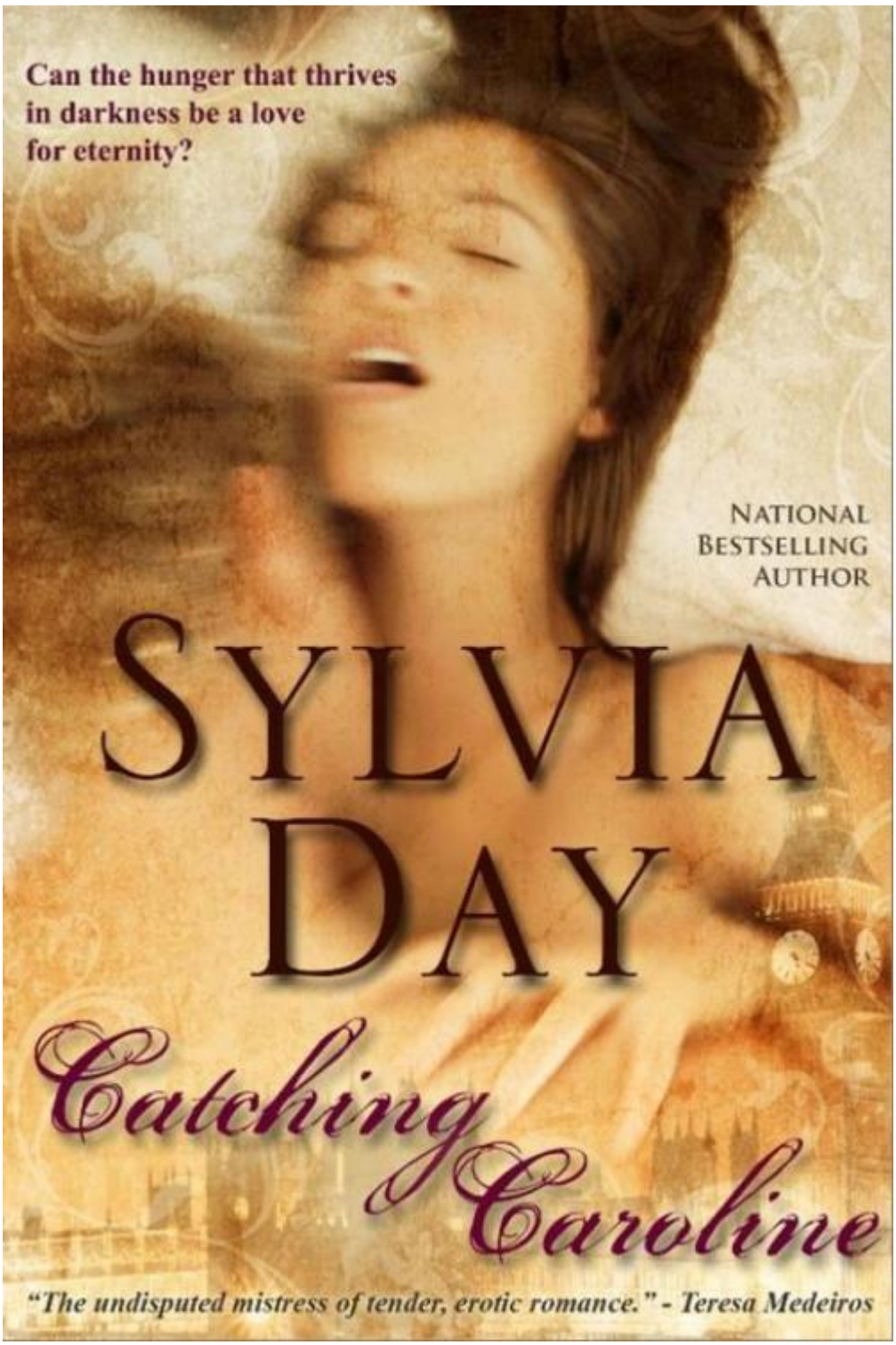
Can the hunger that thrives in darkness be a love for eternity?
NATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SYLVIA DAY
Catching Caroline
"The undisputed mistress of tender, erotic romance." - Teresa Medeiros

CATCHING CAROLINE

SYLVIA DAY

Published by Sylvia Day
ePub ISBN: 978-0-982-85710-6

Catching Caroline
Copyright 2005 by Sylvia Day
All Rights Reserved.

(Edited by Karin Story)

Excerpt from *Bad Boys Ahoy!* Copyright 2006 by Sylvia Day

* * * * *

This book is a work of fiction. All names, characters, locations, and incidents are products of the author's imagination, or have been used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, locales, or events is entirely coincidental.

* * * * *

License Notes

Thank you for downloading this ebook. You are welcome to share it with your friends. This book may be reproduced, copied and distributed for non-commercial purposes, provided the book remains in its complete original form and proper attribution is given. If you enjoyed this book, please visit www.SylviaDay.com to discover other works by this author. Thank you for your support.

* * * * *

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page
Copyright
Dedication

PROLOGUE
CHAPTER ONE
CHAPTER TWO
AUTHOR NOTE
The Author
“Lucien’s Gamble”

Dedication

This is for Audrey. I miss you, Mom, and think of you often.

PROLOGUE

London, 1810

"Wicked men are a weakness of mine."

"Good heavens, Julienne." Lady Caroline Seton smothered a laugh as she entered the Dempsey ballroom. "You are incorrigible."

Julienne La Coeur arched a brow. "You have no notion of how fortunate you are to be unhindered by the rules of Society. You may do and say whatever you wish. You can associate with the rakes you prefer and marry whomever you like. I, however..." She paused and shot a glance at her aunt behind her. Lowering her voice, she continued, "Am destined to do whatever I'm told."

Caroline offered a quick commiserating smile as she waited at the top of the staircase for the majordomo to announce their party. Her gaze drifted across the occupants below, taking in the various gowns and the number of guests in attendance. At one time she had attended such events with her own family, but they had passed on to their reward long ago and she had learned to manage on her own. Her comfortably sized trust funds and lack of familial ties afforded her a freedom other women of her station, women like Julienne, did not enjoy. Unfortunately, it was also very lonely.

With her thoughts elsewhere, Caroline might have passed over impressively broad shoulders and hair as dark as night had the tiny hairs on her nape not stood at attention and her jaw not begun to ache in a wholly unfamiliar way.

She stilled, her attention riveted on the tall man whose powerful torso tapered to a narrow waist and lean hips. His black hair gleamed under the golden glow of the chandeliers, the ends curled lovingly around the top of his starched cravat. The evening attire of stark black and white appeared to have been made with him in mind, showing off the austere beauty of his features to perfection, a beauty enhanced by the statuesque blonde who clung to his arm.

