



# The One With the Duke's Curvy Bride (Curves & Cravats)

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**Category:** Historical

**Description:** She has everything to lose by being his friend, and everything to gain by stealing a kiss.

Lady Philomena is in love with her best friend. Cliche. True. He sees her as nothing more than a friend, but then she gets trapped underneath his hard body.

Henry, the Duke of Ruxbergh, is being set up. Again. His mother wants him to wed this summer. No excuses. But when he lands on top of his best friend, he cant forget the feel of her luscious curves on his body.

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# Page 1

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1816 England

THERE WAS A TIME and place for being around people. Now was not it. Solitude in the library was much preferred. It housed at least one vase of flowers she could fiddle with and arrange to her liking. She wasn't in the mood to add another flower sketch to the small book in her pocket. Arranging or drawing flowers. Either activity qualified to fill her time.

Despite being at a house party, Lady Philomena Wentword assumed that her presence would not be missed. Although she didn't have impenetrable evidence to prove her conclusion, it didn't take a genius to acknowledge a cold, hard truth. She was only attending this house party because her sister, Paulina, was a candidate to wed the duke.

Her duke. Henry, the Duke of Ruxbergh. Philomena knew the time would come when she should no longer refer to Henry as her duke. Lord knew she wasn't going to marry him, even though he was a good friend. Perhaps her best friend. All the same, Philomena hadn't expected to have to give up that possessive pronoun for her sister. Paulina didn't even want her duke. Paulina was only there, playing along, because she had practically been summoned by Henry's mother, Gertrude, the dowager duchess. And Paulina always behaved as a paragon of propriety.

Paulina. The pretty one. The duchified one. The one ready to become a duchess. In fact, the one sought after to become the very duchess that Philomena only dreamed of being. Though, truly, did Philomena really dream of becoming a duchess? No. She dreamed of marrying Henry. It wasn't the same thing as wanting to be a duchess. And even that dream of marriage was just clouds in the sky. They were friends. In the haut

ton , friends did not marry. Couples wed due to convenience, finances, or scandal. Any of which could often be arranged by their parents. Love was not a factor. Friendship was certainly not on the table, let alone a requirement.

Ideally, a couple would develop a friendship and perhaps come to love each other in some way, but marriage for love was pure fantasy.

Philomena pulled a few peony stems from the vase. She wanted the flowers to feel as though they were coming alive. It only took a few attempts, but after popping them in and pulling them out of a few spots, she found the asymmetry that caught her eye and her heart.

It was true that Paulina was a typical beauty: thin and blonde. While Paulina was a stem, Philomena was more...like a peony. Curves for days. Curves in all the places. Curves everywhere. Personally, Philomena loved it. She looked at herself in the mirror and felt beautiful. She just wasn't sure if men (Henry mostly) thought she was beautiful. Of course, Henry gave her compliments, like any gentleman would do, but she couldn't be sure of anything more than that he was doing his duty. And, well, being a good friend. Of that, she had no doubt.

She also knew, without a doubt, that Henry's parents were particular about who he wed. He had told her on more than one occasion that he had resigned himself to the fact that he wouldn't be picking his bride. Even with his father gone, his mother, Gertrude, still had a heavy hand on the affairs of the family.

It was this heavy-handedness that planned the current house party Philomena was avoiding. It was all with good intentions, Philomena reassured herself, that Gertrude planned to have Henry betrothed by the end of the house party. The man was seven-and-twenty. It was about time for him to start his married life and beget an heir.

Philomena sighed. Soon her friend would no longer be as accessible. Surely his future

wife would not allow it. Maybe, if Philomena was lucky, the future wife wouldn't be too controlling. And if she were really lucky, the future wife wouldn't be Paulina. That might be almost too much to bear. Being able to see him at any time for any good reason yet witnessing him have the life she wanted with her own sister. With any luck at all, one of the other two women on Gertrude's discreet-not-so-discreet list would marry Henry.

Luck.

That was all she needed.

The word vividly brought to mind her luckiest moment. Incidentally, Henry had been there.

The two had been walking down Bond Street with their families. Philomena would have been around eighteen, Henry twenty. Philomena had seen something shiny on the ground and, knowing Henry's fascination for coins, she bent over to pick it up so he could add it to his collection. If it was worth anything.

Well, in hindsight, it wasn't worth anything in the monetary sense, but it was worth the lives of an eighteen-year-old female and a twenty-year-old male. A duke-to-be to be more precise. For as Philomena had bent over to pick it up, a rapidly approaching carriage with an oversized load raced around the corner and its bearings flew right over their bent-over backs.

If Philomena hadn't called, 'Look, Henry,' and if he hadn't bent over beside her and responded with, 'Well, won't you look at that shiny little thing,' then both of their heads would have been wiped clean off their necks.

