in your own house, is that agreed?”

They both nodded and went about their day, while I went and sought out Helena.

#### **46. *Naked as Savages***

I found Helena seated on a *chaise longue* in the bay window of the library watching the wind-blown clouds. I sat down beside her upon the *chaise* and kissed her in greeting.

My encounter with the twins had left me slightly hot-blooded and Helena drew back from the kiss, with a querying look. I had to explain why my kiss was so passionate. She laughed.

“Not that such a passionate kiss is not pleasant on a wet and blustery afternoon, but I did wonder what had caused you to be so... er... fiery.” She smiled. “Perhaps I should allow them to ‘open the show’ for me again, if it arouses you so much.”

“I need no encouragement when it comes to you, my love, none at all.” I kissed her again.

“So, tell me,” Helena said, when we had finished kissing, “What did you learn from the twins, and what did they do that so fired your passions and made my afternoon so pleasant?”

I laid out the conversation I had had with Margaret and Louise, about them moving to their own household.

“And this worries you, how?” My mother asked. “Are you afraid that as soon as they leave your sight, they will become debauched harlots with bacchanalian orgies every night?”

“A little.” I conceded. “I worry that once they are allowed to govern themselves, their behaviour will

open them — and the family name — to all sorts of scandal and slurs.”

“And is that not a little hypercritical from the man who sleeps with his own mother and who has slept with three of his sisters whilst exposing his genitals to the other two?”

I laughed. “You’re right, of course. It is.”

We exchanged places on the *chaise* and I leaned against the back of the couch while Helena rested her arms and upper body upon my chest. I looked into her eyes, her beautiful grey eyes.

“Do you think then that they should be allowed this?” I asked.

“I think that they should at least be allowed to try. Your sisters might run wild a little at first, but I believe that they will settle down after a short while. I also believe that they are astute enough to realise what is at stake, that they can be trusted. There is a house in Sloane Square, which could be used, if you decide to allow it. We could look at it when we return to London.”

She kissed me, as passionately as I had kissed her previously, then rose from my chest and walked over to the library door, which she locked with the key.



Returning to the *chaise longue*, Helena straddled my legs and sat upon my thigh.

“Do you think...” She started to ask, as she unbuttoned my breeches, “Relief would be in order after the twins teased you so much?”

My exposed prick sprang up from my belly to greet her. “Oh! You do!” She exclaimed delightedly.

My mother edged up my thighs, drawing her skirts up until her bare cunny rubbed up against my aching cock. The tickle of her cunt hairs upon my prick was almost too much, and I had to stop her moving.

Helena pulled the hem of her skirt up so that she could feed me into her, as she lifted, and then lowered herself down on to my iron-hard rod. “Oh, dear Lord! You are so hard William. It fills me, it fills me completely! Oh God! Oh God!”

I tried to lower her bodice so that I could play with her breasts, but a few tugs later decided it was not possible, so I massaged them through the thin fabric and then settled my hands on her hips and helped support her as she began to pump up and down on my hard cock.

“Oh fuck, William! I could get used to this!” She laughed as she came upon me. I felt her juices soak my cock, as she fell forwards, and I held her as she caught her breath. “Just an off-hand fuck in the library,” she giggled delightfully.

“What next?” My mother asked, as we gazed into each other’s eyes. “Taking my bottom over the dining table? Frigging me in the sitting room?”

“Whatever you wish, mother.” I said, stroking her hair. “Whatever you wish.”

Helena pushed herself upwards and started a slower, more grinding fuck. There was less bounce and more just pressing herself this way and then that, stimulating us both with slower, erotic movements.

I was surprised that I lasted as long as I did, after the attention I had had with my twin sisters and now my mother, but soon I was spurting my hot jism inside her cunny. Shooting up and up and filling her most intimate place with my spend, I filled her so full that I felt it run down my cock and into my pubes.

Helena felt it too — she opened her eyes, which had been closed in passion, looking down in shock,

“Gracious!” She exclaimed. “You have made a mess!”

Then she quickly tugged at the hems of her skirts to make sure that they did not get soiled by my spend. She drew herself off my prick and turning, presented her cunny to me so that I could clean her cunt lips before she let her skirts down.

That took a few minutes.

I licked her fanny thoroughly, cleaning it carefully with my tongue, chasing every drop of jism on the folds of her cunny, and the soft hairs of her mons.

Once I had thoroughly *gamahuched* my mother clean, she knelt beside me to suckle upon my cock as she cleaned up the rest of the mess we had made.

When I finally buttoned my flies up — again, we both lay on the *chaise*, embracing each other in the after-passion.

“I would be inclined to allow the twins to live away from us, if it meant that with the others married off, we would be free to fuck like this, where ever we are in the house.”

“We would have to be careful not to frighten the servants off,” Helena said, kissing me lightly.

“Oh! I would let them all go.” I told her, “Except Barclay, I would keep him. He is nearly unflappable, nothing shocks him.”

“I would need to keep Phoebe, my maid,” Helena said, after some reflection, “Unless your Mr Barclay could curl my hair and help me rouge my face.”

“I am sure he would do his very best.” I laughed, then said, “Very well. You can keep a maid, and she and Barclay will run the house, while we run around the inside of it, naked as savages and fucking as and when we wish to.”

Helena laughed at the silliness of it.

The light from the afternoon had faded and the park outside was dark.

“Go and change out of those breeches,” Helena urged me, “Dress for dinner, it is formal tonight so that your sisters can practice their soup spoons.”

Kissing her tenderly, I went to change.

**47. *Practice, practice, practice .***

At the beginning of that January, Rogeringham Hall became an academy.

My breeches were becoming unfashionably tight. I found that I was putting on weight, so with the help of Barclay, I began to practice my swordsmanship again, first in the Long Gallery while the weather was bad, then on a path by one of the side lawns when the weather was better.

We practised with the straight sword and the sabre, going through the simple forms, before we moved to more free practice. Our training with old dulled blades — they were blunt, but if you missed a parry, you would receive a nasty bruise — often drew an audience in the form of my sisters, who enjoyed the free show. Henry was one of those on-lookers, at first, until I recalled what he had said about being unskilled with a sword, at which point he got drawn into the practices with Barclay and myself.

In the morning Barclay, Henry and myself would work until we began to perspire, then, in the afternoon I would ride out on Cumberland the hunter, if the weather permitted. Henry often rode with me as we familiarised ourselves with the local

area and met the tenants. Because of all this activity, I soon found my waistbands becoming less tight.

My sisters on the other hand, found themselves re-learning their social graces.

That first ‘formal’ dinner — where manners and etiquette became the focus, set the tone for the next few weeks. The dinners were held every three days or so, and we had guests each time. Sir Arthur and Lady Mary Walker from Buckingham, were the first to attend with Sir William and Lady Catherine Blunt. Sir William, the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire had been unable to attend our Grand Winter Ball, but made up for it by gracing us with his attendance with the beautiful Lady Catherine, and their attendance set a nicely grand tone for this first formal dinner.

Dr and Mrs Locksley were guests one night, with Emily Dodgson and her daughters, and Mr and Mrs Langton, our solicitor and his wife. This was a slightly less than formal ‘formal event’ but still good practice. Formality is never a set level during the Season’s occasions, some are more formal than others, it varies greatly, so practising at all levels is very important. It was also something of a celebration for Mrs Dodgson, she would commence

teaching at the school soon, so this dinner was to mark this.

One evening our senior staff were guests at our dinner table. Mrs Ellis was there, Mr Dives. Barclay, of course, Mr Roberts the cellarman, our head coachman Mr Hopley, Mr Peyton who is in charge of the stable-yard at Rogeringham Hall with his wife, and several others. This was a particularly interesting evening for all concerned. The staff presented a serious and sober group, and a slightly intimidating one at that, dressed for the occasion as they were.

My sisters are used to these ladies and gentlemen being around and about them in their lives, but they are less used to interacting with them at a conversational level, and I was nervous that they would not be able to adjust themselves to this novel situation.

I should not have worried, after all I had observed the way that they had welcomed Emily Dodgson into our house, though she had the advantage of being both a woman and closer to my sisters' ages. My sisters had obviously prepared themselves with some questions — Mr Roberts was engaged by Margaret and Louise to explain about what he

considers to be a good wine and how he judges one. Caroline then used this topic to include Mr Dives, Barclay and the others.

From this one conversation my sisters came to understand the depth of skills that people like Mr Dives and Mr Roberts have, and how it enables them to do their work. They also came to understand that this applies to Mrs Ellis as well, she made some very astute observations about table wines that even Mr Roberts acknowledged as being well-made.

Mr Peyton was asked by Charlotte how my mare was progressing, and thus, each of these worthy individuals was engaged and encouraged to talk, my sisters asking further questions as they did so, until it became less of an interview and more of a conversation. All in all, it went well and the meal ended with Mr Dives proposing a toast to the future, which was a nice touch.

The principle behind all of this was for the girls to rehearse their formal behaviours, so that it becomes a second nature to them. Much in the same way that we do musketry drill in the army — so that the soldier does not think about what he has to do, he just does it; thus, it was with my sisters.



Whether and when to curtsy or bow, and knowing when to do which, and the depth to which you should curtsy depending upon your rank versus the person to which you are curtseying. Demure conversations with our guests, the correct and appropriate ways to respond to a guest's joke. And yes, which item of cutlery to use at each and every point in a meal. It sounds restrictive and prescribed and wrong in so many ways for vivacious and strong-minded women to have to behave so, like empty-headed ninnies. It is.

But, in the same way that a young officer has to endure being barracked by his seniors, until he proves himself in a fight, so too the young women being presented at court have to prove themselves at the functions they will attend. It might be observed that the difference is that a young officer must learn his trade before he goes into harm's way, but it has also been observed that one slip at a dinner, or a word out of place at a ball, can be a social death for the offender, at best they will miss out on an opportunity for a good match, at worst it will lead to them being isolated, even ostracised, from society, and placing them at a severe disadvantage in their adult lives.

I hope you that you will understand that my sisters were not in any way wayward or lacking in social skills. They were all beautifully mannered young women, even the twins, and they had all been schooled in proper behaviour, as had I, as we grew up. Rather, this was a polishing process, my mother and I wanted to ensure that my sisters were perfect in their parts, and that they behaved this way without conscious thought, so that it would appear to an observer to be completely natural. My mother watched everything like a hawk. No sergeant-major ever had a sharper eye than hers, she saw all, and noted the tiniest error — a mis-speak, a hesitation or pause for thought.

For all of her perception, and her observation of *faux-pas*, unlike the army, there were no floggings, no extra duties, Helena was gentler when it came to correcting mistakes. A simple word, a look, even just the way she set her mouth — in a tight line — would be enough for the offender to know that they had erred, and she would rehearse their error with them at the next opportunity.

The wrong fork, a laugh too loud, using the incorrect style when greeting a guest, all received one of mama's 'looks'.

We followed this programme for two weeks. During the day Mr Adams, Barclay and I exercised our swordsmanship in the Long Gallery. Then later in the day, my sisters would practice their comportment there — practising the art of moving not as they would normally, but instead perfecting a graceful glide. If they were not gliding up and down the gallery — with a small book balanced upon their heads, they would be sat at the table, practicing conversations and which way to turn to start one depending upon where one was seated. All of this, the dinners, comportment and dancing, all culminated with undress rehearsals of the presentation to Her Majesty, with Mrs Ellis, the house keeper, taking Queen Charlotte's part, and enjoying herself greatly in the role when she did.

This fortnight of preparation was immense fun, I got to know many of the local dignitaries — and my own people — much better. Most of them were well aware of what was going on, but they ignored that aspect of the evening (except when their interaction with my sisters was critical to the training) and I found to my surprise that, by the end of the two weeks I had received a letter to say that my name was short-listed to become a local Justice of the Peace.

The final dinner was just for ourselves, the family, Henry Adams, James Barthomley and a couple of other young men that were invited by Helena. For my sisters it was a culmination, a final examination, which, I am happy to say, they passed without one single, solitary hard stare from Helena.

Not a one.

#### ***48. Returning to the Ton***

Just after Valentine's Day, we made our way back to the Ton. I have seen military wagon trains that were smaller, and which took less time to organise.

Mother and my sisters, Barclay and the staff would travel up today. With an early start they would arrive in London late tonight, though I had sent an advance party two days earlier to assist the staff at the Mayfair house to prepare for their arrival and get rooms aired, and fires lit and so on.

Henry and I were not travelling straight to London, we were going via his estate near Stevenage. Henry had been before, in January, but now there was something he wanted to discuss with me, so we would both ride over there, stay overnight and then onto London the day after.

I sent Naiad up to town with two grooms, who would lead her while they rode.

Our first stop, once we had seen the carriages and wagons roll off on the road to London, was Rogeringham village itself, and a rather unprepossessing unoccupied house just on the main street by the gates to the Yew Walk.

“I was thinking about assistants, Your Grace, and where we could accommodate them. My suggestion is that we convert this house into an office where I and the clerks can work, it will be more easily accessible to callers and we can better store the records there, rather than having them clutter up your study at the hall...”

I actually did not need to consider it, it was such a sensible idea, I agreed immediately. “Put it in train Henry.”

Once that was done, we rode on to his new estate.

It is a decent house, with good grounds, a farm attached and, according to Henry, several tied farms — controlled by the estate, and a number of properties from which he draws rents.

The staff welcomed us, and the horses were stabled, and Henry took me on a tour of the house

which had several workmen employed at various places, doing repairs and making changes to the fabric of the building.

After dinner Henry poured us a very nice port and we sat for a few minutes while he talked about the changes he planned.

Finally, he stopped. "I believe that the time is now right for me to ask you if I may marry Lady Caroline, Your Grace."

"Have you discussed this with Caroline?"

He nodded. "We are agreed on most aspects of the union, but I wanted you to see my estate and hear my plans before I asked you."

"But you haven't formally asked her yet?" I smiled.

"No." He admitted ruefully.

"Very well then, I am happy with the union. Ask my sister, and then come and see me with her to ask formally. How does that sound?"

Henry nodded. "I believe she wants to marry in September at Rogeringham church."

"Not during the Season or in London?"

“I believe not.”

“If that is agreeable to you then we shall have to make it happen.”

And with the formal business concluded, and a long ride ahead of us in the morning, I bid Henry good-night and retired.

It was very strange to spend the night without Helena, but it had been a long day and I slept well.

The next day we rode on into London.

It was a good day for a hard ride, and old Cumberland seemed to enjoy it immensely. We stopped at a coaching inn in St Albans, and at one in Harrow. Henry is a good horseman, a natural I would say, and we made good time. So it was, that we rode into the stable-yard in Mayfair an hour after dark.

#### **49. *And so, it begins...***

The Rogeringham's return to town was not surreptitious — not with that many carts, coaches and what have you, however we seemed to have been overlooked by the newspapers, which I counted as a blessing.

My mother immediately began to summon dress makers. Naïve fool that I was, I had imagined that one could lay in a store of gowns and dresses ready for the Season ahead; after all, that is how it works in the army. You know that you are going to need shakoes, coats, breeches, packs, muskets, bayonets and the like, so you get them made and put them in store until they are required.

I had forgotten about ‘fashion’. It was true that we had acquired a number of gowns, with the dress makers travelling to Rogeringham Hall to measure and fit. And they were, or so I am told, very nice gowns and dresses, and bonnets, and coats of assorted design, but...

Once we returned to the Ton, the demands of the latest *modes* would need to be met. Huge sums of money would need to be sacrificed upon the altars of the capricious goddess Fashion and her equally fickle sister, Style. These demigods, whose whims ruled young women’s lives, changed their minds almost daily, it seemed. Only their priestesses, the dress makers and couturiers know what these glamorous deities need, and that is the secret of their power, and why they are so important at this time of year.



Such was the demand for the best designers that there was, inevitably, a waiting-list, but letter-headed papers from the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton proved useful in cutting into the line at a more appropriate place, to wit, the head of said queue. Helena also began organising the steps needed to get my sisters invitations for Queen Charlotte's ball — the event at which they would be presented, and which marked the start of the Season proper. At the same time, she set about securing invitations to some of the more prominent events, others, we reasoned, would follow in due course.

It seemed like there was a never-ending stream of calling cards and footmen carrying out invitations. I myself, began discussions with the vicar of St George's church in Hanover Square — the parish church for Mayfair and an elegant newish church, as we searched for a suitable date for the wedding of my youngest sister.

As I had anticipated, I soon found myself being visited by James Barthomley's mother, Eugenie.

It was everything I thought it would be. She suggested 'this', she suggested 'that', she even suggested the 'other'. It was all very respectful, to be sure, but it was very definitely her efforts to

shape the wedding in the manner in which she wanted it. When I asked how many she thought would be attending from James's side of the family, she presented me with a list that would have filled St Paul's Cathedral, never mind St George's, Mayfair.

That aside, Mrs Barthomley — who wore quite a daring dress, which once again showed an inordinate amount of her rather large bosom, was quite charming, and although I had to put off her demands — it was always uppermost in my mind that this was Hermione's wedding, her special day and not Eugenie's — she did make some very good suggestions.

Once she had gone, I sent for Hermione, and asked her to join me.

I went over what Mrs Barthomley had said, to see whether any of her suggestions fitted with her own plans. We had discussed this at length over the winter. Hermione and James had devised a plan between them and they had a firm idea of what they wanted. So, I suggested that it was time that she went and called upon Eugenie, visiting her to discuss the wedding, laying out how she envisaged the ceremony, and recruiting Mrs Barthomley to help her make it so, by persuading me to pay for it.

She would also attempt to prune the guest list somewhat.

Hermione agreed. She would, she told me, call to see her prospective mother-in-law the next day.

### **50. *The interminable question of dowries***

With Hermione's wedding planning in train, and Caroline and Henry's engagement — which was agreed quietly between us, it was now time to start thinking about dowries.

When a woman marries, she gives up any right to ownership of property or monies of her own. This state of affairs continues as long as she is married. If she becomes a widow for whatever reason, then that prohibition is ended — as in the case of Elizabeth Dorrington, who retained everything from her last marriage, and who would only give that up if she remarried — **if** she ever did so, which I doubted she would.

However, when a woman marries for the first time, assuming that she is not wealthy to begin with, she usually brings a sum of money to the partnership which is hers and hers alone. The interest on that money is hers by right, to be her 'pin' or spending money. It will also provide an income if she finds

herself widowed with no other support, or it becomes an inheritance for her children if she and her husband died together.

The presence of a dowry or not, or the amount of one, can be the making or the breaking of a successful match. So, dowries are both a plague and blessing. They can be a blessing as long as the woman can keep them apart from her husband. They're a plague on the father, or as in my case, the brother, who settles them. The dowries for my sisters are supposed to keep them in the manner to which they have become accustomed for the rest of their lives. They will be arrived at by splitting my mother's dowry into five parts.

This would not be enough.

Helena's dowry was a relatively small one, coming as she did from a family which had seen hard times. Marriage to my father had been seen as a good thing for Helena's parents and they had provided as big a dowry as they could, even though it was actually quite a modest sum. If she had married a well-off grocer, it would have been adequate; as the wife of a duke, and mother to his daughters, it was far from it.

Splitting that dowry would only leave a modest sum for each girl, far too modest to meet their needs. It would have to be topped up, and quite substantially too. I think that this was one of the issues that my father had with this, (and incidentally, why he had preferred sons to daughters) which was most unfair on all concerned because he was the one who settled Helena's marriage agreement to begin with. He was not prepared to top up my sisters' dowries and this was part of the reason that they were excluded from the Season. No woman of quality would ever marry without a dowry. Rectifying this was the promise that I had made to Helena.

If agreeing dowries was a thorny and complex problem, at least I needed to have no part in the prenuptial agreements with James's family. Hermione and I met with Mr Langton our lawyer, and an associate of his, who specialised in these things and laid out what we wanted — correction, what **she** wanted — to be included in her side of the contract.

It was amusing (and more than a little frightening) to see my eighteen-year-old sister lay down chapter and verse to the lawyers with the assurance and authority of someone twice her age.

My sister had taken my advice to heart. She had created a large number of conditions that she could pare back, as and when she wanted, but all the time it would appear to Eugenie Barthomley that my sister was prevailing upon me to moderate my demands, when in actual fact Hermione would be the one making changes to her own stipulations. At one point Mr Langton's associate looked at me for confirmation of something that Hermione required. I just smiled and pointed him back to her. At the end of it, they went away to start their meetings with the Barthomley's lawyers with a very full brief.

### **51. *A meeting on Rotten Row***

The weather in the early and middle parts of March was horrendous. Any time outside of Rogeringham House was generally spent in dashing from house to carriage and from carriage back to the house.

So, when at the end of March, Spring sought to regain its rightful place on the calendar with a number of fine days I had to get out.

All of the Rogeringham women were involved in dress-making or being fitted for dresses in some way, shape or form; Henry was busy with some

accounts from our farms, so I exited quickly and took Naiad for a circuit of Hyde Park or two.

This was a day I had been waiting for. This was what all of the care and attention in the stable yard at Rogeringham Hall had been about. Everyone that was associated with Naiad's care was satisfied that she had fully recovered. When I asked Matthew, the boy that was most responsible for her tending and exercise — and who positively beamed when I asked his opinion on the matter, assured me that she was ready to be ridden out.

Matthew had brushed Naiad so that she gleamed like burnished copper in the sun. He had brushed her mane and her un-docked tail so that they draped just so. And when she walked about the yard, she had so much energy that she bounced. Naiad has a long, straight-legged stride and when she trots, she looks the perfect picture that I had imagined she would.

We entered Hyde Park and made our way towards Rotten Row, drawing admiring stares and spoken compliments. If I tipped my hat in acknowledgement of an admiring comment once, I tipped it a dozen times. Naiad appeared to be enjoying every second of it, her head was up and her ears forwards.

We had just begun our second circuit when I heard, “Your Grace! Your Grace!”

I looked to my left to see Arabella Dorrington, standing in an open landau, waving.

“Miss Dorrington!” I said when I finally brought the feisty mare to a stop. “Good morning to you!”

“Good morning, Your Grace.”

The matched pair of greys pulling the landau set off at a walk and I walked Naiad alongside as we exchanged pleasantries.

“It feels such a long time since your excellent winter ball.”

“Indeed!” I said, “I take it that you are keeping well?”

“Meeting Your Grace has made the day better. If I could ask you, would you care to ride with me for a circuit of the park?”

“Pretend, Your Grace, that we are not two of the most eligible beings in London — I would have said the two most attractive, before I saw that magnificent lady you rode up on...”



“Well, you and Naiad here, are certainly attractive, I would not include myself in such a list...”

She leaned over and dabbed at me with her fan as a rebuke, then brought her head closer so that she could whisper, “Having the words ‘duke of’ in front of your name trumps any pretty boy looks, Your Grace, they easily make you the most handsome man in sight.

“But that aside,” she said, in a more normal tone, “Let us forget all that, and behave as two friends out on a wonderful sunny morning should, and just... gossip.”

It was borderline scandalous for me to sit in the carriage with her, without a chaperone. However, with the landau’s open top and the driver being present, I had no fears about propriety, so I gave Naiad’s reins to Arabella’s footman, who had gotten down from his seat to hold her for me, and mounted the landau with her. Arabella gathered her skirts and slid over to allow me to sit down.

“Edward!” She called to the footman, “We shall take a couple of turns of the park, look after His Grace’s beautiful mare and we shall return for you.”

The carriage set off at a walk and I almost felt sorry for the footman who had been marooned in the heat of the spring sunshine, until I saw him walking Naiad into the shade where there was a drinking fountain.

“Now!” Arabella said, “How are you finding life out of the army? Are you coping with the changes?”

For a moment I just looked at her. She laughed, it was a delightful tinkling sound, cultivated, of course, but artfully so for the best effect. “Don’t forget, that I have observed you in uniform, Your Grace,” again she leaned in, conspiratorially, “You were a soldier through and through, I imagine the change from that to ordinary life is something of a shock. I will freely admit that I have found the move from Portugal back to London, difficult.”

“I am doing much better, thank you.” I told her, “I find the urge to bark orders at people has diminished greatly, and I no longer rise in the middle of the night to go and check the watch. I find I am still busy but the concerns are very different now, thanks to being at home in the bosom of my family.”

“Speaking of which, how is your dear mother? And those lovely sisters? Especially the beautiful Lady Charlotte?”

I looked at her, surely not?

“Arabella? What are you saying?”

“Nothing Your Grace, nothing at all, merely asking after them.” She fanned herself rapidly.

“How are you then?” I asked. “You say that you are having problems with life here in England?”

“I miss Portugal,” she confided. “Oh, there is so much more to do back here at home, but the young men — and the young women — lack the vitality of those about the army. It is almost boring.

“But then I see you, Your Grace,” Her smile was radiant, and this time, I felt it was genuine. “And I am reminded of what fun we had there.”

There was much that was artificial about Arabella Dorrington, her laugh and the way she comported herself, her artful grace, but it seemed that at times she opened up and I was allowed to see the real woman behind the curtain. If I am being truthful, I quite liked that person.

She is pretty without the simpering girlishness of many society women. She is astute, despite her youth, with a keen intellect and she is genuinely

kind in many ways. She can also be very open, to me at least, which is another admirable trait.

“Tell me,” She asked, “About the young man who is going to marry the lovely Hermione? I understand that the wedding is to be the event of the Season. What are his family like?”

“They are interesting people,” I told her, “I think that they are the future.” When she asked me what I meant, I explained about what I saw as the changes in society. To many women I think that this would have put them to sleep instantaneously, but not Arabella. Rather she asked questions, getting me to explain what I was thinking.

“So, you are saying that you think our life style will change?”

“Not yours, dear Arabella, a clever, handsome woman like yourself, will always make her way in life.”

“Do you really think that I’m clever, Your Grace?”

Naiad whickered at me as we drove past them, the young man stood beside her in the shade.

“Of course I do, Arabella, and you know that.” I laughed. “What changes will come I cannot tell yet. But they will, and I am determined to make the best of them that I can — for my family and the people that depend on me.”

Arabella thought for a few minutes, it was a mark of how comfortable we felt together that we neither of us needed to fill the silence. Finally, she looked at me.

Speaking in a low voice, she said, “Your Grace. William. I wish to tell you something, because I think it is important that you know it, and I can think of no other way than to do it directly.”

I nodded.

“I like women,” she said, “I like men too, but mainly as companions, I have slept with very few. I prefer to be with a woman. I have slept with considerably more of them.”

I nodded again, without commenting.

“And that is one of the reasons why I have so much regard for you, William. When I said very few men, you did not react. Obviously, you are one of them, you were my first, as you know, and I have no issue with saying that you are one of the best lovers

I have encountered. And still, you do not react, or crow, or... or... whatever!”

“I am merely trying to comprehend what you are telling me, Arabella. No. Not the tribade thing. I am a devout believer in whatever gets us through the night hours, so that is neither here nor there. I was just wondering why you suddenly decided to tell me all of this.”

“What I am trying to say, Your Grace, is that what you said about dealing with changes — confronting them — struck a chord in me. I struggled with my feelings for so long,” she said. “That was why mother engaged you to sleep with me. She thought to get you to fuck it out of me, the old hypocrite!”

She laughed. “My mother is just as divided as I am, though I would say that she is more even-handed than me, she likes both men and women in even measures, as you may have noticed.”

Arabella sat upright; her tone more conversational, but with some purpose now.

“When I said before that we are two of the most eligible beings in London, I meant it, Your Grace. I believe people see us as an obvious match — I just

wanted to be clear regarding that for the future.” Arabella laughed, making me think that, to her mind at least, that us being thrown together by public opinion was not what she wanted.

It wasn’t what I wanted either, and I was curious as to where she was going with this.

It seemed as if she had come to a resolution. “I hold you in very great regard, Your Grace. You are a fine lover, but more importantly, from all I hear, you are a good man, and now, a friend. Once the Season gets underway, I think that many people will seek to push us together and marry us off because of who we are and what they want from us. We both have our own lives and wish to live them as we want to. Perhaps we can... work together? Cooperate, to further our own best interests?”

“As we are exposing our secrets,” I said, softly, “And for very much the same reasons — I am sleeping with my mother.”

Arabella nodded. “One only had to watch you at your winter ball. To those that know these things, it was obvious.”

“I have always loved her,” I said. “I respect you greatly, Arabella, I hold you in great regard also —

you and your mother — but it can never come near to the way I feel about Helena.”

Arabella nodded once more, acknowledging my admission.

We were coming back round to where Arabella’s man was waiting with Naiad. “You fool many people, Miss Dorrington, with your girlish manner and supposed empty-headedness...”

I alighted from the carriage and she moved over to my side, so that only we could hear each other. “But I have seen the **real** you, and it is a person that I genuinely admire and I find my affection for you has grown. I am pleased that we call each other friend, and I think your proposal has merit. I will give it some serious consideration.”

I kissed Arabella’s offered hand, and went to remount, the footman holding Naiad’s head as I did so. The mare had grown bored of standing, she was skittish and wanted a canter. “Please call at Rogeringham House, any time you wish, Miss Dorrington, you and your mother will always be welcome.”

And so, throwing a sixpence to Arabella’s footman, Naiad and I were off.



## ***52. Pillow talk, part the second***

If I had allowed her to, Naiad and I would have done many circuits of the park, she would have run until she dropped, she was that willing. After several circuits though, because she was still regaining her condition, her bouncing trot was less energetic than it had been. I think it is a testament to the mare's spirit and a validation of all of the work that went into her care over the winter, that she looked no less magnificent when she walked gracefully into the Rogeringham stable yard than she had when she walked out. A little less feisty, but something told me that once Naiad had rested, then she would be prepared to go again this afternoon.

Sadly, that was not to be, I found myself with visitors and other things to deal with.

At dinner Helena announced that we had been invited to a ball at Lady Dorrington's in a month's time to mark Arabella's nineteenth birthday. I wasn't surprised.

"All of us mama? Not just William?" Charlotte asked, mischievously.

Helena re-read the invitation, "It appears so," she laughed.

I noticed that Caroline cast a possessive glance at Henry and Hermione did the same towards James, both of whom now dined with us on a regular basis. I chuckled inwardly. If only they knew, I thought, that it was not the men folk that were in danger.

Helena must have seen something because she asked me about it as we lay in bed that night.

I told her about meeting Arabella, leaving nothing out of my account.

“A tribade?” Helena asked.

“The writings of the Greek poetess Sappho, it is believed that she was a lover of women. I don’t know whether she was exclusive in that, but these days tribade is a name that some people use for women who sleep with women.”

“A lesbian?” Helena asked.

“Exactly!” I laughed, “Sappho came from the island of Lesbos.”

“So does Arabella only sleep with women, because you said...”

“I did. And yes, we did.” I replied. “In fact, she thinks I am very good as a lover.” I said proudly.

“And how was she?”

“She was also very good. I was her first man, but she knew what she wanted and that is so important. Her mother was better.” I let that snippet fall into silence.

“Lady Elizabeth?” It was not the angry blast that I expected, it was more an amused curiosity. “You slept with her too?”

“Yes, and then with them both together.”

Helena got up on her elbow next to me. “When did you actually find time to fight the French?” She laughed.

“It was in the late autumn of last year,” I told her as I toyed with her nipple. “The campaigning Season was done, and we had been in Portugal since the mid-summer previously. Wellesley took us into winter quarters.”

I told Helena about the bed hopping around Wellesley’s headquarters and the Portuguese whores, and how Elizabeth had propositioned me at a *soirée* and how I had fucked her that night, ostensibly so that she could ‘try me out’ for her daughter.

“I must have done something right, because the next afternoon I received an invitation to her house and I was introduced to Arabella.

“The girl had turned eighteen half a year earlier, and her mother wanted me to relieve her of her virginity; I spent the night and did just that, although in actual fact it was just a damned good fuck.

“I was invited back a third time, where I found myself entertaining both of them.”

“If you had told me this before Christmas, I fear it would have made me most insecure.” Helena’s warm hand was wrapped round my cock, stroking its hardness up and down. “It bothers me less now.”

“And so it shouldn’t, beloved, the past is no threat to you and I. When she was at the ball, Elizabeth told me that when she finally met you, she understood why I was so enamoured. Lady Elizabeth thinks you are very lovely, so does Arabella, and I think that they would both rather bed you than me these days.”

I smiled at the surprise on my mother’s face at that.

“Arabella did say one thing,” and I explained her proposition about mutual co-operation over the

course of the Season.

“And what do you think of that?” Helena had slid down the bed and her chin rested on my belly as she slowly frigged my prick, curling her hand around it and pumping it slowly up and then down.

“It has merit.” I told her. “But I am undecided. This Season is about my sisters. Not myself and Arabella. I am not at all concerned about acquiring a wife and she does not desire a husband, so we could repel all comers by dint of mutual defence.”

“But \_ I just don’t know.” I admitted.

Helena chuckled, “This will be a Season to remember!” she laughed, before lowering her mouth down over my cock.

### ***53. Queen Charlotte’s Ball***

Helena was not wrong.

First, we had to experience Coming Out, or as it is more properly known, Queen Charlotte’s Ball.

The London Season opens with all of the year’s eligible young ladies appearing at court before the queen. It is not a competition and Her Majesty does not choose a ‘winner’, though she does usually select a favourite. That individual rides on this

honour through the weeks of the Season, getting the most attention from the young men, because she is the one favoured by Her Majesty.

At the risk of acquiring the royal wrath, I was going to ignore that. The Rogeringham women were going to have the pick of the young men begging for their mere attention.

A-ha! I hear you say, surely, two of your sisters are already spoken for? Is there any need for them to be a part of the Season, even for them to be presented?

It is true that Hermione will be marrying towards the end of the Season and Caroline and Henry want an autumn wedding at Rogeringham. But there was always the hope, the possibility, that the twins or Charlotte might find someone.

Being presented at court is much more than just the start of the Season, it is one of a girl's steps to her coming of age. For women of our social status, Queen Charlotte's Ball opens the doors to adulthood and marriage. It is a milestone, as they transit from a girl to being a woman in society. Our father denied my sisters this step, this vital occasion. Charlotte and Caroline should have had this pleasure previously, although there is no specified age for

presentation, normally it is around the age of eighteen or so. All of my sisters had passed this mark. This was, in my mind, long past due.

To someone that has not been presented — who is not *out*, enjoyment of the events of the Season is dulled. Oh surely, one can attend the *soirées*, the balls, the picnics, one can drink the wine and enjoy the buffets, but a girl isn't really 'there', if she has not been presented. She is one of *les Autres*, the Others, the younger sisters, the mothers, the fathers, even the younger brothers — the onlookers, those looking in. And of course, there are the 'looks', the whispers, and the feeling of being excluded from society.

This was also the first part of my promise to Helena, that all — ALL — of them would have their moment.

Charlotte, Caroline, the twins and Hermione would be able to enjoy the rest of the Season, spoken for or not. They could attend an event, with their heads high, in fitting with their rank, and enjoy it. That was also part of my promise to them.

The announcements for the receiving line for Her Majesty's ball, had been going on for at least twenty minutes. I was, thankfully, not a part of it this time,

being merely a spectator. The Honourable Arabella Dorrington and her sponsor, Elizabeth, Lady Dorrington had been announced quite early on in the proceedings.

Finally, I heard the Master of Ceremonies say “Your Majesty — Lady Charlotte Rogeringham, Lady Caroline Rogeringham, Lady Margaret Rogeringham, Lady Louise Rogeringham and Lady Hermione Rogeringham. Their sponsor is the Duchess of Norton, Lady Helena Rogeringham.”

My sisters looked magnificent. Where Helena looked stunning in a black silk dress, my sisters all wore the traditional white, short-sleeved presentation gown, by the most desirable designers. Each girl there, all of the *debutantes*, wore basically the same outfit, the three ostrich-feather head-dresses, their pearls, the gloves, fans, shoes, even the trains that they carried over their arms. But there was so much variation on show within these simple parameters, that it was quite a dazzling array and if I had been in the market for a wife, I would have had a very fine selection to choose from.

Each of the girls being presented came forward and bowed — they did not curtsy — to Her Majesty and then stood to let the queen assess their



qualities, before moving on to allow the next young lady to be introduced.