Caroline stared at the man shamelessly, knowing that even if the animal inside her had not felt the singular attraction, she would have wanted him anyway.

With his full lips and intense gaze, he was gorgeous, his face so perfect as to outshine any classical painting or statue of her recollection. She'd never witnessed a more resplendently masculine being in her life. There was something about him, a dangerous edge, a predatory alertness she found utterly mesmerizing. Just looking at him made her nipples hard, her body soft, and caused moisture to pool between her thighs, readying her for his possession.

Just one look and she was nearly undone.

"Jack Shaw."

Caroline glanced aside at Julienne. "Beg your pardon?"

"The man you are presently drooling over is Jack Shaw, an American. Obscenely wealthy I've been told, due to his shipping interests."

"He's...stunning," Caroline murmured, acknowledging even as she spoke what an understatement that was.

"Yes," Julienne agreed. "With a fabulously wicked reputation. How I envy you your choice of men such as him."

Wicked. Caroline shivered with desire. She knew he would be, just from the sight of him.

As if he could feel the longing and need in her regard, he looked up and caught her gaze,

revealing the molten silver color of his irises.

The connection was devastating. Caroline was unable to halt her instinctive reaction. Her own blood flooded her mouth before she realized her fangs had descended.

It took everything she had to prevent leaping from the staircase and biting deep into his neck. The desire to pierce his skin, to drink him in, was so overwhelming she didn't trust herself to be around him. In the century she'd been vampire, she'd never experienced such a soul-deep pull to another being.

Startled, confused, and deeply afraid she would do something she'd regret forever, Caroline covered her mouth and spun blindly away. She ran past gaping guests in the crowded foyer and fled to the safety of the night beyond.

* * *

"You're coming with me, Caroline. Whether you like it or not."

Caroline watched Julienne pace across the Aubusson rug in her parlor and released a deep breath. Arguing with Julienne La Coeur about anything was a chore. Her friend was too stubborn by half.

"I told you, Jules. I'm not feeling well." Settling more comfortably into her seat, Caroline attempted to look ill.

"Nonsense," Julienne scoffed, coming to a halt directly before her. "You look the picture of health as always. Besides you've been convalescing for a week, plenty of time to recover from what ailed you when you ran out of the Dempsey affair."

Shaking her head, Caroline knew she couldn't continue to hide in her residence forever, but the fear she would chance upon Jack Shaw again was strong enough to make the idea appealing. He'd come calling twice already, bearing lovely bouquets of flowers, and both times he had been turned away. Any notion she might have held that she'd gone unnoticed was completely dispelled. He knew her name. Worse yet, he wanted to court her. The thought sent her into a mild panic. Even if she could control the animal within her, she was not free to accept his attentions as long as she was promised to another.

Julienne sighed. "You are attending the Moreland ball with me. I won't take no for an answer." She dropped to a crouch beside the settee. "Please, Caroline," she begged. "These events are positively dreadful when you're not around. Aunt Eugenia fusses all evening."

"Why is the Moreland ball so important to you?"

Blushing, Julienne admitted, "Lucien Remington is rumored to have been invited."

"Good grief. Talk about wicked men, Jules."

"Ummm...isn't he? So you see, you must come with me and distract my aunt so I can ogle Remington at my leisure."

Staring into her friend's hopeful features, Caroline couldn't find the heart to refuse. "Oh, very well then," she gave in with a laugh. If she was very careful and very fortunate, she might be able to survive the evening without crossing paths with Jack. "But I'm taking my leave early. So ogle with haste."

* * *

Jack traversed the lamp lit garden trails with his customary noiseless tread, his heart rate quickening as he followed the woman who had occupied his mind ceaselessly for the last

sennight. He turned a corner on the gravel walk and paused, staring at the dark-haired beauty who stood drenched in moonlight. Dressed in ice blue satin with pearls in her hair, Lady Caroline Seton was a vision he almost doubted was real.

His gaze drank in every detail of her--the creamy swell of her breasts above the pearl encrusted bodice...the graceful curve of her spine...the delicate arch of her throat that begged for the brush of his lips...

"Breathtaking," he breathed, awed by the sight of her.

She turned to face him.

Slender, with shoulder length raven curls surrounding a face of such beauty he was robbed of his breath, Caroline caused a sharp stab of recognition deep within him.

"Mr. Shaw," she whispered, taking a stumbling step backward. She'd seen him in the ballroom, he was certain of it, but she'd quickly turned and headed in the opposite direction. He'd had a devil of a time finding her after that.

Smiling, he sketched a low bow. "Lady Caroline. It is a pleasure to finally make your acquaintance." He straightened and then stepped closer.

Caroline backed away, but seemed unaware of the hedge at her back that would soon halt her retreat. Jack saw no reason to point it out.

To the untrained eye, she might seem frightened, but the heat in her gaze betrayed her. She stared at him with a burning intensity so hot it sparked a fiery awareness.

She looked beyond his shoulder, her fingers twisting restlessly in her skirt.

"We are alone," he said softly, taking another step. "I won't harm you. I simply wish to speak with you."

That wasn't entirely true. He'd wanted to meet her, yes, and talk with her. But if they suited, as he suspected they would, he also wanted to claim her.

"Wh-what is it you wish to discuss with me, Mr. Shaw?"

"Jack," he corrected, stepping closer still.

She smelled like vanilla and spice, a scent that was at once familiar and unknown, a scent that urged him to bridge the gap between them until nothing separated his body from hers.

Caroline swallowed and Jack's entire body hardened. Her gaze was ravenous, filled with a hunger that ignited a similar need within himself. No woman in his life had ever looked at him as she did.

"Mr. Shaw, it's best that you stay away from me."

His mouth curved. "You could ask anything of me, sweet, and I would do my best to grant your desire. To stay away, however, is not something I'm capable of doing."

"You don't understand--"

"Are you still unwell?" he asked gruffly, frowning with concern.

"No." The low tone of her voice made his blood heat in his veins. Eyes wide, Caroline took another backward step only to be brought up short by the hedge.

Jack tugged off his glove and reached out to her, brushing a finger along the edge of her bodice. His breathing deepened at the feel of her satiny skin. "Your heart races as fast as mine."

"Please..."

He stared into her eyes and saw the longing there, a longing he reciprocated. "If you have a care for me at all, love, you would ease my torment."

"Jack...you must go. Forget I exist."

"Tell me I'm not what you want, Caroline, and I will walk away. Otherwise, I intend to kiss you."