It was a sobering thought, to say the least.

And it was the luckiest coin in the world. Partly because it saved both of their lives, but also because Henry had deemed it his lucky coin and thus it lay snug against his heart from that day forward. A year or so later, Henry had given her a similar-looking coin for good luck, and she had kept it in her little treasure box.

It hadn't quite meant the same thing to him as it did to her, but at least she knew his intentions were kind. And every time she took a peek at it, she remembered the lucky coin she had been able to give him. It meant so much to her that he wore that lucky coin around his neck every day.

Every blazing day, that lucky coin rested against Henry's heart.

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HENRY NEEDED A brEAK from the crowds. Just a short break. As much as he loved being around people, even he needed to take a few breaths devoid of observation.

He had just discovered a new coin to add to his collection and it was imperative that he show it to Philomena. He had hoped to share it with her the second he returned home from finding it on the road but she had been nowhere to be seen. Even now, he hadn't seen her in at least—he checked his pocket watch again—thirty minutes. But he was pretty sure he knew where to find her. She often escaped to the library for short reprieves. He rubbed a hand over his chest where, underneath the fabric, lay his lucky coin.

He could just see her now, rearranging some flowers in an already perfect vase. Perfect because she had probably already arranged them once. Or twice.

He grinned at the thought. She would love his new coin. It had some inscriptions on it that he had never seen before. Ostensibly it was from another country, but he couldn't

decipher which one. The writing almost looked like Chinese characters. That would be his first from the region. He couldn't contain the bubbling feeling welling up in his chest.

Henry dashed to the library and grinned as he opened the door. He grinned even wider when he caught Philomena wide-eyed behind the vase full of tulips. Or were they peonies? He could never remember. That was what Philomena was for.

"Well, hello there, Mina. I knew I'd find you here."

"Oh, did you?" Her eyes rounded to large onyx pebbles. He had never known anyone to have such dark eyes.

"Yes, I did."

"I could have been out in the garden."

"No, I don't think so. I know you. I knew you would be here."

Her dark onyx eyes narrowed in...an emotion he couldn't quite identify.

"I have something to show you, Mina."

Her eyes glittered as she held out her hand. "What's special about this coin?"

"How do you know it's a coin?"

"Henry, please. The chances of you bringing a new coin to show me are incredibly higher than the chances of you finding me in the library. And those chances are already high." She bobbed her hand in the open air. "Show me the coin. And stop grinning like you just ate the last raspberry tart."

“But I did.” He chuckled as he walked over to where she stood behind the desk. “No, I would have only eaten the last tart if it wasn’t the raspberry one. I would have saved that one for you.” He stood shoulder to shoulder with her and opened his palm.

“Look.”

“It looks Chinese.” Her eyes flew to his and a small smile crept over her face. “Is it?”

Henry took a moment to think. He couldn’t remember what he was doing. And what was the question she had just asked? She was smiling about something. He just couldn’t remember what it was. He was rarely—no, never—at a loss for words around Philomena. But there was something in her eyes. Like he was seeing her for the first time. He rubbed his chest, feeling ridiculous.

“You don’t have a coin from China, yet. This would be your first, right?” She held up the coin to her face. “Is the coin from China?”

China? Why were they talking about China instead of what had gone through her mind to turn her gaze into something he could feel on his skin?

His hand floated to her lower back. To steady her. Or himself. “Um...yes, the coin is from China. I believe—”

But he didn’t have time to expand on his beliefs. There were voices just outside the door.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: August 12, 2025, 4:12 am*

F OR ALL THE TIME that Philomena and Henry had spent together, they had somehow been lucky enough to never even be close to scandal. Although, come to think of it, they weren't often really and truly alone, alone. There was usually some friend or family member around. Edwin, Philomena's brother and Henry's good friend, was often at hand. If not Edwin, then Paulina. And if not family, then someone. Someone. Someone was usually around. Only...that someone was never a someone that was about to find them in a scandalous situation that would warrant a marriage proposal.

"Quick, duck." Henry dragged her to the floor, coin in hand, to lie hidden behind the desk. Only, he didn't have time or space to lie beside her. The chair was too close to the window and there was only room for one body to be supine on the floor. The other body—his, to be precise—was on all fours, straddling her. Straddling her fine form which, just to reiterate, was lying delectably beneath his.

There was not enough air for Philomena to breathe. There was not enough blood for Philomena to pump. There were not enough words for Philomena to think.

Henry was inches from her face, his expression half panic, half natural grin, as if he were enjoying this position.

Well, she was not enjoying this position. It was too blazing torturous.

And then the voices that were once behind the door came into the room. And she could tell, without even looking at them, just hearing their giggles—yes, two adults giggling—that they were two besotted fools.