Charlotte, obviously was the first of the Rogeringham women to come forward, the oldest by quite a large margin of the *debutantes*. She managed to rein in her usual purposeful stride and glided gracefully to where Her Majesty was seated, her face passive and still, and I saw again the graceful beauty of her mother in her as she moved.

Caroline came next, also older than most of the other girls there. Caroline, despite her height, will often seem to be withdrawn within herself, as if she seeks to avoid being noticed, not on this occasion. My sister stood up to her full height and while not striding out, made her way to the throne, where she made her graceful bow.

I did hear some hushed whispers from those already presented, who were standing behind my right shoulder, presumably making reference to the ages of my sisters. If either of them was aware of anything, they showed no sign. I could not have been prouder of them.

Margaret came up and bowed, and then Louise did the same. While they were at least a year older than the other participants, they appeared to fit in

with the others, so much so that I do not think any of the other girls noticed.

Hermione, glided across the floor towards her majesty, her long hair and the stillness of her posture added to her gracefulness as she moved. Oh, my beautiful Hermione, I thought, as she stopped and made a proper bow to her majesty.

All of the preparations had been worthwhile, the rehearsals, in particular. By going over precisely what they were expected to do, we had removed many situations that would or could have caused concern. Certainly, they had advanced towards the queen with assurance, looking in complete control, exactly as a Rogeringham should.

I believe that not one of my sisters wore anything — bar some items of jewellery — that had not been made especially for this occasion. The costs for this one event alone would make one's eyes water.

And the cost was part of the whole show. It was not sufficient to be wealthy, but one had to be seen to be wealthy. Wealthy enough to take part in this parade of elegantly wrapped, eligible womanhood, anyway. The newest of everything, and if it wasn't new, as in the jewellery, it had to be the very finest of heirlooms. The fact that the women who wore

these gauds were the prettiest, the most attractive of our society, whether they wore expensive ornamentation or not, did not matter, the outer layers of ostentation were crucial.

Not that I was complaining. Henry Adams assured me — after spending days familiarising himself with our accounts, that the estate was quite capable of bearing the cost, despite Dodgson's depredations. Henry and I joked between us about the wisdom of my trying to get five sisters married off all in the same year, and there were times when even I doubted the idea, but we were committed now.

Just to be here had been a journey in itself. First there had been the 'training', then there had been applications to the Chamberlain's office, and then waiting for acceptance. Then, knowing that we would be attending, there was the actual dressing and fitting. And now we were here, and my sisters had met the queen. Now, I thought, it was time to begin; the first cannon shot had been fired, and I could hear the enemy's drums.

I was talking with my mother, when one of the royal footmen asked me to attend Her Majesty.

“Cousin!” Queen Charlotte greeted me. It is a technicality. The Rogeringham line does not have any royal blood, as far as is known. Lady Elizabeth Rogeringham, the first duke’s daughter, only conceived once she had been married off, after the all-important affair with King Charles II. But in rank, we are next to royalty, and so Her Majesty uses the old-fashioned greeting of ‘cousin’.

“Your Majesty.” I bowed and kissed the proffered fingers.

“We are pleased to finally see your sisters before us and to find you in attendance with them, Sir William. We were wondering, how are you adapting to your new role as duke? We hear interesting things about you.”

“It is very different from the army, Your Majesty but I am adapting,” I said, as she rose from her seat and indicated that I should to escort her out into the garden.

Her Majesty, Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, wife of King George III, King of England, Scotland and Ireland, is not a pretty woman, as some people have noted, she is not even handsome. Her features have been described in various ways, one

commentator even saying that she has the features of a *mulatto*, though that seems to be spiteful gossip.

Focussing on Her Majesty's outward appearance misses much that is very important about the queen. The first thing that an astute observer notices about Her Majesty are her eyes. She is a great observer of things, the people around her especially. It appears that little escapes her. The queen is also possessed of a fine brain, enquiring and intelligent, after all she founded the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew for the advancement of our knowledge of plants, hardly the act of a dullard.

She is also a very capable woman, not only does she manage the king and his illness but this with having given birth to thirteen children and she still guides the reins of the government.

“Sir William, it has come to our ears that you believe that great changes are afoot within our society.”

That was a surprise and no mistake. I have made no secret of my beliefs, but had not noised them abroad like a prophet, and yet they have reached the ears of the queen.

“The life I left when I went into the army, Your Majesty, is not the life I returned to. I merely seek to understand it. Like Your Majesty, I have family and people that look to me for their livings, it is important that I know what route to follow.”

The queen looked at me. “It is equally important that the leaders of our country look at the road ahead and guide themselves along it, Sir William. England is best served by those that see the clearest.

“Pray, though, we would like to know,” she asked, “Will there be howling mobs such as assailed our cousins in France?”

“Not while I still draw breath, Your Majesty.” I thought it prudent not to mention King Charles I and the Great Civil War, though I think the English people, having executed a king once, have little appetite to do it again.

The queen offered me her hand; clearly, she was bringing the interview to a close. “I hope that your blade is as sharp as your obvious intellect, Sir William, and that we will be well served by both.”

Her Majesty leaned in towards me, “We are pleased with what we see and hear and want it known, but not too widely, sir, that we hope that

your endeavours this Season are successful and that you find all that you seek for your family.”

I touched my lips to Her Majesty’s offered fingers again and Queen Charlotte moved on through the throng.

Helena and my sisters were immediately by my side. The interview had been observed but not overheard, and they were eager to hear what had been discussed. There was so much to be understood in what she had said, that I simply repeated the exchange, and delayed interpreting it with them until later.

This was an illustration of what I meant when I said that the queen was capable. She had said so much while not saying a lot. I reflected on it all that afternoon — I didn’t have much else to do. The presentation ball, was chiefly for the young ladies being presented, and their sponsors — most often but not exclusively their mothers — the deuce take the fathers, and the brothers. They have to fend for themselves.

I found myself with the other men in a reception room off to the side, it was an oasis of peace and calm, away from the ball room, the fluttering fans and eye-lids and the chattering.

“Your Grace?” I looked to my left to see a man in the uniform of a general approaching me.

After exchanging greetings, the newcomer turned out to be Lt.-General Sir George Bradley, who had previously sent an envoy to invite me to meet him at Horseguards.

“Well, Sir George, does Horseguards have designs on recruitment this afternoon?” I asked. The general was in charge of that department for the army. “Because if it is, I am sorry but my soldiering days are done.”

He looked puzzled for a moment, then realised what I was asking. He laughed, “My youngest daughter was presented today. Thank the Lord, that was the last of ’em.”

He looked at me, “You have five sisters, Your Grace, my sympathies.”

I laughed with him as I nodded.

“May I assume that that was the reason Your Grace decamped from town before Christmas and that it wasn’t just to avoid meeting with me?”

A footman brought a tray of champagne glasses, the general took two and offered me one.



“I am afraid that was only part of it, Sir George,” I told him, “I needed some time to move from one role to the other.”

The general nodded. “And how have you found it?”

“A deuced sight more complicated than the army!” I snorted. “I’m still not sure how civilians manage without drum calls and sergeants.” We laughed.

“And now, Your Grace?” He asked.

“I think I see the way forward.” I did not expound on what I was thinking, though I found talking to Sir George remarkably easy. The fact that our ranks had effectively been reversed — the captain of a relatively obscure infantry regiment now outranked the general — that was one reason for this, but the other was that there was a shared experience between us. We both knew the same people, and understood the same jokes; the army was a common thread between us.

“Perhaps now is not the time to talk ‘shop’, as they say, Your Grace, but I hope that you can see your way to visiting me, for a chat sometime.”

“I shall.” I told him and took his calling card.  
“Good luck with your daughter.”

“Thank you, Your Grace, she is a sweet child, but I think she may need all the luck she can get.”

#### **54. *On our return home...***

In the sitting room at Rogeringham House, after the ball, the Inquisition was in full flow, as each of my sisters recounted her view of the ‘action’. Helena — changed from her gown into her nightgown and her favourite pearl-grey banyan, sat at the centre of it all, listening to each account. Charlotte and Caroline, were still in their presentation ball gowns, though they had removed their headdresses and jewellery, and placed them away safely. Hermione had opted for a *robe de chambre* like her mother. Of the twins — Margaret — refused to take off her ball gown, unlike Louise who immediately changed into a *robe de chambre*. All of them, even Caroline and Hermione, had enjoyed the day immensely, my sisters’ joy was a delight to see. After the years of being denied, they had finally been presented to the queen and I took the opportunity to instruct that champagne be served to celebrate. The excitement was still in the air, but there was an enervated, exhausted feel about the gathering, now that all of

the planning, all of the practice and, of course, the event itself, were done. But in spite of this there was a feeling of the job at least being partly completed — even though this was just the beginning of the journey.

Once my sisters had all shared their experiences, it was time to dissect my audience with Her Majesty. Every word that the queen had uttered was repeated, discussed and digested and then discussed again.

The most important thing for me was what the queen had said. We were not her favoured choice, the gossip sheets would announce that tomorrow, but it seemed to me that Her Majesty was still favouring us with her permission. Not only that, but she appeared to be blessing my own ideas about social reforms, even though they were only partly formed in my mind.

Helena and I were sat together in my room, having a late supper together. My mother had not stopped humming to herself all evening, as she happily moved about the house. Now, as we sat over a light meal, her eyes shone.

“I did wonder, you know.” She said, out of nowhere.

“Wonder what, mother?” I asked.

“If you would meet my demands, when I first asked you about the girls and their weddings. It was my worry that you would not meet your commitment.”

It would have been easy to have been offended. But I understood what Helena was saying, “There is still much to do,” I reminded her, “How many are there?”

Helena looked at me.

“How many balls, and tea parties are there between now and the end of the Season?” I asked.

“Oh! I’m not sure, it may be thirty-two I think...”

“And Hermione’s wedding in July. There is still a very long way to go.”

Despite our happy mood, we were both tired, so we slept that night intertwined, our naked bodies pressed together. We hardly stirred all night.

### **55. *Tittle-tattle***

The gossip rags the next morning set the cat among the pigeons.

This was never about me; I had my own goals to achieve; this whole adventure was about meeting my mother's wishes for her daughters, my sisters, it was about the Rogeringham women, about their futures, not mine.

Except that one of the tattle-mongers in one of the daily broadsheets had decided differently.

*"We noted that during this year's wonderful presentation that someone stood out. Was it the delightful Phoebe Raglan-Watkins, who looked stunning, or Portia Cunningham? Even the queen's favoured Lydia Bradley, the youngest daughter of Lt.-General Sir George Bradley?"*

*No dear reader, it wasn't.*

*We were watching carefully while the two most eligible people of the year studiously avoided each other. Captain Sir William Rogeringham, the valiant 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norton — not long returned from the service of his King, and the vivacious heiress, the Honourable Arabella Dorrington. It cannot be a coincidence that they barely exchanged a word all afternoon, and it might be construed that they are deliberately attempting to throw this observer off the scent. We shall see..."*

There was much giggling about this at our breakfast table, more so when I loudly told Charlotte that it was all so much bollocks, but abruptly my position was undercut by the appearance of Mr Dives with Elizabeth Dorrington's calling card, and apparently, she had Arabella with her.

For a moment, I felt trapped, and totally unprepared for this, but then to my relief, Mr Dives offered the calling card to Helena and not to me, so as Elizabeth was calling on my mother and not myself, I went to my study.

Which lasted ten minutes or so, as Mr Dives appeared with a message from Helena requesting that I attend her and Lady Elizabeth. I was reminded of being summoned for some transgression as a child.

In fact, as soon as I entered my mother smiled, "Oh William, is it such a chore to take tea with two of your most ardent admirers." It occurred to me that she was enjoying my discomfort.

"Especially as you seem to be 'one of the Ton's most eligible people'," Lady Dorrington teased.

"I beg you Elizabeth, please ignore that stupidity, this year's Season is not about me."

“However sincerely you believe that, Your Grace,” she smiled, “The gossiping community now see it as about you, as much as anyone else.”

“The deuce to that!” I snorted. “I have the highest regard for your daughter, and I know that I agreed with her that we should cooperate as friends to discourage others, but I see no reason why she should be so mired in a gossip driven fiction.”

“Ah, but she is now.” Helena explained, “You both are, I am afraid. And there is very little that can be done about it, short of you bolting for the safety of the country. Try and deny it and the gossip mongers will have a field day.”

“They would also construe flight as confirmation, whether it is or not.” Elizabeth agreed with her.

“And is there no recourse against these vultures?” I asked.

Both women smugly shook their heads. I sat back in my chair. I could not for the life of me comprehend what they found so funny, and said so.

My mother appeared to take pity on me, which was nearly as bad. “It is simply watching you flail about as you try and thrash smoke, as it were, especially as you are usually the one directing

affairs,” she told me. “You are helpless, and it angers you that you have no recourse. These gossip columnists conceal their identities and can make these pronouncements with impunity. They can ruin someone’s reputation with a sentence.”

“If I may, Your Grace?” Elizabeth said, she and my mother appeared to be finishing each other’s sentences. I wasn’t sure which was more disconcerting — their new friendship, or my, apparently, growing relationship with Arabella. “As my daughter suggested to you, allowing it to appear that there is a relationship will work better for both of you than trying to fight such a suggestion.”

Helena nodded. “It will draw any attention away from you and I, and from any relationship that Arabella wants to pursue.”

“And because they will be looking at you two, it means that they will not be scrutinising your sisters, which in itself is a desirable outcome, Your Grace.”

“How so?” I asked.

“Because people make mistakes — and the young ladies of the Season are no different. I would assume that as well-prepared as the Rogeringham ladies are, they will slip as well. If the eyes of the



scandal mongers are focussed on yourself and Arabella, then hopefully any slips your sisters may make will be ignored.”

I was about to say something in my sisters’ defence, but Helena spoke before I did, “If my daughters err in any way, it will be because of a failure on my part.”

“Please, Your Grace?” Elizabeth started quickly, “I meant no...”

Helena stilled her comment with a gracefully raised hand, “No offence was taken Elizabeth, I assure you. We have all spent many hours on proper behaviours, and manners.”

“Not that there was anything wrong with my sisters’ manners.” I hastened to add. “It was simply decided that it would do no harm to anyone to re-examine proper behaviour.”

Elizabeth nodded. “I admit that I have done much the same with Arabella. I feared that she had spent too much time around soldiers and military camps to be let loose on polite London society.”

I smiled at that, remembering the first time I had met the Dorringtons. But there was much that was different in Portugal and the social scene there,

things which would have had the ‘proper’ society of the Ton grasping for its pearls and gasping for air. Not that Arabella behaved like a street whore or that the Dorrington house in Lisbon could have been construed in any way as a *bordel* or anything like that. But the norms of society in London were such, that what was normal in Portugal — young men and young women associating together with no chaperone — would have been seen as scandalous in London.

I suspected that Arabella had spent more than just a few hours on re-learning the polite behaviours of London society, and I was just turning that over in my mind, when I heard Elizabeth Dorrington say to my mother. “Would it be impudent, Your Grace, if I asked whether you like women?”

We both looked at her in surprise.

“Forgive me being forward, but Your Grace is a beautiful woman, and I believe that you are also a woman who enjoys sensual pleasures. I have found that too much time is wasted in skirting around these things, so I prefer to ask directly.”

“Not everyone surely?” I asked. Such abrupt approaches would surely soon result in Elizabeth being ostracised from London society.

“No, Your Grace,” she acknowledged. “However, sometimes I meet someone, and I think...”

I looked at Helena. As is fashionable for a woman of her social standing, my mother has a pale, almost alabaster complexion, and I watched a rosy flush spread across her cheeks, and I noted that her breaths seemed to speed up, becoming shallower. Apart from the flush, I suspect that only someone who knew Helena very well, would notice that this was not simply embarrassment but also a mild flush of excitement.

“I thank you for your consideration, Lady Elizabeth,” Helena told her calmly, mastering her breathing. “I am aware that many women find comfort in the arms of other women, and that they prefer it to lying with their husbands, but I cannot, in all honesty, say that I do. If by your question, you are also asking would I enjoy such an encounter with yourself? I would say that I do not know, as my experience in these things is still very limited. I have enjoyed what very few experiences I have had, but they have not been sufficient for me to say whether I would like to have more.

“I am, of course, flattered, Lady Dorrington,” Helena continued, “You are a very attractive woman

of stunning appearance, and you are obviously a woman who does herself enjoy sensual pleasures; however, I am still a novice in such voluptuous adventures, and while I am progressing in my knowledge, I am not sure that I am ready for such an interlude.”

I sat there intrigued by this conversation, Elizabeth had propositioned my mother, in much the same way that she had propositioned me to sleep with her daughter in Portugal. And instead of a heated denial and rejection, Helena had gracefully declined her offer, though it was my feeling that she was mildly interested. I think that what made it worse for me was that Helena did not mention my name once!

Elizabeth Dorrington was not easily put off. “I would be greatly honoured, Lady Rogeringham, if you would consider coming to stay at my house at Henley for a couple of days,” Elizabeth said, “It has a pleasant aspect and there are some pleasant walks by the river there. And perhaps I could assist you in making your mind up?”

Helena laughed. “I will gladly accept your invitation Lady Dorrington, a couple of days in the

country would be most agreeable. The rest, however, I will have to consider.”

It was not the morning I had anticipated, but at this point Arabella returned, and I felt a walk around the gardens was in order, so I suggested this to her and we left our mothers circling round an assignation in the country, as one does.

Charlotte agreed to chaperone us. And we had a pleasant walk in the sunshine. Charlotte and Arabella chatted happily and it appeared that she and my sister had become friends, I wasn’t entirely convinced that this was a good thing.

I was struck by the thought that things were getting out of control.

I recalled a similar walk with Charlotte before we left London to go to Rogeringham Hall. My sister and I had discussed hopes and dreams and we talked a little about my promise, now the first part of that had been delivered and I wanted to talk about the next stage. However, it appeared that Charlotte was keen on pushing Arabella and I together. Of course, Charlotte knew that I was devoted to Helena, but she appeared to have joined the group of people that thought that Arabella and I acting together would serve us both well.

There is a saying that a wise general chooses when and where he is going to fight. Wellesley, as I have said, seeks his opportunities but when he sees them, he exploits them fully. I suppose that I could have resisted this idea, but on reflection it did make a great deal of sense. I decided, that the idea was a good one, but it could be better.

“So, you think so too?” Arabella observed.

“I beg your pardon?” I asked.

Both women laughed. “Oh William!” Charlotte took my hand. “I hope you do not play cards like that!”

“Like what?”

“While you were considering what we were saying.” Arabella observed, “You suddenly underwent a change. Your body straightened.”

“You came to a decision.” Charlotte finished for her.

Was this going to happen with all of the women in my life? Would they **all** finish each other’s sentences?

“And considering what we were talking about, it might be assumed that you had made your mind up

about it.” Arabella ended the thought.

I had to laugh. Arabella was intelligent and perceptive, and she got on with my sisters, always a good thing. She knew about my mother and me, and it did not bother her, also a good thing. She was attractive, and I liked her. That other people thought we should be together was unimportant, it was what we thought that mattered.

Both women stopped laughing.

“Your Grace?” Arabella had seen my face.

“William?”

“There is much we need to discuss — a contract, if you will, informal, but we need an agreement.” Both women nodded.

“What is our aim in this?” I asked.

Arabella blinked. It had been her suggestion originally; I was looking for her thoughts. “I just thought... perhaps we could...” she said.

“Perhaps an illusion? A ruse?” I suggested, “You and I pretend that we are interested in each other? We make this last through the Season, and part as friends at the end?”

“Or?” Had Charlotte made the leap already?

“We carry this through, see it to its logical conclusion,” I said, both of them looked stunned.

“Your original idea was correct Arabella, there are advantages for both of us,” I went on, “But I believe you did not see all of the possibilities. By making this pretence real, I can give you the security you need, to do as you wish, to love with whom you wish, as long as you are discreet, and that will give me the cover to be with Helena. Marriage would be a security for both of us.”

As proposals of marriage go, I will admit that it was a little abrupt, stark even; bare of romance and positively business-like, but the proposition before us was less about romance and more about an accommodation between Arabella and I.

“You and I to marry?!” Arabella exclaimed. I could see that Charlotte was equally surprised.

I spoke rapidly, originally the plan had been to only make it appear that we were interested, so that we could avoid being matched up. My suggestion turned that on its head, but for what I thought were good reasons. I had come to many realisations over the winter, that Helena and I would never be able to



marry was the biggest one and the most disappointing. On the other hand, I reasoned, if Arabella and I were to marry, then she and I could each pursue our own happiness, under a guise of married respectability.

It was, I am sure, not a new idea and many couples did the same, for whatever reasons they might have. The sexual preferences of the married parties, as in our case, being probably the most obvious one. In our case we were adding an additional layer, my relationship with my mother.

And many men and women marry and they don't actually like each other, and never do, many of His Majesty's officers have wives at home while they serve abroad and both parties are completely comfortable with the situation. These relationships are mostly remote and distant, Helena's marriage to my father being a good example of how remote two married people can be. Unlike others, however, she did not look outside of their relationship — at least not until I returned home. If Arabella and I both knew what the other was doing, and were content with that, surely that would be more honest than many marriages? It would be unusual, mad even, but honest.

It is a mark, again, of how perceptive Arabella is, that as I explained my thoughts, she grasped the implications of my proposal quickly, how what I was suggesting would work to her benefit as it would mine.

“Would you consider children?” I asked. A marriage without issue, would be unusual, suspicious perhaps.

Arabella thought for a moment, before she nodded. “That would be... reasonable,” she said. “It is not like we haven’t...” She let the sentence tail off.

“You are not escaping the Season!” Charlotte chipped in. “You will have to go through it all, the same as the rest of us, of course.”

She was right. Arabella nodded. “We shall have to flirt, you and I, and be seen in all of the right places. And, Your Grace, you will have to woo me!” She laughed.

“I thought I had done that already.” I told her, with a grin.

Arabella swatted at me with her fan, “Fie, sir! That was uncalled for! It’s true, but a low blow all of the same.” But she laughed as she said it. I could see

that Charlotte was intrigued by all of this and that she would probably quiz me mercilessly when she had the chance.

We walked back to the house, making light conversation as we did. Arabella's mother was ready to depart.

### ***56. Pillow talk, part the third***

Helena and I talked about this that night.

This was after I had explained to Charlotte how Arabella and I had been 'introduced'. Her eyes went very round at this, after which she declared that she thought that a collaboration, even a union, was a good idea. She said that all of my sisters liked Arabella. In fact, she said wistfully, there was much in her to admire. Which is true, there is much to admire about Arabella. Her strong will, her independent mind and her charming personality. I had to fight the feeling that I did not want Charlotte, Caroline, Margaret, Louise and Hermione to be known for having the same amorous nature that Arabella has. But I chided myself for that as being unfair, because I, personally, had already been teaching them exactly the same thing for the last few months. I told myself, I was not encouraging them to be as adventurous as Arabella, just helping them to

understand what they wanted in the bed chamber, but I feared that, in actual fact, I was opening the door for them to be the same as her.

Helena was distracted, it was as if she could not settle, so I turned instead to cunnilingus to pleasure her and bring her mind back to bed. I thought I had been successful but it was Helena that got up first and she poured herself a glass of madeira.

“What are your feelings for Arabella?” She said at last.

“Is that what this is about?” I said packing the pipe with the sobranie tobacco.

“What do you mean?”

I lit the pipe, “You are not ‘here’ tonight, even licking your quim will not do it, and I know that you love that.”

Helena reached for the pipe, blowing a thin stream of smoke into the air. “Yes.” She said, “That is precisely what this is about. How do you feel about her?”

“I have told you before, we are friends, and we have much in common, the not least of which is a desire to preserve what we have. We like each other,

for sure, but it is my belief that she is more interested in you than she is in me.”

I do not think that that answer did anything to reassure her. Helena scowled.

She shook her head, “I do not understand how this idea of marriage came about? Did you not say that I was everything to you?”

“I did and you are,” I told her.

After a moment’s thought, I saw Helena take a deep breath. “I do not want to be put aside!” She said emphatically. “You are correct. I have come so far in my journey with you, I have given you so much, and you have taught me so much more, I do not want to stop this and have Arabella take over in my stead.”

“That shall not happen.” I told her. “I said forever and I meant it. It was you that I came home to. It is you that I want.

“If anything,” I said, “It makes our lives easier.

“I understand that!” Helena snapped. Then she relented, “Can you understand the fears of an older woman, in the face of a younger, prettier one?”

There is only one answer to that kind of question.

I immediately took my mother back to bed and fucked her relentlessly, ensuring that she spent again and again and again. We fucked, she sucked, we frothed, frigged, fondled and fussed over each other. I caressed her and coddled her, touching and tasting all of the places that I have become so familiar with over the last few months. I weighed her boobies and tweaked her ‘sacred’, coral-coloured nipples between my fingers. I licked every inch of her body, tasted her cunny and ran my tongue around the rim of her arse. We kissed, French and otherwise, we chewed at each other like wild, hungry animals, our mouths hot on each other, wet tongues exploring where ever we could. There was much gasping and breathlessness, and my mother demonstrated that she had become quite adept at profanity. We laughed, Helena cried, I groaned, she called out my name, I whispered hers.

In the end we lay wrapped in each other’s arms, sated, perspiration-sheened and exhausted. The candles had burned low, the room was warm but dimly lit.

“You need not worry,” I said. “You will never need to worry.”

“I’m sorry,” she said. “I scared myself.”

I enfolded her tightly in my arms.

“I can see the benefits. Arabella might give you an heir, something I cannot do.”

“What?!”

“Have you never wondered, with all of the fucking we have done, why I am not with child?”

“I — er — I assumed... I... I don’t know.”

Helena gave me a brief amused look that said ‘men!’.

“One of the reasons why your father concerned himself less with us was that I could no longer bear him children, another male child in particular.” She said sadly, “They say that Hermione’s birth moved something inside me.”

I recalled her being ill in bed for several weeks after Hermione was born, but as children all that we were told was that she was ill, simply that. We were too young to really understand it.

“I never knew.”

“It was not something that I really wanted discussed.” She said, “Perhaps now is a good time to face up to it.”

If I had hugged Helena any tighter, I might have hurt her. I could not possibly understand what she had gone through or what she was going through now, admitting it. I just wanted to protect her and show her that I loved her more than anything else.

She turned in my arms and kissed my face, her hand on my cheek. “I should have told you earlier.”

“Even if you had, it would not have mattered.” It was true, “There are ways and means for everything. I simply want... I want you and I want you to be happy and I don’t give a damn about anything else.”

“Oh, William! I thank God for your being in my life!”

“And I, thank Him for you, Helena.”

I wanted to lie there, in that warm darkness for the rest of my life. If I never moved apart from her again, it would be too soon. Lying next to Helena was not the answer to many things, it was the answer to everything.

It had all seemed so simple. Come home and make Helena mine. That plan had changed so quickly, become so complicated — my sisters, society, Arabella, the Season, the responsibility of



the dukedom, it was a tangled puzzle, but the answer was always Helena.

My mother must have sensed something in me, she turned over and pressed back against me, so that we fitted together like two spoons.

“Arabella will be your wife?” Helena asked into the darkness.

“In name only. It will be a convenience, so that we can each follow our hearts. Mine will be with you and hers will be with whomever.”

She considered it in silence for a few minutes, “Such an arrangement is not unheard of, I will consider it.”

It seemed like no time at all after that, that Barclay brought my washing water.

***57. Arabella’s birthday — and conversations are had***

The Dorrington’s town house in Belgravia was bathed in warm sunshine, which seemed entirely appropriate given the pleasant nature of the birthday girl. She herself, looked very elegant and quite beautiful, and there was a large crowd of picturesque young men about the place, each vying for her

attention. She paid little attention to them and welcomed us all warmly, my mother especially, when we arrived. I presented her with a necklace as a gift.

Elizabeth had laid on a lavish buffet, a string quartet played under the shelter of a gazebo in the garden, and the house and garden were busy with guests. I found myself talking to a young officer from the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons, though they are more properly known as the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars these days. He was due to embark with his squadron for Portugal next week. He looked very fine in his braided pelisse and hussar breeches.

The lieutenant — when he found out I had not long returned from service in the Peninsular, was asking me about the conditions out there. I apologised to him, in that I knew very little about the needs of the cavalry, only having my own horses to care for while I was there, but I did advise him that the grazing in the Peninsular was generally poor and that he should not rely on it for his mounts. I also gave him some pointers about problems he might face around his men and the differences between England and Spain, in particular the heat, which takes many by surprise.

We were just discussing Wellesley and his habits, when I noticed that Helena, who had been by my side, was not there. Begging the lieutenant's pardon and wishing him God-speed, I set off to find her. I suppose I searched for some ten minutes, or more before Elizabeth told me that she had seen my mother and Arabella in the garden.

I discovered them there some minutes later. They were seated together in a swinging seat near to the musicians. But they were paying very little attention to the music. Their heads were inclined towards each other, and they were talking together, in hushed tones. Arabella looked very serious for a young woman celebrating her birthday, while my mother was giving her fullest attention to what she was saying.

As soon as Helena saw me, she touched Arabella's hand and they stopped. Any sign of their previous conspiratorial behaviour vanished.

Standing, my mother turned to Miss Dorrington, and bent to embrace her and kiss her cheek. She turned again and took me by the arm, then she turned me around, and drew me back towards the house. There was something about her manner that brooked no argument, so I offered none.

Helena led me to Elizabeth Dorrington, whom she embraced, before apologising for our early departure. She explained that while we would be going, my sisters would be staying, which baffled me somewhat. We would send the landau back for them.

And that was it, we were in our carriage, heading home to Mayfair.

Helena never removed her hand from my arm, all of the way home, it rested there and when we returned to Rogeringham House, she led me inside and up the stairs to my room. It was there, finally, that she let go of me. In the privacy of my bedroom, Helena urgently began to remove her clothing.

Up to this point I had been silent. From the moment I first saw the two of them on the swinging seat, through Helena taking my arm, smiling my goodbye to Elizabeth Dorrington, travelling home, and arriving back at Mayfair, I had not said a word.

I was about to ask what in the Lord's name was going on, when Helena launched herself at me and kissed me passionately for a long couple of minutes.

"Helena! Beloved!" I finally said, pinning her arms to her side. "In God's name? Please tell me

what the deuce is going on?”

My mother squirmed out of my grasp and climbed onto the bed, pulling the sheets back and indicating the space next to her.

In an effort to regain a modicum of control, I slowly removed my own clothes, all the while watching Helena, who seemed unable to sit still while I did so.

At last, I climbed in next to her and it seemed as if she would explode in anticipation, before she threw herself onto me and began kissing me again.

Kissing led to caressing, and caressing led to stroking. Stroking led to fondling and fondling led — inevitably — to fucking. It was a glorious, joyous tumble, a mid-afternoon bed wrecking, and a jumbled tangle of sheets, as I slid into her lubricious quim, and pounded her into the mattress. No matter what I did, none of it seemed sufficient. Helena pulled at me with her hands, wrapped her legs around me and squeezed me in. She clenched her thighs on me, and her finger nails clawed at my back. My mother was a woman possessed, but I knew, I felt it in every desperate movement, that she was a woman possessed by passion, aflame with it.

At last, after I had spent in her cunny, the creamy jism filling her, we both collapsed back onto the bed, though she still clung tightly to me.

I recovered my breath before I spoke. “Well?”

Helena took a moment to speak. “I spoke with Arabella,” she said, “But you saw that didn’t you?”

I nodded.

“I wanted to know her better. To understand her. We talked about the two of you.”

“And?” I asked carefully.

“She was most complimentary regarding your character and your ability as a lover. Both of which things I knew already, but she also complimented me, as your mother. She believes that you could only be such a fine example of a man because of my influence on your childhood.”

I really had no argument against that, and said so. Helena seemed most pleased.

“That all sounds very well,” I suggested, “But when I saw the two of you, it appeared as though you were exchanging state secrets.”

Helena smiled. “Arabella told me that she envied you. That she understood why you were enamoured of me. She was quite complimentary...”

“Well of course,” I began, “You are...”

Helena looked embarrassed, and pushed at my chest to stop me going further.

“But you are!” I retorted, “You are everything that she said, and more, my love. It would do you no harm at all to hear your praises sung by someone other than myself and accept them for what they are, respectful and genuine.”

Helena nodded. “It goes against my nature,” she said, “But Miss Dorrington did seem most genuine in what she was saying.”

I nodded. “Arabella is a complex woman for her age, she is direct, and adventurous, but also perceptive, thoughtful and honest. If she said those things then, I believe that she truly means them.”

It was Helena’s turn to nod, “She is all of that and more, a most remarkable young woman. Once one sees past the forward, flirtatious chit that she appears, she is quite remarkable.

“She is indeed flirtatious, and forward.” I agreed.

“I like her,” Helena declared, which considering the proposals on the table, boded well for the future, given that the two women would be sharing a household.

“I also asked if she would be willing to have your children.”

I was stunned. “I beg your pardon?” I exclaimed. I mean, I had already mentioned this to Arabella, but that Helena would broach the subject with her directly, came as a bit of a surprise.

“Given that I cannot bear you a child, and succession is crucial, given Arabella’s preferences I had to know her feelings on the matter, so we discussed it and she told me that she was quite prepared to bear your children to ensure your line continues. She said that it seemed fair given the freedoms you were offering her.”

“And did she say anything else?” I wondered.

“Yes,” and I could hear the smile in Helena’s voice as she said it. “But that was between Arabella and I.” And there was a finality in my mother’s voice that suggested that trying to get her to say more would be a pointless exercise.



No more was said, and we lay there in the warmth of the afternoon, enjoying the closeness and time together.

Eventually Barclay knocked to find out whether we were going to dress for the evening — we were due to meet the Dorrington's again at a ball thrown by the Duchess of Richmond.

While dressing, I reflected upon the afternoon. I had not appreciated how deep Helena's feelings on the subject of me fathering children were. I had assumed that there would be children eventually, somehow — hence my asking Arabella while we walked in the garden, but it had not been a major consideration, until now. But to Helena, given her circumstances, it **was** a bigger issue. I suspected that Arabella's reaction to my mother's question eased many of her anxieties, the easement of which I assumed had led to the outburst of passion that led to her dragging me home to make frantic love in the afternoon.

The succession issue aside, it was essential that my mother did not see Miss Dorrington as a rival, Arabella knew that my affections were entirely for my mother, and was quite content with that, but it was important that Helena understood that also. It

appeared that they had come to some sort of agreement on that between them. It had also been my hope that they could be friends as well, and after this afternoon that also seemed to be a likelihood.

In fact, when we met the Dorringtons later at the ball, the cordiality with which they greeted each other was plain to see. Helena embraced Arabella when they met and the two women spent the evening in close proximity to each other, leaving me to accompany Elizabeth.

Several of the scandal rags reported their closeness the next day, which sent the authors into paroxysms of delight as they speculated on the ins and outs of the relationship. The rumour-mongers had a field day — my mother was arranging our marriage there and then, I was making up to Elizabeth, Arabella and I had fallen out and even that we were planning a huge wedding within the next week. Of course, none of them came even close to the truth of it. Which caused much amusement as we read them aloud over breakfast the next morning.

### ***58. An interval of Masculinity***

For the last few weeks Rogeringham House had been like a military headquarters. Footmen came and went like equerries and *aides-de-camp*. My mother

moved between meetings with the house staff about Hermione's wedding, and the next ball, and the one after that, and the one after that, and so on. My involvement in most of these discussions was minimal, and I ended up at a bit of a loose end.

I thought about taking Naiad around the park, but instead settled for going to see Sir George Bradley. The general had invited me to call on him, so I called for the landau, and made my way to Horseguards.

Sir George greeted me as I entered and we sat and we chatted.

This made me smile. The British army is an unusual place, even though it has a rank structure, titles and the like mean that the official organisation is more of a guide than a hard and fast rule. On the other hand, captains and generals do not usually chat, but a general is a law unto himself, if he chooses to, he can do whatever he wants.

"But you are no longer **just** a captain, Your Grace." Sir George reminded me, as if reading my thoughts.