She started to speak, her eyes wide and pleading, but in the end she said nothing.

With unsteady hands he reached for her, lowering his mouth to hers. Her taste, sweet and ripe, flooded his senses, and Jack groaned, clutching her more tightly to him. He had not been mistaken. The fit of her body against his was perfect. *She* was perfect.

Caroline melted into his embrace, returning his kiss with welcome fervor. Her lips parted and her tongue slid along his, licking and tasting the deepest recesses of his mouth. Jack shuddered, his entire body aching as her gloved fingers curled around his nape, holding him to her.

And then suddenly he was alone, his arms empty.

Bewildered, Jack spun about, searching the garden around him. He found no trace of the woman he'd just held.

Like a dream or misty apparition, Caroline was gone.

CHAPTER 1

Two years later

Caroline closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Standing on the foredeck of the merchant vessel *The Dreamer*, the misty salt air bit at her skin and caused her to clutch her shawl more firmly around her. She'd left the warmth and comfort of her cabin to find a reprieve from thoughts of Jack, but it was impossible. Beneath the smell of the ocean she could still detect his evocative masculine scent, a scent that heated her blood and made forgetting him impossible.

He owned this ship, as well as a dozen others, and his presence lingered here, taunting her with the promise of what she wanted most, but could never have.

Under more ideal circumstances Caroline would have found berth on another vessel, but time had been of the essence. Jack had returned to America months earlier than she had anticipated.

She'd heard word of his return at almost the exact moment she'd sensed him. Rushing to her lodgings, she'd gathered up her belongings and boarded the first ship back to England. It was her misfortune that the earliest departing vessel had been one of Jack's, because her haste had cost her dearly.

These last days at sea had been torture. Jack's essence had seeped into every pore of the ship. He haunted her dreams, would give her no peace. Every night as she attempted to sleep he visited her, begging in his velvety voice for her to return to him. *Come back to me, Caroline*, he urged. *Come back*. The heat of his nocturnal caresses and the ravishment of his kisses drove her to madness.

Opening weary eyes, Caroline gazed out over the water. Swirls of mist partially obscured the cloudy sky, the silvery gray color reminding her so much of Jack's eyes.

From the moment she'd first seen him in the Fontaine ballroom, she'd been lost. The passionate kiss a week later had destroyed her. Even now she could feel the heat of his expert lips against hers, and the remembrance of his taste made her mouth water.

She wanted him so desperately she knew she would never be able to control the animal within her. It would bleed him dry; she would not be able to stop it. She had to stay away, far away. A man as beautiful and magnetic as Jack Shaw did not deserve to die in such a heinous manner. He radiated life and vitality, and she would flee to the ends of the earth before she drained him of the very things that had caused her to fall in love with him. A love that had been doomed long before she met him.

And so she ran. From France to Italy to America, she'd barely catch her breath before Jack would arrive, the expansion of his shipping interests causing him to visit all of the places she fled to.

This last missed encounter had come too close. Caroline could only hope his overseas business was resolved and he would remain in America. She was tired, lonely, and hungry for him. Misery was sapping her strength and resolve. If Jack came near her again, she wasn't certain she had the will to resist him.

And he would pay for her weakness with his precious life.

* * *

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when Jack Shaw strode down the gangplank of his ship in London. Thick fog swirled around his boots as he left the dock and vaulted into his waiting carriage. He looked at his man of affairs who sat across from him. "She's in residence? You're certain?"

"Yes, Mr. Shaw. Lady Caroline is here. I saw her myself, just to be sure."

Jack breathed a sigh of relief and relaxed into the squabs. He'd deliberately timed his docking, aware that if he arrived during the day word would spread of his arrival and Caroline would hear of it. For the sake of his ego, he'd denied for years that she was running from him, but after this last occasion in Virginia he could no longer delude himself.

Lady Caroline Seton didn't want anything to do with him.

At the age of five and twenty Caroline was considered a spinster by choice. Highly sought after for her beauty and unaccountable wealth, she rejected all suitors. She was an enigma in every respect, a beautiful and vivacious young woman who had taken the *Beau Monde* by storm. Her origins were unknown, her courtesy title derived from a tenuous tie to a title now held in abeyance. Jack appreciated her mysterious appeal for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the pleasant notoriety that allowed him to find her wherever she was.

Unfortunately, he'd caught only fleeting and rare glimpses of her over the last two years. Yet every time he saw her Caroline attracted him on some deep, primitive level he'd never experienced before. She traveled with no abigail or companion to lighten her journeys and he respected her strength of will and intrepidness. No other female of his acquaintance would travel the world alone, flaunting convention and unafraid of censure. He appreciated her individuality and admired her for it.

"You've gone to a great deal of trouble to locate Lady Caroline," his man of affairs murmured.

Jack's chest expanded on a deep breath. Caroline was the only woman he had ever pursued. He hungered for her, desired her on a level that went far beyond the physical. She felt their unusual connection as well, or she wouldn't be avoiding him. But running was futile. There was truly no choice for either of them. After that night in the Moreland garden their fate had been sealed. Soon she would see that.

"I missed her in Virginia by only an hour," he brooded, remembering the nearly unbearable frustration he'd felt when he learned she'd fled to London on one of his own ships. But he had come for her. She would not be getting away again. This time he would soothe her concerns.

This time he would be catching Caroline.

The carriage rolled to a halt and Jack alighted. He paused on the street and gazed up at the home where his love slept. Three storied and Georgian in design, it was situated in a part of town that was not quite fashionable. The street was quiet and dark. It was a location that suited Caroline--mysterious and on the fringes of society.

"Here is the key, Mr. Shaw."

Jack turned and held out his ungloved hand, his fingers curling around the metal that would grant him his deepest desire.

His carriage moved away, the clopping hooves of his team of four and the rolling of the wheels echoing eerily around him. Climbing the front steps of Caroline's townhouse, Jack gained entry with the key he'd ordered made from a wax impression.

Once inside he moved unerringly through the darkened house, following her scent and traversing the galleries without light until he found her.

Testing the door to her bedchamber, he was relieved to find the portal unlocked and he

entered, sliding the bolt home behind him.

The room was shadowed in almost complete darkness. The fire in the grate was banked and barely gave off light, but he had no difficulty seeing. It was a small room, but perhaps that was merely the impression he received from the massive bed that dominated the space. Before the fire waited two wingback chairs. A book and blanket rested upon the arm of one; a cozy picture that warmed him as surely as the coals.

As if she sensed his presence, Caroline stirred restlessly. "Jack," she breathed in a sleep-throaty murmur that made his skin mist with sweat and his cock swell.