The man's voice said, "We should be safe in here." The lock on the door clicked.

"I know you'll keep me safe anywhere we go."

Henry peered at Philomena, two blinks closer to a chuckle.

Don't laugh, she mouthed.

I can't help it, he mouthed back.

Help it, she replied inaudibly. And she hoped she was giving him her most stern look. Though she didn't feel stern. She felt...tight. And hot. Heat was starting to traipse across her thighs, where his legs burned into hers. And it wasn't stopping at her thighs. It was going all the way to her center. To the places only she had ever explored.

There was significantly less talking—or rather, less interpretable talking—and a lot more...groaning. Philomena blinked. Long. Really, she had just closed her eyes. Groaning? What the blazes were they doing?

She knew. She just didn't want to accept that it was happening six feet away. Even twenty feet away were too few.

A small brush against her shoulder interrupted her long blink.

Henry was mouthing something at her. But instead of being able to read his lips this time, she could only focus on those gentle lips. Lips that had shared silly secrets, notable achievements, and trivial details about his day. Best friend lips, they were. And they were mouthing something again.

Didn't he realize what he was doing to her? She wanted to scowl at him. Perhaps she

had scowled at him because he was leaning down to whisper into her ear whatever he had been trying to say.

“Are you all right?” The words...formed a question he had asked her innumerable times over the years, and yet now they branded her. This time he was so close. His breath was soft and warm. No, that’s how a whisper should have felt. But this one was harsh and hot. It was searing through her. Inch by smoldering inch. And then she was smoking. She was pretty sure of that fact because something was seeping out of her core.

She had been all right, or close enough to it, a moment ago. But now...now she was melting wax.

She was definitely not all right. Not even half all right. So she shook her head. Afraid to speak. Afraid to move her tongue. Truthfully, that was her biggest fear at this point. Her tongue. It was restless and she had no idea why. How could she answer him? No, I’m not all right. I’m being deliciously tormented by my hopes and dreams. They are literally touching me, in so many good ways right now, yet they are still out of reach.

Well, it was that...or, what? What were her options? She shook her head again.

He leaned down to scorch her for a second time. “It’ll be over soon. I promise.” She could feel him smiling. Was he amused? She didn’t care. She focused only on his words.

She wanted to trust him. But...she almost didn’t want him to be right.

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HENRY WASN’T SURE IF he wanted to be right or wrong about his promise. On

the one hand, he didn't want to be made out to be a liar. On the other hand, well, his other hand was nicely tucked against Philomena's rib cage. And he couldn't say he was disappointed about that. In fact, he really only had nice things to say about it.

Really nice things.

And he wanted to whisper some of those really nice things into Philomena's ear again because when he did, his nose brushed against her cheek. And that was another thing he had really nice things to say about.

"You smell good." Those were the nice words that popped out first. His chest was pressed against her buxomness. When she heard the words, her sharp intake of breath dragged her heavy bosom up and down his chest, and he could feel her pebbled nipples digging into him. The sensation flared straight to his groin.

Her breathing sped up, and so did the gentle friction against his own nipples. And with each rapid breath, he was rapidly losing his sense of logic. Logic may as well have been a coin from a country that he had yet to find.

"You feel good, too." Those were the next nice words out of his mouth. Though one could surely argue their niceness on a spectrum of nice and naughty.

"Henry." His name swelled from her lips.

He had never wished to be staring at her lips more than at that moment, but currently his lips were attached to her ear.

"Henry," she moaned again.

"Shh ..."

He didn't want to quiet her. He wanted...well, he kind of wanted to hear how loud he could get her to be.

But the third time she moaned his name, “Henry,” was a plea.

He couldn't deny her request. He pressed his throbbing member against her core. When he did so, she lifted her chin and arched her breasts up into the air. By that point, he had to see what he had been missing. And the reward was magnificent. Lifting his head, he found her creamy white mounds pushed into the air, straining at the bodice.

He groaned. “You look so good.”

Her hands gripped his flexed forearms. He wanted them higher. And lower. He couldn't decide. Everywhere was enough.

The couple in the library were moaning together. The woman let out a squeal. “Harder,” she hissed. Then she commanded, “Deeper. I need you deeper. Uhh...”

The couple's panting was driving Henry insane. He couldn't be sure what it was doing to Philomena, but her body was giving him some indication.

He nudged his nose against the top of her bodice, and he felt her tremble. He licked across one delectable white mound and then the other.

“You taste too good, Philomena.”

“Then...keep...licking.” Her panting aroused him further.

If he thought he had been hard before, he was a beam of steel now. His little Philomena asking him for more pushed him over the edge. He leveraged his tongue to get under her bodice in search of her nipple.