"Still," I said, "I am curious, why did you invite me, Sir George?"

General Bradley explained that originally, he had wanted to know my mind about Wellesley, but he went on, that original purpose had been pushed aside firstly by my leaving London, and then later on by Wellesley leaving Portugal and heading into Spain for the summer where he was running Boney's *marechals* ragged. Where it was hoped I could provide some insight to his mind set, Wellesley had set out his stall and was doing business, and answering his critics in the process.

"So, you see, Your Grace, this really is just a social call." He stood up.

"I intend to dine at my club. There is so much 'femininity' going on at my house, I thought that the change would be refreshing. Would you care to join me?"

He told me where it was and I set off to join him there.

The gentleman's club in question — The Alacrity Club — is just off Pall Mall, and is typical of such places. There are lounges, reading rooms, dining areas, and of course private rooms. Members can sleep there if they wish, and several members, apparently live there exclusively when they are in London. Women are banned from entering the club,

even as staff, hence its status as a refuge from the demands of family life, especially at the height of the Season.

Sir George treated me to a very nice meal of beef-steak seared over charcoal upon an open grill. This was topped with a pepper corn sauce which caused angels to dance on my tongue. Over dinner we discussed the transition to civilian life, the army, and we commiserated with each other over 'femininity'.

It was very pleasant and very civilised. I realised that I missed male company after so much time with my mother and sisters. Not overly, I did not pine for it, but it was good to catch up on people I had served with. Major Thomas Raine of the 45<sup>th</sup> Foot, whose command I had been under in Jamaica, had moved to the Peninsular and transferred to the 27<sup>th</sup> as a Lt. Colonel. I was greatly dismayed to hear that he had died in an engagement with the French, but in the process he had covered himself in glory by defending the regimental colours with his life, which prevented them from being captured by the enemy. We drank a toast to Thomas Raine, a villain and a rogue by his own words but a damned fine soldier, and a man who made good soldiers better.

After the meal I went with Sir George into the member's lounge, where I was introduced about the place. Many of the members knew my father, either through his commercial connections or just socially. He hadn't been a member of this club, but he was well known. We talked about many things and it was suggested that I should be put up for membership. One doesn't just apply to join a club like The Alacrity, one has to be proposed.

I wasn't opposed to this; I appreciated the opportunities it offered, but I resolved I would never make it more than an occasional treat.

I ended up having a very nice *cognac*, with Sir George. French brandy via the coast of Dorset is a bit of a rarity, technically such trade with the French is under a strict embargo, but where there is a will... perhaps, if I became a member, I would ask for the name of the supplier.

Sir George suggested that we might move on to another place that he knew — one where women were definitely allowed in. These would be whores of course, but women of the very best calibre and guaranteed to take very good care of you. But I found that I no longer had the taste for such casual

dalliances, and made my excuses, and returned home.

### **59. *The Season grinds on***

From being at a loose-end before my visit to Sir George, the situation changed, and the next few weeks were busy. The days were full — letters to and from Henry about the estate and his and Caroline's wedding; meetings with Mr Langton and the lawyers acting on behalf of Hermione, further meetings with Mr Langton about the upcoming court case against Sir Montague Fellowes. I even travelled to Rogeringham Hall to meet with Sir Arthur and Sir William Blunt about taking up the role of Justice of the Peace.

Sometimes, when I had rushed back to Mayfair from Buckinghamshire, I had to change immediately to venture out for an occasion such as a ball, a dinner or a concert. And then the next day there would be a picnic or a garden party or even just being seen walking in a park. The one who appeared to enjoy this time most of all was Naiad, the mare, who despite the long, and often hurried, days on the road always seemed to be ready to go on and do it all again.

Evenings, when I was at home were dinners, the theatre, recitals and balls, and all of the pleasures of the Season. Glittering parties, orchestras, food, drink, conversations with gentlemen of society and some quite predatory women.

At one ball, at the home of Lord and Lady Cumberbatch, I narrowly avoided what appeared to be a trap laid for me in the Cumberbatch's rose garden. It transpired that a very pretty young lady — the Honourable Geraldine Pennywise had been set to wait for me by her mother, and at the appropriate moment she would be found in my company unchaperoned, I would be embarrassed and dishonoured, unless I took Geraldine to wife. Oh woe! Oh! Woe!

By chance I was escorting Helena through that very rose-garden, admiring some of their magnificent blooms, when we encountered young Miss Pennywise. (The fact that the twins had overheard the plan had nothing to do with it, honestly) To cut a long story short, Helena took on the role of chaperone, chatting with the young lady, who was, to be honest, quite attractive and charming, and together we ensured that no one was able to take advantage of her. Geraldine was totally enamoured of Helena, as so many young ladies



appear to be, and kept returning to her company throughout the evening, before we surrendered her to her mother, and Helena left Lady Pennywise with the message that she would need to try much harder and get up far earlier to succeed with such tactics.

And that was not an uncommon occurrence, such was the drive to get this year's crop of young ladies married off to the best advantage.

I could have written much, much more about the events of the Season, but to be truthful most of them were the same event — except that they were held in a different place upon a different date. Occasionally there were occasions that stood out — a masked ball, or a picnic which took place upon the Serpentine with everybody cruising upon the lake in small boats, complete with watermen to move them about. But events like that were the exception, rather than the rule and I have tried to spare the reader from having to endure such glittering tedium.

Added to this was the intricate dance of 'the courtship that was not', between Arabella and myself. We managed it by creating "moments" — me assisting her up or down a step, handing her a drink of punch, sometimes we would be passing each other and have a 'chance' encounter, and I

would bow and she would curtsey. And each and every encounter would be reported in the ‘society pages’ the next morning.

And very nearly every night, Helena and I would sleep together, making passionate love at first, then unless one of us was very tired, we would rise for a short time, share a pipe and a glass of wine or a tot of rum, before retiring to bed and sleeping until Barclay woke us.

My mother’s passion was everything I had hoped it would be, and sleeping with her every night was all of my dreams fulfilled.

### **60. *Helena makes ‘arrangements’***

With all of my travelling around, some nights I slept alone, either when I was at Rogeringham Hall or staying somewhere else. I missed Helena greatly, and when I returned to her presence, her smile, her touch, the sight of her coral-coloured nipples and her alabaster breasts, never failed to arouse me.

However, on one occasion it was my mother and not me that had to leave our bed.

Helena received a note from her brother that her father was very ill, and he had asked that she travel out to Guildford, in Surrey to see him. She would be

there for a couple of days, and it was decided that she would take Caroline and Hermione with her, as both of them were soon to be married, and Helena was concerned that her father might not be able to attend the weddings of his grand-daughters. Charlotte also went with them as she has great affection for the old man.

On the morning of her departure, with Mr Hopley, one of the footmen and Phoebe, her maid accompanying them, Helena leaned in and gave me a chaste kiss upon my cheek, before informing me quietly that “I have made arrangements, you should enjoy them.”

I was busy myself that day. Mr Langton, my lawyer, was in town for the start of our court-case against Sir Montague Fellowes at the Old Bailey. I attended as the plaintiff, which was the reason I could not go with Helena. It was quite interesting and Mr Langton — assisting the barrister for the prosecution — appeared to actually be enjoying himself. He later confided to me that it was a pleasure to be out of his office and in front of a judge for a change, but for myself I could not help wondering what my mother’s parting words meant.

That evening my sisters and I dined early because I was escorting them to a performance of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at the newly rebuilt Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

It was a busy evening, we saw, and were seen with the Dorringtons; Her Majesty acknowledged us, and the twins drew the usual crowd of admiring young men, both before we were seated and at the interval. *Herr* Mozart's opera is one I normally enjoy quite a lot, it is clever and lively and if it is done well, most entertaining. Alas, I could not settle to it. My mind was constantly dwelling on my mother's words. Margaret noted my distraction and advised me that the opera was very well done — in case anyone asked me how it had been.

When we returned to Rogeringham House, there was a note from Mr Langton about the case and what had happened after my departure that afternoon. I spent some time reading it, in case a response was needed. Fellowes' lawyer had offered a settlement of the case, but Langton suggested that the offer was almost insulting and that we should reject it.

Mr Langton is a particularly intelligent sort of chap, and his arguments in the court, via Mr Black,

the barrister — those I had followed when I wasn't distracted — were particularly insightful. Between them, they had run legal rings around the defence, whose main tactic had been to argue that the case that we had brought was no case at all, and had no merit, so it should be dismissed. Our argument was simple — Fellowes had conspired with Alfred Dodgson, pressuring him over three properties that rightfully belonged to the Rogeringham estate — which Dodgson had then fraudulently transferred into his own name. Fellowes knew that the properties had not been Dodgson's to sell, but he still planned to buy them off him and then sell portions of them to the canal company, of which he was also a part.

Fortunately, due to Emily Dodgson providing both sets of books and Dodgson's own habit of keeping all documents, we had the proof in the form of receipts; and because of that there was no need to bring Emily up to London from Rogeringham to bear witness. Apparently, Fellowes's lawyer did not see the need for that either; probably because she would have provided a better witness for us due to Fellowes attempts at coercing her, than she would have been for them.

Mr Black, the barrister, had dealt with all of the defence's arguments, dismantling the situation clearly and eloquently, and the offer by the defence to settle was clearly an attempt to avoid further pain and embarrassment, if Sir Montague was to be found guilty.

I agreed with Langton's assessment and sent him back a note saying so, to his chambers at Lincoln's Inn.

### **61. *It all becomes apparent***

So, it was late when I eventually retired. Barclay had laid night clothes out but it was warm — the London night was quite muggy with the early summer weather, so I bade him goodnight and fell into bed naked and tried to sleep, missing Helena but still with the words 'I have made arrangements' flitting through my mind.

Not long after I had retired, there was a knock on the door. I sat up, pulled a sheet around me and bade them enter. The mystery of my mother's words was resolved soon after, when the twins came into my room, wearing their dressing-gowns and from the look of it, nothing else.

They shut the door behind them and posed in the dim light of the room for me.

“William.” Margaret began.

“We need you to settle a small argument.” Louise finished.

“Have you agreed this with your mother?” I asked, though I knew the answer. The twins would never have done this without her agreement.

“Oh yes,” Louise began.

“As soon as we knew that we were not required to go to grandpapa’s, we asked her.” Margaret continued. “We wanted you to settle the discussion we were having.”

From the tone of their voices, their ‘naïve’ way of speaking, I believe that the twins were once again, pretending to be innocent and inexperienced in their manner. Very well, as before — that is a game that two — or in this case, three can play at.

“She was most concerned.” Louise took up the story, “She questioned us quite severely about what we wanted to know.” As she spoke, they both began to remove their night gowns, revealing, as I suspected, their nudity beneath. Their skin was pale

in the dim light, as they moved towards me. I stood up and they stood to each side of me.

“In the end though, it seemed that she gave in quite easily.” Margaret said, thoughtfully.

“Yes, I thought so too,” Louise added, “But mama did tell us that we could attend you each night that she is away.” Their hands reached out tentatively, and their fingers were gentle upon my bare skin.

“And that you would settle the argument between us.” Margaret finished. Between them they explored the whole of my torso, touching, stroking and just resting their fingertips upon my skin.

“And what is your argument about this time?” I leaned forwards and kissed each sister gently on the lips, curling my arms around their hips and drawing them in towards me.

It was a most unusual sensation. The twins’ movements and touches were such that it felt like one person with four hands was touching me, rather than two individuals. Indeed, in the dim light it was hard to know which caressing hand was attached to which sister.



My skin was a-tingle, the constant delicate touching and stroking, their gentle probing and tracing the shape of my body was so sensual, so arousing that I was so hard under the draped sheet that it almost hurt.

“Well, the first thing we wanted to know,” Margaret began.

“Was how much bigger your cock got, when it was hard.” Louise said, as she reached for the sheet that wrapped around my hips.

It was the question that my sisters had sought an answer for before, but as I let the sheet fall to the floor away from her reaching hand, I told them that I was afraid that it was perhaps too late to answer that.

And it was. My prick stood out proud, and as long as it has ever been.

There was a faint sigh of disappointment from both girls as their hands now reached for my cock. “Oh! It is quite big, Louise, isn’t it?”

“It appears to be,” Louise agreed with her, “But as we have not seen it soft, how shall we know.”

I realised that this night had been some time in the making, and that if Helena had given her

permission, it would be hypercritical of me not to go along with what my sisters wanted. And if that was the case, why should I not enjoy it, as well? “You could make it soft,” I told them.

“Can we do that?” Margaret asked, with her hand on my shaft. “It is so hard and so strong.”

“But soft and warm too!” Louise cooed, repeating what she had said the last time we had been in this position, as if she was discovering it anew.

“You know perfectly well how that is done,” I reminded them of what had happened on their first adventure, “If you want to make it soft you must make it spend.

“Use your hands, my dears, and stroke it until the jism flows. Then it will wilt and be soft again.” To be truthful I was not certain of that last part, I felt that were I to spend, I would still retain my hardness, so we would have to see.

I moved from between them and turned up the oil lamps slightly to bring up the light in the room. When I turned back, my sisters were on the bed, waiting for me. I climbed on and took my place between them.

Their hands immediately reached for my manhood, as I settled beside them, “How may we do this, William?” Margaret asked.

“See what Louise is doing?” She was gently stroking my cock up and down. “You may assist her in doing that or you may fondle my pills,” I said.

“Gently!” I gasped, “They are tender and easily hurt.”

“Sorry brother.” Margaret apologised, as she cupped my balls in her warm hand. “Oh! They feel so heavy! Are they full?”

“We shall see soon,” I told her, as I leaned towards her and kissed her, my opened mouth, covering her lips with mine. Finding that she responded to my kiss, I slipped my tongue across hers and soon we were French-kissing.

“Lu-lu, you must exchange kisses with William,” she said breathlessly when we stopped. “It is a most marvellous sensation!”

They changed their tasks — Margaret began to frig my cock while her twin leaned in for her kisses. Kissing Louise was equally as passionate as kissing her twin. Soon I fell backwards onto the pillows, Louise sprawled across my chest while we kissed,

her position allowing me to also fondle her breasts. She began to moan and sigh even while our mouths were together.

Both of the twins have very small breasts, unlike their sisters, even Hermione is bigger in that area, but certainly Louise's are just as sensitive as those of the other girls, and her nipples respond just as readily as theirs do. Having kissed both of her teats and tugged them gently, I placed Louise back beside me, I sat up and turned back to Margaret.

"I am sorry, my loves, but if you wish to see me spend, you will need to work harder." I told them.

"What can we do?" They asked.

"You could always take it in your mouth."

Margaret sat up, "Take your..."

"Cock, in our..." Louise looked at me.

"Mouths?!" Her sister finished.

"Why, yes!" I laughed, teasing their incredulity. "All the sophisticated women do it. There is even a French name for it."

"A name?" Louise asked.

“A woman that does this is called a *fellatrice*.” I told her, “From its proper name — *fellatio*.”

“Does mama do this?” Margaret asked.

“**That** I will not answer,” I said with a smile. “What passes between your mother and I is not something I am going to discuss, but, if you wish to make a man spend, licking and sucking his cock is a very good method.”

“Then it is something that we must attempt, Louise.”

“Very much so, Margaret.” Louise responded, “How do we begin, William?”

By this point, I was beginning to wonder if my sisters’ naïve act was not genuine.

“First,” I told her, leaning my head close to hers and lowering my voice, as if I was telling her a great secret, Louise looked at me expectantly, “You must take my prick...” I paused significantly, “Into your...” I paused again, counting a slow beat — one, two, in my head, “Mouth!”

She realised that I was teasing her, and clenched her hand on my shaft.

I winced.

She smiled. “But seriously, brother?”

“No!” I laughed, “It is no more difficult than that. Lower your mouth over the head of my cock and lick it. Do not use your teeth, my love, but employ your tongue, as if it was a sweet thing, lick it, play with it.”

Margaret, listening to this, decided to take matters into her own hands and moving her head down, wrapped her lips around the tip of my cock, pushing Louise’s hand out of the way.

“Just. Like. That!” I said, as I felt her wet mouth envelope my cock-head. “Now take more in, lower your head down.”

“Mmmmmmmmmmm!” Margaret made delighted sounds as she took me deeper in her mouth, so that I almost touched the back of her throat. Then she raised her head, without letting the shaft out of her mouth and pressed down again!

“Ooooooh!” Louise laughed, “Just like Stable-yard Mary!”

I looked at her, “Who?”

“There was a servant girl at Rogeringham Hall, for a short time, she enjoyed this sort of thing. She

would take the stableboys and grooms in the hay loft and she liked nothing more than sucking on them like this. We heard that her nick-name was Stableyard Mary because she liked the boys from the yard more than the footmen in the house.”

“What happened to her?”

“She fell pregnant and left the hall, that is all we knew. But she did so love this sort of thing.”

Margaret had been sucking away as Louise had talked, she was trying but lacked skill. She raised her head, and allowed Louise access. “We saw her one day going into the stables with one of the boys, and we concealed ourselves to see what they were doing.”

I found it interesting that the twins, like Hermione and Helena before them, had all observed people being fellated, they’d seen it from afar, so that they were aware of the practice, whereas I had had no idea such a thing existed until a servant girl at my college had offered to ‘relieve my condition’ for a penny.

Louise appeared to have paid more attention to watching what Mary was doing in the hayloft, because she applied herself more to the task and was

bobbing her head up and down as she licked my cock. She also had her hand on the shaft, frigging it while she sucked.

“She knelt in front of the boy and took his breeches down, and pulled his cock out,” Margaret told me. “It wasn’t as nice a one as yours, but she attacked it like she had not eaten in days, bobbing her back and to, and moving his prick in and out of her face. The boy seemed to quite enjoy it, as he took hold of her head and began thrusting his hips in and out.”

“At one point, I saw Mary’s hand slide up between his thighs, and poke about between his arse cheeks.” Louise added, pausing her work.

“I thought she was probing him with her finger.” Margaret commented, her fingers soft on my pills as she gently caressed them.

“It looked like it,” Louise observed. “Does that bring pleasure, William, that sort of thing?”

“If it is done right,” I told her. Their faces were a picture of concentration as they listened, but moments later they both leaned in and trapped my cock between their two pairs of lips and began licking and suckling on my hard cock. It was a



delightful feeling, and the concentration of sensation on my shaft drove me quickly to spend.

And spend I did. Copiously.

My jism splashed over both of my sisters' faces, liberally coating them with creamy cum.

They looked at me from either side of my cock and smiled. "Did we do that correctly, William?" Margaret asked, strings of my spend covering her face.

"Did we?" Louise also asked, similarly decorated.

"You spent most generously." She said, as she drew her fingers across her face and tasted the strings of cum. Margaret was doing the same.

"It tastes salty..." Louise said.

"And slightly sweet!" Margaret agreed with her, and for a moment I was transported back to the first time Helena took my cock into her mouth. I had spent energetically across her chest and face; the twins' reactions had been almost identical to hers.

"A not unpleasant taste," Louise agreed, and leaning forwards, she drew some of the spending off

her sister's face with her finger, which she then placed in her mouth and tasted.

"I do believe that the taste is dependent upon the skin upon which it rests." Louise declared.

Of course, Margaret then had to do the same and there followed a mutual tasting, as my sisters cleaned each other's faces and sucked my jism off their fingers.

As I watched the twins, gathering my smeared spendings from their faces and proffering it to each other, which they sucked from their fingers, I could do nothing else but get hard again much to the girls' disappointment.

"William!" Margaret exclaimed, "Sir, you are most unfair!"

"Yes, brother!" Louise said, "We tried so hard to make your prick soft..."

"And you make it hard again!" Margaret finished.

"It was not me that made it hard again!" I protested, "It was watching you, my dear loves, feeding each other with my cum so daintily."

"Was it erotic?" Louise asked in surprise.

“Very,” I told her.

“And it made you hard again?” She said, with obvious disappointment.

“It did.” I said, ruefully. “I am sorry.”

“Well then, we shall have to do something else.” Margaret observed.

“Yes,” Louise agreed, “You must take Mags’ maidenhead!”

I looked at Margaret, then back at Louise, “Does she have no say in this?”

Beside my ear Margaret spoke, “Take my virginity, William. Fill me with this handsome cock, and fuck me ’til I swoon, brother...”

“Yes!” Louise urged me delightedly, “Fill her pretty quim with jism and make her a woman!”

The twins clasped each other’s hands and looked at me hopefully. “Please William!” They begged.

“Very well then,” I said, “Which position would you like to use?”

For a moment Margaret looked puzzled, “There is more than one?”

“The grooms and Mary only ever used one, with her on her back.” Louise said, “There are others?”

“There are many,” I told them, “Each one has its own pleasures and delights.”

“Which is best?” Margaret asked.

“I think to begin with, face-to-face is probably a good idea, but perhaps with a variation.”

I placed a cloth upon the bed in case Margaret had a show of blood, and then had Louise lie down and suggested that Margaret lie back with her head upon Louise’s arm. This way Louise could support Margaret.

“Will it hurt?” She asked.

“Well?” I asked Louise.

“Momentarily,” she said taking Margaret’s hands in hers.

I took my place between Margaret’s legs, lowering myself down, but giving Louise a fleeting kiss as I did.

“Hoi brother!” Margaret exclaimed as I did so. “I am the virgin about to be sacrificed!”

“I beg your pardon, my dear,” I said as I kissed her too. And while we were kissing, I slid my cock into her already wet cunny.

“HMMMMMM!” Margaret’s surprise was a squeal muffled by our lips, as my hard cock forced its way past her maidenhead.

I broke our kiss, “That wasn’t so bad, was it?” I asked. I looked down and there was a spot or two of blood upon her nether lips, none on the cloth, there had been some pain, but I suspect that taking my sister’s maidenhead had not been too painful for her.

Margaret shook her head, her eyes shining. She turned to look at her sister. “It is done! At last!”

Louise leaned her head forwards and kissed her. “And well done, it seems. How does it feel to have William’s prick in you?” She asked.

Margaret’s only answer was a happy smile and a delighted wriggle of the hips, as she wrapped her legs around me and pulled me further in.

“I hope I get to enjoy that,” Louise said, as I began to thrust away into our sister.

“There is plenty of time for that.” I told her breathlessly.

“It is a shame you do not have two pricks, brother, then you could love us both at the same time.”

“Sadly, I only have the one,” I laughed.

“In that case we must be careful, not to put too much wear on it,” Margaret said seriously, from beneath me, “Or mama will be most angry.”

“She will,” Louise agreed. “And we would not want that.”

I have never fucked anyone while having a conversation with the person lying next to her, it was most peculiar, but fuck away I did. Rising to my knees I lifted Margaret’s hips and thrust away at her no-longer virgin cunny. It was as I did that, that Louise leaned over and, resting her hand upon Margaret’s breast, she kissed her sister tenderly on the mouth.

I had suspected something along these lines, that my twin sisters being so very close anyway, might be intimate with each other at times. Certainly, Louise’s kiss was not that of a sister to her sibling, it was the kiss of a passionate and familiar lover. And Margaret’s response was equally passionate.

“Ah-hem!” I coughed, interrupting their fondling. Apologising, Louise left off kissing Margaret, and leaned in and kissed me with her open mouth. It would have been a much longer kiss, but I stopped it, very much aware that I was in the act of deflowering Margaret, and that it would be unsatisfactory if she was the supporting act and not the starring performer in her own erotic drama.

Louise took my meaning and she knelt next to her sister, looking longingly at her, as she writhed beneath my thrusting hips.

Louise could not resist reaching out and fondling Margaret’s breasts with their large nipples. I could see that it was adding to Margaret’s arousal. Her hands clutched at my arms, pulling me to her as she began to pant her lust.

“Oh William! Oh brother!” She gasped, “This is so much better than my fingers — or Louise’s fingers, or anybody’s fingers. Oh yes, oh yes! OH! YES!” Margaret’s head lolled back, as her hips rippled with her orgasm. She pulled Louise in to kiss her and their two pale bodies entwined as I finished my course by spending hard, up inside my sister. It was a mighty cum, I had been teased and tasted, and stroked and fondled and brought to the edge several

times, so that when it did at last come down, it came in a torrent, a blast of hot, sticky jism.

I sat back on my heels, lowering Margaret back to the bed.

“Come here, Louise!” I said as I took her by the arm, “Observe.”

Margaret was still recovering herself after her fierce cum, but I brought Louise so that she could see my limp cock, glistening in the candle light, “That was what you wanted, yes?” She nodded and held her hand up against my prick, measuring it by the span of her fingers.

“Now we need to get it hard again, to compare!” She said brightly.

I sighed theatrically, “Will it ever be enough?” I asked. Louise shook her head, impishly.

“Well then, I shall not do all the work, sister.” And I directed her head, now level with my cock, towards her sister’s cunny.

“Clean that up!” Louise moved to get a cloth but I stopped her. “Use your tongue.”

My sister looked at me.



“What? It’s been there before, hasn’t it?” Sheepishly, she nodded.

“Well then,” I told her, “Now you can eat her quim with a portion of cock-sauce on it.”

“And what will you do?” Louise asked, as she reached for Margaret’s knees, parting them to access her sister’s cunny.

“I shall get hard watching you, and then I shall fuck you as you do it.”

Louise bent to her task with a will, lashing Margaret’s pussy lips with her tongue, burying herself in the task of licking up as much of my spend as she could. I enjoy watching women so engaged, and soon my prick was ready to go again. I brought Louise’s hand to my now erect prick and let her feel the difference in size. She paused briefly to look, measured it with her fingers, as she had when it was limp, raised her eye-brows in appreciation, then plunged back to her task.

I moved behind her, lifted her hips and slid myself deep into her tight, wet quim. After all, I thought, she has only had one cock up there, and not a very satisfactory one, by all accounts.

Margaret began to moan under Louise's efforts. Louise began to moan as a result of mine.

Margaret began to writhe as Louise lashed her sister's cunny with her tongue. Louise began to wriggle and twist as I fucked her in the manner of the beasts.

Margaret's hands pressed down on her sister's head, pressing her inwards and onwards, I took hold of my sister's hair, as I drove her into Margaret.

Margaret shuddered to a series of small cums on Louise's tongue, Louise was wracked by a huge orgasm as I fucked her hard.

Our groans and grunts filled the room. It was, I have to say, one of the most lascivious things I have ever seen or done. At one point Margaret's hand lay upon mine as it was twined in Louise's hair, and she looked at me, as if to say that this was how it should be. We were agreeing that using her sister like a whore between us, was a fit and proper thing to do, and that also, when it was her turn, she would let us do exactly the same thing to her.

I was not gentle with my sister, each thrust shoved her forwards into Margaret's cunt, but from the groans and muffled squeals, it seemed not to

matter. She took it eagerly, pausing at one point to look back at me and urge me on. Her face was wet from Margaret's juices, and her eyes glittered, her grin was less that of an elegant lady in society but more akin to something feral. As Louise turned back to her task, she lifted her hips up, as if in encouragement. The full blossom of her quim lips was a crumpled red flower, but a flower that wasn't for plucking, I was going to crush it.

And crush it I did, as I plunged back inside Louise, as deep as I could, driving her on, withdrawing and then thrusting on again.

I had had a massive spend earlier, but even so with the sloppy squelch of Louise's mouth on Margaret's cunny, and Margaret's sighs, groans and soft words of encouragement for her sister's efforts, I knew I was not going to last very much longer. I straightened my back up, lifting Louise's hips up and began to hammer her battered cunny.

My sister's knees no longer rested on the mattress, they hung suspended in mid-air, her head was at a strange angle to Margaret's hips, so to accommodate her, Margaret lifted her hips, allowing Louise to lie on her thighs, and giving her a more useful angle to access her pussy. What Margaret

wasn't expecting was that Louise, now in pursuit of any of my jism still left in place (there could not have been that much left there), delved deeper and deeper with her tongue until Margaret cried out, "Oh Lu-lu! That is my arse! Oh fuck, yes!"

The touch of Louise's tongue on the pucker of her arse triggered another cum in Margaret, her bucking, transmitted to me through the length of Louise's body, triggered my spend, and like a string of fire-crackers exploding in succession, Louise's cum came down as I drenched her cunt in jism.

Both of my sisters looked like wrung out flannels, as they collapsed upon the bed, with Louise too limp to move from her place between Margaret's thighs.

I took a wash cloth and gently cleaned both of them off, wiping myself off as well. While I placed the cloth back upon the wash-stand, Louise blindly crawled up beside her sister, in the way that a newborn kitten will seek its mother's teat.

When I did climb into bed, both girls welcomed me, wrapping around me and settling into place.

And so, like that we slept.

## ***62. A second day in court***

I rose early the next morning — I could hear Barclay setting out my washing and shaving water in my dressing room, and I was forced to disentangle myself from between the twins. I will admit that it was difficult to leave them both and go, but I was due at the courts that morning to give testimony. Henry too was due and he would be returning with me to Rotheringham House for the night.

My night with my twin sisters had been most enjoyable, but it is my understanding that judges get most upset when they are kept waiting.

When I stood up to testify, Mr Black my barrister, had me recount the sequence of events, culminating with Montague Fellowes' involvement being identified to me by my steward's widow. Sir Montague's defence tried to suggest that this had been a malicious slander by Mrs Dodgson. My argument in reply was that Fellowes' actions at the ball had confirmed the report, especially as he had not been on the original list of invitations.

The mention of Emily Dodgson's name caused the Judge to call both lawyers to his bench to discover more. He wanted to know why she had not been called as a witness. Mr Black explained further that Emily's role had been purely coincidental, and

while she had identified Sir Montague at the ball, all of the details of the actual case had been discovered by Mr Langton in the documents that Mr Dodgson had left.

Mrs Dodgson's part in the matter had been documented in a sworn affidavit, in the presence of and signed by Sir Arthur Walker, the Justice of the Peace.

As Mr Langton noted to me the previous day, the defence did not want Mrs Dodgson present, as they felt she would be prejudicial to their case.

The defence did though, attempt to besmirch Emily Dodgson, by referring to the Dodgson's incestuous status, but Mr Black objected on the grounds that incest was not a crime, and that anyway, she had been forced into it by Alfred. He supported his objection with two more affidavits — one from myself and one from Dr Locksley — the vicar of Rogeringham church, attesting to Mrs Dodgson's good character. The judge took a few moments to ask me about my affidavit.

“You have attested to Mrs Dodgson's character, Your Grace?”

I told him that I had.

“Considering her involvement in this affair, I am surprised that you have testified so. Would Your Grace please explain your decision? So that I have it clear in my mind, that is.”

I was still under oath from previously, so explained that Emily had provided the books of her own volition, and because she wanted to ‘make things right’. Mrs Dodgson was as much a victim in this as she had lost her brother and the father of her children. The whole affair had been of great distress to her, I said, and yet she had borne it all steadfastly and with great grace and courage.

The judge was dubious, as I was affirming the character of a witness of a case in which I was the plaintiff. The principle reason that he was prepared to allow this was simply due to my rank. As one of the highest-ranking nobles of the realm, that wasn’t a member of the royal family — in the judge’s eyes my word was worth more than a commoner’s, in this case Sir Montague’s. If I said that Emily Dodgson was of good character, then she must be. Iniquitous? Indubitably. No man’s word should be better than another’s just because of his rank. But today I would play that very advantage, and Sir Montague could go and stew about it.

It seemed to win the trick anyway, and the judge ruled that the two documents were sufficient for him to rule in favour of Mr Black's objection.

So, the judge accepted Emily's sworn testimonial and my part in the case was effectively ended.

That afternoon Henry Adams testified how the estate documents showed exactly what had transpired. I was most impressed with Henry's part in the trial. He was clear and he was precise and his recall of details was very impressive.

Once again, the defence tried to attack Henry's character, but Mr Black had only begun to say the words "I object", when the judge himself ruled that that ploy was out of order. 'Mr Adams,' he said, "Is obviously a man of quality, and because of that there was no question about his good character."

Henry and I were done, Mr Langton had some administrative matters to conclude at the courts and then at his chambers, but then he would join Henry and I for some supper and we would go with my sisters to a concert in St James's Park.

It was a very pleasant evening which lasted late into the night, when we returned to Rogeringham House. I found the company of the two men to be



most enjoyable. We talked about a variety of subjects and found ourselves in agreement on many of them — the ways forward for the estate, the employment of old soldiers, expanding into industrial interests. Henry suggested that we look at involving James Barthomley there and utilise his connections to our mutual benefit, which surprised me, but it made a degree of sense, as we did not have those skills and it was thought that James might.

They also both agreed with my beliefs about women and their role in society — Mr Langton's wife, Constance was probably a force behind his agreement. She is a formidable woman, charming, attractive and witty, but also possessing a strong will and a fine intellect. Henry's muse in this was my sister Caroline, and of course there was my mother, all of my sisters and women like the Dorringtons. It was with those women in mind that we agreed that their inclusion would be central in the things that we did. We had no illusions that we were going to change English society over-night, none of the three of us was in any way that optimistic, but we aimed to take any actions we could in whatever way that we could.

Eventually, though, it was time to retire.

I was very tired, it had been a long day and I hadn't slept very much the night before, so when I found both of the twins asleep and entwined in my bed — they looked delightful sleeping there, I was torn and I did not want to disturb them. Just then Margaret opened an eye and saw me standing next to the bed. Sleepily she pushed Louise to one side so that I could get between them. And thus, it was that we slept the night away.

### ***63. The third day of the Case.***

The suit against Sir Montague Fellowes was winding up — the defence once again offered a settlement, more desperate than the first but once again it was rejected.

For their part the defence's argument was that Sir Montague Fellowes had done nothing untoward, and that his acquisition of my property with the intent to sell it on to the canal company — a company of which he was a share-holder — was a common practice. Dodgson's decision to sell the properties to Sir Montague had been his own decision and his alone, in fact, they said, he had been the originator of the scheme, and Fellowes had only participated because Alfred had pressured him. It was a good

attempt at a defence, especially as Dodgson could not defend himself.

However, Sir Montague was then cross-examined by our barrister, Mr Black. Using the affidavit from Emily as a basis, he questioned Fellowes about the pressure he applied upon Dodgson to acquire the three farms. Fellowes twisted and turned, and his lawyer attempted to argue the evidence from the affidavit again, until the judge shut him down. With Dodgson's records of the moneys that he owed to people and Fellowes in particular, Sir Montague was eventually constrained to answer the questions truthfully.

The judge concluded that our case was well made, and proven. He advised Sir Montague that he was torn between a large fine or a spell in prison. After some consideration, he elected to levvy a fine on Mr Fellowes. The amount was set at eight thousand pounds to be paid by a specific date. This was four times the amount of their most recent offer to us, and I saw Fellowes turn pale as the amount was announced. I assumed that that meant that it was close to the limits of his purse.

Mr Langton agreed with me. He told me that while Fellowes had many business connections, he

suffered, as many such men did, by having little actual money.

Most of the money from the fine, I had already earmarked for the Dodgson's, Emily and her daughters, as a reparation for the loss of the girls' father, and an insurance for the future. If there was any left over, it would go to relief for the families whose tenancies had been disrupted with the transfer of the properties. Any remaining monies would be used for relief of the poor of Rogeringham parish.

The date set for payment was a month hence, though Fellowes said that he would appeal the ruling. This was of no matter as he would have to pay the fine first, and then appeal the penalty, I agreed though with Mr Langton to hold the payment, if we received it — we were neither of us certain that he would make it — until after any appeal.

#### ***64. More evenings with the twins***

When I returned home that evening, I found Louise and Margaret making ready to go out. They were calling on one of their friends and would have supper with her that evening, so for a change I had a whole evening to myself. The problem was that I found that I had no idea what I wanted to do with it.

Thomas Langton had returned home to Aylesbury, Henry had gone to his house in Oxfordshire, Helena, obviously, was at her father's, with Charlotte, Caroline and Hermione. If I had really wanted to, I suppose that I could have found somewhere to go to or to be at — but I didn't really want to work that hard. Instead, I sat in my study for a while answering letters and trying to read, until I decided 'Deuce!' to that, and went up to my room, had a long bath and afterwards just lay on the bed in the gathering gloom of the evening, wearing just my shirt and musing (for want of a better word).