Stepping away from the door, he moved toward her, the tight knot of longing he'd felt these last years loosening with her proximity. He lit the taper on the nightstand and paused at the fierce reaction of his body to the sight of her in the bed. In the golden glow of the candle Caroline was ravishing.

Her soft, creamy skin was flawless. Against the white linen pillow, the gleaming curls of her hair were spread with wanton abandon. His fists clenched against the powerful urge to run his fingers through them, to cup her head in his hands and hold her still for his ravishment. Her full lips were parted with the deep, rhythmic breaths of slumber, which lifted her chest and outlined her ripe breasts against her night rail.

He smiled. Within moments those breasts would be bare and pressed to his chest, that sweetly parted mouth would be panting and crying out his name as he made love to her like he'd wanted to do for years.

It was time for her to see him as well, to remember and feel the powerful attraction between them, an attraction so overwhelming that time, distance, and unfamiliarity had not affected it.

Taking a seat on the edge of the bed, Jack brushed the back of his hand across her cheek. She nuzzled into the caress, but slept on. His smile widened. Using the sheer power of his will, he called to her, *Caroline, come back to me.*

* * *

Caroline sat up, and discovered Jack Shaw once again invading her dreams. Dressed simply in sweater, breeches and boots, his casual attire bred a familiarity far removed from the glittering ballrooms and Society events from which she knew him and dreamed of him. His hair was slightly longer than she normally pictured it, the dark ebony strands falling across his proud forehead and curling at his nape.

But some things were constant. The sharp silver of his irises glowed with sexual intent and his full, firm lips were curved in the wicked smile that made her heart race.

She took a deep breath, resigned to her torment. He was so achingly gorgeous she had no defenses against him, and the tenderness of his gaze shattered what was left of her heart. Pushing her curls away from her face, she asked mournfully, "Why must you torture me?"

He blinked as if she'd startled him. "What are you talking about, sweetheart?"

"You know very well what I'm asking you. Why can't you allow me even one night of restful slumber? I think of you ceaselessly during my waking hours, why must my sleep suffer as well?"

Already her body ached far worse than usual. Her skin was tight and hot, her breasts heavy and tender. She licked her lips, desperate for a taste of him, and watched his eyes flare with desire at the movement.

Jack rubbed the line of his jaw thoughtfully before answering. "If you would cease to run

from me, your dreams would be less troubled."

Caroline shook her head. "You know I cannot do that."

"Why?"

"You know why," she snapped. "We have this conversation nightly. Why must we discuss it again?"

"Because we must, love," he said patiently.

"I will hurt you, Jack. I've told you before. I will hurt you terribly and I couldn't bear to do that."

He reached for her hands, then appeared to think better of it and withdrew. "Hurt comes in many forms. It hurts that you run from me."

Rising from the bed, Jack began to pace, the powerful muscles of his thighs flexing beneath the tight breeches, making her mouth water. She was reminded of how vital it was that she resist her desires, but she longed for him to understand.

"As long as I stay away from you, you'll remain safe. I love you enough to do what is best, despite how it pains me."

He stilled mid-stride, his smoky gaze locking with hers. "Beg your pardon?"

His sudden shock chilled Caroline to the bone. Every night she confessed her love to him. Never had he responded in such a fashion. She slipped out the opposite side of the bed, putting the large piece of furniture between them. He cursed as he watched her reaction.

"Caroline--"

"You are not a dream!" she accused.

Jack rounded the bed.

"Stop!" She held up her hand to ward him off. "Remain where you are."

"Allow me to explain."

"No!" She shook her head vehemently. "You must go. *Now*."

He raised a sardonic brow. "You just confessed to loving me. I'm certainly not going to leave."

Caroline damned herself for not paying heed to the throbbing that permeated her entire being. But she slept hard, like the dead. Even now she struggled into full wakefulness. "How did you gain admittance to my home?"

"I have a key."

Her eyes widened. "How did you...? No. Never mind. Don't explain. Leave it on the nightstand and go."

Suddenly, he stood directly before her, having moved so quickly as to be undetectable.

"Jack--" she began, but he silenced her with his mouth.

Just like that night in the Moreland garden, every nerve ending in her body reacted instantly to Jack's kiss. Heat scorched through her veins and melted her resistance. He urged her closer, and then closer still, until her breasts were crushed against his powerful chest and his cock burned through their clothing to heat the skin of her stomach.

His hands, work roughened and callused, came up to cup her face, his thumbs brushing across her cheeks and prodding her mouth to open. Caroline complied helplessly and he groaned, his head tilting to the side to deepen the contact.

Jack's taste was intoxicating, rich and heady, and his scent... She wanted to drown in it. Virile and masculine, it was uniquely his and it called to her. Everything about him called to her.

Her mouth moved feverishly beneath his, her tongue sliding past his lips, drawing the taste of him deep inside her. Clutching fistfuls of his sweater just to remain standing, Caroline lost all

ability to move or think, her animal springing to the fore with a surge of triumph. And then, just as quickly as he'd grabbed her, Jack released her.

"Damnation," he muttered, his hand going to his mouth. When he pulled it away it was bloody.

She had pierced him with her fangs.

Caroline stumbled backwards, horrified. "Oh, God, Jack. I'm so sorry. I couldn't help it..." Backing into the corner, she fought the beast inside her, a beast that had tasted a blood so rich it was desperate to drain the being that contained it. Panicked, she began to cry. "Go, Jack. Please. I'll hurt you if you stay."

He came toward her inexorably, undaunted by her distress or her pleas. She sank to the floor, tears flowing down her face.

"Love, don't cry," he soothed. "I can't bear it."

"Go away." She tucked her knees up to her body and wrapped herself around them. "Please..."

"Shhh... 'Tis nothing, a small nick that will heal soon enough."

Her tortured gaze lifted to his and he smiled, a heart-stopping, gorgeous grin.

A grin that revealed a sparkling pair of fangs.

* * *

"You didn't know," Jack breathed, noting the obvious shock on Caroline's face.

She began to tremble all over. "All this time..."

He staggered as everything became clear. "Is that what these last years have been about? Is that why you've been running from me?"

"Oh, God, Jack..."

He pulled Caroline to her feet and into his arms, his heart swelling with emotion and relief. He'd begun to wonder if he were mad, chasing a woman who didn't want him across three continents. Now he was grateful he'd continued the pursuit. Her motivation had been love, just as his had been.

Wrapping a slender arm around his waist, Caroline pressed a kiss to his jaw, the sweetness of the gesture making him cherish her all the more. Her scent, that warm combination of vanilla and exotic spice, intoxicated him. The press of her body... the softness of her curves... the long, slender fingers that cupped his nape and ran through his hair... All of it was beyond what he remembered. He'd had centuries' worth of women. None had burned him with their touch as Caroline did.