One of her hands flew to her breasts, and momentarily he thought she was going to

swat him away. Unexpectedly, she pulled down on her dress and pushed up on her breast. So of course he did what any obliging gentleman with a raging erection would do, and he sucked as much of her voluptuous tit into his mouth as he could.

He felt her legs soften, and he rocked into her. Her whimpers clamored into his breeches.

“Pull up your skirts, Mina.” The shock of his words rippled through him and out of her body. “I’m sorry. I don’t know what I’m thinking.” He started to shake his head.

“Do it, Henry. I want it.” Slowly she pulled up her skirts for him.

“I just...I just want you to feel...”

Philomena tilted her head toward the rutting couple, and he chuckled. “Something like that.”

When she nodded, he repositioned himself against her with his breeches as a layer protecting them. If he had found that coin of logic, he would have realized that there was no protection available for what he was about to do.

“Are you sure?”

She nodded. “But...”

If she didn’t want to do it, he would stop. He’d be damn well disappointed, but he would stop.

“But...don’t stop...this.” She pointed to her exposed breasts.

“I couldn’t stop if I tried.” That was a lie of course but perhaps closer to the truth than

he knew.

Still fully clothed, he slowly pushed his throbbing member between her folds. She caught his movement and absorbed him. The heat soaked him even before her wetness could. He was going to have to change after this. The intention was to give her pleasure but within one minute of glorious friction, he realized he wasn't going to last.

She moaned again.

"I love your sounds." He thrust against her. "You sound...so...good." He chuckled unexpectedly. "I need to hear more." He took her other breast in his mouth, licking, lapping, laving her creamy skin. When he sucked on her, tugging gently, she released a deep moan.

"Shh, my little goddess," he whispered but then he tugged again. Her fingers dug into his skull as he slid himself up and down her wet cunny.

He could feel her body tightening. There was no explanation for it, but he was desperate to see her face when he made her come. Stealing a glance up at her face with her tit still in his mouth, he saw she was studying him with delight, curiosity, and perhaps even disbelief. He watched her face wince and then go lax.

Her breast in his mouth, her hands in his hair, and her quim folded around him, but it was her onyx eyes that were his undoing. Wetness pooled in his small clothes.

Henry looked down at her gorgeous breasts and then back up to her lips. She had the most luscious peach-colored and heart-shaped lips.

And then he realized that they hadn't even kissed.

## Page 3

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“ I THINK THEY’RE GONE,” Philomena whispered to Henry. She didn’t know what else to say. At some point the couple had exited the room and she couldn’t remember noticing it. But it seemed a pertinent fact to bring up, being that she was still tucked away under his pulsating body. Normally she had words for her friend, nice, normal words, but the library seemed to be suffused with some weird tongue-tying fumes this evening.

The adorable, heavy man still straddling her grinned up at her.

“Mina—”

Panicking, she covered his mouth with her fingers. She had no idea what he was going to say. But no words seemed better than any possible words she could predict. What was he thinking? What was he thinking about her? What was she thinking? There was no future between them. Henry’s mother wanted him to marry one of the three ladies she had hand-selected for this house party, and Henry had already given his word to his mother that he would let her choose his wife. If he felt honor-bound to propose to her now, she would never forgive herself. If they were truly as good friends as she thought they were, they could get over this. This was nothing. Just friends...exploring...another avenue of friendship.

And it would always be friendship.

Philomena wanted a marriage based on love. And this...well, she really didn’t know what had just happened. Emotions were still storming and settling. She needed to think things over without him...over her.

“Let’s...um...just go back to the party.” Even she didn’t believe that suggestion was a good one.

Henry scoffed, causing his stubble to rub against her fingers still glued to his lips and chin. Muffled sounds tumbled out.

She didn’t want to risk it so she kept her fingers in place. It only took a gentle clasp around her wrist, and a slight tug, to pull them away.

“Mina—”

“Don’t say anything.”

He grinned at her with an odd look in his eyes. “I have to say something.”

“Please, Henry. Can we just talk tomorrow instead?”

One of his brows drooped in disappointment while the other rose in curiosity.

“Please, Henry.”

“All right. Let’s talk tomorrow. But, if you think I can nonchalantly return to the party after this, you’re sorely mistaken.”

“Fine. I don’t think I could go back either. Off to bed with us, then.” Realizing what she had just said, she felt a hard, fast blush rush into her cheeks.

“Really?” Henry’s smile pulled on her heart. But she roped it back in.

Was he amused again?



“You know what I mean.”

“Let’s get up then.”

He stood and helped her to her feet. He crushed her into a swift embrace, kissed her temple, and said, “Tomorrow.”

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TOMORROW, BEING TODAY, LUCK was squabbling with fate. And fate was winning. It was just not meant to be for Philomena to find a moment alone with Henry. But maybe that was luck after all.