So far, I decided, things were progressing nicely. The presentation had gone well, I was keeping my promise to my mother, Caroline and Hermione, had settled on partners, Charlotte and the twins had not decided but I was not overly concerned about them, in fact I was certain that they would find their own ways before too long. Margaret and Louise usually had young men thronging around them when we went anywhere, and Charlotte always drew the attention of personable and quite eligible individuals, even though she never seemed to want to explore further.

I did find myself coming back to the possibilities of amatory games with Margaret and Louise. Just

the thought of the tangle of pale, soft limbs, tender breasts and moist quims caused my prick to swell. I found myself hoping that they would visit me this night, because I had quite enjoyed our *ménage* on Monday night. Both women had obviously inherited the same sensual natures as their mother and sisters, and they both appeared to be keen on fucking, but what was most intriguing was the play between the two of them. Their tribadic inclinations and their willingness to submit to my will, were all possibilities that would stand further exploration.

I did not, I should be clear with you, wish to maltreat my sisters in anyway. Despite their, often — frequently — irritating behaviour, which I supposed came from them being so close to each other and having grown to depend on each other, I loved them both as much as I loved my other sisters, and I would do nothing to hurt them. However, sometimes when making love, if the woman behaves in a, for want of a better word, ‘sluttish’ manner, it can be most arousing. Not on every occasion, of course, but my associations with Major Raine, first in Jamaica and then Guadalupe, had educated me to all sorts of women, in the various *bordellos* there, and when a woman played the slut for us, it could be quite entertaining.

I was roused from my thoughts by a gentle knock at my door. It was late and it was not the way in which Barclay usually announces himself, so I assumed it was the twins again and called for them to enter.

They entered looking slightly nervous.

“Good evening, William,” Margaret greeted me, with Louise nodding her agreement.

I greeted them back, “What is the matter? Is something amiss?”

The twins exchanged several ‘looks’ between them, and there were some half-hand movements that suggested that each of them wanted the other to go first.

I went and sat by the fireplace, it was too warm for an actual fire in the grate, and I indicated that they should sit down opposite me.

They both wore just a night gown, thin silk that clung to their bodies and emphasised their slim forms.

I offered them a drink — a tot of my rum, at which they pulled a face, so I poured them some of the madeira that Barclay had left out for me.

“Come, tell me what troubles you?” I asked.

The drink and my question seemed to break the spell as Margaret cleared her throat. “We were concerned brother.”

“This is our third night visiting you,” Louise continued.

“And — and because last night we did not look after your needs,” Margaret went on, “We feared that that you would tell mama.”

“And that she would be angry with us,” Louise finished.

As hard as I wanted not to, I could not help laughing. “Oh, the Good Lord keep you and bless you, my sweet loves.”

My laughter did not help. Both women went from nervous to indignant within a blink of an eye.

“For shame, brother, it is no laughing matter.” Louise sputtered.

“Indeed!” Margaret added, “Mother insisted we take care of you. It was her condition for allowing us to sleep with you.”



I stopped them. “And that is precisely what you did.” I said, “Your mother will not mind that we did not fuck each and every night. Even the most ardent lovers need to sleep sometimes, and the last couple of days have been most tiring.

“Let me make a suggestion. Let us fuck tonight, as hard as we can, and I swear I shall make a glowing report of your efforts to your mama.” This seemed to do the trick, as both of them broke out into happy smiles.

“Have we been good so far, William?” Louise asked as we stood up and went over to the bed.

“Yes, my sweet, the best.”

“The very best?” She asked.

“Near enough not to matter.” I told her, as we undressed and settled.

“One thing I need to tell you both.” I said, and they both regarded me with serious expressions on their faces. “When we fucked the other night, Louise, I used you most roughly while you licked Margaret’s quim.”

Louise nodded, quite wistfully, I thought.

“I would be neglecting my duties if I were not to say, that this not a right thing to do.”

Bafflement clouded their faces.

“Very well,” I explained, “It **is** right if done in the appropriate place and time, such as we were on Monday. It was a natural thing to do between three people who love each other dearly, and trust each other greatly.” Slow nods from my audience.

“It is not right to behave in such a way just willy-nilly. You are the daughters and the sisters of a duke, with rank and power. If you are going to play the slut, my loves, be careful with whom you do so.”

I could see the comprehension forming, then Margaret said, “This is true. And I shall tell you brother, that we do prefer it the other way about.”

“We can be quite imperious, when we want to be,” Louise explained.

“Positively bossy.” Margaret added.

“Demanding.” Louise chipped in.

“There is only one man, we would play the slut for...” Margaret continued, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

“And who would that be?” I asked.

“Why you, William,” Louise positively cooed, as she began to kiss my bare shoulder.

“Only you.” Margaret agreed, as she leaned her head down and licked at my nipple.

I must have shown some disbelief at this, because both women began to pay earnest attention to my torso — kissing it and stroking it, licking the perspiration from it, and doing so with exaggerated sighs and moans. None of which did anything to convince me that they were telling the truth. I sat upright, pitching them aside onto the bed.

“William?” Louise grumbled as she righted herself.

“I need you to understand me on this.” I said, taking her by the shoulders and holding her before me. “This is something I take very seriously.”

Louise looked crestfallen, I positioned her next to Margaret, and sat opposite them.

“Do you not love us brother?” she asked with an innocent tone in her voice.

“Stop that! You know that I love you both, very much.” I told her. “Otherwise, I would not put up

with your games and your jests. But in this I am very earnest and I need you to understand what it is that I am saying.”

From the changes in their posture, this time I felt like they were paying attention. “Love-making, and fucking is the greatest pleasure a man and woman can have between them. And there are many different ways of enjoying that pleasure, sometimes it is as simple as lying entwined in the darkness, pressed together and just enjoying the sensation.” They were listening now, nodding intently as I spoke.

“Sometimes it is about submitting and letting the sensation flow over you. But you must be careful to whom you surrender. Some people will take and take and take,” I told them, “And never return anything. They will think only of their own pleasure and not of yours. They will use and they will abuse you.”

I lay back against the pillows and I indicated that my sisters should come closer. The twins leaned towards me, taking their places on either side of me. I place an arm around each of their shoulders. “Do you recall when I asked about what you wanted from life?”

I felt both heads nod, “I meant what I said, I will support you in your choice. But your position, your rank, and just who you are will attract all manner of people — particularly men, who will seek to exploit you, to control you for their own ends. This is something about which you must be most aware.”

“But did you not enjoy my sluttish behaviour?” Louise asked, emphasising the word as she said it.

I placed her hand upon my engorged cock, “You decide.” I told her.

“I am simply trying to help you make your way in the world.” I went on. “To help you understand some of the dangers that await you.”

At this point, by some unspoken instinct they both leaned forwards and placed their hands upon my prick, soft and cool, they enfolded it, gently caressing it. “We understand William,” Margaret told me.

“We really do,” Louise asserted.

“I hope so,” I told them both, “Because if I feel that you do not, then that will affect my decision to allow you to live in your own home.”

Both of the hands on my cock stopped. Now, I thought, now I genuinely have your full attention.

“You are serious William?” Margaret asked.

“When have I ever not done as I said I would?”

They looked at each other. “Never.” Louise replied.

“You mean it?” Margaret asked. “You would allow us to set up in our own home?”

“I would,” I said, “**IF** I feel I can trust you.” I sat back against the pillows.

“What must we do to convince you?” Margaret continued.

“I have told you my conditions,” I reminded them, “What I need to see from you is that you understand them and are prepared to abide by them. No more games, my loves, I want no more of your childish naïveté, your fake innocence. You are grown women now, let me see you behave as such and not girls.”

They both turned to look at each other, and for a moment it seemed as though they were talking between themselves, but without words or sounds. I have no doubt that each knew what the other was

thinking and that they were making their decision as I watched.

“What would the alternative be?” Louise asked nervously.

“I find ‘suitable’ matches for you and marry you off.” I told her. A look of distress passed between them.

“We must be discreet?” Margaret asked after another period of thought. I nodded. She turned back to look at her sister.

“No scandals?” It was Louise’s turn. I confirmed this with another nod.

“And you will support us in this?” Margaret again.

“I said I would.”

Margaret turned and kissed me, deeply, open mouthed and warm, melting into my arms.

“We are sorry, William.” She said in between kisses, with no hint in her voice of the naïveté that was so irritating. Louise’s hand was back on my cock, kneading the flesh, frigging her hand up and down, while fondling my pills with her other hand.

“We are sorry for all the times we have caused you to be vexed with us.” She said, her touch was gentle, loving and most, most arousing. She also spoke in a subtly more mature way.

Margaret paused, “So very sorry,” she said softly. I wound a hand in hair and pulled her in to me, continuing to kiss her, as I reached for Louise, and pushed her down towards my prick.

“We have always loved you,” Louise said before she gave my cock a long slow lick with her tongue. “Even if we do not always show it.”

“Speak less,” I said, “Show me more how much you love me.”

“Yes brother.” Margaret answered for her sister, who now had my cock almost in her throat, as my hand in her hair pressed her head down.

“Help her.” I commanded. I was trying my luck here, but I guided Margaret towards my prick and balls.

Soon I had both of them lavishing their attention on my nethers, while I gazed at their naked cunnies, as they knelt beside me, with their arses towards me. Almost without thought I slid two fingers into each of their exposed quims — much to their surprise.



With a squeak they both stopped what they were doing, Louise to actually kneel up, while Margaret pushed back on my fingers, wriggling her bum at me as she did so.

“Louise!” I said in a stern tone of voice, giving her a gentle prod in the back, indicating that she should return to her task.

“Yes, William,” she said meekly, and bowed her head again.

Margaret, on the other hand continued to push her cunny against my exploring fingers, to which I added my thumb. I used that to press her clitty, caused her to groan loudly. At the same time, Louise was bringing me very close to spending, her skill at fellating demonstrating that she really had paid more attention to the antics of Stable-yard Mary than her sister had.

I stopped diddling Margaret and pushed her back towards my cock, she turned to me in protest but I told her that “Sluts do not get to choose, sluts are used.”

She still wanted to argue, so I gave her a loud, but quite restrained slap on her arse. Her look of amazement was quite amusing, though I did not

show it, my hard glare convinced her that she should be sucking and not sulking.

I made them pause and knelt between them, my cock standing out in front of me. With a hand on each of their necks I brought my twin sisters' heads together and forced them onto my prick.

Their enthusiasm for such rough treatment was a heady sensation, the feeling of power that flowed through me, seemed to surge up into my erection, the thrust of my hips was powered by it, and when I spent, it threw the jism across my sister's faces and breasts and onto the sheets beyond them. I held them there as I came, and came, and came.

Immediately Louise bent her head and began to suckle my cum off Margaret's breasts who used her fingers to clean her twin's face. While they cleaned each other I lay back and watched them. It had been an enormously powerful cum, arcing my back and shaking me like a rag. But it had also frightened me.

I was raised to respect women and protect them. I despise men who brutalise women, but as I had face-fucked my two twin sisters — to use Charlotte's preferred term, I realised how seductive that feeling can be. For the first time I understood how men like Alfred Dodgson could behave in the way that he did.

Power can be exhilarating, and exerting that power in a sexual way even more so. I knew this from my previous experiences, and have always managed to keep it under control, but what worried me was that it was a much more powerful feeling when my twin sisters were involved. I could have easily tipped over into much worse behaviour. I do not know why this was so. It may have been all of the years of being on the receiving end of my sisters' humour, but there was a siren's song in their submissive behaviour, that called to me. It was something that I would have to resist with all of my will.

Margaret must have noticed something, she stopped what she was doing — cleaning the stickiness off my cock — and came and lay next to me.

“Did you not enjoy that, William?” She asked.

“It was most arousing,” Louise sighed, as she lay down on the other side, “Did you not think?”

“It was very enjoyable...” I started.

“You spent most prolifically,” Margaret observed.

“Cups full.” Louise added.

“But,” I interrupted them, “It was also exactly what I was talking about.”

They both looked at me. “I was so close to losing control,” I told them, “It so enflamed my passions that I am afraid of what I might have done to you. I might have hurt you.”

Both girls immediately wrapped me in their embrace, “You would never hurt us, William.” Louise whispered in my ear.

“Not you, William.” Margaret whispered on the other side. “Not ever.”

“We love you William, we really do.” They both said simultaneously as they drew themselves more tightly to me.

“More than you will ever know,” Louise told me.

“And truthfully, William, do you think we would have let you hurt us?” Margaret giggled.

I laughed. She had a point. I can only suppose that the court case and my concerns for the twins and their choices in life, and the fact that I was missing Helena, had affected my judgement so much that I had become over-concerned about them. In

truth, there really was no one more adept at avoiding trouble or punishment than my twin sisters.

I felt Margaret's cool hand upon my chest, "Rest now, brother..."

"Let it be our turn to look out for you." Louise said softly, as she too caressed my abdomen.

They may have wanted me to rest, but it was impossible, as first they frigged me to an erection and then Margaret climbed up and mounted my hard cock.

"I love fucking so very much," she said, between sighs of pleasure.

"It is indeed the very best of things." Louise agreed with her.

"Above all others." Margaret concluded as her spend came down, making her collapse upon my chest.

She did not get long to lie there, because no sooner had she kissed me in gratitude (though to be truthful, all I was doing was lying there with my prick aloft), than Louise had pushed her out of the way and mounted me in her turn.

Margaret moved to my side and began to exchange kisses with me. They were lazy, playful kisses, the sort of kisses that a satisfied lover gives. In the meantime, her sister was grinding herself against me, bouncing up and then down, and pushing her clitty hard against me at the bottom of her movement.

I held my hand up and she grasped it, using like a rest to push against in her passion.

Margaret rose up next to me, and looking down at me, asked, “Do you eat quim, brother?”

“I do.” I told her.

“May I?”

“Please, be my guest.” I laughed, and with that she lifted her leg over my head and lowered her sticky cunny down to my lips.

If I had been concerned about hurting my sisters in any way earlier, my fears were reversed when Margaret just settled down upon my face. I had to support her hips with my hands just so that I could give myself room to move my head about and lick at the various parts of her cunny.

“Is he doing it, Mags?” Louise asked.

“Yes, Lu-lu,” Margaret sighed. “It is wonderful.”

“Is he as good as I am?” Louise asked nervously.

“No, my love,” Margaret re-assured her, “But you should let him lick you as well.”

“Kiss me, Mags, tell me you love me.”

There was silence for a few moments, and then I heard, “I love you Lu-lu, with all of my heart.”

“And I love you too, Mags,” Louise replied, “And I shall until the days end and we are no more.”

Which was very much as I had come to suspect about them. I had no issues with this, after all I was in no position to judge anyone for who they loved, but it was a good thing to know where the twins stood on this.

Margaret’s cum came down in a drenching flow which covered my face no matter how hard I licked and sucked at her. Louise also spent hard, quaking like a jelly on my cock, and soon they both lay beside me, pressed against me, lithe and perspiring, spent and languid. My sisters made many happy sighs as they lay next to me, and several times they moved against me, rubbing themselves against my body, leading me to think that they had enjoyed

themselves very much. It did not take long before we were all asleep.

Eventually I woke again to use the chamber pot and in rising to do so, tried not to disturb my sisters. When I was done, I took a glass of wine and a pipe and, sitting quietly, reflected on the intimacy I had witnessed between the twins.

All of my sisters are close, but the twins have always been closer. They do not isolate themselves but they have always shared a privacy between themselves. Their nick-names — Mags, a short form of Margaret and Lu-lu, short for Louise, they only use between themselves. As I have said, discovering that they were sexually intimate with each other, did not surprise me. It seemed as though I had finally been granted a glimpse behind a curtain, a vision of what went on, when we others were not there.

I stood and went back to lie down with the twins again. Margaret was awake, while Louise was sleeping, so I slipped back into place between them.

“Well, William?” Margaret asked quietly.

“Hmmm?” I asked back.

“Now you know our secrets.”



“It appears so, my sweet.” I enfolded her with my arm. “You may rest assured that they are safe with me.” That seemed to satisfy her, and she returned to examining the scar on my side. I have never understood why people do this, but she traced the shape of it with her finger, though it is less of a wound and more of a gouge, where the French dragoon’s blade raked along my ribs.

“There are so many of these,” she murmured softly. “And yet, thank God, you are still with us.”

“Aye, thanks to Him, I came safe home.” I agreed, “How long have you and Louise been lovers?”

“Lovers?” Margaret wondered. “I am not sure that we are lovers, brother, we are not having an *affaire d’amour*.”

“Those were very strong affirmations of your love for each other,” I reminded her. “‘To the end of days and beyond’,” I quoted back at her.

She nodded. “We love all of you, you, mama, Charlotte, Caroline and Hermione, but we love each other more.” She said, “Just as you love all of us, but you save your deepest love for mama.”

“You are lovers though — in that you share intimacy as well?” I offered.

Again, Margaret nodded, “I suppose we are then,” she said, “Having watched Mary in the hay loft, we were eager to understand what we had seen. So, we turned to each other.”

“You seem to have progressed quite far, even without a teacher,” I observed.

Margaret agreed, “We have had many nights to explore and learn what it is that we can do and what we enjoy. Women are very blessed in having so many places which can give pleasure,” She said thoughtfully.

“We do like hard pricks though, as well,” Louise’s sleepy voice said, from over my shoulder, she rolled towards me and pressed up against my side. “At least, we like your hard prick, brother.” She added.

And with that vote of confidence, and brief view of the inside of my twin sisters’ relationship, we slept until morning.

## **65. *The twins again***

The next several nights were more of the same. During the days I would escort my sisters out and about around the Ton, carriage rides to one or other of the parks, a concert during the evening or just dining together. Wherever we went, young men seemed to appear as if from nowhere, to pay attention to the twins, and watching them carefully, I noted that while they did not actively discourage any of the would-be suitors, they did not encourage them either. No one was given any more time than anyone else, attention was limited to compliments or benevolent observations, no young man was sent away feeling slighted. They were skilful players of the game of courtship, my sisters, and if I had not witnessed it first hand, I would have found it hard to believe, that they managed to keep so many hopefuls engaged, with so little reward for their efforts. If anyone got too close or was too insistent the twins would refer them to me, which seemed to cool the suitor's ardour quite efficiently.

Personally, I missed Helena greatly, and felt guilty about enjoying myself with Margaret and Louise, while she was attending her father, who she had, observed before leaving 'would probably pass on before very long'. However, the time I spent with them also brought me closer to the twins, as I learnt

more about them and understood their thoughts better.

One night — which was also the night before Helena and our sisters were due to return — Margaret and Louise made me sit back while they performed an ‘entertainment’ of how they had learnt to love each other.

It took the form of a play. There was no scenery, very little in the way of costume, and the script was mainly improvised, but they depicted their progress with theatrically declaimed lines like ‘Oh! Lu-lu did you see how Mary kissed the stableboy in the hay loft’, ‘I did indeed Mags! Shall we do as she did?’ ‘Yes, let me be the boy, you be Mary!’ and thus they acted out their progress — with voices (Mags did a quite realistic sounding stableboy’s voice), and in quite enthusiastic detail.

From learning to kiss, to understanding the power of the nipple, to frigging their own cunnies and from thence to frigging each other’s cunny, to licking the same and sucking on each other’s clits.

It kept me hard as a bar, though I had to wait until the intermissions before I could get any relief. During the first interval — just after Louise had her first orgasm, in the play and ‘on stage’, I fucked

Margaret, bending her over the edge of my bed and fucking her hard, while she licked the spend off Louise's wet thighs.

During the second interval, after the twins discovered *soixante-neuf* in their play, I had Louise, while she still lay upon Margaret, who lay with her head beneath my jostling pills, as I pumped in and out of her sister's cunny above her face.

The last act of the 'play' was set on the day before Helena's departure to Guildford. By clever artifice the twins managed to convey a three-way conversation with their mother, with only two voices.

"Yes mama?" They both asked and sat as if they had been addressed by Helena and were listening to her reply.

"Of course, mama." Margaret said.

"We will behave," Louise added her assurance, "Of course we will."

Then she looked at the spot where 'Helena' was, and paused, "Mama? Will we need to look after William?"

There was a pause, and Margaret said, “Why he is a man, does he not have needs?”

There was another short pause, “Well, manly needs.” Louise said, “Needs that must be tended by his woman.”

“Forgive us mama,” Margaret came to her aid, “There are many things in life that we do not know, but we are led to believe that men have many needs. Does William not have them too?”

They were both quiet for a moment, both looking at ‘Helena’, both following her ‘words’ with slow nods of the head. This went on for a few minutes — until Louise broke out of character and said in a way not unlike one of the rustic players in Shakespeare’s *A Mid-summer Night’s Dream*, “At this point mama took some time to explain some ‘womanly’ things with us.” Then she put herself back into character, and a slow smile spread across their faces.

“So! Let us be clear, mama, if William allows us to, we may sleep with him?” Margaret repeated back to her mother, at the same time she reached out and took Louise by the hand, squeezing it in excitement.

“With your permission, mama?” Louise clarified. She too began to get excited, her breasts rising and

falling as she spoke, I noticed that she had begun to rub her thighs together in anticipation.

“And we are to do so, each and every night you are away?” Margaret asked eagerly and equally excited, her eyes shining.

“And when you return, you will resume your place? Thank you, mama.” Louise finished, her voice rising in pitch, as she briefly touched her hand to her lightly furred mons, which because of the earlier acts of the play was exposed for all to see (I assumed that the twins were not naked when they were talking to my mother, but, on the other hand there had been many changes around our family recently that they may have been, who knows?).

“Yes, thank you mama, we shall not fail you!” Margaret assured her mother joyfully.

She then took her sister’s hand and they turned to face me, still naked, with their nipples erect and their eyes shining, and a little breathlessly, Margaret said “William?”.

After which Louise added “We need you to settle a small argument.”

And with that and a graceful bow, it was done.

“Bravo!” I applauded them, ‘Bravo! Very well acted,’ I told them, placing myself between the two of them and drawing them to me. “In truth I have never — ever — seen a theatre like that,” I told them.

“Did you enjoy that, William?” Louise asked as she pressed herself against me, her hand seeking my erection.

“I did,” I assured her as I kissed Margaret, whose soft lips ought out mine.

I found myself wrapped by two lithe, amorous, sensuous beauties who engaged my lips, my hands and my hard cock. They kissed me, they licked me, they sucked and fondled, stroked and caressed me. We writhed and we tangled, at one time I lost all awareness of who I was kissing, who had my prick in her mouth or who was riding my throbbing cock. I was as close to fucking two women simultaneously as one man could possibly be.

How long this passionate turmoil continued I do not know, it might have been a few minutes but it could easily have been hours, the whole night or even several nights. It did not matter, such was the intensity of the pleasure, the overwhelming flood of sensation, that time ceased to exist for the three of



us. I spent once, and then again, but lost count of the number of times my sisters came off or brought each other off.

The only experience I can compare it with is the intensity of battle. I have been in fights where one's world becomes bound by only the limits of what can be seen, heard or felt. The passage of time is meaningless, there is no past, there is no future, there is only the fight, or in this case, the fucking. Like a battle, the moment we stopped our love-making, we fell onto the bed as if we had indeed fought the French or run a race.

Limp, and yet still entangled, we lay entwined, and the twins seemed to glow in a most enchanting way.

“Thank you, William.” Margaret said quietly.

“No.” I told her, ‘Thank you.’ I kissed her, “And thank you.” I kissed Louise.

The younger of my twin sisters purred as she assumed what had become her favourite place on my left-hand side, where she curled up in the crook of my arm. “Thank you, brother.” She said happily.

On the right-hand side Margaret looked at me, “Have we been good?” She asked hopefully. I

nodded and drew her closer to me.

“I do not know what you promised your mother, or even what I did to deserve what we have done these last few nights, but it has been most wonderful.”

Margaret smiled happily. “But we told you William. We told you why.”

I shook my head.

“We love you, William.” Louise said, drowsily, having turned in my embrace, she pressed her back against my side. “We have always loved you.”

“We love you because you love us,” Margaret said. “Despite all of the pranks, and the teasing, no matter how infuriating we might be...”

“And we know that we can be very infuriating,” Louise added.

“Despite all of the trouble we have caused you William,” Margaret finished, “You never stopped loving us.”

I couldn't help but raise my eyebrows in surprise, though I tried to conceal exactly how surprised I actually was, after all this was a major confession.

“We told you that we loved you more than you would ever know?” She said, I nodded slowly, I wondered briefly whether this was another prank, but it did not feel so, it appeared to be quite genuine.

“And we mean it, William. We truly mean it,” Margaret went on seriously, “You have always been the one person, beside mama, we could depend on.”

“You were correct, you know?” Louise said from my other side, “What we did, that time, was a disappointment. It should have been better.”

“And then you showed us how much better it could have been.” Margaret added. “For which we are grateful.” Her hand rested on my chest and she moved her fingers slowly across the skin.

“And a touch sore.” Louise commented happily.

Margaret smiled as she nodded. “You have taught us much. Enough that we understand a little better.” She finished.

“Understand? A ‘little better’?” I asked. Margaret’s breasts were pressed against my side and I felt her breathing as her nipples grazed my skin.

“About what life outside of the family would entail.” She explained.

“The pleasures and the perils,” Louise added, almost as if she was talking in her sleep.

I was drowsy myself, I kissed the back of Louise’s head, and looked at Margaret. “We shall talk about this tomorrow, for now, we should sleep, my loves.”

Margaret nodded and with a contented smile, she and her sister fell asleep in my arms.

### **66. *Helena returns***

Helena returned from Guildford with the news that her father had passed away from his illness. My mother had always had a fond relationship with him — her mother had passed some years earlier, so his death made her very sad.

Helena’s eldest brother inherited the estate, though she also received a small bequest — some of her mother’s jewellery. The funeral was held quite quickly after the old man’s death, and Helena and my sisters attended that before they returned home.

When she did arrive back at the Mayfair house, after she had removed her travelling coat Helena drew me away to my room and threw herself upon me, not for any carnal reasons but simply as an emotional refuge. Without undressing, we lay there

for some time, just embracing one another (though the word ‘embracing’ does not accurately reflect the way my mother clung to me).

After upward of an hour Helena rose and poured herself a tot from the rum decanter, which she threw back without grimacing as she normally does. The week or so that they had been in Guildford had been trying for her, she said, not least because her brother appeared to think that she should have abandoned us here, to fly to her father’s bed side and supervise his care. Notwithstanding that he had only informed Helena days after her father fell ill, she had her own house to manage, and her brother’s wife could have easily managed the situation. Her brother had implied that it was Helena’s role as her father’s daughter, and not his wife’s, even though Helena’s sister-in-law was effectively mistress of the estate. Not only had my mother to witness the decline and demise of her father, but she also had to bear this constant blame sniping from her brother.

And it was sniping, because although he was the heir, and it was his house — upon their father’s death, Helena outranked him considerably — her brother was not even possessed of a knighthood, which was completely trumped by Helena being the current Duchess of Norton. So, he could only say so

much without transgressing the boundaries of social order.

Helena's father was an old man, and he had been ill much of the last few years, so his passing was not unexpected, at least now, she said, he was out of pain. But it had been quite emotional, for her and my sisters and she saw the return to Rotheringham House as a return to a stable atmosphere — even though we were actually in the middle of the madness which is the Season. In fact, the biggest irritation now, she said, as we undressed and climbed into bed for the afternoon, was that she was constrained to commence a second period of mourning — for her father this time, just as she was ready to give up the widow's weeds that she wore for my father. Likewise, my sisters would also have to wear mourning shades, though they would not need to wear the full black, that Helena would.

She also handed me a letter that her brother had given to her for me, which I placed upon the side table, to read after I had shown my mother how much I had missed her.

It would be a fair assumption for anyone who has read the previous passages about my week sleeping with the twins, that perhaps I would be sated in

some way, less enthusiastic, with Helena lying before me on the bed.

Far from it.

My passion for this beautiful woman is no less than that first night I spent with her. Her alabaster skin, her long fine hair, her body, her breasts, all fanned the flames of the passion that burned in the very heart of my being.

I believe that Helena feels the same, because as we came together it was magnificent, a crashing cataclysm, as we sought each other. Kissing and biting, licking and sucking at each other; grasping, pulling, tugging and stroking, as we sought to both console and to comfort each other. Our union was a hunger, a desperate need that could only be satisfied in our being together.

Soon Helena had risen above me, sitting down upon my erection, as she ground her hips into mine. I grasped her waist and thrust up as she pressed down, before moving my hands so that I cupped her breasts — her lovely breasts — kneading them and caressing them, worshipping them. Helena grasped my wrists, using her hands to support herself, and guide my hands, pressing them against her.

Our climax was not long coming, so great was the desire between us. Helena spent first, shaking as the crisis struck her. “Oh God, William, I \_ aaaaaiiiiiaaaaaah!”

In between orgasmic outbursts, my mother urged me to cum inside her. “Spend for me, my love, fill me, with your seed. I need it, William, give it to me! Fill meeeeeeeee!”

When I did spend, it erupted inside Helena, the force of it pressing my hips up as my jism flowed.

Done, we lay together again, the afternoon was warm and so we were naked upon the sheets, our perspiration and other juices drying upon our skins. Neither of us felt the need to speak.

We lay like this for an hour or so, and then, I remembered the letter Helena had given me.

### **67. *What the Deuce?***

The letter began “*My dear nephew...*” which I thought was as pretentious as it was incorrect. We were neither related nor did we have any sort of relationship which would entitle him to call me ‘**dear** nephew’.



What followed was some sort of instructional letter about how I should proceed as the duke, how I should function and perform in my role, written in the form of advice from an older man to a younger. The tone was friendly but condescending, as if my uncle's age gave him wisdom that he felt he had to pass on to me. It was, in reality, another example of how people play connections within our society. Helena's brother, obviously thought to exploit his filial relationship with her to connect himself with me.

I read it and laughed. Helena took the proffered letter and read it, incredulously.

“Presumptuous?” I asked her.

“Very,” she agreed angrily. “He has some pills on him, how dare he?” Helena was almost growling.

“Not content with all of the comments he made to me last week, he now has the temerity to offer you advice! You can learn nothing from that fool, my love.” She kissed me, tenderly.

“You will cut the family off immediately?” She asked.

“We have so little to do with them anyway,” I said, “There was only your father really — God rest

his soul. Perhaps it is best we just ignore them. Until we require something from them.” I suggested. Helena nodded in agreement next to me.

“Will you write back?” She asked, pressing against my side, her breasts resting against my ribs.

“Possibly. Probably.” I mused, “Eventually.” I would, of course, write to the man, just acknowledging his correspondence, but I would not commit myself to anything else, if only because he had angered my mother.

Suddenly Helena asked, “How did the ‘arrangement’ work for you?” She meant having the twins visit my bed.

I laughed, “I am obliged to say that it was most satisfactory.”

“Obliged?” She asked, with a curious smile.

“Indeed,” I told her and explained how they had worried about angering her by not servicing me each and every night. Helena chuckled.

“But in all seriousness, how were they?”

I gave my mother a full report, from taking Margaret’s virginity, to using them as sluts, with one gamahuching the other as I fucked her roughly.

“That sounds intriguing,” Helena mused, though that was all that she said.

The rest of the evening we remained in bed and fucked until morning.

### **68. *A conversation about the future***

Helena’s return had caused my conversation with the twins to be postponed a day or so. That was corrected when they found me reading and enjoying the sun in the garden.

The moment I saw them progressing towards me, I realised that something about them had changed. While they wore their usual dresses, there was a different air about them as they walked, and when we talked, any sign of their previous air of naïveté had gone, they no longer posed themselves as innocent girls, with a wide-eyed unawareness of the world. Instead, they seemed to be more purposeful, more mature in their manner and conversation, as if they had suddenly grown in the few days between our last night together and this bright pleasant afternoon.

“Good day, William,” Margaret greeted me.

“Margaret. Louise.” I greeted them as they each kissed my cheek.

“William.” Louise said as they sat down beside me.

“We have come to discuss the future.” They announced simultaneously. I nodded.

“About the possibilities of living on our own.” Louise completed.

I took a drink from the cup of chocolate in front of me, though to be truthful it was quite cool by now. “I think,” I said slowly, noticing the anticipation on their faces, “That I have not changed my mind.”

They both looked extremely put out by this, I supposed that they had been anticipating me allowing them to move straight ahead with their plans. Louise looked particularly upset, Margaret went to say something but before she could speak, I continued.

“My plan is still to look at how to make this go forwards for you. To provide you with a house and a living, to allow you to live together, away from the family.” Their faces were suddenly wreathed in broad smiles. “But not until after the Season is done, and possibly even then there might be a delay.

“Do not fear,” I told them. “I will do as I have said I will, but once I am sure that it will all proceed without issues. AND...” I told them as they went to speak, “After I am sure you have met the conditions we agreed.”

I half-expected some argument, some attempt at negotiation on those conditions, but instead I was wrapped in warm embraces, and sweet thanks.

I will not lie, I was surprised by the changes in my sisters, not just their comportment but their attitude. They seemed to be willing to work with me to achieve what they wanted, instead of constantly trying the edges of my patience.

“Have we surprised you, William?” Louise asked.

“Indeed, you have,” I told her. “But it is a very pleasant surprise.”

“It was you that wrought the change.” Margaret said, “You treated us as women instead of girls.”

“It felt wonderful!” Louise interjected.

“Indeed,” Margaret continued. “We realise now that being grown up has its advantages.”

“Indeed.” I laughed. “The time we spent together this last week is time I will always treasure, my

sweet loves.”

“May we do it again some time?” Louise asked hopefully.

“**That,**” I laughed, “Is something you will need to negotiate with your mother.”

They sat back, and I can truly say that for the first time I saw them both as grown women, and smiled. One of those all-knowing looks they share passed between them, before Margaret said solemnly, “We shall ask her.”

“Thank you, William,” they said. And with that they had gone.

I sat a little stunned for a while, obviously our conversations had had the desired effect, either that or it was some miraculous power in my cock to make changes in people. No, I thought, that would just be silly, wouldn’t it?

I was about to rise and return inside when Charlotte found me.

“Have you seen the twins?” She asked.

I told her that I had, and that they were now going to visit a friend. “May I ask why?”

Charlotte said that she had seen them earlier and they had appeared ‘different’ somehow.

“More mature?” I asked, she nodded. “We had a few long discussions about their future last week. I believe that they have come to a decision.”

“A decision?” I told her what I had discussed with Margaret and Louise.

“That... that is an option? You would allow them to live that way?” Charlotte sounded surprised.

“If they meet my conditions, yes.” I could see her drawing breath, and I expected an explosion.

“I asked them how they saw their lives — in the same way that I asked you — and that was what they told me.”

The explosion never occurred. It was, she recognised, that the twins had asked for something that she had not. “It never occurred to me as a real opportunity.” She said wryly.

“So, am I to assume that you no longer wish to go to an Ottoman harem?” I asked.

Charlotte had to think for a moment before she recalled the conversation, that we had had in this very garden a few months ago. “Why should I go

abroad for that, when you have a fine one here already?” She laughed.

“*Touché!*” I said as she leaned in and kissed my cheek, before standing up to go inside.

### **69. *A second interval***

After the passing of her father which obviously affected Helena deeply, at the beginning of June my mother and my sisters packed themselves into our spacious landau and set off for Henley-upon-Thames, to stay with Arabella and her mother at their house. My mother and Elizabeth had become quite comfortable in each other’s company. Similarly, Arabella had become good friends with my mother and sisters, and she and Charlotte would often take the afternoon air with a carriage ride in Hyde Park. The idea was for them to celebrate Hermione’s coming wedding by throwing a bachelorette’s party.

I was not invited, which bothered me not at all, Henry and I were busy, so I would be at Rogeringham Hall at least part of the week. So, while Barclay and I made ready to leave for Rogeringham Hall and the country, on the Monday morning, Rogeringham House was all a-bustle as



my mother and my sisters gathered their gowns, goods and chattels for the journey to Henley.

We embraced and they all left, and soon Barclay and I were off as well.

I had several tasks to accomplish while I was there. Henry has established the estate office with two good clerks, both of them old soldiers, and he had also employed some more to work as a workman's gang, across a number of roles — maintaining the estate buildings, road mending, and general tasks.