Her mouth, moist and hot, traveled across his throat, her tongue laving at his skin, tasting him and warning him of what was to come. Jack hissed as her fangs sunk into his neck, piercing with practiced skill and flooding his entire being with a sexual pleasure so intense he almost spilled his seed. He gripped her hips and ground his cock against her, the desire that overwhelmed him almost bringing him to his knees.

He'd never been bitten before. As a pureblood he had been born the way he was, not turned. It was a novel and completely rapturous sensation to give to her in this way, the soft suction of her mouth spurring his ardor until his cock ached with the need to be inside her. Bending his head, Jack nuzzled the neckline of her night rail away and with a growl of possession bit into her.

Instantly a connection snapped into place between them. It was the kind of affinity he'd heard of before, most notably from his parents, but after centuries of existence Jack had thought

he would never find such a love for himself. Yet by some miracle he had. Caroline belonged to him now and he belonged to her. The thought filled him with such joy he could hardly contain it.

Caroline purred with contentment as she drank from him and Jack understood completely. Her blood was pure and sweet like a thick wine of excellent vintage. His entire body turned hard and aroused as the strength of her essence poured down his throat, filling him with her heat just as he longed to fill her with his. He'd waited so long and spent so much of the last two years searching for her that holding her now simply wasn't enough.

When her nails scratched his back through his sweater and her body writhed against his, he sent out his Calling, probing deep into her mind until he saw her Hunger. It held her in its grip, urging her to feed and claim him, to become one with him, devour him. And through the need he witnessed her fear that she would hurt him and he felt the love she held for him. A love that had grown unbidden, but was precious to her nevertheless. It was precious to him as well.

Caroline was confused by the depth of her need for him. She didn't understand it, mistaking the need to join with the need to consume. He tried to calm her, tried to explain, but the heat of her desire was such that he couldn't get through.

Jack tore at the placket of his trousers, freeing his erection. Tugging up her night rail, he gripped her bare waist and lifted her. With a few strides he pinned her to the wall, his cock seeking her heat. She clutched him tightly to her, moaning against his throat, giving him the permission he hadn't asked for, but had needed anyway.

Clenching his buttocks, he thrust into her, deep and hard. Her pleasured cry vibrated against his neck. His answering groan tore straight from his loins, the burning tight grip of her body nearly more than he could bear.

Releasing her throat, Jack cursed, his entire body shaking with the need to finish this, to ravish her, to fill her with his seed. Her flesh was silk under his hands, her scent permeated the air around him, seeping into his very pores, branding him as surely as he would be branding her.

"Don't move," he growled, as she tried to crawl into his skin. The need to go slowly, to pleasure her, was foremost in his mind. He had an eternity to fuck her in whatever manner he desired. This time would be for her.

He gasped as her cunt tightened around him. Slipping out of her damp, clinging depths, Jack thrust forward again, gritting his teeth as the need to come nearly overwhelmed him. Heat wrapped around his spine, swelling his cock and drenching his skin with sweat. Pleasure inundated him in waves, each crest more powerful than the last. Her desire flooded his mind, making his own that much more difficult to contain.

Caroline whimpered and released his throat. "Jack..."

Her breath gusted across his ear and his cock jerked inside her, his arousal so acute it was painful. His large hands cradled the delicate curve her spine, drawing her closer, hugging her to him. He was afraid to move, afraid to hurt her with the force of his passion.

"My love." His arms shook as he nudged deeper into her, hoping to relieve the tightness of his sac and nearly sinking to his knees instead.

Caroline's fingers entwined in Jack's silky hair and then tugged as her body shivered around the throbbing shaft that stretched her deliciously. "You have to move, Jack," she whispered against his skin. He was huge, wondrously huge, filling her completely and she wanted more than just this fullness. She wanted movement, friction--a hard, deep fucking that would end this biting craving she'd felt for years. "You have to move *now*!"

Thrusting his hips hard against her, he held her to the wall, impaled on his cock, as his hand left her buttocks and moved between them. "If I move, this will all be over before either of us is

ready."

"I don't care," she cried.

"I do."

His thumbs brushed across the lips of her sex, then dipped inside. Finding the hard point of her pleasure, he rubbed softly, massaging the cream-drenched skin that was taut with the effort to accommodate him. "Come for me, love." His tongue swirled along the shell of her ear and then dipped inside. "Milk me," he whispered, his voice dripping with sin.

Spurred by his words, Caroline dug her nails in his shoulders and held on as rapture, sharp and searing, shattered her, shivering through her in rippling spasms.

With a harsh groan of relief, Jack released his desire. She wrapped her legs around his hips, using the curve of his buttocks as leverage, rising and falling with his thrusts, taking as much of his cock as she could.

He was killing her with pleasure, taking her as if he couldn't get deep enough, couldn't stroke her fast enough. She sobbed, struggling against him.

"Yes, sweet," he rasped, pumping into her with astonishing speed. "Scream my name, come for me again." He thrust hard and then ground against her, sending sparks of sensation from her core to the tips of her toes. His thrusting grew more frenzied, his cock thickening magnificently until she was certain she was losing her mind.

Crying out his name, she came again, her body gripping him rhythmically until he followed her with a haunting moan, flooding her with his seed. Panting, shuddering, he buried his face in the curve of her shoulder as he emptied himself inside her.

When he finished, he pressed a reverent kiss to her skin. "Caroline," he murmured as he carried her to the bed. "All these years...centuries I've waited." He lay her down gently, his semi-erect cock slipping from her sated body.

"How old are you?" she asked, snuggling into the pillows.

"Too old for you." He brushed the curls back from her face, his own visage tender and flushed with passion in the candlelight. "But I hope you'll have me, nevertheless."

Straightening, he yanked his sweater over his head, revealing a torso rippling with strength. Unlike the indolent aristocrats she associated with, Jack was strong and fit, a hunter forever in his prime.

Caroline sighed at the sight of him. "How did you come to have a key to my home? And why? You just recently returned to America."

"I went to America in pursuit of you. Just as I went to Italy and France and a dozen other locations." Sitting on the edge of the mattress, Jack tugged off his boots. Unable to help it, she reached out and caressed the flexing muscles of his back. As her fingers brushed across the top of his shoulder, he turned his head and kissed her fingertips.

"Truly?" Her heart skipped and then raced, resuming the same feverish pace she'd experienced just moments before in his arms.