Gertrude, the dowager duchess, had prearranged moments for Henry to visit with each of the three eligible ladies, including Paulina— an event which included Philomena. It wasn’t proper for the couples to be entirely alone, so Gertrude determined that Philomena would tag along as a chaperone.

A chaperone to her sister on an outing with the man she loved. Fate or luck? It was yet to be decided, she supposed.

“It’s too bad our friend Juliet couldn’t make this party.” Paulina was making small talk, and Philomena just realized she hadn’t been listening.

“Juliet? The one we found hiding behind a ficus that one time?”

“Yes, that’s the one. She’s so lovely.”

“Perhaps that’s why she wasn’t invited. Too much competition?”

“I wouldn’t call hiding behind plants competition.” Paulina chuckled. “But you’re

probably right. We might have gotten carried away trying to matchmake someone with her. I'm sure she'll find someone soon. Just like you."

"Like me?"

Paulina motioned to be quiet. "What excuse should I make up?" Paulina leaned in and whispered into Philomena's ear as they approached the spot they expected to find Henry in the gardens.

"What are you talking about?" Philomena hissed back.

Paulina nudged her in the ribs. "So you and Henry can be alone."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Of course she knew. Although they were sisters first, they were also friends. They had discussed Philomena's obsession—infatuation, nay, interest—with Henry at least a few times over the years. If not a few times in a single day over several years.

"Mina, are you really going to act like that? Or are you going to tell me what happened?"

"N-nothing happened." She stumbled over her words and a tree root at the same time.

"Stop." Pauline tugged on her sister's arm. "In a minute or less, we're going to find Henry in the garden waiting for a prearranged visit with me, and you will be acting as the chaperone. Tell me you don't want that to happen."

Philomena dared not look into her sister's eyes. Instead, she focused on her sister's skirts skimming the ground. She was so close to having what she had always wanted. What was holding her back?

What if last night meant nothing to him? What if it was all in her head? If they never addressed it, she could keep the fantasy alive. If they addressed it, and he admitted it was a mistake, all her dreams would float away on a cloud. It would be far too unreasonable to cling to any hope in the face of such blatant rejection.

And if anything, Philomena was reasonable. Which meant...she needed to face Henry.

Staring straight ahead at a row of bushes, which Henry was likely standing behind, Philomena lowered her voice. "Tell him you've turned your ankle."

"That's the spirit!"

"Keep your voice down."

"Are you going to tell me what happened?"

Philomena finally glanced at Paulina. Given the situation, Philomena should have been the one bearing the glittering grin, but it was Paulina.

"I might."

"You might later or never?"

"I might tell you. I haven't decided."

"Oh, Mina. You think too much. I hope he ravished you like we've read in *The Way of a Wanton Woman* ." Paulina poked her shoulder, and, as if it were a button, redness crept into Philomena's cheeks.

"Oh he did, didn't he?" Paulina clapped her hands over her mouth. I'm so excited for

you was what Philomena interpreted through the muffled sounds.

She grunted in reply.

“It was that good, was it?”

“Paulina, please.”

“Don’t worry, if there’s a scandal, we’ll get cousin Quinn involved.” Paulina shook her head in reproof. “Oh, there are just too many people missing from this party.”

“What will Quinn do? He’s just a colonel.”

“He’d shoot someone for you, I’m sure. Or at least threaten to.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Philomena chided. “Besides, it’s not like he’s a duke. He can’t just get away with murder.”

“You’re right. But he would make a good duke, wouldn’t he?”

“Paulina, what are you talking about?”

“Well, I thought you wanted to avoid our other topic.” She paused. “The one about you being ravished.”

And just when Philomena thought her cheeks had returned to their normal shade and temperature, they were right back to flaming hot.

“We can’t walk up to Henry if I’m as red as an apple.” Before Paulina could interrupt with a placating reassurance that Philomena did indeed not look like the tempting fruit, she plodded on. “And you know I look like one. Don’t deny it. I can feel it, you

know? That's the worst part. I don't want it to be there. I'm not embarrassed, per se...Yet still, this ridiculous physical reaction occurs."

"You look beautiful," Paulina whispered with a smile.

"Thank you." Philomena returned the grin. "All right, it's safe to forge ahead. Let's go."

So it was that Philomena and Paulina rounded the shrubs to find Henry standing there with the largest grin on his face.

"Paulina, I'm so sorry to hear you've turned your ankle."

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: August 12, 2025, 4:12 am*

“ R AVISHED YOU, DID I?” It was a cocky thing to say. As well as entirely impolite. But he couldn’t help himself. Henry was all clichés this morning. He was sitting on top of the world. Floating on clouds. He felt young again.