I rode out with Henry one day, to meet them where they were maintaining some stone walls and the trackways that ran past them. I took some beer and some food with me in one of the smaller carriages. We ate and drank together and as these things happen, they talked. They seemed a handy bunch, from a variety of regiments, all sound in wind and limb, but home from the wars and looking to re-establish themselves.

I met with the High Sheriff's officers and started the process of my appointment as a Justice of the Peace. There was talk about my representing Buckinghamshire in the House of Lords, but I explained that that was very low on my list of things

to accomplish and that there were other items on my agenda that needed attention first.

“HEM!” Sir Arthur coughed loudly, “Getting five sisters married and settled, I believe!” He laughed, and each of the gentlemen around Sir Arthur’s table that night commiserated with me. They all had daughters, and we laughed about it, but they understood my reluctance.

I took the opportunity to call upon Emily Dodgson. She was now teaching at our local school on a full-time basis. Dr Locksley took some lessons but Emily bore most of the burden. Mrs Dodgson had elected to keep her daughters with her, though she thanked me again for my offer to fund their schooling.

I did not mention the award against Sir Montague Fellowes as it was still under appeal and thus, not settled yet, I did not want to disappoint her if it failed to appear.

When we were private for a few moments at one point, Mrs Dodgson made it quite clear that she was willing to express her gratitude for everything I had done, in any way that she could or that I wished her to.

Fortunately, I was saved from having to evade that particular conversation by the arrival of the good doctor.

It was a busy week, but by the middle of it I had progressed a long way in my affairs and decided to return to London on the Thursday so that I could carry out some errands in the Ton on the Friday.

Sleeping in my bed in Mayfair was a peculiar feeling, that night. The bed felt like it was too large, and it was strange not to have Helena beside me, and my sleep was disturbed by the return of my old nightmare. It was not as disturbing as it had been, not that it wasn't uncomfortable, my heart was still racing and my breathing rapid, but I felt less terrified than I had in the past. It woke me and it was a while before I could compose myself for sleep again, but the feeling of panic was less and I did not feel the need for a tot of rum, as I would have previously.

This was the first time in some time that I had had this dream, it has become rarer as the weeks have gone by. What did its return mean? I could only guess at that, but not having my mother asleep near me may have been a factor. Perhaps she gives me a feeling of security and comfort, I do not know, but I looked forwards to seeing her again.

## ***70. The return from Henley-upon-Thames***

I returned from my errands in the Ton on that Friday afternoon to see the landau stood outside the house as footmen carried items of luggage into the house — there actually seemed to be more than they had taken with them — so I assumed that Helena and my sisters had returned.

Despite that, Rogeringham House was deserted. Not one of my sisters was to be seen and when I went to see my mother in her room, Phoebe, her maid, advised me that her mistress was feeling fatigued and that she might see me later for supper.

I locked my purchases in the strong box in my study and sat down to write some letters. I half expected Charlotte to find me, which she usually did but I finished the letters and gave them to a footman and still no sign of any of my female relatives.

I went up and dressed for supper and when I came back downstairs, Helena was waiting for me in the dining room.

“Good evening mother,” I leaned forwards and kissed her cheek, “Did you have a good visit with the Dorringtons?”

Helena mumbled something, as I waited for the footman to seat her.

“David.” I turned to the footman, “Please remove the settings to my room, I think we will take supper there, thank you.”

Helena looked at me aghast. It would take the staff a few moments to relocate everything so I walked my mother into the sitting room and poured her a drink.

“Am I wrong in this?” I asked. “I feel like there are things that we should talk about. Would it be better in private?”

She nodded, before draining her glass.

I offered Helena my hand, which she took, and we walked up the stairs to my room. Her hand felt relaxed in mine. Whatever had happened, it was not so bad that we would not be able to talk about it, eventually. Something had occurred, that much was obvious, and to be truthful I was quite eager to hear what she had to say. Knowing the Dorringtons, and the conversation that Elizabeth had had with my mother some weeks ago, I had my suspicions that whatever had happened was amorous in nature, but I was most careful to keep my expression and tone

neutral. I did not want to suggest any kind of displeasure to Helena, and neither did I want to show eagerness.

She would tell me in her own time and in her own way, and all would be revealed.

Helena and I began to eat, and still all she would do is make small responses, as if she did not trust her tongue to speak, so instead I told her about my week, giving her news about becoming a Justice, telling her about Emily Dodgson, suggesting that we should host her and her daughters here in London, and treat them to a concert at some point.

Thus, it was that I chatted away through the meal, with hardly more than a sentence passing my mother's lips.

Finally, the footmen cleared the meal away and Barclay brought a fresh bottle of wine. I poured Helena a glass, and one for myself, walked over to the fireplace and filled and lit up a pipe, and sat down upon the couch.

I had just blown a string of five perfectly formed smoke-rings, when my mother came and sat next to me.

“William,” she began, “I must apologise\_”

“Whatever you say, beloved, it does not matter.” I told her.

Helena was horrified, “Are you so angry with me?!” She looked perfectly distraught.

“What?!” I said in surprise. ‘No, my love, not at all.’ I assured her hastily, “I am not angry. In fact, I have never loved you more.” She looked at me trying to comprehend my tone, my words, the emotions running through her.

“I was merely trying to say in my clumsy way,” I went on, “That there is nothing that you could say that would require an apology. Not to me anyway.”

I was not certain that she was re-assured by my words, and I drew her to me. “Tell me what happened and if it makes you feel better, I can be angry with you afterwards.”

Helena sat up and looked at me, before pushing me in the shoulder, “I am serious.” She said, partly in relief and partly in exasperation.

“I have no doubt,” I told her. “But I will not know whether you need to apologise — or whether I need to be angry with you, until you tell me what occurred. Come, let us move to the bed, I sorely missed you lying next to me last night.”

We settled together. Neither of us undressed fully, merely shedding enough clothes to feel comfortable, lying entwined *en deshabille* on the covers. Helena's shoulder pressed into my side and my arm wrapped around her shoulders.

"Now." I said, "Tell me what you have done that makes you feel that you must apologise."

Helena pressed closer, as if the words were bubbling inside her and she needed to free them. Indeed, I could feel her excitement.

### **71. *What transpired at Henley***

"We arrived at Lady Dorrington's house just after noon on Monday," Helena began, "It is a very fine house, older than this one, but nicely done. The house is spacious and all of the rooms are well laid out. There are many couches and day beds placed about, it is very informal." This was very much Helena's manner, to lay out a story slowly and sequentially, furnishing all of the details. It would take time but we would arrive eventually.

"One thing that I did notice, was that the Dorringtons only have a few footmen, and they are only in the house when they are required to be — such as when they carried our bags to our rooms or



when they move tables about. For the rest of the time, Elizabeth and Arabella are attended by maids.

“We assembled for dinner and I must say that Lady Dorrington has the most marvellous cook. The dishes were delicious and yet light. After dinner we repaired to the sitting room where we all sat and chatted over a glass of wine. Then it was suggested that we engage in a game of ‘Questions and Commands’.”

I laughed; it had been many years since we had played that as children. When we had played in the nursery at Rogeringham Hall, it had been quite innocent — one of us would ask a question and the person being questioned could either answer it, or if they did not want to answer, they could choose to perform a forfeit, a command set by the questioner. The commands would normally be physical tasks but as I said, completely innocent, the person being commanded would have to stand on their head or run around the stable yard or similar. With the Dorrington women involved, I imagined it would be anything but innocent, but I said nothing and waited for Helena to unfold her story.

“The maids were summoned and arranged the chairs and couches into a circle. Elizabeth was at the

prime position with Charlotte on her left, Hermione, next to her and then myself. Arabella was opposite her mother and next to me. Beyond her was Caroline, with Margaret next to her, and Louise beside Elizabeth.

“We all chattered happily, sipping our wine and nibbling daintily on tid-bits that the maids had laid before us. I looked at the girls and wondered what would happen. I suspected that the evening would degenerate into lewdness quickly...”

“And how did you feel about that?” I asked.

Helena looked at me and laughed. “I was nervous, but excited also. I suppose I was approaching it with my eyes open. You have shown me so much, and the biggest thing you have taught me — besides the joy of love-making — is an awareness of how much more enjoyment there is to life, and how to go beyond what would be considered ‘normal’ in pursuit of it. I had no fears for myself, I was ready for what might happen and to do the unusual.”

I nodded, and smiled to myself, Helena had stepped away from herself and was embracing the adventure. “What about my sisters?” I asked.

“Your sisters I was not sure of. I thought that Charlotte and Hermione would probably embrace the experience. The twins might, but I was not certain of Caroline.

“So,” Helena continued, “I suggested that if anyone wanted to remove themselves from the game at any time, no one was to pass comment. Withdrawal was always an option.

“Fortunately, everyone agreed to this, even Elizabeth and Arabella. In fact, Elizabeth commented that this was ‘a game for enjoyment, it was not designed to be an ordeal.’

“With that agreed, and with everybody still seated around the circle, Elizabeth asked for a volunteer to take the first turn. But Hermione suggested that as she was the host perhaps Elizabeth herself would ask first and demonstrate the game.”

I smiled, I know for a fact that Hermione knows perfectly how it is played, and said so.

“Indeed,” Helena confirmed, “It was my impression that she was inviting Elizabeth to question her first. Instead, however, Elizabeth asked Arabella whether she would prefer to be questioned or commanded.

“And what did she say?”

“She took a sip of her wine and said that ‘she would be happy to be commanded later’, that she ‘looked forwards to it’, but for now, she said that she would opt for a question’.

“Elizabeth asked her if she knew a joke that she could tell.

“Arabella nodded and started to tell a story about a man who was seen with his stockings on with the inside outwards. When people asked him about it, she told us, that he said it was because he had a hole in them on the other side.”

We laughed about it together, as had everybody else.

“Having answered her question, Arabella looked at me and asked which I would prefer. I told her that I would like a question and she asked me nearly the same as her mother had asked her, but she added that it must be about men and women.”

“So, what did you say?” I asked.

“It was a story I heard many years ago, but it seemed suitable for the evening. ‘A famous teacher of Arithmetic had long been married without being

able to get his wife with child. One day someone said to his wife, madam, your husband is an excellent arithmetician. To which she replied, he is, but he is not very good with multiplying.’

“I admit that it was not uproariously funny but it started a chain of similar questions and responses. Eventually though, the challenge fell upon Charlotte and she told Margaret that she chose a Command.

“Margaret instructed Charlotte that she must drain her glass of wine and dance a circuit of the room.”

I looked at Helena, “What a strange challenge!”

“True but it inspired a new round of challenges which saw all of our glasses being emptied and refilled and series of physical exercises. I myself had to dance with Elizabeth at one point.”

“Who took the man’s role?” I asked her.

Helena chuckled, “Neither of us did.” She said, “We were both quite merry from the drink and neither of us could lead, though Elizabeth did take the opportunity to rest her hands on my hips and bottom, which she took great pains to stroke.”

“Oh, really?” I laughed. “How did that feel?”

“Quite pleasant,” my mother advised me, “She is very skilled and very sensual. She looked into my eyes, as we ‘danced’ and pressed her bosom against mine. She looked quite disappointed when we had to sit down again.

“The game continued, but now it had changed, it became so that whoever was challenged had to kiss Arabella. All of your sisters did so. Some with less enthusiasm than others but while I was not surprised by Charlotte, when Hermione kissed her, she did it with such enthusiasm I think even Arabella was taken aback.”

“I decided that, at this point, it had been a long day with the travelling and I had had quite enough to drink and thus was done for the evening, so I went upstairs to bed.”

“And what of the others?” I asked her.

“I found out later that the game had gone on for some time after. I am told that Elizabeth retired not long after I did, as did Caroline. The rest of them indulged in more kissing and eventually shed all of their clothing and danced around the place like a group of wood nymphs, while Charlotte — also nude — played the piano for them. I believe you

will need to ask one of them as to what occurred after that.”

That was something that I resolved to do, when the opportunity presented itself, but for now, I was content to listen to Helena continue her tale.

## ***72. Of steam and hot chocolate***

“When I rose the next morning only Elizabeth had risen for breakfast. She greeted me warmly and seeing that I was slightly worse for wear, invited me to steam with her.

“The Dorrington’s house has a room devoted entirely to steam,” she explained. “It is like a bathhouse with a small pool in it, but there are also braziers in the room, upon the hot coals of which they pour a small amount of water to create a heated, steamy atmosphere.”

I nodded, Elizabeth had had something similar at her house in Lisbon, a building at the rear of the house had been converted, cleaned out, painted and a large tub, a grape pressing vat, had been added with a wood fired boiler. I remember thinking that it was a most admirable construction and thought that perhaps we should add one at Rogeringham Hall somehow.

“We lay for a while in our chemises,” Helena went on, “Which were soon wringing wet through with perspiration, so much so that Elizabeth stood up and removed hers, encouraging me to do the same, saying that I would enjoy the feel of the heat on my bare skin.

“I did so. And she was right. I could feel the unpleasantness from the night before, leaving my body through the pores of my skin as I perspired. Then she called her maid in.

“The maid servant was a black girl, called Abigail. She had the most stunning features and shapely breasts and wide hips. She had very short black curly hair, which she wore under a cap. When she later removed the cap, her short hair only served to emphasise the shapeliness of her head and her neck.

“Elizabeth told her that I needed a ‘massage’, before explaining to me that it was the most wonderful thing and that Abigail had magical fingers.

“I was not certain at first, but Elizabeth prevailed upon me, so I lay upon the couch with my face resting upon my arms, while Abigail made ready.



“She took some scented oil upon her hands, and began to stroke and soothe the skin of my legs, working from my feet — to which she gave careful attention — up my legs towards my body. She has very strong fingers, and she pressed her finger tips into the flesh of my legs, as if she was aligning the muscles to their proper order. Oh! William, Elizabeth spoke quite truly, that girl does have magic in her hands.

“After a short time, I could feel my legs relaxing. Elizabeth was talking to her quietly as she worked, which I wasn’t really paying attention to, I was enjoying the sensations too much. Then she said to me, ‘Helena,’ (we had agreed the previous evening that styles were not necessary between the two of us), ‘Abigail says that you are very tense, I told her that it was the stress of being a mother in the midst of the Season.’

“I am afraid I could only groan my agreement; Abigail had begun to work her hands on my back. She briefly gave my bottom some of her attention but soon moved on to the area of my back bone. She patiently worked each of the bones, and pressed and prodded them carefully, before moving to my head, taking hold of my shoulders and pulling them gently towards herself. Dear Lord, I thought I was in

Heaven. Oh, do not mistake me, my love, you bring about the most wonderful feelings in me, but she caused such delights, such a wonderful floating feeling... and then she asked me to turn over onto my back.

“As I turned over, I saw that Abigail had stripped her own clothes back so that she worked naked from the waist upwards, to keep her chemise clean of the oil. I also noticed that her breasts were exquisite, firm and shaped like pears, sitting high on her chest and with the largest areola I have ever seen and erect stub-like nipples. Before I began ‘our journey’, my love, I probably would never have looked twice at her, but now I found myself admiring her form and enjoying the sight. She was so pretty and so exotic.

“I also saw Elizabeth reclining upon a cushion, still naked, next to us and watching, she also seemed to be enjoying what she saw.

“Abigail began again on my feet. This time she lavished attention on each toe, taking her time with each one before continuing her work on my feet themselves. Elizabeth told me that she was working any poisons and bad blood towards my core, where my body would dispose of them. I am not sure about this but as she moved from my feet to my lower

legs, the feelings were so pleasant and I was so transported with pleasures that I would have agreed with anything.

“I did not realise how much tension there was in my muscles, but as she finished each limb, they felt limp as if they had no strength in them, though they were merely relaxed. It was very much the way that you make me feel.

“And so, she continued, until she reached my breasts, her hands were very gentle, gliding across the skin, but where I thought the girl would massage them in an erotic way, she was quite workmanlike, in that she caressed them but made no move to touch my nipples, or do anything to stimulate them.”

Helena paused, thinking about the experience. A smile played across her lips.

“When she was finished, Elizabeth suggested that Abigail make us a drink of hot chocolate. It was a most marvellous feeling to lie there as if I had just woken from a night of the very best sleep — fresh and relaxed, and not as I had that morning — feeling the effects of the previous night.

“Another maid brought us a clean chemise and dressing gown each, whilst removing our previous

wet clothing, so after our steam, and my massage, we dressed and sat together in the sunlit room, whilst Abigail prepared our drink for us.

“I watched her milling the chocolate, and frothing the milk, taking the utmost care to make the most perfect cup of hot chocolate.

““Abigail is delightful, is she not?’ Elizabeth asked me.

““She is,’ I replied, ‘Where did you find her?’

““She was working in the household of Lord Portishead in Bristol. He is old and partly-blind and she was just a chamber-maid. He was completely wasting her ability.’ She told me, ‘I was staying there one time and Abigail was assigned to me.’

““Then Abigail is not a slave?’ I asked, looking at the lovely girl, who shook her head.

““Good heavens, no!’ Elizabeth exclaimed. ‘She was born in Bristol of a free sailor and his woman, weren’t you, my dear.’

““That I was, ma’am!’ Abigail’s confirmed, appearing not to be concerned in anyway about my comment.

“‘After a few days I discovered how talented she actually is and induced her to come and work for me.’

“‘You discovered...?’ I asked her.

“‘I seduced her.’ She said with a triumphant grin, ‘After all, is my beloved Abigail not the most beautiful of creatures? It would have been a crime not to...’ Elizabeth stroked the girl’s shoulders and neck as she said this.

“‘I believe that you are as incorrigible as any man,’ I observed to Elizabeth.

“‘She laughed and thanked me. ‘Why should men be the only ones allowed to have pleasure?’

“‘But seriously, Helena,’ Elizabeth then laid her hand on mine, and I shall not lie, relaxed as I was, and the air in the steam-room was so charged with sensuality, a thrill ran through me when she did.

“‘You are so very fortunate,’ she went on, ‘William is an experienced and considerate lover, and to be treasured for that, and he loves you very much. For the rest of us, we have to take our chances when we can.’

“Elizabeth’s hand on my wrist was cool, and she caressed the skin ever so slightly. ‘Women have always sought out other women for comfort and relief when they are neglected, so I do not consider my choices to be anything other than natural. And does it matter if it is my lovely Abigail or someone as elegant and as sensual as yourself, Helena? Pleasure is pleasure, wherever you find it. Thank you, Abigail.’

“The maid had presented us with the hot chocolate, which I discovered she had infused with both the merest hint of ginger and a drop of oil of peppermint to make a most delicious drink, which we continued to enjoy in quiet contemplation.

“I still felt as if I had just woken from a deep, deep sleep, but I was also quite alert, not drowsy. Because of this I was quite aware that this was all part of Elizabeth’s seduction. Unlike yourself, she does not stride up and declare ‘we will be lovers!’” She pronounced that last in a gruff, deep voice, which I assumed was supposed to be me.

“Elizabeth creates an air of ease and sensuality, which envelopes one, so when finally, she does make her attempt, it almost seems like a logical conclusion.”

“So did you sleep with her?” I asked.

“After a morning of languorous ease and grace, we took a carriage ride around Henley,” Helena deftly deflected my question; she had a story and was going to tell the tale of it in her own way.

“We talked of many things, as we drove around the town, which is most charming and Elizabeth told me about how she had met you in Portugal. She was quite complimentary — she said that you were considered very honourable, and were well-liked as an officer, even though some felt you were unnecessarily reckless at times.” Helena looked at me as she spoke, that look that a mother gives a naughty but well-loved child. “And that was the deciding factor in her asking you to deflower Arabella. Any man could have done it, but Elizabeth felt that your manly qualities of strength and bravery, combined with more gentlemanly aspects of your nature — your discretion in particular — made you the ideal person to do that particular deed, that and your obvious skill in bed. She knew — and she did not expound on **how** she knew — but Elizabeth says that she knew that you would not require commitment from Arabella, because you were obviously devoted to someone else, and she

complimented me once again for being the object of that devotion.”

“After a simple supper, with the girls singing around the piano afterwards again, we left them to their own devices and retired. Elizabeth suggested that we change into our *robes de chambre* and retire to her rooms.”

### **73. *That evening***

“Once there, Abigail again brought the equipment for making chocolate, though this time she added drops of an orange liqueur to her brew. Then with the chocolate done, and the service tidied away, the maid attended her mistress, brushing her hair and performing a massage upon her shoulders. I observed that it looked most relaxing, so when she finished with Elizabeth, Abigail came to work upon me.

“First, she brushed out my hair, and she complimented me on the fine quality and the natural colour of my hair. Then, as we had changed on retiring and sat in our chemises again, she lowered the neck of my chemise and began to stroke my shoulders with her long, strong fingers. She kneaded the flesh and worked upon it, and while there was some light discomfort, I have to say that, like the



massage in the morning it was the most pleasant and marvellous feeling.

“And then at a sign from her mistress, Abigail lowered the neck of my chemise even further so that my breasts were exposed and she began to stroke and massage them as well. I had been half-expecting this, so did not react with any surprise. I allowed her to perform her magic, and as I have learnt to, relaxed and enjoyed the girl’s ministrations.

“I found myself reclining back against Abigail, who had also lowered the neck of her dress, so that I rested upon her bare chest with those perfectly shaped breasts, with her nipples pressing against my back. It was most exciting to be in such a position. This time though, Abigail’s touch was less about a simple massage, and more about stimulation and pleasure.

“She cupped, and weighed my breasts, warming them in her graceful hands. She kneaded them, causing a great warmth in me, making me want her to touch my nipples and tease them. I needed her to do this, as I felt that the merest touch of her fingers on my nubs would make me spend, I was that close.

“I was beginning to understand Elizabeth’s fascination with Sappho,” she told me, “The touch

of a woman is so very different from that of a man, however skilled he is. Women know which touches excite.”

“So, is this where I get angry because you are discarding me for a woman?” I asked.

“No! No! No!” Helena threw herself on top of me, kissing me frantically. Her hand snaked down to my groin, and her fingers stroked my hardness. “I will always need this. Women are good, they are soft and sensual and they understand the art of touching.”

My mother rubbed her mound against my bulging prick through her gown. “But it will never replace your warm, hard cock, not for me, anyway.”

We broke then to undress and get back onto the bed naked, so we could enjoy each other’s touch — skin upon skin. Helena folded herself against me, her leg draped over mine and her hand wrapped around my cock.

“So did this girl, Abigail, bring you to climax?”

Helena smiled, “No, the minx! She maintained her touches, her hands holding my breasts, as I lay back against hers. I could feel her long nipples touching my back, gently moving as her arms

supported me and the tiny movements of her hands kept my excitement from dissipating, but she was subtle enough to stop my climax from taking me.

“It was at this point that Elizabeth leaned in closely, so close that her own bared breasts were a fraction of an inch from mine. I was breathing as hard as if I had run a foot race at this point, and she looked at me and asked if she could kiss me.”

Helena looked at me, her face impishly gleeful as she said, “I am afraid I was in no state to refuse, William, so I reached up and drew her face to mine.

“We kissed passionately, I could taste the chocolate and the lingering taste of the orange on her lips, as our tongues duelled. Her hands replaced those of the maid upon my breasts, while Abigail reached over to caress the skin of her mistress’s back.

“We were quite a tangle of flesh,” Helena laughed gently, “My hands joined with Abigail’s darker ones, as we wrapped around Elizabeth, trapping her against me. She pressed herself upwards, leaning past me to kiss her maid, and then returning to gently press her mouth once more to mine. Then she lowered her head to suckle my nipples, while I turned my face and kissed Abigail.

At some point Elizabeth's tongue upon my breast caused the fire that had been building in me to burst into a flame and I spent most vigorously. Trapped between two women, as I was, it seemed that it was that much more intense, to be confined thus."

Helena was almost quivering as she remembered that evening with those two women, "I never knew that I could do something like that. I was engaged with both Elizabeth and her servant, and it mattered not at all," she told me. "We were simply three women finding pleasure in each other.

"Elizabeth was the first to break free. She rose up and slipped out of her chemise, standing naked before us in the dimly lit room, encouraging us to do the same. I noted again, as I had when we were in the steaming room, that she had shaved her mons, so that it was devoid of any hair.

"When I asked why she did this, she told me that it felt much better when being carnal and anyway, she said, laughing, nobody likes hair in their mouths. 'You must try it', she told me, 'William will appreciate it.'"

I reached down and found Helena's skin bare and smooth to my touch, it felt strange for my mother to

be bare there but it was a strangeness that I thought I would enjoy, later.

“Abigail and I rose from the couch and undressed, to join Elizabeth. I believe I gasped when I saw Abigail step out of her chemise, she was exquisite. She was slim in her upper body and legs, yet her hips swelled as if she had borne children. On seeing me regarding her maid, Elizabeth advised that it was common in some black women, that they had such wide hips, but, said, it only makes their bottoms so much more delicious. At which point Abigail pirouetted and showed off her pert, rounded bum cheeks.

“It was readily apparent that those two are familiar bed-mates, and any reservations I had had about joining in their sport were waved away by Elizabeth. ‘You have come so far, Helena, this is but a step to be taken...’ and she extended a hand to me and we joined Abigail upon Elizabeth’s large bed.”

“You **have** come a long way, my love,” I said.

“As I have said, Elizabeth Dorrington does that,” Helena laughed. “You’re drawn into her web of sensuality and pleasure; she makes it very easy. Was it that way for you?”

“Exactly so,” I admitted. “The level of debauchery that was normal in the night-time society of Lisbon, created such an atmosphere so that when she propositioned me, it seemed almost natural to agree. But tell me more my love, your story is most engrossing and you tell it so well.”

“I can tell,” my mother laughed, stroking my hard cock.

“At first, we all lay on the bed, simply exploring each other, Elizabeth assisted me in exploring Abigail, from her perfectly shaped bobbies, to her shaven mons — apparently Abigail shaves Elizabeth, and having done so, she then shaves herself. As I have said the girl’s nipples are extraordinarily long, like studs, when she is excited, I also found that she had dabbed some of the orange liqueur upon them making them taste delightful as well.”

“You tasted them?” I asked, mused at how quickly my mother had embraced Sappho and her acolytes.

“I did more than that!” Helena said proudly, “I suckled them, and at her request bit gently upon them. In fact, Elizabeth and I assaulted them

together, she suckled on the left nipple and I, the right.

“I slid my hand down Abigail’s smooth dark skin, across her mons to her cunny, only to find that Elizabeth had a hand there already. We looked at each and grinned and then she took her fingers from Abigail’s quim and offered them to me to suck on.

“I was so deeply involved in this lewdness that it seemed a natural thing to do,” my mother admitted, “and Abigail’s cunny tasted divine.”

I shook my head, smiling. I had hoped that such a sensuous creature dwelt within my mother. In many of my fantasies I dreamt that finally achieving my mother’s love would unlock some wild, sensual, lascivious woman who would match my own desires. It would not have mattered if she had not been that way — my love for Helena was such that I simply wanted her for herself, but to find that there was indeed that side to her nature was a wonder indeed. I was glad that she seemed to have progressed that much further.

Helena seemed to sense my thoughts, “I recall,” she said, “When you told me that there was so much more to be enjoyed in love than I was used to, I admit that I did feel sceptical. I thought that I was

too old; too confirmed in my ways to indulge, but there in that room, with Abigail lewdly open on the bed before me and Elizabeth feeding me the girl's cunny juices on her fingers, I realised that I wasn't, that it was exactly as you had said and here it was provided for me. I almost regretted not having had this pleasure sooner in my life."

"But?" I asked her.

"It would not have happened, not as I was before you returned home. But now it has happened, as part of our journey together, my love, and **that** I would not have missed for all of the gold in all of the world." Helena leaned towards me and we kissed passionately, both of us showing our love for each other.

After some minutes of this enthusiastic kissing, we broke and I rose and poured us some wine. Helena resumed the story of her tribadic progress.

"Tasting Abigail unlocked a frenzy," she said, "Of a sudden we were unleashed like ravenous beasts. We kissed, we touched each other, I tasted Elizabeth, then she and Abigail bent their heads and licked at my cunny — and you know how much I love that. After I recovered from that, I licked Abigail, while she licked her mistress and Elizabeth



licked me, like a chain of daisies, intertwined and inter-linked.

“Sweet Lord!” Helena fanned her face with her hand, “Just thinking about it, brings my juices down.

“But there was more,” she told me, “Elizabeth reached into a drawer and took out a device of straps, and having put it on, it appeared that she had just grown a fine, outstanding prick!”

I nodded, “I have seen such devices, they’re called a *godemiche*.” I did not remind her that Charlotte owns one.

“This one was on a harness round her hips,” she said, I nodded again.

“I was fascinated to see what Elizabeth did with it. She mounted the bed and presented it to Abigail, who treated it just like a real prick and started to fondle it and lick it. She sucked it into her mouth pressing it so far in that her nose was touching her mistress’s belly. Once she had it thoroughly wetted, she turned around and presented her cunny to her mistress, who wasted no time in mounting her and fucking her.

“I lay beside Abigail, with my head beside her hips, watching as the black toy slid in and out. She

draped herself over my hips and bent down and started to lick my cunny again. I had Elizabeth fucking Abigail with her fake cock, beside my head, and Abigail licking my pussy. It was so erotic, so involving, that I moved under Abigail and in between hers and Elizabeth's thighs, so that I could take licks at their cunnies as they moved back and to above me."

Helena moved herself so that she was impaled on my cock, resting there, not moving, just letting me fill her, her cunny hot on my prick, her bare breasts resting on my chest. She continued on with her story.

"And so, it went long into the evening until Elizabeth finished by allowing me to fuck her with the *godemiche*, while she and Abigail kissed in front of me. When she finally spent, and collapsed on top of the black girl, we were all exhausted.

"Abigail left us and we arranged ourselves for sleep. Truly, I never thought such a thing was possible, William, not only was I indulging in love-making with another woman, but that there would be three of us."

"But did you enjoy yourself?" I asked her as she lay upon my chest looking up at me. Helena

wriggled, causing a thrill to run through my cock.

My mother nodded, a wide smile on her face. But there was something else there, an echo of the discomfort I had observed earlier.

“So,” I asked her “Why do you feel that you need to apologise?”

I felt Helena’s body move as she gathered her courage, she looked at me, “As much as I enjoyed my experiences, I fear I cannot be a sensualist like Elizabeth Dorrington. I do not think I have it in me.

“I love you,” she said, “I revel in your love and your attention, William. When someone says your name and I hear it, I swell with pride. When you enter a room that I am in, I feel a delicious thrill course through me, and when you look at me, I feel my passion start inside me. Your scent, your touch, even just your attention excites me as if I were a blushing bride. All day I look forwards to the moment when we will lie together, to when you will perpetrate your acts of lust upon my willing flesh, and I will endeavour to match each and every one of them. But I am sorry, I shall never be an Elizabeth Dorrington for you. She is unbridled sensuality set free upon the world. I am not sure I have that in me.

“I see now why you esteem her so much, but I can never be that openly wanton, brazenly seductive, or simply devoted to sexual pleasure. It is not the person that I am.”

“God forbid!” I laughed, “One Elizabeth is enough.”

“But I thought you admired her?” Helena asked, puzzled.

“I do!” I told her, “Greatly. She has many excellent qualities — her sensual nature notwithstanding, she is an intelligent, articulate and independent person. She has an abundance of energy, so much in fact, she is almost a storm of passion walking among us.”

“So why would you not want more of her?”

“Because she is Elizabeth, unique and beautiful as she is. And you are Helena, also unique and so very much more beautiful. Arabella, and Charlotte, and Hermione, Caroline, they are all individuals and all beautiful in their own way. All of you are persons with your own thoughts and fears and desires and needs, to be treasured and loved for who you are, and not because of people that you resemble.”

“So, you are saying that you do not want me to be a copy of Elizabeth, you want me just to be who I am?” Helena said thoughtfully, she did not sound entirely convinced.

“Exactly, my love.” I kissed her again.

She looked down, still pressed against my body, but I could feel her uncertainty. I kissed the top of her head. “You do not need to be Elizabeth; you simply need to be Helena. What you said just then about starting out journey together?” She nodded; her hair soft against my skin as her head moved.

“Slowly and surely, you have come to know how much pleasure a man and woman can enjoy, more than most people ever find, more than some people can even imagine.” Helena and I kissed, tenderly.

“What you experienced with Elizabeth, was just another step on that journey. She has opened your eyes to pleasures I cannot show you. Take from that experience what you will, discard what you do not need. Nobody, least of all me, wants you to be another Elizabeth.”

“Truly?” My mother asked, looking up at me.

“Truly.” I told her, and for the first time the doubt and uncertainty left her eyes. My mother relaxed

against my chest.

“Wait! What about the twins?” Helena asked after a few moments. “Are they not the same as your other sisters — individuals?”

“To be honest, mother, I am still not sure exactly what the twins are.” I laughed. “They baffle me.”

After that we slept.

#### ***74. More from Henley***

We woke early, Barclay had not yet brought my shaving water, so we talked more about their time at the Dorrington’s, while we waited.

The next day of their stay, Helena told me, she went for a second drive around the town, this time with Arabella. Once more she used it as an opportunity for the two of them to become more familiar. Their route about Henley crossed the bridge over the Thames and then came back into the town, where Arabella paused their journey to greet a friend of hers, before they returned to the Dorrington’s house.

“And what did you discuss while you made your way about?” I asked, though I half expected Helena

to close down, as she had on the day of Arabella's birthday.

Instead, she turned to me and embraced me tightly.

"Arabella told me," She explained, "what she had seen on a day out to view you soldiers fighting. Did people actually do that?"

"Oh yes," I laughed, "Just like a day at the races. They ride out in carriages, with picnics, no less, and sit at the edge of the battlefield and watch the carnage unfold for their entertainment."

"And you did not mind?" She asked, amazed at such behaviour.

"My mind was elsewhere, my love." I told her gently, "There were always other things to keep you occupied on days like that in Portugal. The French, for example, they tended to be very annoyed if they thought you were ignoring them."

Helena poked at me for taking it lightly, but really what else could I have done, I explained? My duty was to the King to do as we were ordered and my men to see that they did the same and that we all came through it as best we could. The French and the Allied troops tended to ignore the onlookers,

keeping the focus of their attention on killing each other and not the viewing public.

“She said that you were all so brave to do what you did, and that she was glad that of all the people she had known in Portugal, you had come through it safely.”

“I will be truthful with you, my dearest love, so was I.” I said as I leaned over to kiss her. “So was I.”

My kiss led to other things and soon Helena and I were in the midst of a leisurely fuck, where she rode me again, her coral-coloured nipples jiggling as she thrust up and down, when we heard the knock-knock, pause, knock-knock, that heralded Barclay’s arrival.

We went out that afternoon for a drive around Hyde Park in the landau, it was a pleasant afternoon, and we had the hood down, so that we could see and be seen. Charlotte rode with us, Caroline and the twins were chaperoning Hermione in the brougham with James. The afternoon became quite warm and the sun shone brightly, so that all of the women opened their parasols to avoid being burned by the sun which would spoil their fashionably pale complexions.



For myself, I had to endure Charlotte pointing out various young ladies, emphasising their qualities as if I would be interested in them as potential matches. When they were aware of our scrutiny, the young ladies in question would primp themselves and pout, showing themselves off as if they were items in a shop, to be bought or sold. The only difference here, was that the merchandise was actively trying to sell itself.

We stopped by the Serpentine and dismounted to promenade for a while, and quite soon after that, the Dorrington's appeared in their landau, which stopped close to us. The greetings between the vehicles were enthusiastically warm, and embraces were exchanged as they also dismounted and we walked about the park, talking with each other.

My mother and Elizabeth's greetings were particularly noticeable, when she first greeted Helena — "Your Grace", Elizabeth's curtsy was quite spectacular, low and with a markedly bowed head. If a curtsy could be considered in any way sensual, this was an excellent example, and to be truthful such a thing could only have been done by a Dorrington. Helena — "My dear Lady Elizabeth" — also inclined her head in greeting, probably more than the difference in rank between the two of them

demanded. However, then both women embraced warmly, and bussed each other on the cheeks.