He tossed her a careless smile over his shoulder. "Truly. I've been chasing you for years, my lovely Caroline. I acquired the key through nefarious means because I knew of no other way to reach you, and I don't regret it. From this night on, we'll weather the years together."

Her heart aching, Caroline curled back into the pillows. Now that she knew the depth of Jack's affection it would be even more difficult to leave. The smell of him, the taste of him, the skin she'd felt beneath her hands would haunt her forever.

Tonight was all she had. Selfishly she clung to it, determined to enjoy what little happiness fate would allow her before the dawn rose and forced her to go.

* * *

Arching his back from the bed, Jack awoke to pleasure so intense it hurt. "Bloody hell," he gasped, his eyes flying open to find his love straddling his hips, his cock held tightly within her creamy depths.

Caroline smiled down at him, her fingertips drifting across his chest and swirling around the flat points of his nipples. Riotous, disheveled curls surrounded her face, which he saw as clearly in the darkness as if the room were lit with a hundred candles.

"God you are so beautiful," he breathed, lifting his hands to cup her breasts, his thumbs returning the favor she had just paid to him. She moved on him, lifting with her lithe thighs and then sinking to claim his cock again. His fangs descended as the Hunger took over.

Jack dropped his head back on the pillow and allowed Caroline to have her way with him. Through heavy-lidded eyes he watched her fucking him, watched the lust and love that drifted across her porcelain features, watched the pleasure she took in his body, and reveled in the fact he could give it to her.

There was so much he had to teach her about their kind, so much he could sense she didn't yet know, but they had an eternity for such sharing. At the moment he considered nothing but this joining. His hands dropped to her thighs, his thumb brushing across the mark that adorned her hip.

How he loved her! Loved how she hungered for him, hungered enough that the hours he'd just spent pleasuring her senseless had not been enough to sate her. Jack imagined all the endless mornings ahead of them, his body hardening further at the thought of waking again to this delight. Caroline whimpered at his added girth and rode his cock faster, her firm, high breasts bouncing with her motions.

His orgasm followed hers, draining him until he sank into the mattress, exhausted. Caroline sprawled across his chest, her sweat slicked skin bonding with his. "I love you," she sighed, snuggling closer. "Never forget that."

"Ah, sweet." He crushed her to him, wishing he could explain how he felt, but knowing there were no words to express the deep need she appeased. "How could I? I expect you to remind my in just this way for the rest of eternity."

But when he woke just after dawn, he was alone again, just as he had been that fateful night in the Moreland garden. He closed his eyes and searched for her, but the echoing reply he'd basked in all night was gone. He sat up and the sheets rustled behind him. Turning, he spotted the missive on her pillow...

I cannot ask you to wait for me, however I pray that you do. There is something I must resolve, but I cannot say how long it will take me. Once I am free, I will come for you.
Yours forever, my love,
C

The warm languor in Jack's veins turned to icy fear as he read. And then the fear buckled under the weight of his grim resignation.

Caroline had run again.

CHAPTER 2

Caroline stared out the porthole window and brushed the tears from her face. An eternity without Jack was a prospect so devastatingly bleak she could scarcely think through the pain of it. It couldn't be borne. She wouldn't allow it. Somehow she would find a way to have him.

"Milady?"

She glanced over her shoulder at the young seaman who waited beyond the open door of her cabin.

"Do you have any trunks to be brought aboard?"

Her throat clenched tight with misery, Caroline could only shake her head and look away, her vision blurred by the tears that welled ceaselessly. There had been no opportunity to pack, not with Jack sleeping just a few feet away from her wardrobe. She'd have to acquire new clothes when she arrived in France. It was there she decided she would begin her search.

"Very well then," he said cheerfully. "We'll be casting off soon."

"This ship is not leaving the dock."

The carefully controlled voice behind her sounded nothing like the one that had murmured so sweetly to her just hours ago, but Caroline knew it was one and the same. She spun about and stared at the apparition that dominated the slender doorway. Jack stood there, his breathtakingly handsome face so harshly set she took a step backward in fear.

His silver gaze burned into her and never left her face as he ordered the young sailor to leave them. Entering the tiny cabin, Jack kicked the door closed and thumbed the lock.

"Wh-what are you doing?" she asked, her voice faltering.

"There will be no more running, Caroline."

"You don't understand--"

"No!" he barked. "You are the one who fails to comprehend. I am weary of chasing you, Caroline, but I won't stop. Not ever. I will hunt you down, I will run you to ground. There is no place where you can hide from me."

Frightened at his vehemence, Caroline twisted her fingers in the skirts of her traveling suit. "There is something I must finish before we can be together."

"The hell you say."

"I was told to wait for another," she blurted, hoping desperately that he would forgive her once he knew. "The woman who changed me did so with a purpose. She said something about time and love--"

"Love will find a way against time itself."

Caroline gaped. "How did you know?"

"'Tis is an old vampire proverb. One of the many things I planned to share with you."

Fresh tears fell as she explained further. "The woman felt I would be a perfect spouse for her son. She said love might take time, but it would find me. *He* would find me. One day he will come for me, Jack. But I intend to find him first. I will tell him of my love for you, how I cannot imagine my life without you. I will never belong to another man. Never!"

"Caroline--"

The words tumbled out of her mouth in her haste to tell all. "She placed a mark on me. She said he would know me by it. He will believe me, Jack, and I will make certain he understands that there can never be anything between us."

Studying Jack's face, Caroline saw that her words did not soften him. Instead his ire

appeared to grow before her eyes.

"And you didn't feel that you could share this with me?" he asked sharply. "You couldn't tell me this, discuss this with me and allow me to help you? What of the love you professed to me, Caroline? Where is the faith that my love for you would see you through any challenge you faced?"

Stung, she retorted, "What good will it serve for you to see another man's claim to me?"

His jaw clenched as he thrust out his hand displaying his signet ring. "This claim?"

She gasped at the crest that mirrored the mark on her hip. Her eyes lifted to his. "You knew?"

"My mouth and hands caressed every inch of your skin. Did you think there was any part of you that escaped my notice?"

"You said nothing!"

He gave a sardonic laugh. "I had other more pressing matters to attend to last night. With an eternity ahead of us, I saw no need for haste."

"That woman...was your mother?" Caroline shook her head, her heart aching. Her hand gestured between them. "So this feeling...this *love*...has been arranged?"

"No one can force love to grow betwixt two people, not even a master vampire like my mother."

She frowned. "But you came for me. Why?"

"From the moment your lips touched mine in the Moreland garden I knew what you could become to me. It was that potential that drove me these last two years, nothing else."

"Why didn't I know?"