“Apparently we weren’t as discreet as we thought we were.” As they strolled down the pathway, Philomena and Henry left Paulina on the garden bench in view of them. Well, in view for now.

Hand on heart, Henry offered, “I must confess to eavesdropping.”

“I’m not sure if that makes the situation any better or any worse.”

“It is what it is.”

“True.”

He could tell that Philomena was nervous. Hell, he was nervous. Or perhaps it was more accurate to say that he felt a wee bit anxious. Last night was an unforgettable memory engraved on his brain. Like a rare coin.

He still wasn’t sure what to do about it though. Having given his word to his mother that she could pick his wife, and knowing that this house party was designed so he could deliver on that promise, he felt more than a wee bit stuck.

And these little wee bits of emotion were more than a wee bit vexing. It was perhaps more vexing that Philomena wasn’t giving any indication of her thoughts or feelings on the matter. She was almost a touch cold since their flaming encounter.

It would be simple if one of two options could happen. One, everything could go back to the way it was before. Two, he could marry Philomena. It seemed that while both were simple in theory, they were both impossible in execution. At least for the time being. He didn't want to humiliate his mother who had invited—summoned—the three women here. He also didn't want to undermine her or betray her by reneging on his promise.

But he also knew, and more than just a wee bit, that he wanted to make sure that the second option happened. That is to say, he wanted to marry Philomena. Wee's aside, (really, where those had come from he didn't know, for he wasn't even Scottish), he knew his heart.

“What are you grinning about?”

There was no denying it. “You.”

Philomena's eyes rounded and her brows flung wide.

“It's true.”

“Well...”

It was cute to see her stuttering. He had never seen this side of her before. Knowing her only as a friend, trustworthy, reliable, confident. After last night he could add passionate and shaken to the list, too.

“Did you arrange any flowers this morning?”

“I'm not always tweaking a posy.”

“Just usually.”

“Exactly. Sometimes I’m sketching said bouquet,” she said with a smirk.

There it was. Some of the coldness melting away. The intoxicating combination of friend and tease. And now as she teased him, it felt entirely different. Worlds. Clouds. Youth. It all rushed to the forefront of his mind. As they walked down the garden path, trees and their branches reached out overhead, shadowing the way ahead.

He wanted to do something silly. He knew it was silly before he even did it. He hadn’t done something so brainless since being a boy. But, well, worlds, clouds, youth, and all that. That’s all he could think. He jumped up and latched onto one of the overhanging branches and made to swing on it.

“Henry, what are you doing?” Each word was emphasized equally.

“Just swinging in a tree.”

“I can see that. But why are you doing that?”

“Just felt like it—”

And then the branch snapped. And Henry fell on his bum while a cloud of dust encapsulated him like a globe. So much for being young.

“Henry,” Philomena cried. “Are you all right?”

“Of course,” he tried to say with some dignity. “I’m fine.” He put his palms on the dirt to stand but before he could move, Philomena was on her knees beside him. “Perhaps I’m not all right.” He leaned back to rest his head on the grass. Might as well milk this tenderness for all it was worth.

“Henry, you scared me.”



“I did?”

A gush of air broke from Philomena’s lungs. He hated to see her in any kind of distress. Had always hated to see that. Fortunately, she was not the type to be easily overwhelmed. In this moment, her concern was apparent but it was easy to reassure her.

“I’m fine, sweetheart. I just need a little TLC.”

“What’s TLC?”

“Tender loving care.” He grinned up at her concerned eyes. “I think I just made that up. But I still want it.” The coldness was gone and in its place was the warmest smile. Glowing. Radiating. Just for him.

How many times had they shared a smile? He couldn’t count. But this was so much different than before. Before, they were friends. They talked about everything together, shared secrets, important news, and even trivial matters. No topics were untouchable. Only their bodies. And then that had changed. It seemed like such a natural progression, when he thought about it. He wanted to share everything with her. That’s why she was one of the first people he sought out when he found his most recent coin. Why not want to share his life with her? Why not? With that luminescent smile directed at him, he couldn’t think of a single reason not to. Not even his mother counted as a reason against.

“You’re adorable,” Philomena said sweetly.

“I am? You’ve never called me that before.”

“Well, clearly something has changed between us.”

“I didn’t think you were ready to admit it.”

Her voice was raspy. “I don’t think I can deny it much longer.”

The tone and texture of her voice coated his cock. It began to throb. Remembering what had happened the previous evening, he knew he was in trouble. He wanted her. In the gardens. On the grass. Now.

“No one’s watching us.”

Wide-eyed, she unexpectedly asked, “What do you have in mind?”

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: August 12, 2025, 4:12 am*

WHAT HENRY HAD IN mind, needless to say, resulted in mussed hair and crumpled portions of fabric. It was not Philomena's best look, but she was pretty sure the vibrant grin on her face was.