There was no doubt that the relationship between the two women had reached a new level, which was impressive, given that they had only become acquainted for the first time at the Winter Ball before Christmas.

“Has your mother talked about her visit last week yet?” Elizabeth asked me as we walked along the edge of the lake.

“In some detail,” I laughed. “She appears to have enjoyed it greatly.”

“I believe we all did,” Elizabeth told me. “Lady Helena is a remarkable woman, she is brave and daring and quite, quite beautiful.”

“You understand now that my feelings for her are not coincidental?” I asked, she nodded.

“Yes,” She agreed. “You make the perfect couple.”

I was tempted to see if I could pry some more information about what occurred the previous week from Elizabeth but out of nowhere there was a sudden, and quite intense rainstorm and we were

forced to repair back to our carriages and from there we returned to Rogeringham House.

I was in my study reading a letter from Henry, when Charlotte came to see me.

We had had no real opportunity to talk while we were out — aside from her teasing me — but now it seemed that she wanted to chat, so I offered her a glass of the madeira and we sat together and talked about the events at Henley. I asked about playing the piano in the nude for a group of dancing nymphs.

At least Charlotte had the decency to look embarrassed.

“We had all had far too much to drink that night.” She admitted sheepishly, “The game\_”

“Questions and Commands?”

“Quite so,” she said, “It got completely out of hand. Once mama and Lady Elizabeth had retired to bed, we started doing silly things\_”

“What sort of things?”

“Childish dares, most of which involved one of us kissing or touching another. And as the game progressed, they became more intimate — at one point I ended up frigging Arabella’s cunny, and

another time she frigged Hermione while they kissed for two minutes. Anyway, one thing led to another and we all ended up undressed, and someone called for music, so I played and they danced like crazed bacchantes.” And like that, she dismissed their debauchery as mere girlish hi-jinks.

Charlotte caught the look on my face and laughed. “Oh William! Really, it was just high spirits! Young women — and only young women, having the sort of adventures that you had as a young man. And that was probably the worst of it,” she declared. “The rest of the week we were quite demure and behaved more in line with our social positions, we talked a lot and sang together and played parlour games. And learned much more about each other.

“Did you know that Arabella shaves herself like that black girl you told me about in Jamaica? The one with the dil doule? Of course, you didn’t know, how could you? She only began doing so recently, I am thinking of doing it myself, it looks like it would be most refreshing during the heat of summer.”

I nodded; it would indeed be more comfortable when the weather was warm. “But you should not describe yourselves as Bacchantes.” I told her,

drawing a curious look. “Maenads would be a more fitting name,” I suggested.

“Were they not the same?” she asked.

“The Bacchantes were Bacchus’s followers, and they did do the sort of thing you described, but they were mere mortals. The Maenads on the other hand, were all divine\_”

Charlotte squealed with laughter. “And, of course, we are **all** divine. Thank you, William!” Charlotte hugged me closely. “You are the very best brother.”

We talked for the rest of the afternoon, Charlotte told me about the library at the Dorrington’s house, which contained a wide selection of erotic literature from ancient writers — similar to Catullus, to more recent authors such as Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, who is also known by the pen name of the Marquis de Sade. Charlotte described spending some time perusing de Sade’s *Justine*, and his *100 days of Sodom*, but then admitted that it seemed a little extreme for her tastes. She had enjoyed what we had played at but thought that what de Sade described would not be so enjoyable.

She went on to describe other, more sociable activities, such as riding in the carriages to beauty spots around Henley, along the river and about the town. Arabella invited some of her friends to picnic, and they all shared a pleasant afternoon on the river bank. Elizabeth even arranged for them all to be taken on a river cruise in rowing boats, crewed by her footmen. All in all, she said, it had been a very pleasant interval, away from the intense scrutiny of The Season, even if it had been a little lewd at times.

The most important part, Charlotte said, had been to become better acquainted with Arabella. She really liked her, I nodded, no, my sister said, she really, **really** liked her. But, she laughed, she promised that she was not going to steal my bride from me.

“As lovely as Arabella is,” my sister added, with a gentle pat of her hand on my prick, “I like the feeling of one of these in me much better.”

I asked her how Helena had enjoyed herself.

Charlotte told me that she thought her mama had enjoyed it greatly, certainly the carriage rides and the picnics, but then told me that Helena and Elizabeth had often left the young ladies to their

own devices and retired early. I noted this and said nothing.

### **75. *A short interlude and an oratorio***

We went out again that evening, dodging the showers that still fell, to go to a perfectly excellent performance of Mr Handel's *Messiah*, which was very rousing and quite moving. After that we were invited to a *soirée* at the home of Sir John Armstrong, a man who had done business with my father, and who kept trying to talk business with me throughout the evening. I realised that I should make time to talk to Sir John, after all we did share some business interests, but I was simply not in the mood, and kept trying to change the subject, though he was quite insistent.

Fortunately, Helena feigned illness, saying that she felt weary, so as soon as was polite, we repaired to Rogeringham House.

### **76. *Helena, Elizabeth and bathing***

Once we had returned to Rogeringham House, I asked for a light supper for Helena and I, in my room, which we ate naked in bed. It felt quite decadent, to have the dishes on trays on the bed before us, and at one point some drops of a sauce

from one of the meat dishes dropped onto Helena's breast. It was too good an opportunity to miss, and I bent my head and licked it off. Of course, I could have simply scooped the sauce off with my tongue, but instead, I spread the sauce about, even applying some to her near-by nipple, before I cleaned the upper surface of her breast.

Helena laughed and shivered as I did it, but it was clear that she enjoyed it immensely because no sooner had I finished with her right breast, than she deliberately smeared some sauce upon her other breast.

"Minx!" I laughed, before applying myself to that task, only to find that Helena had a finger full of the creamy sauce and was smearing it over her nude mons and upper quim.

This was going to descend into messiness, so I removed the trays and glasses to the table and pinned my mother to the bed, placing myself over her in the *soixante-neuf* position. Helena reached up and guided my hips down towards her face, while I lowered my head down and began to clean up the mess on her cunny.

It wasn't long before the cleaning was done, no time at all in fact, and soon we were quite involved



in mutual frigging, licking and sucking. The creamy taste of the sauce that Helena had smeared on herself, had been replaced by another cream, a different, more piquant tasting sauce that flooded my tongue as she arched her hips up to my mouth. She pressed upwards as I bent my head down. Her cums were little ones, but no less intense for that, each jerk of her hips, each pulse of her thighs drove me on to give her more, more, more.

And so, it continued, Helena came and came and came again, until she begged me to stop, all the while continuing with her hand to frig my cock or fondle my pills, or even penetrate my arse with her finger.

When my spend did come down, I drenched her face beneath me, literally dousing her with ropes of jism, that wound across her nose and lips and cheeks.

Helena sputtered, coughing as some of the spend fell into her mouth.

“Oh William!” She laughed, “You have made such a mess!”

I moved to lie beside her and with a sigh of resignation, continued my task of cleaning her. “It is

you that is the messy one, mother.” I told her between licks. “I have spent the best part of the last hour cleaning you up!” I continued to clean my mother’s face by scooping up jism on my tongue and feeding it to her welcoming mouth.

“But it has been enjoyable, hasn’t it?” She giggled. “I do not believe I have come as much as that before.”

Helena pulled me to her, clutching me tightly. “I do so love you, William,” then she paused and looked at me, ‘Just in case you ever wonder,’ She advised. “I would not want you to think otherwise.”

“Your love always has been, and it always will be, the pillar upon which my life is built.” I told her.

Helena threw herself on me again, almost smothering me with the fierce passion of her embrace.

After that we lay for a while. I took a cloth off the wash stand and wiped us both down, “I am thinking,” I told her, “Of commissioning a bath house, such as Elizabeth has.”

“Here?” Helena asked, meaning here in the London house.

“I thought perhaps at Rogeringham Hall, but we could look at some sort of accommodation here as well.” I added.

She nodded, “I was most taken with the arrangement, I used the steam room at Elizabeth’s house several times.” Helena paused, staring into the space above her, as if re-living a memory. A half smile lingered on her lips.

“As well as a more satisfying way of taking a bath,” I said, “The possibilities of such a facility are quite interesting.”

Helena’s half smile broke out into a fully blown lascivious grin. “They are indeed.” She agreed.

“You and Elizabeth have become quite firm friends.” I noted.

“Yes.” She agreed, “We have, which surprised me.”

“How so?”

“When you first mentioned her, and I encountered her at the ball, I thought she might be a rival for your affections.” Helena held up her hand as I went to answer her. “Don’t forget how jealous I am,” She reminded me. “But I did feel that way, I

believed Elizabeth to be a competitor, but the more I learnt about her and her philosophy, I realised that she was not.

“Elizabeth made love to you, but she told me that that was the end of it. Not only did she recognise that you are devoted to someone else, but she does not want to be involved with anyone in the long-term anymore.” Helena laughed, “She said that as far she is concerned, it is now ‘find them, fuck them and then forget them’.”

I got up and poured a glass of wine for her.

My mother gave a huge sigh, surprising in that it seemed to come from nowhere. “Your father did not only isolate your sisters, you know? He isolated me as well — I had no friends, no one to confide in. Oh, I had your sisters, and I have you, but I missed having a woman of my own age to talk to. It was nice to have Emily Dodgson to talk to, but she has her own life to live. And anyway, I feared to let her be too involved in our lives. If she had discovered our relationship, who knows how she would have felt. I worried that she might have had a breakdown. So, Elizabeth has become the friend I needed, a friend who is also my *confidante*.”

I nodded.

“She and I shared so much this last week, we talked about many things. There is much that we agree on, and there are things that we do not — but we can respect each other’s views. The chief thing,” Helena went on, “Is that she understands me and does not judge, and I feel the same about her.”

“And Arabella?” I asked.

“That was harder to come to terms with,” she said, “She is everything that you advertised her to be — young, attractive, intelligent, sensual and willingly adventurous. Oh, I did see her as an issue at first, but there are times when we must over-ride our fears, and consider the future, and in this case, succession is my main concern. That was what decided me that we should proceed. That and the fact that Arabella is wonderfully amiable. I found that the more that she and I became acquainted, the more that I liked her, and that has made the resolution to that situation easier than I thought it would be.”

“So, your mind is at rest, then?” I asked.

“Oh, I suppose I will always worry about something,” she laughed, “Raise five daughters and have a son who is away fighting in a war and there is

always some spectre of doubt lurking somewhere in your mind. But for now, I am content.”

And with that Helena lay back upon the bed, resting on her elbows. She parted her legs invitingly, and looked me with a girlish smile, “Come to bed, William, I need your cock filling me.”

Well, I suppose that when it is put like that it would be churlish to make a lady wait.

After I had done my duties, and Helena and I were sitting on the couch by the fireplace, drinking a very pleasant *rioja*, and sharing some *sobranie* tobacco in the churchwarden pipe that she had given me for Christmas.

“Elizabeth has a very fine pipe,” she said, “It was made in China, and has a long, straight, black stem, and a tiny silver bowl. It makes her look very exotic when she uses it.”

“She uses it as if it were a prop in a theatre, or a portrait?” I suggested.

Helena nodded, “Yes! Yes, she does,” She laughed.

“Elizabeth does it with everything; a pipe, a glass, a carriage, even another person,” I laughed,

“We are all props, in the portrait of her life.”

Helena looked at me, “Is that a bad thing?” she asked.

“It is neither good nor bad, simply the way she is, as much a part of her as her skin or her hair.” I laughed.

“Did you both share the pipe?” I asked. Our “intermissions” between our bouts of love-making had become dear to me, as we talked I was privileged to see a totally different Helena — my Venus of the bed chamber — and while we talked, I learnt more about my mother and she about me.

“I did!” She laughed, ‘I introduced her to this.’ Helena waved the pipe to encompass the pair of us, “Sitting and talking, though Elizabeth preferred to drink chocolate at night rather than wine, or rum. She says it feels better in her stomach.”

“You slept with her each night?”

“Yes.” Helena replied. “We would sit and talk for hours, long into the evening, — we had broken down any barriers on that second night — so it seemed natural to sleep in the same bed. Most of the time we just slept, but sometimes we would indulge

with each other.” Helena broke off with a sly smile, as if she was recalling something to her memory.

“It was very interesting,” she said, “Some nights Abigail would join us, but she never stayed the night. I learnt a great deal of what pleasures a woman’s body can offer.”

Helena placed the pipe down, and drank the remainder from her glass. “Now come back to bed, I just want to sleep with you ’til dawn and be loved.”

“It will be my greatest pleasure, my love,” I told her as we climbed into bed again.

### ***77. Co-ordination***

An invitation arrived for a garden party at General Bradley’s house on the other side of Hyde Park. I asked Helena to respond as soon as she could, which, apparently, she did.

It is a measure of how complex the whole social season, and our involvement with Elizabeth and Arabella, had now become, that the Rogeringshams were now secretly co-ordinating our social calendar with that of the Dorringtons. Arabella and her mother wanted to know which invitations we were accepting so that they could accept the same ones. It



was a note from Elizabeth Dorrington that started the next chapter.

*“Just wondering why you chose the garden party at Sir George’s and not that of Lady Hampton?”* the note from Elizabeth read.

After checking, it was found that Lady Hampton’s invitation had been received at the same time as Sir George’s but the General’s was opened first and responded to first.

“We can always excuse ourselves from the general’s party and attend the ball.” Margaret suggested.

“No.” I told her firmly. All of the heads at the table — Louise and Margaret’s, Hermione’s, Charlotte’s and my mother’s turned to look at me.

“We shall not do that.” I explained. “We accepted the invitation; we shall attend the garden party.”

“But Lady Hampton’s ball will be... everybody will be there!” Louise said.

“Everybody, bar ourselves and the Dorringtons apparently.” I corrected her.

“It is quite simple,” I explained, “What would it say of our manners, if having said that we will

attend, we were to pass up the General's event and then be seen at another?"

"It would be very bad form indeed." Helena said, "I agree with William, and it is an important principle of life, having accepted an invitation, one must make every effort to honour it, even if a more prestigious one arrives later. After all, one never knows when the next invitation will come."

"Besides," Charlotte laughed, "All the very best people will be at the general's house."

"Oh!" said Margaret, "Who would that be?"

"Why, us of course!" My eldest sister laughed. 'When news of William and Arabella being seen at the general's gets out,' she went on, "People will be sick with envy at not being able to bask in the light from their glory."

"There is that of course," I added, dismissively, "The general's youngest daughter is counted to be the queen's favourite, so yes, all of the most desirable people will be there. Even you and Louise." I teased Margaret.

**78. *We went to a garden party...***

The afternoon was warm and pleasant. The general's house was a short stone's throw from Kensington Palace, and stood in its own grounds. It was a very masculine dwelling, which was understandable as Sir George had been a widower for some fifteen years. He was the father to three daughters, of whom only one remained at home, the older two having married.

His remaining daughter, Lydia, was a charming girl, with a mind some years older than her eighteen summers. It was my impression that she was actually the mistress of the house, despite her years. It turned out that she had organised her own Presentation party, with only a minimum of input from her father. He was very proud of her and loudly proclaimed it, however, he wanted me to meet someone else.

"Your Grace!" Sir George greeted me, "May I present my nephew, Captain Richard Carter?"

I turned to the general's companion, a good-looking chap, with a boyish smile.

"Captain." I greeted the man in front of me, in the same uniform that I had once worn, though the lower left arm of the jacket was turned back on itself. Despite his youthful face, one merely had to

look into the young man's eyes to see that he had known battle. "You are just returned, sir?"

"Two weeks, Your Grace."

"And will you return?" It was not unknown for men even with missing limbs — as long as they were not too debilitating, to return and fight in the line.

"I do not know yet, Your Grace. A French musket ball," he touched what remained of his arm. "Shattered it below the elbow. I was lucky, the surgeons managed to remove the damaged section quickly, saved the rest of the arm and saved me."

I nodded. "If you do not return, what will you do, sir?"

"I have a living from my father, in Oxfordshire, it will be amply sufficient." I could sense that he missed the army, and that Oxfordshire was seen as the less desirable option, "I believe I shall learn about cows and sheep and how they increase, and make that my future." I wasn't sure whether the slightly sardonic humour was real or forced.

I extended an invitation for the captain to call on me for lunch the next day. "It is my experience that the transition to civilian life is not an easy one,

captain, if you feel the need to talk, I will be happy to accommodate you.”

I was just giving Captain Carter my card, when Charlotte appeared at my side. “Oh! Hello! Will you introduce me to your friend, William?”

“Charlotte, this is Captain Carter, of the... er?” I looked at the buttons on the captain’s coat. “The 27<sup>th</sup> Foot!” The 27<sup>th</sup> was the regiment that my old mentor Thomas Raine had transferred to. He died defending their regimental colours.

“Indeed, Your Grace, the 27<sup>th</sup>.” The young man confirmed.

“Captain Carter, may I introduce my sister, Charlotte?”

“Lady Charlotte.” The captain greeted her with a graceful bow.

Charlotte told me that my mother was looking for me, so I took my leave of the captain, while she remained conversing with Captain Carter and I went to find Helena who was chatting with General Bradley.

“Mother?” I greeted her. “You asked for me?”

Drawing me away from the general, with an apology, my mother whispered that she didn't really need me for anything, but that Charlotte had been devouring the young man I was talking to with her eyes, Helena had used it as a chance to get them introduced.

"He reminds me of you very much," she said, guiding me towards Arabella and her mother.

I moved around Helena so that I could see Charlotte and Captain Carter, without appearing to be looking at them. They seemed to be involved in a conversation which absorbed both of them. At one point the captain made a remark which amused Charlotte greatly, though she did not laugh out loud, (that would have been most unpolite of her), she did laugh and it seemed a very natural and unforced humour. If Charlotte — who up to now had shown no interest in suitors — found the captain interesting, then our attendance had been worthwhile.

### ***79.... and the prince was there***

The afternoon took a sharp downward turn with the arrival of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, Prince George, the king's oldest son, also known as 'Prinny' to his confederates.

His entry was suitably spectacular as he manoeuvred his bulk through the house and gardens, with the General and a group of his extravagantly dressed companions, in tow.

When he saw me, and my mother, he simply inclined his head and said “Cousin”. Again, we Rogerings have no royal blood, so I have no idea where he came across that idea. And while we bowed and curtsied with suitable deference, he was off, with his eyes roaming the assembly looking for attractive young women, and an audience.

It might be observed that I do not have a high opinion of the man who may be our future king — God save King George and give him long life. The prince is a man of great personality, and no little charm, when he wants to exercise it. He is also most stylish, in fact it is from his set of admirers and hangers on that most of the more outlandish of men’s fashions originate, as each of them endeavours to outdo the others, as they seek even a simple word of recognition from His Royal Highness.

Personally, I think the man is an arse, of the first order.

Aside from the idiocy of some of the fashions emanating from his court, he has a great pretension to military prowess, which is totally undeserved due to the fact that his mother and the government refuse to let him take ship and be even in the same country as any sort of fight. But that does not stop him from proclaiming to anyone nearby how he and Wellesley beat the French at such and such a battle, or how he led his brave soldiers to victory in such and such fight. There are also many rumours about the man, about a secret marriage to a catholic woman and several bastard children. This is all very unbecoming and completely inappropriate for a man who may actually be crowned king of England, Scotland and Ireland one day.

As I said, an arse.

And he behaved as one as well, standing in the garden, surrounded by many of the party goers, as he recounted how he and Wellesley had set the French back in the Peninsula, to the polite applause of the audience, all of whom knew it was utter horse-shit, but they indulged him anyway.

Still Lydia Bradley had crafted an excellent party and despite my feelings about ‘Prinny’, it was most enjoyable. Arabella and I managed to craft a



‘moment’ for the gossip rags, when I secured a small prize at a hoop-la stall and presented it to her. (Helena had suggested that I win Arabella a prize for precisely that reason. I also secured a second one, which I gave to Helena, but they appear not to have noticed that one).

### **80. *The next morning***

I mentioned that I would be having lunch with Captain Carter to my mother at breakfast.

“I’m sorry?” Charlotte looked at me, innocently. “Who?”

“Captain Richard Carter, of the 27<sup>th</sup> Foot, just returned from the Peninsular, the nephew of General Bradley, wealthy with an estate in Oxford?” I reminded her.

“Oh? Who was this?” Margaret asked.

“That very dashing looking officer, most handsome he was, at the garden party.” Louise told her.

“Oh, with the... er?” Margaret held her left arm up. “That one?”

Louise nodded, “Yes, a foot officer though, not Horse or even a dragoon sadly, but other than that, no disfiguring scars, quite handsome.” She said with an impish grin, looking directly at me. I smiled back at her. By mentioning the two cavalry types, Louise was implying that they were worth more than a mere foot soldier. That might be something worth addressing with her some time.

“Was he as charming as he looked, Charlotte?” Margaret asked, with an air of feigned innocence.

“We only talked for a few moments, so I am sure that I could not say. He did seem quite pleasant though.”

“Excellent,” I smiled, “I am going to suggest that he and I go for a ride on Rotten Row this afternoon.”

Charlotte’s face was a picture, she did not seem to know where to look, or even what to do. She finished her breakfast and immediately went upstairs.

I was in my study, composing a letter to Henry, who was in Rotheringham supervising the changes to what we were calling the estate office, and his own house, when Charlotte sought me out.

Her pretty face was sullen and she had a pout one could stand upon.

“Should I not have invited Captain Carter?” I asked.

“You might have asked me first,” She growled.

“Really? And why was that?” I asked, “‘He was pleasant’, and you ‘only talked for a few minutes’.” I reminded her. Her frown deepened.

“I invited Richard Carter here as a friend,” and I explained about Thomas Raine and how I hoped that Captain Carter could shed more light on his passing. “I did not invite him as a possible suitor for you. Now, if you wish to change that situation, that is entirely up to you. Based on what I have seen so far, I would have no problem with that, but — and I repeat — that choice is yours, and yours alone.”

Her visage darkened even more, but she did not say anything.

I put down my pen and leaned forwards on the desk. “No one, especially not me, is ever going to make you do anything that you do not wish to do, Charlotte, no one will force you one way or another.

“He is very pleasant company.” Charlotte said quietly after some thought.

“May I make a suggestion then?” I asked, Charlotte nodded. “I expect Arabella will be here soon, she normally is. It looks like a nice day, Captain Carter and I will probably ride out on Rotten Row, why don’t you suggest a trip around Hyde Park with her, this afternoon? Failing that take Caroline with you, in the brougham.”

### **81. *Lunch with Captain Carter***

Richard and I lunched together. After we had dined, I asked him whether he had met Thomas Raine, who had purchased the rank of Lt.-Colonel in the 27<sup>th</sup> Foot.

“Of course, Your Grace. It would have been difficult to have been anywhere in the Peninsular and not to have been aware of Colonel Raine. I take it that you served with him?”

“In the West Indies. We must have crossed — he must have arrived in Portugal as I left for England. Were you there, sir?”

Richard Carter knew exactly what I meant, had he been in the fight where Raine had been killed?

“It was where I lost this.” He gestured with his forefinger at the stump of his arm. “Our battalion was ordered to take a hamlet on the flank of the army’s advance.

“As we progressed, our advance was suddenly stalled in an olive grove, where we were crossing a wall in the face of French musket fire. Of a sudden, we were flanked. The colour party were decimated, Colonel Raine picked up the regimental colour, the Regimental Sergeant-Major picked up the King’s colour and the two of them formed an island in the middle of it all. With the men that were left to them, they stood firm. The enemy were piled up around them.

“The French had driven a wedge into our column, the colonel and his men were on one side by the wall, and the rest of us were prevented from reaching them by the intrusion of the French. All order in our column was thrown away, the companies intermingled. Captain Bolton of the Grenadier Company, gathered the remaining part of the battalion and led us forwards towards the colours.

“I never saw our men fight better sir, never.” He said slowly, reliving the fight in his head as he

spoke, his body unconsciously moving in a vague memory of his actions. “They were ferocious, each man a lion in a red coat. It was all bayonet work. Bayonets, musket butts and fists. Ferocious, to a man.

“Sadly, even as we reached them, Colonel Raine fell from his wounds.”

“But the colours were saved?” I asked, Captain Carter nodded. A regiment’s colours are its heart and soul, and by his actions Raine had saved the 27<sup>th</sup> from the greatest ignominy known to the British army — the loss of their colours. “And your part in this, sir?”

“Mine?” Richard Carter laughed, ironically. “I was carried along by it, caught up in the assault trying to reach our colours. I scarcely recall a moment of it, it was so intense as we fought and bit and clawed our way towards the colours. So intense, so fierce was it that I do not even recall being struck. Not until it was all done, and I collapsed from the loss of blood.”

I stood up, Captain Carter doing the same. I offered him my right hand and we shook.

“Captain.” It was all I could say. Even after all the months away from it, I had great emotions that I found hard to verbalise. That emotion, my regard for Colonel Raine and my sadness at his death even though it was typical of the man, and my esteem for the man in front of me, it all went into that one word.

“Thank you, Your Grace.”

“If there is anything you need, sir, ever.”

I think — I know — it surprised him. It surprised me, and I realised that though the dust of Portugal and Spain had long been cleaned from my uniform, it still lingered on my soul.

After lunch he and I rode out.

Despite his missing hand, he handled his mount well, compensating by riding with more leg aids than I usually use. He was quite fussy about the reins, one of my grooms passed them up to him, and he went to take them with his left hand. Realising his mistake, he cursed himself, before he apologised to the groom and gathered them up in his right hand.

We had talked much over lunch about his return to London, and his situation. He had few friends in town apart from family, but he was less concerned

about that. He had only attended his uncle's garden party because the general had insisted.

"Practically ordered me." He laughed.

Captain Carter was still sensitive about the loss of his hand, and was uncomfortable about being seen without it, which I could fully understand. The problem was that Richard Carter, I discovered, was an intelligent, irrepressible man, with an innately cheerful disposition and a keen sense of humour that fought its way through to the front, more often than not. It wasn't that he was putting a brave face on his situation, rather this was his natural character shining through, despite everything. Sometimes there was a dark edge to his humour, biting or self-deprecating, but I have seen that before in men. Suffering the trauma of a wound like Richard's will do that to a person. But I was certain that he would accommodate himself to his situation, and even if he did not fully accept it, he would live a full life in spite of it.

Captain Carter was doing a very passable impression of Sir Arthur Wellesley while we walked the horses on Rotten Row, "Well, damn me, sir," he said, mimicking Wellesley perfectly, "If I thought my hair knew what my plan was, I would cut it all



off, sir!” when Arabella’s brougham passed us going in the opposite direction.

“Is that not your sister, Your Grace?”

“I do believe it is Richard.”

“Shall we catch up with them?” and he wheeled his horse about and nudged it into a trot. The problem normally is stopping Naiad from trotting, so she cheerfully wheeled about, and we set off after them. We soon caught up with the brougham.

“Lady Rogeringham, Miss Dorrington!” We both greeted the passengers, Richard walking his horse up on the same side as Charlotte, and I walking Naiad on the same side as Arabella.

“Edward! How are you this fine day?” I called out to Arabella’s footman, who nodded back, looking pleased at being recalled. “Don’t worry man, we shall not make you wait with the horses today.”

After talking with the ladies for a few minutes, our progress around the park was halted by a troop of the Royal Dragoon Guards (the third regiment in the Household Cavalry brigade) making their way by column of threes into the park.

“Oh, how magnificent!” Charlotte enthused, clapping her hands, as the column made its way past us. They wore nearly full uniform, all accoutrements, but rather than their bicorne hats the troopers rode out in forage caps. The officer in charge rode a dark bay stallion that curvetted and pranced — and darted and jumped at anything and everything. He was a vociferous chap, shouting all sorts of commands and comments, though he was courteous — he tipped the peak of his bicorne in the direction of the carriage.

I could sense that Naiad wanted to go with them, but she waited dutifully, until they had gone and we made our way onwards.

Charlotte looked at me, “You do not seem to have been impressed, William? Nor you Captain Carter?”

“I think it is because they have seen too many cavalry men like that, all puff and show.” Arabella told her.

“How so?” Charlotte asked her.

“That captain was trying too hard at his work, he should have given one order and let his corporals do the rest,” Arabella explained.

“Astutely observed, Miss Dorrington.” Richard observed approvingly.

“Arabella, please captain?”

“Miss Dorrington spent some time with the army in Portugal,” I told my younger friend. “What else did you notice, Arabella?”

“He has a very fine mount, but it would be no use when ‘the ball opens’, as they say. He is too highly strung — the poor fellow would spend all of his time controlling his own horse and not handling his troop.”

“But they looked most excellent?” Charlotte suggested.

“They did indeed, Lady Rogeringham.” Captain Carter agreed. “A very good turn-out. Do you not think, Your Grace?”

“Passable.” I granted.

At which point Arabella chipped in, “Spoken like a true foot soldier, Your Grace. Lady Charlotte, I believe you will find that your brother is not a great believer in the qualities of English cavalry. Is that not so, Your Grace?”

I believe that when written down the sound I made was an ‘harumph!’ Arabella laughed at me, her girlish laugh, a pleasant sound.

“William very rarely speaks of his military experiences,” Charlotte told her. “I do not recall him expounding on the virtues of our cavalry.”

“Most of our foot soldiers do not feel they have any.” Arabella explained, “The English cavalry stationed in the Peninsular are believed to be good for charging at the horizon, and very little else. A cavalry man will tell you different but their role is to support the infantry and not the other way about. If they are not there, they have no use.”

I looked across the carriage to Richard where he rode on the same side as Charlotte. He was listening attentively as Arabella explained the situation to my sister, “On the other hand, the German émigré horsemen with Lord Wellesley’s army — they call them the King’s German Legion, they are most capable soldiers.”

Charlotte nodded, “William has mentioned them before. ‘If they ride into camp at the gallop, — something is afoot’, was that not it?”

“It was indeed!” I laughed, “Well remembered.”

By this point we had arrived at the place where Richard would leave the park and go to his uncle's house. He took his leave of the ladies as I paused with him.

"Well, that was an education and no mistake. Miss Dorrington is most proficient in the ways of the army." He laughed.

"Never make the mistake of labelling her as a mere girl," I suggested. "She is an intelligent young lady."

"If I may, Your Grace, your sister is a very fine woman as well. I would like to call on her further, if I may?" Well, this was hopeful I thought.

"I suspect that she would be amenable, but I would like to be certain before I grant permission, Richard." He nodded.

"At the risk of being indelicate, dear chap," I said, "May I know your tailor's name? He has done a fine job on the presentation of your sleeve there and that jacket is particularly well cut. I should like him to come and see me."

Captain Carter said that he would send the man a note to call on me. As he turned his horse to go, he paused and said seriously, "Thank you, Your Grace,

thank you for allowing me this.” He waved his arm at the park and the horses. “I was considering going back to my regiment, where I could face the French, rather than come home and face polite society. But I am giving it some serious thought now.”

Naiad side-stepped as she imagined something on the slight breeze. “Think nothing of it, sir, as I told you, I found changing from the army back to being a civilian, deuced tricky. If I can help a fellow soldier do the same, then my work here, as they say, is done.

“Now I am off, Richard, I need to run some of the fizz out of this one, before I return her to the stable. Will we see you at the concert tonight?”

Richard signalled that we would and I turned the mare’s head for home.

On my return to Rogeringham House I found Charlotte in the sitting room, “Well?” I asked her.

My sister would not meet my gaze for a minute, until finally she broke down.

“Very well!” she blurted out, “I admit it. Captain Carter is quite personable, and he is quite attractive as well.”

“And he does not remind you of me at all, does he?” I smiled.

“There is that too.” Charlotte scowled, though not so severely that it spoiled her face, “But at least when he tells a joke, it is funny.” She said as she broke into a smile.

“*Touché!*” I laughed. “Anyway, he has asked me if he can call on you.”

For a moment Charlotte looked shocked. “And what did you say?”

“Simply that I would ask you first.”

Charlotte came over and embraced me, “Thank you.” She said, and then after a moment, she added “It would be acceptable for him to call on me.”

After she had gone, I wrote Captain Carter a short note, and despatched it to him. If this worked out, I thought to myself, then we were three down and two to go.

## **82. *The Queen***

Several days later at a concert in St James’s Park, I was escorting Helena to where we were to be seated, when a young man in the uniform of a royal page appeared.

He bowed, “Your Grace, the Queen requests your presence.”

Though it was phrased as such, it was not the kind of request that one ignores.

Her Majesty was sat surrounded by courtiers in a small enclosure quite close to the stage. As we stood waiting to enter, another page announced “His Grace, Sir William Rogeringham, Duke of Norton.”

It was completely unnecessary as Her Majesty had seen me and was indicating I should enter, even as he spoke, but I suppose he had his orders.

The queen wore white, dazzlingly, glitteringly white. To my eyes, her gown seemed to be archaic, out of time for the modern style, but as she was the queen, who was to gain say her?

After I paid her the correct compliments, she indicated a chair which had been placed near to hers. It is usual to stand in the queen’s presence but in this case, I was commanded to sit, so I sat. I assumed that it was because she preferred not to draw too much attention to our conversation. I would have been the only one standing while everyone around us was seated — her courtiers, the concert goers outside of her enclosure, everyone.



“Cousin,” the queen began. “We trust you are well?”

“I am, thank you, Your Majesty.” I replied, by this time, I was done with the ‘cousin’ thing, if that was what the Queen wanted, then that was how it would be.

“And your mother, Sir William?”

“Very well too, thank you ma’am.”

“We are pleased that that is so.” She said, “It has come to our attention, that you are much seen lately with the daughter of Elizabeth, Lady Dorrington. Pray tell me, sir, is this true?”

Well, there was a question, and no surprise! I always assumed that the queen had her spies out and about, but I had not thought that Arabella and I would have been subjects for her attention. “It is true, Your Majesty, the young lady and I have often found ourselves thrown together on social occasions. I find Arabella Dorrington the most admirable and entertaining company.”

“Lady Dorrington was in Portugal last year?”

“She was, ma’am.”

“And were you acquainted with her there?”

“I made the acquaintance of both her and her daughter there, ma’am.” There seemed to be no point in lying, Her Majesty appeared to be quite well-informed. The queen seemed to be satisfied with my answers, she nodded as if to herself.

“Forgive our directness, Sir William, but do you have any intentions towards Miss Dorrington?”

It has long been Her Majesty’s inclination to over-see matches in society, I suppose that it was now our turn to be reviewed and approved or discouraged.

“As I say, Your Majesty, I find Miss Dorrington to be excellent company and having discussed this with all parties, and though nothing has been formalised — it has been said that our mutual interests might be better served if we engaged in the union of marriage.”

“You have discussed it with all parties... but ourselves, Sir William.” The queen observed.

“It was our intention to do so when the moment was appropriate, ma’am.”

The queen looked at me with those clear and intelligent eyes, “Perhaps then, this is the appropriate moment. We have given consideration to

your situation, after all you are two wealthy families, and as such would make a powerful union. Were we to be assured that our blessing would ensure the support of your family if it was called for in the future, we would gladly bless the union of the Dorrington family with that of the Rogerings — if you decide to proceed with your union.”

“If we do proceed, Your Majesty, I would hope that our support has never been in doubt, and that it will never be considered to be doubtful.” I said, still wondering precisely what this was all about.

“In that case, Sir William, you may announce to all concerned that your union has my blessing.”

“Thank you, Your Majesty. May I ask if we could do so when **we** feel it is appropriate?” The queen nodded her agreement.

“And would this be an appropriate time to mention the weddings of my sisters, Your Majesty? I have several and...”

Her Majesty looked at me with an amused twinkle in her eyes, she knew that I was throwing the dice on this. “You may arrange matches for your sisters as and how you feel best, Sir William. We trust that your decisions will be the best ones for all

of the parties concerned.” And as a punctuation, a full-stop to the conversation, the queen picked up her opera glasses and surveyed the stage.

With that the audience was in effect, over. Rising and then bowing to Her Majesty I made my way back to our seats where I told my mother what had just taken place. Helena was quite excited by the news of the queen’s blessing, but I sat through the whole performance rehearsing what Her Majesty had said, and why. I would have been hard pressed to tell you whether the concert was good, bad or indifferent, I paid it so little mind. The next thing I was aware of was Helena waiting for me to stand so that I could hold her chair.