"She left you the choice, Caroline. In the end the decision is yours to make. Whether or not I am the man you want is a conclusion you must draw for yourself. Nothing binds you to me. The mark she gave you was simply to guard you from those of our kind who prey upon the unprotected. That crest shows that you were chosen by an ancient family, that you are important to someone and would be missed."

Shocked, she looked away, afraid to believe that she could indeed have him, even as hope welled up within her. "My love binds me to you," she whispered, chancing another glance at him. "I cannot survive without you in my life. I've been miserable without you."

Jack took a deep breath, the silver of his irises molten with a hurt that she had caused. "How could you have left me so easily?"

"Oh, Jack... Leaving you was many things, but easy is not one of them. I thought it was the only way. How could I come to you fettered by the chains of another?" She held out her hands and walked toward him. "I would have searched the world over, left no stone unturned--"

Gruff voiced, he cut her off. "This habit of yours to run must be broken."

"I would not have left if you'd told me you were the one," she pointed out with an arched brow. "Your silence led me to false conclusions."

"I won't tolerate it again," he said, his voice softening but deadly earnest.

"I won't run." Her arms encircled his taut frame. "I shall never leave your side. You'll never be rid of me."

He crushed her to him and rested his cheek atop her head. "I want to throttle you for leaving that damned letter."

"I'm so sorry. Please, you must believe that. If I didn't love you it wouldn't have mattered. For a brief affair, I wouldn't have bothered. But to have you forever I had to be free."

"You can have me now. In that bed behind you."

Caroline tilted her head back to look at him. "*Here*?" she asked, incredulous.

He growled and she felt a tremulous excitement grow within her.

"Here." Jack stalked forward, forcing her to retreat toward the tiny bed. "You're going to prove everything you just said to me."

"The ship...?"

"Won't be going anywhere."

"My gown...?"

His wicked smile made her shiver. "Lift it."

The backs of her knees connected with the mattress and she fell on her back, her hands yanking and pulling franticly at the many layers of her skirts.

Jack's expression of pure possessiveness made her heart race. When he tore open the placket of his breeches and his cock sprang free, hard and long and impressively thick, she flooded with moisture and licked her fangs.

He spread her legs wide and began to slip inside her, taking his time, making her feel every inch. Lacing his fingers with hers, he pinned her arms above her head. "Never again," he warned.

With a gasp, she arched upward. "Never."

"You'll marry me as soon as we can arrange it."

"Yes..."

He began a luxurious rhythm, slow and sensual, an erotic dance of hardness into softness, and it swept through her in a gentle wave. Holding both of her hands with one of his, he reached for her knee and anchored it to his hip, opening her further so he could drive his cock deeper.

He fucked with such skill, such breathtaking expertise, and she loved him so much she cried with it. The loneliness she'd felt for so many years was gone, replaced by Jack's strong, steadfast presence in her heart and mind. The connection was deep, one that awed and amazed her. Closing her eyes, she touched him back, and felt his love surround her in tender embrace.

"God, Jack. You feel so good..."

He groaned and quickened his pace, the soft sucking sound of their lovemaking making her ache with the need to come.

"Please..." she begged.

"You'll wait for it," he growled. "After what you did to me this morning, you'll wait."

"I love you."

Jack pressed his lips to hers as he shuddered at her words. "Damn you."

She cried out his name as he brought her to orgasm with a powerful thrust. She felt his cock jerk inside her as he came, hot pulsing bursts of semen that pushed her over the edge until she shivered beneath him in another, more powerful release.

* * *

The gentle rocking of the ship brought Caroline out of the deep drugging pleasure to a gradual awareness of their surroundings. She laughed at the feel of linen beneath her cheek, a not so subtle reminder that they were both still fully clothed. "Jack. Tell me this isn't one of my dreams."

"If it is, my love, don't wake up yet. I've only just begun."

###

Author Note

Dear Reader,

This story was written before I sold my first book. When the rights reverted to me, I considered editing *Catching Caroline* again. Then I realized there was really no way to edit this story; I would have to rewrite it. Caroline is uniquely unlike my usual heroines. Changing her would require changing the whole tale, and changing the whole tale would destroy it. This story is written differently from how I would write it today, but that's okay.

So I present *Catching Caroline* to you in the exact same form in which it was first published. I hope you enjoy it!

— Sylvia

THE AUTHOR

Sylvia Day is the national bestselling, award-winning author of a dozen novels written across multiple sub-genres, under multiple pen names--*three!* A wife and mother of two, she is a former Russian linguist for the U.S. Army Military Intelligence. Sylvia's work has been called "wonderful and passionate" by WNBC.com and "wickedly entertaining" by *Booklist*. Her stories have been translated into Russian, Japanese, Portuguese, German, Czech, and Thai. She's been honored with the *Romantic Times* Reviewers' Choice Award, the EPPIE award, the National Readers' Choice Award, the Readers' Crown, and multiple finalist nominations for Romance Writers of America's prestigious RITA Award of Excellence.

*Sylvia also writes under the pseudonyms **S. J. Day** and **Livia Dare**.*

Connect with Sylvia Day online:
http://www.sylviaday.com
http://www.sjday.net

Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/sylday
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/AuthorSylviaDay

* * * * *

Caroline's friend, Julienne, has her story told in Sylvia Day's award-winning

"Lucien's Gamble"
in
BAD BOYS AHOY!
(single-author Historical Romance anthology)

Kensington Publishing Corp.
ISBN-13: 978-0758212511

* * * * *

CHAPTER 1

London 1810

"What the devil are you doing in my club?"

Julienne looked across the massive mahogany desk into blue eyes the color of which she'd never seen before. Somewhere between deep blue and purple, they were fringed with thick black lashes that were shamefully wasted on a man. "I need to find my brother," she said, lifting her chin in defiance.

One black brow arched. "A message left with the doorman would have been simpler, Miss…"

"Lady. Julienne. And I attempted to leave messages. I have yet to receive a response." She shifted in her chair as the broadcloth trousers chafed the delicate skin of her derriere. The wig itched, too, but she refused to embarrass herself further by scratching.

"Dressing as a man was an original touch."

She heard the laughter in the velvety voice and scowled. "How else was I to gain admission to a gentleman's club?"

Julienne resisted the urge to flee as Lucien Remington rose from behind the desk and rounded it. She licked suddenly dry lips as she took in his height and the breadth of his shoulders. He was even more devastating up close than he had been across crowded ballrooms. Black hair and tanned skin displayed his extraordinary eyes to perfection. A strong jaw and generous mouth bespoke of his sensual nature, which was lauded far and wide by well-pleasured ladies of his acquaintance.