They had spent far too long in a caress that led to straddling, which led to rubbing, and God, his body felt amazing. He was strong and confident. And she could tell he was enamored with her. The dreamy looks he was giving her warmed her entire being. He had been her friend. Now he was something more. But what exactly more, she wasn't sure. He was enjoying her body, and she was enjoying his. But what of his heart?

She couldn't help but notice that they hadn't yet shared a kiss. It was odd. Or was it? Being an innocent, she wasn't sure if it was odd. It didn't really feel odd, since the pleasure and intimacy of everything they were doing was enough to flood her senses. She wasn't sure what a kiss, on top of (or underneath) everything else would do. She had never been kissed. How could she know what she was missing?

She was kneeling in the grass at Henry's side, while he reclined on one elbow, the other hand drawing messy circles on her thigh. She didn't want to leave. It was all so perfect, but she knew that their time away would soon be noticed.

"I think we should go back before someone sees Paulina sitting all alone on the bench when she's the one who should have been here with you."

Henry brushed his fingertips over her cheek. "No one else is supposed to be here with me except you."

“That’s nice of you to say, Henry.”

“It’s true.” Pushing himself up, he kissed her cheek.

“All the same, we should be going.” The cheek kiss was unraveling her resolve. Not just her resolve to make their way back and put on airs of propriety, but also her resolve to not indulge in unrealistic hopes and dreams of a future with him.

It was all too perfect. There was no point in tainting perfection with real talk about the future. The future she knew couldn’t exist.

“Let’s go then.” Henry stood and, for the second time in twenty-four hours, he helped her up, squeezed her, and kissed her temple. “Mmm...you feel so good, Mina.”

She swatted at his shoulder. Well, really it was more of a rub. “Come on, Henry.” Secretly she adored his attention but she just couldn’t bring herself to let down her guard.

As they walked beside each other, Henry reached for her hand and she let him. Until they were close to Paulina, and then she pulled away, not meeting his eyes.

As they rounded the bushes, Philomena immediately sensed something was wrong. Mostly because she could hear Paulina talking, and really, who would she be talking to? But also because her voice was half an octave higher than normal and a touch strained.

“There you are, Philomena.” Paulina shot her a layered look of vexation and apologies. “As I was saying, Your Grace, I turned my ankle, and these two took a quick stroll to see if the path would be too risky for me to amble down.” The dowager duchess turned to her son with a blank look. The look was not so blank when it shifted to Philomena. There was a certain narrowness to the dowager’s eyes. In fact, a

definite shooting arrow of contempt, one might say, if one was putting words on such a fleeting flicker of a glance.

And Philomena was. Indeed, she was so caught up in labeling the brief glance that she missed the not-so-subtle gestures from Paulina indicating that she had something in her hair. Henry must have caught it because he casually leaned in and picked something from her coiffure.

“It seems a leaf floated down and entwined itself in your hair.” He grinned at her.

Oh no, not that grin. In front of his mother of all people. Gertrude strongly disliked her. Philomena already knew she wasn’t duchess material. All she needed was for the dowager duchess to be given another reason for contempt. That of a scandalous woman.

All she could think of to clarify the situation was to say, “Funny how leaves fall, isn’t it?”

“Yes, they do fall. Fast,” Henry quipped, gazing into her eyes.

Philomena froze. Longing to hear those words about her, to her, yet afraid they would destine her to always being at odds with Gertrude.

Ever equipped with etiquette, Paulina interrupted. “You two.” She shooed them apart and took both of them by the arm. “Must be an inside joke about foliage or something. You know these two have been friends forever.”

“Yes.” Gertrude gave a sharp nod. “They make very good friends .” Extra emphasis on friends.

Philomena could read between the lines.

“Help me back to the house, you two. I want to rest my ankle.”

“Henry, take Lady Paulina back to the house. I’d like a word with Lady Philomena.”

“But—”

“Henry.”

That was all that needed to be said. Henry nodded and escorted her sister back to the house.

And then a strange thing happened. Philomena could not have predicted it. Though, she wasn’t entirely sure she would have wanted to. Knowing the dowager did not particularly like Philomena, she couldn’t say she ever wanted to have a one-on-one chat with her.

“Lady Philomena.” Getrude bestowed a strained smile upon her and gestured to the bench. “Please take a seat.”

The two sat uncomfortably on the cold stone. “I have seen and heard about your special gift with flowers.”

Unexpected, but true. Philomena should have responded with more than a gaping mouth, quizzical brows, and a slight nod.

“You enjoy it, do you not?”

She nodded again. This time holding her mouth and brows in check.