When we returned to Rogeringham House, my sisters — who had been at a garden party, had arrived home. Elizabeth and Arabella were also there, they having been at the same event. This was good, as it saved me repeating the news for them.

The news from Her Majesty was received with great delight, not only had I secured the Queen’s blessing for Hermione and James, and Caroline and Henry but she had effectively given her permission for the weddings of Charlotte and the twins, if and

when they happened. The champagne went round, and there was an air of celebration.

I went down on one knee and in front of her mother, asked Arabella if she would marry me, and she said that she would, but then said that she wanted to wait a while, at least until after Caroline and Henry had married. As she wanted a spring wedding, she asked if I would be prepared to wait until the next year, when we could marry at Rogeringham church.

By this time the only one of my sisters that remained with us in the parlour was Charlotte, along with Helena and Elizabeth. The idea of a spring wedding went down well, though I was surprised that she was prepared to have such a long engagement.

Arabella laughed. If we kept the engagement secret, she said, it meant that we could enjoy the rest of the Season, and create all sorts of intrigue with the gossip rags and yet our future would still be secured.

Her reasoning had been well thought out, as usual, and I agreed with her. Then she and Charlotte went off leaving my mother, my future mother-in-law and myself.

“Do you have many friends in the Parliament, Lady Elizabeth?” I asked.

“I have some,” she replied, with a smile. “Why do you ask, Your Grace?”

“Something that Her Majesty said.” And I recounted what Queen Charlotte had said about whether she could count on our support.

“That would be the government moving to install the Prince of Wales as the Prince Regent,” She said, “It has been discussed before — some years ago, but with the King’s ill-health recently, some members of Parliament think it is becoming a necessity again. And of course, if they elevated the Prince, Her Majesty would lose any authority she has.”

“God save King George,” I murmured, “And preserve us from his half-wit son.”

“You do not like His Royal Highness?” Helena asked.

“Not particularly,” I said, “But that is of no matter. You are probably right, Lady Elizabeth, but let us not talk about that for now. There are some things that will happen anyway, no matter what our feelings. Let us hope that the King is blessed with better health and talk of more pleasant things.” And

we spent the evening discussing the union of our two families, now that it was becoming a reality. It was a frank discussion of the situation, almost dispassionate, about issues such as Arabella's dowry and what other things she would bring to the marriage including heirs, and what freedoms we would grant each other. There would be a contract eventually — once we had a clear way ahead, and it would delineate both of our sides of the relationship.

### ***83. Concerning Hermione's wedding***

Hermione had created a contract for her marriage with James. However, where Arabella and I were approaching it very much as a union of equals (though without explicitly saying so, as *M. Dumas* once wrote 'one should be careful of what one writes'), my sister had used her contract to consolidate a position of strength in their marriage.

In my name, you will recall, my youngest sister had set several clauses in the contract, which James' family — his mother — had disagreed with. Hermione had asked 'me' — on their behalf, to alter those conditions (as you will further recall that she had made all of the decisions herself), and those clauses had then been amended in various ways. The result was that Hermione was now guaranteed a

status in the marriage which meant that she would need to be consulted when certain decisions were made, that she and James would have equal access to their family monies, and that her own money was vouchsafed to her control and no other.

Unless there was a male heir, Hermione also had the primary position in terms of inheriting the estate, which our solicitors agreed, was a particularly strong clause, and even with a male heir my sister would automatically become the guardian of the child and the boy's estate until he reached the age at which he would inherit. What she had done, in effect, was to insulate her and her husband from the Barthomley family empire. There was nothing to prevent James from participating in family enterprises, nothing at all, if he chose to. But Hermione's contract allowed them to establish themselves, for themselves, outside of any manipulation from within the family.

Because of the manner Hermione had "wrung" concessions from me, she was in distinctly good odour with James' mother, Eugenie, and she spent nearly as much time at the Barthomley house in Belgravia as she did at our own house in Mayfair.

Hermione also made certain that James knew that she enjoyed riding out on Rotten Row, and the two



of them often rode together, sometimes with Charlotte acting as their chaperone and sometimes with me. Hermione was often the first to trot or canter, ensuring that when her husband eventually asked about the lack of a maidenhead, **if** he asked, then the evidence would be clear.

I found that James was less nervous when I was about, but he still looked like he would jump if I said ‘Boo!’ to him. What I did notice was that he seemed less of a twit these days, and more serious. I was actually coming to like him.

One area in which James did surprise me was in his horsemanship. The first time we rode out together, he came into the yard at Mayfair upon a very nicely set up grey gelding. The horse had been prepared beautifully — brushed to a high shine, his mane and tail brushed out just so. James himself had an almost perfect seat upon his mount and the pair looked as if they had been made for each other. Mr Barthomley had a gentle hand and did not tug and saw at his horse’s mouth, but instead, his movements were fluid and very much in tune with his mount.

I could not fail but to complement the young man, someone had taught him very well, and he was

an exemplar of their teaching.

You would have thought that I had given him his own personal key to the Kingdom of Heaven, his chest swelled, and he stuttered as he thanked me, before waxing lyrical about Naiad as we rode out of the yard. Hermione, riding between us on a fine boned dark bay mare, beamed at the way her fiancée had taken the compliment.

I also had the same conversation with James that I had had with Henry. Obviously, it was not the exact duplicate of the one I had had with Mr Adams — there were certain questions which never arose, and because of that were never addressed. However, I did explain that although I was giving Hermione into his care, she would always remain my baby sister. I could tell from the way that James' complexion paled, that he fully understood the implications of that simple statement, and that there would be no need for any more explicit threats.

#### ***84. Hermione's last night as a Rogeringham***

The next big occasion then, was the actual wedding of Hermione and James. The Queen's approval had been secured, the banns had been read, the agreements had all been made and signed. The couple had even secured a property in Kensington,

not far from where General Bradley lived, though the house was smaller than his house, it was still a very nice property. All that remained was the actual ceremony.

This was to take place at St George's church in Mayfair.

I understand that James celebrated the end of his bachelor status at a club in St James's with a group of his friends. I believe it was drunken, and I understand that there were women of negotiable virtue, but although I was invited, I declined.

While James celebrated his last night as a single man, out drinking with his friends, Hermione chose a more domestic evening. She chose a dinner at Rogeringham House with her sisters, Helena and I. She said that she wanted 'nothing more than her closest friends, her family about her' before she left to become the mistress of her own house.

It was a splendid evening. We dined, we sang in the parlour and when we pushed the chairs back, we danced to Charlotte's accompaniment on the piano. The first part of the evening ended with me giving Hermione a gift of a necklace I had had made for her. The silver and diamonds glittered and shone, as she modelled it for us in the candle light.

Charlotte, Caroline and the twins excused themselves and retired to bed, leaving just my mother, the bride-to-be and myself.

We sat for a few moments as we enjoyed a glass of sweet sherry. We had all eaten well and enjoyed our meal, the cellar at Rogeringham House had provided some excellent wines, and while we had sampled a variety of different drinks, we were none of us tipsy. As we had what I thought would be a last glass together before retiring, I suddenly felt that this was not the way it would be. Helena and Hermione had something planned.

I do not know what it was that tipped me off, possibly it was the studious way that both women were examining their laps, as if they were searching for something, or the way that the conversation had ceased, as if in anticipation.

I laughed. "Come on then?" I said, "Out with it! What are you planning?"

They both looked up, Helena looked relieved and was laughing. Hermione was laughing too but her look was more anticipatory.

"We were hoping..." Helena began.

"Would you?" Hermione leapt in.

“I don’t know.” I told her, as her smile faded a little, “At least not until you’ve told me what it is that you want.” I finished.

Helena rose and took my hand, drawing me up and out of my seat towards the door. Hermione also rose and followed close behind me.

“Hermione asked me,” my mother explained, as we crossed the hall, to the stairs, “She wanted to spend one last night in your bed.”

I looked at my sister, she nodded.

“But I thought... we’d already done that,” I said.

“I suppose that we did,” Helena conceded. “Except that the last time you and your sister slept together, I asked if I should stay and Hermione did not want that.”

As we reached the landing, I looked back and Hermione nodded.

“I decided that this time, she will have no say in the matter, and that this time I will stay.”

Obviously, Elizabeth Dorrington had wrought many changes in Helena, “I have asked Mr Barclay to arrange some wine for us,” She went on. “You

and I will celebrate my sweet girl's last night in our house and fulfil her wish."

Barclay waited at the door of my rooms, "All is as you requested, Your Grace," he told Helena.

"Thank you, Joshua," I said, realising that this was out of my hands at the moment, "I do not think you will be needed again tonight."

"In that case, good night Your Grace," He said solemnly, 'Your Grace,' to my mother. "Lady Hermione."

Completely unexpectedly, to me anyway, Hermione leaned in and kissed Barclay on the cheek. "Thank you and goodnight, Mr Barclay."

Barclay and I exchanged a passing glance. My man-servant — a man that I trusted nearly above all others — was completely unabashed as he turned away and went towards his quarters, in fact he seemed quite pleased with himself. Though there was no reason at all why he would not have dealings with my mother or my sisters, I was curious as to what had transpired between them, and coincidentally what else might have been agreed behind my back. I put that out of my mind though, for now I had other things to think about.

The bed had been turned back and a second chair had been placed against the wall nearby, so that someone could place clothes upon it. On a table near the fire, there was a bottle of champagne and some glasses, and a second tray with a decanter of wine and some appropriate glasses. Some cheese, biscuits and a small bowl of fruit, grapes and pears, had been placed beside the wine.

“It looks like all is in order,” I observed, ironically.

My mother smiled, and told me to be quiet and open the champagne.

I opened the bottle and poured us each a glass.

“To my dearest little sister...” I proposed.

“To my daughter...” Helena added.

“To you both, mama, for bringing me into the world and to you, William, for enabling me to go out into it.” Hermione finished as we drank.

At which point, both women burst into tears and embraced each other fiercely. They were both speaking at the same time, apologising to each other and assuring each other that there was no reason to apologise.

It took me a moment to understand what they were saying, but Hermione was apologising to her mother for being a difficult birth, and for the way that Helena had suffered as a result. Helena was telling Hermione that what had happened was not her fault and that it did not matter and she loved her dearly. Helena was apologising for anything that she might have said that made her daughter think that she held her to blame and that she wanted Hermione to know how loved she was.

I did the only thing I could think of which was to open my arms and embrace them both, drawing them in towards me. I kissed Helena first — as is right and proper, and then kissed Hermione, who then kissed her mother. There was no reserve in any of the kisses, as the tears turned to passion. I felt my sister melt in my arms as she pressed herself against Helena, who responded equally passionately. I found that my task was to keep them upright, and prevent them from falling to the floor. I guided them both to the bed to make their fervent embrace easier to manage.

Helping them onto the bed, I paused and watched them for a moment as I loosened my clothes. It appeared that Hermione was the one leading in their amorous tangle. Her hands roamed about her



mother's body, and she sought out those areas of her mother which would respond best to her touches and kisses. Helena meanwhile was kissing her daughter and enjoying the attention.

I cleared my throat to interrupt their passion. "Do you wish to remove your clothes?" I asked. "This will be far more interesting without them."

Hermione blushed, her enthusiasm for her mother's kisses had taken her over, and Helena, responding to her daughter's passion had prevented her from disrobing. They sat upon the bed and removed their clothes, handing each garment to me, which I carefully placed upon the chairs Barclay had set out.

Finally, they had both disrobed, Hermione sat upon the bed completely naked, her legs crossed and tucked under her, while Helena had retained her knee-length silk stockings, but was otherwise equally, delightfully nude. They smiled as I folded their dresses and chemises and laid them upon the chairs, before turning back to them, at which point I started to remove my own clothing. I felt like some sort of entertainer, as I stripped down for my mother and my baby sister. Indeed, they made appreciative noises as first my waistcoat came off and then my

shirt. I removed my boots, and stockings, before standing again to take off my breeches.

As my hands reached for the fly buttons on my breeches, the comments and half-noises stopped as if in anticipation. Still not entirely certain that I knew what was going to happen, I paused, and turned away from them.

Helena sighed theatrically, and Hermione said, “Quickly, William, take them off!”

“Yes, take them off!” Helena chorused.

“Off! Off!” They both said, laughing, like the crowd in the cock-pit of a theatre heckling a performer.

Hesitating a moment, to increase the tension, I turned back to them and dropped my breeches to the floor.

“Oh, my Lord!” Hermione said as my hard cock came into view. “I am so envious, mama, that you have William and his marvellous prick, whenever you wish it!”

Helena dismissed her comment with wave of her hand, “Oh, you know, sometimes it gets tiresome...”

I sputtered in surprise, only for both women to burst out laughing at my annoyance. As it was, I was welcomed onto my own bed, by their open arms. To make up for their teasing, I was fondled and caressed, and stroked and soothed and generally made to feel adored.

It seemed like we were not in any urgent hurry to fuck, and we stayed like this — kissing and touching, for some time, as we explored each other in a most sensuous manner. Hermione seemed quite taken with her mother's breasts, while I spent time kissing Helena's quim. She spent quickly, small urgent cums, that made her body jerk, and caused her boobies to jiggle, much to Hermione's amusement.

While Helena recovered, I spent time kissing Hermione, and when her mother had gathered herself, she engaged her daughter by kissing her belly, then proceeding down to her cunny. I saw Hermione's hand drop down onto Helena's head, as my sister stretched herself on the bed, and lifted her hips up to allow her mother greater access. For myself, I lifted Hermione by reaching my arms under her shoulders and drawing her upwards. I ravaged her mouth with mine and then moved to her breasts. while my mother applied herself to her

daughter's quim. Supported as she was, Hermione could do nothing but writhe in our embrace.

And writhe she did — twisting and turning this way and that, as we made oral love to her. Helena and I exchanged places so that I was the one licking her exquisite cunny, and she was the one feasting on her daughter's breasts.

I felt Hermione shudder to a cum at least twice while I was holding her in my arms, tasting her spend on Helena's lips when I kissed her, when we changed places. My dear sister spent again, while I was gamahuching her, and when her spend came down, she drenched my face. So copious was she that at first, I thought that she had pissed herself, but it was immediately clear from the taste that she had merely had an excessive cum.

Helena and I rose from the bed to wipe our faces, leaving Hermione limp and murmuring softly as we did so. I brought her a glass of wine and helped her to rise up so that she could drink it. I was surprised to find that she had tears in her eyes, though she wasn't crying as such.

"I love you both, so very much," she said at last. "You and mama are everything to me."

“And you will never cease to be everything to us,” I told her. “You will always be loved.”

As the tear drops rolled down her cheek, Hermione thanked us.

“Bless you child,” Helena told her, “We are your family and we always will be. But you must now take this love to your husband. For all of his faults, James is a good man and he loves you very much. And when you have children, show them the same love we feel for you.

“Having said that,” she went on, “You should try and sleep now, or you will not be the Season’s most beautiful blushing bride tomorrow!”

“Ohh!” Hermione said, plaintively, “One last fuck, mama, please? And I promise I will sleep soundly. Here. Between you and William. Please?”

Helena laughed, “I do not know why you were not the most spoiled child that ever lived. It is so difficult to refuse you.”

“Lie there!” Hermione told her mother excitedly, indicating the centre of the bed. When she had positioned her mother, my sister took her place between Helena’s thighs, presenting her sweet rounded bottom to me.

“Now!” She told us commandingly, “William, you shall fuck me from behind, while I kiss mama’s lovely bare cunny, and this way, we shall all have a last grand cum together.”

I did not mention that if she was going lick Helena’s quim, then it was unlikely to be just the one spend, especially given how much Helena enjoys cunnilingus. But Hermione was in charge, she was the one directing us. And so, we fucked.

I took hold of Hermione’s hips and plunged myself deep into her cunny, which brought a deep and heartfelt moan from her, which was cut off short as Helena placed her hand on her daughter’s head and guided it back to what she was supposed to be doing.

Each movement of my hips thrust Hermione up against her mother’s cunny. I kept the beat of my thrusts slow at first, as I sought to grind as much pleasure as possible out of my penetration, seeking to use my cock to probe all of my sister’s most sensitive areas. But as my passion built, seeing my lovely youngest sister, lasciviously licking her mother’s cunny. Making it Helena’s turn to writhe in pleasure as she did so, and with Hermione herself

writhing, I could not help but increase the tempo of my fucking.

Soon Helena had had at least two spends, grasping the bed sheets and twisting them in her passion, as she did. She allowed Hermione to have at least one quite loud orgasm, letting her raise her head to gasp out her cum, before pressing her back down. Oh, so strict Helena, I laughed.

It was as Hermione had a second spend, still with her mouth noisily applied to Helena's cunny, that the wriggling of her delicious bottom brought about my own spend. I could do nothing to stop it, it started in the pit of my stomach and bent me double over Hermione's back before I shot upright and fired stream after stream of jism deep inside my sister's cunny. My hands gripped her hips and I shot again and again.

I groaned, Helena groaned and a happy Hermione sank down on to her mother. And with that, there was nothing left for us but to kiss and embrace each other lovingly and compose ourselves for sleep.

Hermione placed herself between Helena and I, and so, entwined like that, we slept. It must have been a deep sleep, because the very next thing I

knew was that Barclay was fetching my water for washing and shaving.

### **85. *Hermione and James's wedding***

Hermione became Mrs James Barthomley in St George's Church, Mayfair, at fifteen minutes past eleven o'clock on a Thursday morning.

The morning had been a hurried flurry of bathing and dressing, as all of my sisters had pitched in to help Hermione achieve bridal perfection. She was bathed, and powdered, made up and dressed. She wore one of Helena's garters for something old, and the necklace that I had commissioned for her, for something new. A jewelled comb from Charlotte, that she wore in her hair was something borrowed, and a fine blue silk ribbon that bound her hair was the 'something blue'.

No time was wasted in all of this, but even so it seemed to be cutting it fine, until at a half hour past ten o'clock my mother and my sisters were taken by the landau the short drive to the church. Twenty minutes later, Barclay checked his pocket watch and gave me a firm nod. Hermione and I climbed into the brougham and set off for the church.



It would have been understandable if my sister had been nervous, after all, she had never been married before. But I could see no trace of nerves, no feelings of regret, she went forwards as if it was her destiny, and I could see once more the strength within her.

As we sat in the coach, she looked at me and smiled and said simply, “I love you.”

There was so much that we could have said, and much that, perhaps, that we should have said, but most of it had already been said, so I replied, equally as simply, “And I will always love you.”

And that was the only conversation on that short trip to the church, I rode with my thoughts and she with hers. For myself, I still couldn’t shake the feeling that she could have done better, but I suppose that that was me being the protective older brother. Hermione had made her decision and I could only admire the commitment that she had made to it.

I was so proud of her, as proud as any father could be, of the girl that she had grown into. Not, I hasten to add that I was seeking to claim any credit for her being the woman that she was, far from it. But I thought — I hoped — that if I was ever a

father to a daughter, that she would grow to be as strong as Hermione.

James and Lady Hermione Barthomley were married in front of a full church. On the bride's side there were many Rogerings — Hermione's immediate family, our near aunts, uncles and cousins, and a few of our friends and my sisters' admirers. The rest of the church — James's side — was filled with assorted Barthomleys and there appeared to be dozens of them, of all shapes and sizes.

Hermione and I progressed down the aisle towards James and his groomsman. Being on my sister's right hand as we went, I saw the whole pantheon of his family members, from his mother Eugenie, standing before me, dabbing at her eyes already, yet still with an exultant smile beneath her handkerchief to what appeared to be innumerable younger Barthomley relatives all clustered into the pews.

I delivered my sister to her soon-to-be-husband and when he looked at her, the look on his face convinced me that he was genuine in his feelings for her. He might be wrapped around Hermione's fingers, as Charlotte put it, but from his delighted

smile, I believe that he was more than happy to be in that precise position.

‘May The Good Lord keep you and preserve you, James’, I thought, ‘for what you are about to receive I hope that you are well and truly thankful’.

After the wedding we repaired the short distance to Rogeringham House, for the wedding breakfast. And it was there that I was cornered by Eugenie again.

I was just in my study for something, when Mrs Barthomley knocked on the door. I called her to come in, not knowing it was her. She approached me, her bosom leading the way and she stood quite close to me, ostensibly to thank me for my efforts with the wedding.

“You should thank my mother for this, she is the one who has organised it.”

“I have, Your Grace,” she told me, “However I wanted to thank you personally, you have been so accommodating, especially during the contract negotiations, I am sure it could have been much... harder.” She breathed that last word, leaning forwards as she did.

“Harder, Mrs Barthomley? I’m sure I don’t know what you mean.”

“Call me Eugenie, please Your Grace.” She fluttered her fan rapidly and then folding it up, she laid it gently on the breast of my coat. Mrs Barthomley was making an unabashed attempt at some sort of seduction.

“Thank you, Eugenie, but please explain what you mean?”

“Only that there were many items in the contract, which I am sure were important, Your Grace,” she added hastily, “But you were able to see your way to removing so many of them. I just wanted to show my gratitude — if I may?”

“There is no need Eugenie, all I have done is for the happy couple.” I told her.

Eugenie pressed closer, much closer than might be considered socially acceptable. Her hands seemed to have a mind of their own, as if they wanted to reach out and touch me and she had no control over their movements.

“You have done so much, Your Grace. You have started them out on their journey in the very best way.”

I was now looking down at her bosom, down into the chasm that made up her cleavage, and just at that moment, Helena entered my office.

“Mrs Barthomley?” My mother greeted her with a cautious smile.

“Your Grace.” Mrs Barthomley answered, curtsying. “Your Grace.” She said as she turned to me and curtsied, before leaving.

It might be expected in a situation like that, she would have been embarrassed as she beat her retreat, but Eugenie Barthomley walked out with her head held high.

“Was that woman doing what I suspect she was doing?” Helena asked.

“I do believe she was, mother,” I replied, “Not content with getting her son married to my sister, she seemed to be trying to engineer a tryst with me.”

“I did not quite believe what you and Hermione said about her,” she said with an amused smile. “I do now. The shameless baggage!” We both laughed.

It may appear that I am being quite dismissive of my new brother-in-law’s family, I suppose that I am. The greater part of them are hangers-on and part-

players, who will not contribute to the future's story, but who will instead live their lives and loves out as best they can and just that. But Eugenie Barthomley stands out as everything I suspected she is.

Calculating, audacious and brazen, she is obviously the power behind the Barthomley throne. Just her willingness to venture outside of her marriage was a sign of what she would do to further her ends. Did I think it was because she was attracted to me? No, it is my experience of women like that, that they rarely do anything like this without an ulterior motive. The only exception to that, of which I am aware, is Elizabeth Dorrington, who was in a position that she did not have to sleep with anyone to further her own ends — Elizabeth did it because she enjoyed it.

Hermione had joined herself into Eugenie's realm, but she was walking into her new situation with her eyes open, knowing what to expect. I suppose many brides do not have that luxury, and find themselves trapped and struggling to preserve themselves against a dominating parent. My sister had a head start with her clever marriage contract, and her strong will and sharp wit; she was forearmed and forewarned, and that pleased me greatly.

## **86. *The Season ends — Henry and Caroline***

The Season came to an end, and around The Ton, fathers (and brothers) heaved a sigh of relief that the drain upon their purses would be eased. It was no longer necessary for women to have a new gown or dress for every single occasion (well, no more than usual, anyway). The number of events and occasions dropped, and many people left the Ton for the better airs of the country.

We did, and as the summer ended, we prepared for Caroline's marriage to Henry.

Unlike Hermione, Caroline did not require a 'farewell party'. The relationship between us, and Henry, was such that it was not felt necessary. My sister went into the union with Mr Adams, with my friend Henry, with her eyes open and ready to be Lady Caroline Adams.

My gift to them was the three properties that Dodgson had appropriated. This would give them the additional rents and revenues, but also — if they chose to do so — they could dispose of some of the properties to the canal trunk, which was still going ahead, though without Sir Montague Fellowes. It would add considerably to the family's income.

The church of St Mary, Rogeringham, was packed, most of the staff attended, Henry had been popular when he had worked below stairs, and in his work managing the estate he had maintained an easy, almost affable approach. Richard Carter, acted as escort for Charlotte, and I suspected (I hoped) that I would soon be talking to them about the next wedding.

The ball that evening to mark their nuptials was also declared as marking my birthday, which was a few days afterwards. Like our Grand Winter Ball, it was attended by people from all over the county.

I met with Henry's half-brother, the new Lord Brunton, Sir Walter. Unlike his elder half-brother who has an easy affable nature, my initial impression of the younger man, was that he was a prickly character, who bristled when people so much as looked at him. Brunton's wife was pretty and vivacious, with a particularly musical laugh. She appeared to embrace my sister Caroline, almost immediately, and as I watched Sir Walter seemed to thaw and by the end of the evening, he was quite enjoying himself.

As they were staying with us at Rogeringham Hall, he joined me for a brandy afterwards.



Away from the other wedding guests, Brunton, was quite different, he still seemed to be uncomfortable, but he was more relaxed. We chatted for a while, and he admitted that initially he was sceptical of Henry, having never really known him. That he had risen as far as he had — to the position of my assistant, before his inheritance, had come as a shock. That I had allowed him to marry my sister was an even bigger shock.

“I hope that you will forgive me saying so, Your Grace,” he began, and his tone was completely respectful, “But surely Lady Caroline might have made a better match than my brother, however highly you regard him.”

I suppose I should have expected it, that more conventional members of our society would view my willingness to allow my sisters to marry as they wished and not exert more control over the unions (that is — marry them off to gain advantage from the match), with suspicion and caution. I ignored it — in a way.

I explained to Sir Walter, that I had done exactly what it was that I was supposed to do — the unions were my decision to make, and I had made those decisions. The difference was that where many

fathers — and older brothers — would have simply married the girl off where and when they thought fit, I had simply taken a very close account of my sisters' wishes in making my decisions.

“And anyway,” I said, “In Henry’s case I was quite happy to allow him to marry my sister, because he had achieved his success entirely on his own merits, his inheritance had merely enabled events better.”

Lady Brunton, who joined us at that point, with my mother, declared that she had never seen a couple that looked more fitted to be together.

“My wife is a very good judge of character, Your Grace, more so than I am,” Brunton admitted sheepishly, “She was very impressed by Henry, and of course Lady Caroline. I should have listened to her earlier.”

“Well, perhaps that is another reason to celebrate the day then.” I declared, raising a glass in Lady Brunton’s direction, “A *rapprochement* between two brothers. Your brother is a good man and an honourable one, as I am sure you will discover.”

### **87. *A birthday present***

My birthday present, as delivered by my mother on the actual day, or rather evening of my birthday, was Helena, herself, with Margaret and Louise. A full night of erotic and lascivious exertions that was.

We shared an intimate meal in my room and then retired to bed. Straight away we fell to fucking.

At one point I made Margaret and Louise repeat their ‘play’ of how they had progressed from watching ‘Stable-yard Mary’ to the time when they convinced Helena to be allowed to tend to my manly needs while she was away at her brother’s house when her father was ill.

Once again, they took to their parts with gusto, and soon Helena and I were enjoying their erotic presentation, their mimicry of lusty stable boys, and amorous maids, and finally their marvellous portrayal of the ‘conversation with Helena (who watched it dumb-founded at the skill — and some of the half-truths with which it was embroidered).

We laughed so hard that my mother had tears in her eyes and at the end she joined me in proclaiming it a masterpiece of acting. The twins were very pleased by that, and as a reward for our lavish praise, they offered Helena and I, full use of their bodies, in any way we wished.

Helena enjoyed having both of them worship her cunny, while I took turn-about on their quims, first Louise and then Margaret, and then back to Louise and so on. My mother, as you are surely aware by now, loves having her pussy licked, and she surrendered herself to their attentions, squealing in delight, and writhing in pleasure. I spent early, with the erotic vision in front of me, I shot cum all over Margaret's back, and then made Louise lick it off, which was just one of many highlights from that night.

However, as we composed ourselves for sleep, Helena explained to the twins that this would be the last time that they would enjoy this sort of pleasure with us, that my mission to prepare my sisters for the Season was ended and that she was re-taking sole possession of my attention, at least until my marriage.

There was something in the way that Helena said this, that suggested I would be wise not to argue with her. After all, while I had had a most marvellous series of adventures with my sisters, it had only been intended that I prepare them for their future lives and it was never supposed to be a permanent arrangement, the only permanency was my mother's and hers alone. For a moment I sensed

that Margaret and Louise might also be tempted to argue with her, but neither of them said anything, which seemed to be another very promising sign of their new maturity.

### **88. *Reparations for Emily Dodgson***

Fellowes paid the fine that the court had imposed, and though he appealed the verdict, failed in that attempt, and as a result of some other issues that came to light, went to Debtor's Prison for a few months. His run as an *entrepreneur* was done, though men like that are seldom down for long, many of them have the power to rise again no matter what adversity is thrown at them. In this case however, once the whole story got out, few people wanted to deal with him, his glib credibility was shot.

I took the money and gave five thousand pounds of it to Emily Dodgson, two of which she kept to herself, though she confided to me that she had all that she needed, Fellowes' money would serve as an inheritance for her daughters. The other three thousand pounds was split as dowries for each of the Dodgson girls, and held in trust until it was needed.

The balance of the money — three thousand pounds — was also split and some went to the

families that had been dispossessed of their tenancies by Alfred Dodgson. The rest was used to create a fund for the relief of the poor in the Parish of St Mary Rogeringham.

### **89. *The year turns again***

The winter came and went. With it came the Rogeringham Grand Winter Ball, the Christmas goose for the tenants, Midnight Service, and the ball for the locals, all of the things I had sought to establish as traditions under my tenure as the new duke. Fortunately, there were no *alarums and excursions* at any of these events and all of them passed off as they were supposed to.

My mother and I also visited the new tradition of the Christmas Eve arse fuck again and thoroughly enjoyed it, both of us.

The snowball fight at Rogeringham Hall assumed new proportions with more of the available staff being involved, though I was prevailed upon to not take part this time. Instead, I awarded ‘medals’ to various of the participants for their achievements — heaviest snow ball, receiving the most shots, the longest throw and the luckiest. Hot drinks and food were made available afterwards again. It was all

very enjoyable and made for a pleasant afternoon's diversion.

Both Caroline and Henry, and the now pregnant Hermione and James came to stay at Rogeringham Hall over the Christmas period. The weather had been bad and the roads in general were in a foul state, so it made more sense for them to be with us, rather than for them to travel back and to.

Helena made sure to make some time to talk with both of her newly married daughters, and she later told me that on her wedding night, James had questioned Hermione's lack of a maidenhead. My sister had explained the situation to her husband — that the hymen was frequently ruptured, or in her case, destroyed, by activities such as horse riding. James had listened intently, and then the next morning had gone out and purchased Hermione a beautiful black mare for her own personal use. It was a sweet gesture, and one that I think showed again how much he doted on my sister.

The biggest problem Hermione had had was not to show her hand, her bed-room skills, too quickly, but now she said, he was a perfect model of a lover.

Because we were less invested in the new Season, Helena and I did not return to the London

house immediately in the early Spring, though Charlotte and the Twins did. This was not to say that I did not travel to and from the Ton. I did, several times, there was still business to conduct after all — but as our focus had changed, Rogeringham House was far less frenetic, and the pace of life far more enjoyable.

### **90. *Richard and Charlotte***

Captain Carter became a regular visitor to Rogeringham Hall over the winter, and then to Mayfair in the spring, and as well as his paying court to my sister, we often found time to practice our swordsmanship in the grounds there. It was at the close of one of these sessions that Richard finally asked if he would be permitted to marry Charlotte.

I led him into my study, where I poured us both a sherry.

“I will not say that I am surprised,” I told him, “You have been paying court for nearly a year.” I laughed.

“It has been a long time,” he agreed, “I simply wanted to be sure that my living was in order and fit



to support your sister in the manner to which she has become accustomed.”

“Is all in order then?” I asked, he nodded. “Have you asked Charlotte yet?”

“I have, Your Grace.” He replied, “She is willing.”

“And what is your opinion of my sister, Richard?”

Captain Carter looked at me for a moment. “I would say, Your Grace, that your sister is a beautiful woman, with many social graces and many skills. She is intelligent and she is witty.”

He paused a moment and then a rueful smile spread across his face. “But I suspect that Your Grace knows all of that, so I would ask in return, is there something I should know about?”

It was my turn to smile, in the time since I was first introduced to the man before me, I have come to respect him, and his quick wits.

“I want to be sure that your choice is made for the right reasons.” I said, bluntly.

“Your Grace?”

“That suddenly finding yourself cast into the maelstrom that is London in the Season, you did not simply latch onto the first person that you came across, who was not dismayed by you.” I lifted my left arm.

Captain Carter leapt out of his seat — very much as I expected him too. “It is only my respect for you, Your Grace, for the friendship that I feel has grown between us, that I do not challenge you here and now for that, sir!

“You undervalue your sister greatly, Your Grace.” He went on fiercely, “She is a princess; she could easily have become a **real** princess if she had so wished. That she chooses to bestow her favour upon me is something for which I give thanks daily. We talk together and when we talk about our future, Lady Charlotte is most enthusiastic about a life together. Even with this...” It was Richard’s turn to wave his left arm about.

“Her interest in me and my life honours me, and if it were anybody else that spoke so about her — I would sir \_ I would\_!” He groped frantically for what he would do.

Then the Captain saw my face, and he paused in his speech. He paused because he saw precisely

what I had done. Richard sat down, “Masterly, Your Grace, masterly!” He laughed. “You laid the trap and I walked straight in. Please forgive my hasty words, Your Grace...”

“There is nothing to forgive, Richard.” I reassured him, “And for hasty words, they were well said. But then again, I would not have expected less.”

I topped up our glasses.

“Charlotte **is** a princess, Richard.” I agreed with him, “All of my sisters are, and not just because of our rank, but because of their qualities, and of all of them, Charlotte is perhaps the best.

“When I returned from the war, I found that my sisters — the girls I had left behind, had grown up, and had become women. In their hearts they are still the same girls I grew up with and whom I love, but each of them has become their own person. So many changes, Richard, they are wilful, certainly, but they are also clever, resourceful, and strong.”

I took a sip from my drink, Richard waited patiently for me to continue, “You may ask my sister for her hand and if she gives it, I will give my blessing. But beware, Charlotte is not a society wife.

She has never been a shallow person, nor will she ever be. And because of that, she will never be a pale reflection of her husband, some wife to be left at home and called for when needed.”

“Are you trying to dissuade me, Your Grace? Because that will not work...”

“No, not dissuade you, Richard, I am simply trying to ensure that you understand what it is that you are entering into with her.”

Captain Carter reflected for a moment. When he looked at me, I saw the doubt and hope flick across his face until they were replaced by firm resolution. “I understand Your Grace, I can only hope that I can live up to her and be the husband she deserves.”

I stood up and offered him my hand. “I am sure that you will be — I would not have given my blessing otherwise.”

Charlotte came to see me after Richard had departed.

We sat together on the couch, and she asked why I had asked Captain Carter what I had asked.

“Charlotte, of all of my sisters you and I are the closest, despite our having different mothers I feel

that we are both cut from the same cloth. We think alike in many ways, we feel the same about many things, I have never felt like you were genuinely anything other than my sister.

“Hermione and I are connected through our hearts, Caroline and I, through our intellects, the twins...” I waved my hand airily, “Who knows?”

“But you and I, Charlotte, we are connected in many ways — so many, in fact, that I believe that it is our souls that join you and I.”

Charlotte leaned in and kissed me, “Thank you William, may we always be so.”

“I hope so too.” I continued, “I like Richard Carter too, but I had to be sure that his feelings for you were genuine, that he would honour you in the way that you deserved.”

“And are you convinced?” She asked.

“I am.” I told her.

Charlotte and Richard dined with Helena and I the next evening and Richard, now that he had secured my blessing, got down on one knee and asked Charlotte to marry him. She agreed, and with that, my promise to Helena was fulfilled.