"Exactly, Lady Julienne. A gentleman's club. Those garments do not disguise the fact that you are all woman. Ridgely's foxed, or insane, not to have noticed." His perusal paused briefly on her breasts before rising to meet her gaze.

"No one noticed," she muttered.

"*I* noticed."

And so he had. Almost immediately. She'd been in the club only five minutes at most before he'd grabbed her by the elbow and pulled her in his office. But then, it had only taken her five minutes to make a mess of the whole affair.

His voice softened. "What is so urgent that you would take such drastic measures to speak

with your brother?"

As he leaned against his desk directly in front of her, the material of his trousers stretched over firmly muscled thighs. He was so close she could feel the heat emanating from his body. She smelled a hint of tobacco and starched linen, and another delicious scent that could only be the man himself.

Remington cleared his throat, drawing her attention. Julienne flushed at the knowing smile that curved his lips.

She straightened her spine, refusing to be cowed despite how beautiful he was or how flustered he made her. "My reasons are my own."

Remington bent, bringing his mouth inches away from hers. "When your reasons include my club, I reserve the right to know what they are."

Julienne's gaze was riveted to his lips. If she leaned forward just a tiny bit, she could touch them with her own.

Would they feel as soft as they looked?

He pulled away, then lowered to his haunches and placed his large hands on her knees. She jumped at the heat that burned through the broadcloth. "Who is your brother?" he asked.

Julienne's mouth parched the instant he touched her, making speech difficult. Lucien Remington was simply gorgeous. She'd always thought so, always compared her suitors to him and found them lacking in all respects. No one was as handsome, or as interesting, or as…wicked.

Her tongue flicked out to wet her bottom lip, and his eyes followed the movement. An ache came to the place between her legs. Julienne attempted to push his hands away, but when she touched his skin, her palms burned. She pulled away quickly. "A gentleman does not put his hands on a lady," she scolded.

His hands slid higher, squeezing gently, his mouth gifting her with a roguish smile. "I never claimed to be a gentleman."

And he wasn't, she knew. His determination and ruthless business acumen were the stuff of legend. If it wasn't precisely prohibited in writing, Lucien Remington would do it. He showed no leniency when it came to expanding his empire. He was widely disparaged for his "vulgar pursuit of money", but Julienne found it rather thrilling. He cared nothing for the regard of others, a nonchalance she wished she could affect herself.

"Now, about your brother…?"

"Lord Montrose," she blurted.

A devilish smile teased the corners of Remington's mouth. "That explains why he hasn't answered your messages, sweetheart. The earl owes me a great deal of money. I suspect he's avoiding me."

She said nothing, but she clenched her fists. Their situation must be worse than she'd thought. It was common for Hugh to carouse and spend days on end with his scapegrace associates. From experience she knew he most likely wasn't in danger. But that didn't ease her worry. Or their predicament.

"Why don't you tell me what you need?" Remington coaxed, his long fingers rhythmically kneading her lower thighs. "Perhaps I can help."

The sensations he elicited spread up her legs and into her breasts, flushing her skin. Her nipples hardened. "Why would you want to do that?"

His powerful shoulders flexed as he shrugged. "You are a beautiful woman. I like beautiful women. Especially troubled ones who require my assistance."

“So you can take advantage?” She stood, her thoughts and body in turmoil, and his hands fell away. “I should not have come in here.”

“No, you shouldn’t have,” he agreed, his voice soft. Remington rose at the same time, towering over her. The top of her head barely reached his shoulders and Julienne was forced to tilt her head back to look at him.

She turned to leave, but his grip on her elbow stayed her. Heat radiated from his fingers and spread through her body.

“Unhand me,” she ordered in an unsteady voice. “I wish to leave.”

She didn’t, not truly, but she must. Remington’s proximity was doing terrible things to her. Wonderful, terrible things. Things it most likely did to countless other women.

He shook his head and grinned. “Pity that, since you’re not going anywhere. Not until morning. You’ve created enough of a stir as it is, coughing brandy all over Lord Ridgely. Returning to the floor, however briefly, would stir up the whole mess again. You’ve wounded his pride and he’s a pompous ass.”

“What do you suggest I do then?”

The amusement in his eyes never wavered. “You’ll stay the night in one of the rooms upstairs. I’ll entertain Ridgely and his cronies until the whole debacle is forgotten.”

She gaped. “You’re mad! I cannot remain in this establishment overnight!”

Remington laughed. The deep, rich sound gathered around her like an embrace and made her shiver. But she wasn’t cold. To her dismay, she was growing hotter by the moment. She couldn’t help it with the way he looked at her… Julienne had seen that look before. But no man had ever dared to give it to her.

She found she rather liked it.

“You went to a hell of a lot of trouble to get in here,” he purred. “And now you’re anxious to leave?”

Julienne sidestepped, but he didn’t release her. “My need was especially dire. I apologize for any trouble I-”

“You don’t sound very sorry.”

“I’ll leave immediately,” she offered.

“You’ll leave in the morning. The hour is late. The streets aren’t safe.”

“My aunt will worry,” she argued.

“I’ll send Lady Whitfield a note. She’ll know you’re well.”

She stilled, her eyes narrowing. “How do you know about my aunt?”

“I know everything about every one of the members of my club. Especially those who enjoy lines of credit.” Remington’s thumb began an absentminded caress of the hollow of her elbow. Julienne felt the warmth of his touch all the way to her bones.

“I know your parents died when you were very young and your Aunt Eugenia’s been your guardian for years. You and Montrose are always running roughshod over her. Your brother is brash, hotheaded, and still too young for the responsibilities of his title. You’re always bailing him out of one mess or another. And now I know how seriously you take that responsibility.”

She looked away, flustered that he knew such intimate details. “Do you also know how sick to death I am of that chore?” she said finally, surprising herself with the admission.

His voice turned soft and sympathetic. “I’m certain you must be. But you’ve done an admirable job. There’s not been even a breath of scandal attached to the La Coeur name.”

Julienne looked up at him, overwhelmed by his nearness. She felt slightly tipsy, but she couldn’t blame it on the brandy. Lord Ridgely was presently wearing most of it.

Remington led her across the room and pulled the bell. “I’ll have one of the courtesans give you a night rail. You’ll be comfortable. My hospitality is legendary.”

She scowled. “That’s not all that’s legendary.”

###

Discover more of Sylvia Day’s historical and paranormal romances at
www.SylviaDay.com



This is a legally distributed free edition from
www.obooko.com

The author's intellectual property rights are protected by international Copyright law. You are licensed to use this digital copy strictly for your personal enjoyment only: it must not be redistributed commercially or offered for sale in any form.