Each of my sisters had been presented at court, they had all had their Season and each was living the life that they wished. And even though the twins were unlikely to marry soon, their dowries had been placed into trusts and set aside for the future. With that — as they say — my task here was accomplished.

All that remained was my own future.

### **91. *The eve of my wedding***

On the evening of the last day of April, I stood at Hawley's tavern in Rogeringham village with a small group of friends and we drank, well, we drank to damned nearly everything. We drank toasts to my bride-to-be, my mother, my sisters — each one in turn, the House of Rogeringham, Henry Rogeringham, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Norton, and his daughter Elizabeth, the Church of England, the King, the Queen, the Prince Regent, King Charles II and his roving eye, Viscount Wellesley and his victories, we drank to Buckinghamshire, and we toasted to each and every one of us that was assembled there.

In truth though, though I drank to each and every toast, I never lost my wits. I do not know whether it was the coming nuptials or what, but I remained reasonably sober.

Sir Montague Fellowes looked as if he had slept in a ditch, but without the services of a good manservant like Barclay to make him presentable the next morning.

He barged into the tavern and walked towards me through my guests. I could see Barclay moving around behind the interloper but waved him off with a motion of my head. Fellowes' hair was disarrayed and he had not shaved in a day or so. His neck-cloth was stained and his clothes were rumpled.

"I am sorry Your Grace, I must have missed the invitation this time," he sneered as he stood in front of me.

There were murmurs from my guests, a sound not unlike the sort of low growling that a dog will make before he attacks.

I held my hand up for silence.

"Erm. Sir Montague Fellowes, isn't it?" I said after regarding him for a few moments.

"As you damned well know, it is, sir!"

"And is there something we can do for you, Sir Montague?" I asked pleasantly.

"Have you not done enough, sir?" He snarled.

“Not I, sir,” I saw Mr Langton off to Fellowes’ left side. “Anything that has been done to you was by the court of law, and your own deeds, of course.”

“I am damned nearly penniless, sir, practically destitute!”

“Was it not you that coerced my clerk to rob me, so that he could then sell the land to you? As a result of which he was killed, leaving a grieving wife and daughters. All consequences of your actions, sir.”

“Wife? She was not his wife...!”

“Be very careful sir,” I interrupted his rant, even as I started to speak, I saw the direction in which this was heading. Well, so be it. “We have spoken about this before. I believe I told you then that the lady is under my patronage, and that she is a proper gentlewoman — and that I would be offended if you said anything untoward about her.”

“She is an incestuous bitch, and her daughters are the get of an incestuous union.” He said calmly and deliberately. “And as we are discussing you being offended...”

He paused for a moment, and I wondered what it was that he was going to say — could he possibly know about Helena and I?



“I understand that your bride-to-be has slept with most of Wellesley’s army,” He announced loudly.

The next sound that I heard was all of my assembled guests drawing their breath, as they waited for an explosion on my part.

Instead — and knowing Arabella and her tastes, I actually laughed out loud at his suggestion. I could not help it. The sheer ignorance of his statement was ridiculous, though even I thought that the sound of my laughter was incongruous given the tension in the tavern.

“I do not know how you intend this to go, Sir Montague, but I will play your game.” I took a glove that someone offered and theatrically threw it down in front of him. “I take it that you have a second you can call on?”

Fellowes nodded.

“In that case — swords or pistols?” I asked, though to be truthful I did not care.

“Pistols. Yours or mine?”

I waved my hand dismissively, “You may provide the weapons. There is a meadow at the end of the

lane by the church, tomorrow at dawn would be acceptable.”

With a curt nod, he turned and walked out.

“What a rude chap!” Sir Arthur observed.

I explained who he was, as the Justice had been involved on the periphery of the case.

“Gentlemen!” I said loudly as the drinks went round again, “Please, for the sake of her peace of mind — and my life — I implore you, do not anyone tell my mother about this.”

## **92. *The morning after***

It was a glorious start to May Day, my wedding day. The mist over the slowly flowing river was thinning as the sun rose red and golden on the water-meadows. Weatherwise, it was going to be a good day for a wedding. Fellowes and his second waited by the river at the designated place as Barclay and I dismounted and walked towards them.

Sir Arthur Hastings waited with them and he turned to me as we stopped in front of him.

It was Sir Arthur’s role as judge of the duel to ask “Gentlemen, is there anything that can be said to mend this affair? Mr Fellowes? Your Grace?”

When neither of us spoke, he signed to the seconds.

“Very well. Sir Montague, your pistols sir?” He took a box from Fellowes’ second and opening the catch, offered it towards me. The weapons were nicely made and well-kept weapons, I took them both out of the case and tested the balance before choosing one. Fellowes took the other.

“Gentlemen, stand back-to-back.” Sir Arthur’s instructions were firm and delivered in an authoritative tone. “On my command, you will walk fifteen paces and stand. On my next command, you will turn to face each other. Once you are both facing each other, and only at that point, then you may fire when you are ready.”

“Walk!”

I could feel the rising sun on the side of my face as I counted nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen. I stood and waited.

“Gentlemen — turn!”

I pivoted about to see that Fellowes was already pointing his pistol at me.

I have been here before. This is as much a game of dare as it is anything else.

And I dared.

My own pistol pointed upwards in my hand. Fellowes' piece was pointed directly at me, but even as I watched, it wavered. Tiny motions, tremors of the hand and wrist. I looked at him, at his eyes — red and raw looking. It took no time at all to observe all of that, and almost immediately afterwards Sir Montague Fellowes discharged his pistol.

Even as I watched the spark flare, igniting the powder in the pistol's pan, I saw that Fellowes had jerked at the trigger, the movement rippling along his arm towards his shoulder; causing the muzzle to drift off target and the ball, when the pistol fired, to pass close by my cheek, making a fluttering, rushing sound.

I was not hit. That will please Helena, I thought to myself.

Now it was my turn to fire, and pistol still raised, I waited to do so. I made a slow count of ten under my breath, before I lowered the muzzle and took a sight upon my opponent. Despite the drink I had had

the previous evening, my hand was rock steady and the muzzle of the pistol did not waver at all.

Fellowes was not taking it well. He shook and he twitched, his breathing was rapid and his eyes darted around. Escape was now not an option unless I offered it to him, it was all he could do to remain standing.

Finally, he cracked. “Shoot! Shoot damn you, Rogeringham!”

At that point I cocked the pistol. “You will address me as ‘Your Grace’, sir.”

It was the act of readying my piece to fire, that finally broke Sir Montague’s strained resolution. He sank to his knees and fell forwards, grovelling on the floor, at which point, I fired the pistol — into the earth at my feet.

“Get up you wretch!” I told him, “Get up!”

Fellowes stayed upon the floor, sobbing.

I turned to his second, “Get this coward out of my sight! Get him out of this county, and ensure that I never see his sorry face again. If I hear that he has repeated any word of his vile slurs, I will hunt him

down and beat him to within an inch of his snivelling life!

“Do you hear me, Fellowes? With my bare hands.” (I later found out that Sir Montague Fellowes had used the last of his money to buy passage to the Americas.)

And with that, Sir Arthur, Barclay and I walked to our horses, to go back to the Hall.

As we rode back to the hall, I looked at Barclay, “Joshua, if I ever do anything as reckless as that again, you have my permission to knock me down.”

“Very good, Your Grace. I did wonder what it was that you were planning.”

Sir Arthur looked at me. “I was so angry that I wasn’t thinking clearly.” I told him ruefully.

“It seemed to make an impression on your opponent, Your Grace. Damn me! The chap folded up like a used napkin.”

I thought about what I had done, and shuddered inwardly, if that ball had been two inches to the left... But it wasn’t and I was still here, on a glorious morning of a beautiful day that was also

going to be the day on which I would marry Arabella.

“There is still one thing to be taken care of, Your Grace,” Barclay said quietly, “You still need to tell Lady Helena.”

I winced. “Is that really necessary?” I asked.

“I believe it would be the best course of action to confess now, before the wedding. To save any issues later, Your Grace.”

Of course, Barclay was right. Truthfully, I was more scared of what she would say than I had been facing Fellowes.

In the end there was no need to tell her. I never found out how she knew but she did.

And she was quite annoyed about it.

In fact, she expounded exactly how annoyed she was quite loudly and for some twenty minutes without once pausing for breath or grasping for what she was going to say. And Helena had obviously made a great deal of progress on her ability to swear, because a ten-minute spell in the middle of her declamation was continuous — and quite imaginative — profanity.

Only when she had finally ended her rant, did she enquire why — ‘in the name of the Dear Lord God and all of His Little Angels’ — I had chosen to fight a duel upon my wedding day. What about your poor wife? What about me, William? Why?”

When I told her the circumstances and what Fellowes had said, she paused, and her angry face softened. She reached out and touched my cheek, the one that the pistol ball had passed so perilously close to. “Never tell me what happened, I could not bear to hear how close you were to death, but know this as well, despite being your lover, I am still your mother and I am so proud of you and the man that you have grown into. Doubly so that you are an honourable one as well.

She moved her hand to my loins and cupped my prick within my breeches, which swelled appreciatively, “As much as I would love to do something with this now, it is only fair to save this for your bride and her wedding night. You should go and change your clothes. We are due at the church at eleven.”

That comment about saving it for my bride ruled out the chance of me getting Helena on her knees



before me and having her use her mouth. I knew from the tone of her voice, that it would not happen.

Ah well.

### **93. *Union***

Just before eleven o'clock I stood with Henry Adams as my second, I apologise, as my best man, and we waited at the altar of St Mary's church in Rogeringham when Arabella entered on the arm of her uncle, with her two bride's maids.

I am afraid that I could no more describe her dress and what it was made of than I can fly, but she did look very pretty. It was cream in colour as is common, and decorated with ivory-coloured flowers, and she held a bouquet of white roses before her as she advanced down the aisle towards me.

Dr Locksley officiated and read the service, during which we made our vows and responses, though I think that even the vicar, that most astute individual, missed some of the looks that passed between Arabella and I during the exchange.

As has been suggested, it would be totally correct to call this a marriage of convenience, after all we were both entering the agreement with our own

interests, but it was less strange — and more honest than others — because, despite both of us having our own interests in the marriage there was a genuine affection between us and it was the same between Arabella and my family. That we were neither of us head-over-heels in love did not matter. Our marriage might have been described more like a dynastic alliance, except that we genuinely enjoyed each other's company and we were comfortable together in each other's presence.

It was all in the vows never spoken — in private we had both sworn to never embarrass the other by what we did in private, that we would always treat each other with respect in all aspects of our lives and loves, to always be honest with each other, and should there be children, we would both be parents to them as much as we could.

Soon we had returned to Rogeringham Hall for the wedding breakfast, where the booming voice of Joshua Barclay announced the entrance of His Grace, the Duke and Her Grace, the Duchess of Norton, Captain Sir William and the Honourable Arabella Rogeringham, to happy cheers and great celebration.

In 'olden times', a ducal marriage like mine might have lasted days and the feasting and merriment would have consumed prodigious supplies of food and wine; actors and musicians would have played and performed and the whole thing would have been a great festival.

Those days, as I once told Helena, are long past. Oh, for sure, there was feasting and there was merriment. An orchestra played in the ball room, and people travelled from all over the county and down from London to be seen at our wedding. Rogeringham Hall did what it does best — hospitality of the very finest kind.

Eventually, after a day filled with laughter, music, and dancing, it was time for my new wife and I to retire.

Arabella and I entered my chamber to find that Barclay had placed everything just so for us. There was wine and tid-bits if we felt hungry, there was space for my wife's clothing, and because the nights were cool this spring, dressing gowns had been placed ready, the fire was banked and the room was warm.

Helena, or as she was styled, now that I was married, the Dowager Lady Duchess of Norton, sat

upon the couch by the fire waiting for us, dressed in what looked like nothing but her favoured pearl-grey *banyan* dressing gown.

Despite the fact that we had been with her all evening, she welcomed us, and Arabella received a warm embrace. “I have already greeted you,” Helena said, with her arms still wrapped around her daughter-in-law — my mother had actually proposed a toast during the wedding breakfast doing just that. “This now, is about me welcoming you...” Helena paused, looking for a suitable phrase.

“Into the family, Your Grace?” Arabella asked.

“Please call me Helena,” My mother asked, “And yes, I am welcoming you into **our** family, with all of the adventures that that can bring.” Helena finished, with a smile.

I poured some champagne, and handed it round.

“The thing about families,” Arabella mused, as she sipped her champagne, “Is that they offer the most interesting of possibilities. Take my own mother, for example, she is most adventurous, as I think you know.”

Helena nodded with a twinkle in her eyes.

Suddenly Arabella paused and asked, “May I call you mother, as well, Helena?”

“I would be honoured,” Helena told her. “And I hope that we have many adventures together.”

Arabella placed her champagne glass on the table, stood up and walked to the side of the bed. She looked back at me, inviting my assistance to help her undress, which I did. Dropping her last garment, her chemise, to the floor and climbing to kneel on the bed, naked she turned to face us. She reached out, for my hand and for Helena’s.

“Well, mother?” she said, “Will you assist me in the process of making an heir to His Grace, the duke?”

I waited, looking at Helena.

“It would be my pleasure Arabella.” She replied as she too, disrobed and climbed onto the bed.

It was the first time I had seen them naked together, Helena’s more mature and, if she will forgive me saying it, fuller figure against Arabella’s, which is still girlish in some ways, though ripe and sensual in others. The prospect of having both of these beautiful women in my bed at the same time

was more effective than any aphrodisiac could ever have been.

“Ooooh!” Arabella squealed delightedly as I stepped out of my breeches, “I had forgotten what a splendid weapon it was that you wielded, William.”

She dropped her hands to it as I lay down next to them.

“Yes,” Helena said slowly, thoughtfully, as Arabella slowly stroked my hardness. “I understand that you may have made its acquaintance before.”

Arabella stopped her fondling, clasping her hands in front of her, she bowed her head and looked quite contrite as she knelt in front of Helena.

“This is true, mother,” she said in a girlish tone, ‘I did.’ She reached out with her right hand, and toyed with the head of my cock, as she said thoughtfully, “I suppose that that makes me a bad daughter.” Before she continued in a sly, teasing tone, “Perhaps you will punish me for it later?”

Helena laughed, a delighted sound, and leaned forwards to embrace her daughter-in-law, “Oh I shall,” she said, still laughing, though the underlying tone of her voice, suggested that she fully intended to. “I shall indeed, you may be assured of that.”

Arabella looked at Helena with what I can only call worship in her eyes, as she breathed, “Ohhh! Yes, please! I await your pleasure, mother.” And the two women kissed, even as both of them fondled my prick between them.

For a moment I wondered whether Arabella had married me or Helena, but then Arabella leant forwards to begin sucking on my cock.

“Get William’s prick good and hard, daughter,” Helena encouraged her, fondling my pills as Arabella sank her nose almost into my pubes. “It has much work to do tonight, it must be perfectly ready.”

With my cock filling her mouth, my new wife made an mmm-mm sound, to signify that she understood. While she was suckling away, I reached out and sought the curves of her backside, cupping her cheeks and sliding my fingers through the groove of her cunny. It appeared that any reservations Arabella might have had about me versus her obvious attraction to my mother had been dismissed, because even as my fingers played across her cunny, I felt her labia swell and flower, and I could feel their slickness increase.

Helena moved to me, on the other side from my wife, and she gave me a quick kiss before she leaned over and ran her hands across Arabella's back, this allowed me to caress my mother's quim in the same way that I was exploring Arabella's.

It did not last long though, Helena decided that I was hard enough, and directed me to get up so that Arabella could lie down.

"Now, William!" Helena encouraged me softly, "Now is your time, put a child into this beautiful girl. Fill her cunny with your seed and make a son with her."

"Please husband," Arabella looked me in the eye, "Give me your child."

What should a man do? Why, try his damndest to do what he is asked, of course!

Helena took my cock and presented it to Arabella's cunny. Arabella had reached out and held Helena's other hand, so that I was connected to both women by my hard throbbing prick, it was such a sensuous picture that I nearly spent there and then. But the mission was my emission and making sure that it happened in the right place — Arabella's place. Arabella's warm, wet, waiting place that lay



before me. The lips of her quim were full and opened and slick with her juices. Her cunny mound was bare — the same as Helena's — who now habitually had hers shaved, and it rose and fell with her breathing, her whole body trembled with her excitement. She raised herself on her elbow so that she could watch as I moved into place.

With a gentle push, I was seated inside Arabella, who lay back as I took my place on top of her. I looked down at my wife, who nodded her head saying that she was comfortable. Helena lay beside us, her hand was on the small of my back as if to urge me on and we were able to share kisses between the three of us.

I had to get up, get up on my knees, I wanted to get as far up inside Arabella as I could. On my knees I could grasp her by the hips and pull myself in tighter. Arabella helped, by wrapping her legs around my back and crossing her ankles. She matched each thrust with a flex of her legs and I doubt I could have penetrated her any further than I actually was.

Consider this picture then — I am fucking my wife, who is enjoying every moment of it, as we try and breed her with a Rogeringham heir, at the same

time, my mother is embracing Arabella in front of me and the two are exchanging passionate kisses. Can you imagine a more lascivious picture? I cannot. However, it is also a loving picture. The woman who once worried about Arabella replacing her, is joyously amorous with her. They kiss, they fondle, they stroke each other. Helena presents her breast to Arabella who fervently suckles it, noisily, and then they exchange their roles and Helena moves her head to swirl her tongue around her daughter-in-law's red nipples. At the same time, Helena's hand makes its way down across Arabella's alabaster skin, across her belly and down between us. Even as I am fucking my wife, my mother is frigging her. Arabella takes Helena's head in both hands and draws it to her so that they can kiss, and at the same time she moans around a spend that shakes her under me.

As she stops spending, Arabella takes her left hand and pulls me down to kiss me and once again, we begin a round of kissing, where the three of us share each other's lips, exploring each other with our tongues. Then Helena urges me back to the business of making an heir.

My mother switched her focus from engaging Arabella's mouth and bobbies, and moved so that

she was by my hips. She changed hands so that she was still frigging Arabella, and at the same time she began to stroke my back and hips, gliding her hand across my back and urging me on.

“Fuck her William, fill her up with your creamy cum. Spend for me, my love, shoot your jism up inside her tight quim. Do you feel him Arabella? Can you feel his hard cock pounding your girlish cunny? Do you like it there?”

“Oh yes, mother! I feel it!” Arabella moaned back, grasping at my shoulders, digging her nails into the muscles of my arm (and adding to my collection of scars, I am sure). “And I — Aaahhh! — I do love it!”

At this moment Helena moved her hand down from my back and placed it between the cheeks of my thrusting arse. In one swift movement she had impaled my bum-hole, screwing her finger up inside me. It was this act that tipped me over the edge.

“Oooooohhhhhhh!” Arabella moaned loudly as she felt my spend come down and fill her. I stiffened and went still, feeling the pulses deep in me, my new wife clung tightly to me while I orgasmed.

“Thank you, William, thank you,” she said into my shoulder.

“Now you are truly man and wife!” Helena said from beside us, as she kissed us both in turn, “My son and my new daughter.” She would not let us move apart, insisting that we stayed joined to give the cum the best opportunity to impregnate Arabella. It was only when my cock had gone limp and it was likely to fall out of Arabella’s quim, that she would allow us to part.

I got up and poured wine for Helena and Arabella, taking a rum for myself. I did not need the strong rum; it was simply that I desired some. Of course, Arabella remarked on it, but as she had been to Portugal and understood something of a soldier’s life, she did not make the error of tasting it.

“The mere smell of the stuff is enough for me,” she told Helena, who smiled at her comment.

When we did actually return to the bed, there was a moment of confusion as we arranged ourselves, but eventually we settled with myself in the middle and Helena on my right-hand side and Arabella on my left.

There was much light kissing and touching as we lay there and at one point Arabella went to take my cock in her mouth, she offered it to Helena, so that she too could taste it. Which she did, but she told us both, quite firmly, that if at any time, I was even close to spending, I must enter my wife and place my seed in her.

Thus, it went on for most of the night. Helena and Arabella would tease my cock, frigging it, or sucking on it — I was hard for longer than I think I have ever been, so relentless was their assault on my manhood. I, in turn, tongued both of them, at one point licking Arabella, while Helena sat on my chest kissing her daughter-in-law. I did try to fuck Helena at one point but was told that that would have to wait for another night, my wedding night was totally dedicated to Arabella and the making of an heir. The teasing went on and each time I started to feel close to cumming, Arabella would open herself to me, and I would enter her and fuck my spend up inside her.

At one point she got up on her hands and knees and I went to enter her from behind, but not before Helena had wriggled her way underneath her and they both engaged in a passionate *soixante-neuf* before me. With such a beautifully lascivious scene in front of me, I could not help but spend quickly,

but even though it was perhaps my fourth or fifth cum, it was just as powerful as the first, if not more. As for my mother and my wife? I got off the bed and was pouring myself a drink and they continued as if I was not there.

I sat down and watched them from the chair, I was so spent that I would have been pushed to raise a smile let alone an erection, but they seemed to be enjoying themselves. At one point Arabella raised her head, her hair falling down around the side of her face, and she howled her cum, as Helena lashed at her quim and her clitty.

“Oh! Fuck! Shit-in-a-pot, mother, fuck! Yes, yes, oooohhhh yes!” She spewed a stream of vulgarities at Helena, which only seemed to drive her on further. I saw Helena’s hand reach up between Arabella’s arse cheeks and she began to explore her daughter-in-law’s bottom hole, much to Arabella’s surprise and delight. This assault on her arse effectively proclaimed that from that point onward, ‘no holds would be barred’, and my wife pressed her head forward and down between Helena’s thighs again, and down further, exploring my mother’s bottom with her tongue. Not long after that, both women came with such ferocity that when they were done, the throes of their orgasms made them fall

apart exhausted. For a moment it looked as if someone had simply thrown them both upon the bed and left them. They both lay motionless like that for a few minutes.

Helena was the first to stir and I offered her a glass of wine.

“Dear Lord God and All of His Little Angels!” She laughed, kissing me, “I love you William, with every fibre of my body, but that was a cum like nothing I have ever felt.”

“Shall we keep her then, mother?” I asked, looking at Arabella, discarded on the bed.

“I think we shall.” Helena laughed, “Though I am not certain we should go as hard as this every time... it is perhaps a little too much.”

“Did you hear that, wife?” I chuckled as she stirred, “We have decided to keep you, and not send you back to your mother!”

“Wine!” Arabella croaked. She took a hasty gulp of the madeira, “I am so glad. It would have been a shame to have gone through all of that and been thought a failure. Now, I feel well and truly fucked.”

We settled again, but this time there was more of a ‘job done’ feeling as we composed ourselves.

“Do you think...?” Arabella asked sleepily.

I didn’t comprehend what she was asking at first, but Helena did, and she replied for us both. “I think it may have. Certainly, the amount of cum William put up inside you, it should have done.”

“Who said that we are done?” I asked with a laugh, “There is nothing we need to get out of bed for, we can stay here all tomorrow and fuck if you wish.”

After a short discussion, Helena decided that she would need to rise, because while it would not be considered unseemly for Arabella and I to stay in bed all day, it would give the game away to all and sundry if she stayed with us (bearing in mind that we had guests staying at the hall). She counselled us to do the same, as while the fucking had been a great deal of fun, it had also been most vigorous, and she wondered whether Arabella might not require a respite.

I looked to my left and saw my new wife give a little nod, then she leaned across me to kiss Helena, “Thank you, yes mother, I am feeling a touch sore.



Perhaps we can take a tour around the grounds and the village later, yes?”

After that we slept for a few hours until Barclay appeared and quietly asked if we would like breakfast in my room. Bearing in mind what Helena had said, I told him that we would be taking breakfast in the dining room with all of the family and guests and would he bring Arabella’s maid to attend her?

It was the first time that I had met Kate, the maid that Arabella had brought with her, and I was surprised. They were like enough that they could have been sisters, though not so similar that you could mistake one for the other. Where Arabella was fair haired, Kate was dark, she was also more well-endowed than her mistress, both in her boobies and her backside, but they were both about the same height and both pretty, and though Kate was a servant, she bore herself with the same sort of confidence that her mistress did. I had agreed not to pry into Arabella’s privacy, unless she allowed me to, but I understood that Kate was her paramour, and had been my wife’s lover for at least a year. It was a very convenient arrangement, as it meant that there was no necessity for my wife to go outside of our household.

She entered my room to assist Arabella, bobbed a curtsey to me, “Your Grace!”, a second deeper curtsey and a more breathy greeting to my mother, ‘Your Grace!’, and a totally worshipful greeting to her mistress, “Your Grace!”

My mother spoke before I could, “Kate. If you are going to do that every time we meet, you’ll get nothing done. One curtsey will do for the future and a bob at that.”

The girl nodded, “Yes, Your Grace, thank you.”

And with that I was suddenly alone. Helena returned to her own room, and Arabella to hers. After the frenetic activities of the last forty-eight hours, it was somewhat of a shock, to not be surrounded by people, to have no one within arm’s reach, even in intimate contact. Then Barclay brought my shaving water and normality resumed.

After lunch I escorted Helena and Arabella out into the warm sunshine, where the highly polished Rogeringham landau with our four shining bay horses waited patiently for us. Mr Hopley and one of the grooms waited with them.

I helped them both to get into the carriage, Helena first, as was proper, and then my new-wife.

The groom that held the horses leapt up beside Hopley and we were off!

Hopley took us down the Yew Walk — which was perfectly adequate for the coach and four, we stopped for a moment to visit Henry's estate office, then remounted and drove through the village. People stopped and waved, calling out greetings. We stopped several times to speak to people, including Dr Locksley and his wife who were returning to the vicarage. From the church, we made our way towards the south end of the village where one of our gangs of workmen had started work on building a row of labourer's cottages.

When we arrived there, we stopped and dropped off a hamper of food for them and some bottles of beer. Arabella dismounted to talk with the men and I watched as she chatted with them, asking about their jobs or the tools that they were using — getting them to explain how to properly use a chisel or what a string line was for. I used it as an opportunity to ask if there was anything they needed, any way that I could assist them, while Helena remained in the carriage, leaning over the side and watching the whole thing. And all the while Arabella moved among the men, with her inquisitive manner, and her pleasant laugh, she charmed each and every one of

them. I knew that they appreciated our stop when they gave a quick cheer — though that may have been the gift of beer — as we remounted and drove on.

Across Rogeringham Moor, the heathland that stretched away to the south of the village, the road brought us to the bridge and the ford and the grand entrance to Rogeringham Hall.

At the ford the Rogeringham estate's other gang of workers were repairing the bed of the ford which had suffered over the winter. Like the first gang, we stopped and gave them a basket of food and some bottles of beer, and though there were less opportunities for Arabella to express her curiosity — after all their work was under water, like the first gang the new duchess charmed them all to a man. The men stood tall in her presence, and there was a measure of showing off as they posed for her. It was light-hearted, and amusing, but it was also important that Arabella be recognised as my wife and the new duchess.

Her role, very much as my mother's was, is as the mistress of the house and the estate. There were many decisions that would be hers and hers alone to make now. While I would make the major decisions,

and control the purse, Arabella would be the person to whom the house staff would come, who would run both Rogeringham Hall and the Mayfair house. Helena would be there to assist her, advising her when Arabella asked, but her role as the mistress was over, it was Arabella's now.

We left the gang of workmen at the ford and drove back up the long drive to Rogeringham Hall.

The next couple of days saw more of the same sort of thing, travelling out and about and even as far as Buckingham town itself, and we were invited to several balls and dinners given on Arabella's behalf, mainly so that local dignitaries could see and be seen with her. From what I could see and what we discussed, my new wife relished her new responsibilities, she looked forwards to fulfilling her role, both here and in the Ton.

The nights were similar to that first night of our marriage, as we made every effort to ensure her impregnation, though perhaps we were not so urgent in the way we approached it. Arabella told me that she enjoyed making love with me, though she still preferred women, and she whispered that she hoped that she would not conceive too soon, because just trying was so enjoyable.

When I asked whether it was me or Helena that made it so, my wife just laughed and hid her smile behind her fluttering fan. However, it was not long before Arabella began to be sick in the mornings and it appeared that we had been successful in our efforts. If I thought Helena had been strict during the conception, she became even more so as Arabella's belly swelled, and she did all that she could to ensure that her daughter-in-law had a safe and healthy pregnancy.

Helena became fiercely protective, and made sure that everything was prepared for the birth and that Arabella wanted for nothing. She had already done the same for Hermione, when she conceived, descending on their house like a terrible goddess, and as my sister told me, sending Eugenie Barthomley fleeing. Caroline had also benefitted from her mother's care.

Fortunately, for all of her enthusiasm, Helena never lost sight of the fact that it was Arabella's child, and while she made sure that carriages were taking the best route, that her daughter-in-law never had to stand any time for too long, or that she didn't suffer from the heat of the day; if Arabella asked her to desist, she did. She was protected but never suffocated by my mother's love.

Hermione's child — a girl, was a babe-in-arms at the time of my wedding, and was much admired, and doted on. Caroline was also pregnant at the wedding, and she gave birth a month later.

We all returned to the Ton in June for Charlotte and Richard's wedding, which was again one of the events of that year's Season. And with that event done — the twins having made their decision as to how they wanted to live — and the newly-weds installed at Richard's home in Oxfordshire, my tale is done.

#### **94. *Afterword***

Arabella took to motherhood like a duck takes to the water, something about being with child caused her to embrace it. Privately, between the three of us, she jokingly referred to it as 'being bred', which she said that she always enjoyed, especially as each time it happened, Helena was present. It did not limit her passion for women in any way, but she told us, she saw our family as her way of repaying the freedom that I gave her. I had never sought to put any pressure upon her to repay anything. We had agreed that we would try for heirs, but that was it, no more was required from her. Still, Arabella felt obligated in herself. In spite of this, 'breedings' were always

seen as a great occasion, which we all three of us enjoyed. I did sometimes wonder at the enthusiasm that Arabella showed for the process of making a child, given her avowed passion for other women, but during her first pregnancy Helena told me what had been said between the two of them at Arabella's birthday party.

Helena said that she had specifically broached the subject of providing heirs with Arabella and had been surprised by her response. It appeared that Arabella had said that she desired children as she had grown up an only child. She said that she could think of nothing more that she would want in the world than to be surrounded by children, to make up for her own, quite lonely, childhood. That was what had convinced my mother that our betrothal should proceed. That, and she genuinely liked Arabella as a person.

In time Arabella bore me three sons and three daughters. They were, in order of age — William, Helena, the twins Henry and Thomas, Elizabeth and then my baby, Charlotte (named primarily after the queen, but also for my eldest sister). There was another boy, Daniel, between William and Helena, but sadly he died at birth. After Charlotte, Arabella decided that enough was enough and we



concentrated on raising our children as best we could.

As marriages of convenience go it was a good one, and it lasted a very long time. While my love for Helena never faltered, and the same went for hers for me, the affection and regard that I held for Arabella matured and while it never reached the height of that which I felt for my mother, I believe that it was all that a married man and woman can hope for, perhaps more. Helena came to regard Arabella as her sixth daughter and I know Arabella always treated Helena as she did her own mother.

I lived with my mother and wife for many years until the Lord called us all home to him.

I have often reflected upon my life with Helena, and Arabella. In some people's eyes, I suppose, we were committing a mortal sin. I care not for that view. If, as the good Doctor Locksley told me, Jesus preached a doctrine of Love above all else, if something was conceived in Love, and we loved each other dearly, how can it be wrong? It was certainly no crime, well not until many years later and by then it was no matter, and I can honestly say that I have no regrets on the choices I made.

As for the other people in my family, in order, my sisters also progressed in their own lives.

After Charlotte and Richard married, they lived in Oxfordshire on Richard's estate, preferring there to London. He turned his will to 'raising sheep and cattle', as he had said he would, and then having established himself in that, he and Charlotte expanded into raising children. I think I am uncle to ten children by their marriage, though to be truthful I am not actually certain, it may be more. Charlotte, was most prolific.

Caroline and Henry were a little bit more moderate and brought just four young Adamsons into the world. They often came to stay at the Mayfair house and Rogeringham Hall. When the Rogeringham children and the Adams children brigaded together it was always chaotic. (I never subscribed to the view that children should be seen and never heard, and while I know many people disproved of it, we spent a great deal of time with our children, instead of isolating them with nannies and tutors) Nothing more was ever said about the conversation that Henry and I had on Christmas Eve and Henry remained my assistant for many years, and our friendship lasted many more after that.

The twins never married. Oh, they had lovers and beaus and suitors aplenty — and I believe that there was debauchment and orgiflying as well, but thankfully no scandal. There were a couple of close calls, but nothing that could not be handled, discreetly. They lived with us for a couple of years and then set up at a house we own in Sloane Square, a short way away from Rogeringham House, where they lived until their old age.

Hermione powered James Barthomley's career like one of Mr Congreave's infernal rockets, though with considerably more accuracy. In between delivering off-spring — six in total, she propelled his course, so that by his thirtieth birthday, James had actually become richer than his father and his portfolio put him and my sister into a very strong place. Fortunately, the brash young man that I met on my first night home, matured into a clever and compassionate chap, and though he ruefully admitted that he still found himself nervous in my presence, we spent many pleasant days and evenings together.

Their eldest child, a girl, Phoebe, who everyone assumed must have been conceived on their wedding night, was unmistakably a Rogeringham in features and in form, having a strong resemblance to

her mother. I believe that of all my nephews and nieces, she remains my favourite, and it was only when we attended her coming out ball, about a month after her eighteenth birthday, that Hermione confided to me that she was certain that Phoebe was my daughter, conceived on that last night before her wedding.

I know that both Charlotte and Hermione had expressed a desire to make return visits to my bed once they had established their own marriages. But with my mother and Arabella, I had as much as a man could want and more. So, as she had with the twins, quietly and firmly, Helena closed that door, to all comers bar my wife.

Elizabeth Dorrington, never remarried. “Why should I?” she once asked me, “I am enjoying myself far too much to burden myself with another husband.” At which point she went off and began creating mischief and joy with her grand-children. I am quite certain that if my children ever found themselves in trouble, Elizabeth had been involved at some point, usually as the primary instigator. Just the sight of Grand-mama’s carriage approaching in the distance would cause a thrill of excitement to ripple through the young Rogerings (and any Carters, Adamses, or Barthomleys that were

present), and the servants would start to batten down the hatches and give an eye to anything that might get broken.

Eventually, after many years of service, Barclay trained up his own replacement and retired to a cottage on the estate, with a good pension. Of course, he found himself a wife and married and with his and her money combined, they never wanted for anything. The day that Joshua Barclay married Emily Dodgson was a particularly enjoyable one, and my mother and I were pleased that they had found each other. Joshua had been at the centre of it all, and he was well aware of Emily's story, none of which made any difference at all to him, and from what I could observe, it seemed that they were very happy together. If Joshua told Emily about my mother and I, neither he nor she ever made mention of it.

Emily eventually sent her daughters to a school in Buckingham and from thence to one in Oxford. They all married well, and we maintained contact with them as women. With their families, they were frequent visitors at Rogeringham Hall. Emily herself wrote two books on the education of women, which were well received though they never got the readership of someone like Mrs Wollstonecraft.

Several people said that Emily's ideas were equally thoughtful and worthy of consideration, I thought that her words were most thought provoking and read the books several times.

The daughter of Lt-General Bradley, Lydia — the queen's favourite of the Season, married a young German prince, an émigré relation of the queen. They married in a quite spectacular wedding at the prince's home in Berkshire.

A man is lucky if he has one woman in his life, a woman who loves him and who he may love and share his life, and his bed, with. I was blessed in not only by having my mother and Arabella in my life, but all of my sisters, Elizabeth Dorrington, Emily Dodgson and so many others.

I have been privileged to make my way in war and prosper in peace, and I have known and been friends with many great men, but most of all, I thank God — and all of His Little Angels — for the women I have known in my life.

*And with that, this simple tale of ordinary, everyday Regency aristocracy, their lives and their bodice-ripping, incestuous loves, comes to an end. I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed it, and that if*

*you have, you will consider voting for it and perhaps even leave a comment.*

*Thank you for your indulgence.*

*God Save the Queen!*

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