“That’s wonderful. I have an unusual favor to ask of you. I’m quite busy with this house party, but I have plans for a special event later tonight at the cottage. It

involves flowers.” Gertrude tilted her head toward her as if Philomena were bird-witted. Which, by her series of nods, seemed plausible.

Gertrude was asking her for assistance. Perhaps she didn’t disdain her as much as she thought. And if she did, perhaps this could be a way to gain her favor. It didn’t matter the task, Philomena knew she would say yes.

“I’d like you to oversee the flower arrangements. As I said, I’m too busy here, and you are the only one I can trust with this task.”

Trust. Yes, this was her way in.

“Of course, Your Grace. Anything I can do to be of assistance.”

Gertrude smiled. Sort of. It was a smile by all definitions of the word, but something wasn’t quite right.

Philomena had to admit that she was studying said smile more than she was listening to the subsequent instructions. It couldn’t be that hard. It was flowers. That was her gift. Her passion. Her obsession of sorts.

So when Gertrude asked, “Have you got all of that?”

Philomena stuck with her tried and true response. She nodded.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: August 12, 2025, 4:12 am*

I T HAD BEEN HOURS since he had seen Philomena. Henry was pacing the drawing room. Guests were mingling and playing cards. Paulina had given him a sly look a couple of times. Obviously, she knew what had happened in the gardens. But she was discreet. He hoped.

When he asked her where Philomena was, she couldn't say. She merely suggested he check the library. As if Henry hadn't done so already. Library. Conservatory. Philomena's guest bedchamber. The only place he hadn't checked yet was with his mother.

His mother was the last one to have seen her and she had absconded to her bedchamber. Something was amiss. Apparently his mother had a megrim and was not to be bothered. She blamed it on the rain and he couldn't doubt her. She often claimed that the weather affected her health.

But it was certainly more than just the meager rain dousing the grounds that had thrown Henry's mood off its normal even keel as he marched onward to see his mother.

Anxious. Huffy. Vexed. So much so that the coin he was smoothing between his thumb and index finger was about to rub away his epidermis. That's what physicians called the outer layer of skin, wasn't it? He was sure that was correct. Yet, his brain was not functioning properly.

If this was what happened when he couldn't determine Philomena's whereabouts, there was really only one thing to do. Which, after the night in the library, he had already decided. He wanted to marry her. He just needed time to get his mother to



agree. He could do it. He just needed...well, he wasn't quite sure what would convince his own mother, but surely she would bless him knowing that he loved Philomena.

Loved.

Yes.

His coin smoothing stilled. His footsteps froze. Standing just outside the door of his mother's room, Henry gave himself permission to listen to his heart in full.

Loved.

Yes. He did love her. He had always loved her. As a friend, but even perhaps on a deeper level. He had always cared for her wellbeing and had always loved sharing everything he could with her. He needed to talk to her now. More than when he had needed to show her his coin. What a euphemism that sounded like...

Megrim be damned. He rubbed the lucky coin hanging on a chain around his neck, tucked his new coin in his pocket, and knocked on the door.

Before he heard an answer, he strolled into the room to find her sipping tea by the fire. "Mother." He stopped in front of her. "Where is she?"

Taking a slow sip, his mother looked up, "Won't you have a seat?"

"There's no time."

"Henry, you sound like a mad man." She gestured to the chair. "Please take a seat. That's a good boy. Now, where is who?" A fraction of a smirk crept up and disappeared in a trice.

“Where is Philomena?”

“Isn’t she with the rest of the guests?”

“No. No, she’s not, Mother.” Henry sat on the edge of his seat. “Do you think I’d be here asking you where she was if she was with everyone else?”

His mother slowly lifted two fingers to her temple. “There’s no need to shout.”

“I’m not shouting. I’m demanding. Tell me where she is.”

“Surely I don’t know. I’ve been up here all evening. Perhaps she took a walk.” She glared at him. “Again.”

“So you know what happened.”

“I saw the way you were looking at her. Like a little puppy. She’s not the woman for you, Henry. We agreed that you would let me pick your wife. This dukedom will not be put to shame because you can’t pick the proper wife.”

“The proper wife?”

“Yes. The proper wife. You need someone who knows how to run a dukedom. How to host. How to throw events. Appeal to their guests.”

“Like you?”

Another glare. “Similar to me.”

“Like your marvelous hostessing skills right now?” He shouldn’t have said it. This was not the way to warm his mother to his next declaration.

“Everyone has their weaknesses, Henry. Mine happens to be rain.”

“Yes.” He patted his knees. “I’m so glad you put it that way, Mother. Since you have been vulnerable and courageous enough to share one of your weaknesses, I will do the same. I must confess my weakness. Her name is Philomena. I love her. And I will marry only her.”

His mother gasped. “She will n-not do.” It was the closest to sputtering he had ever heard from his mother.

“She will. She already does. I love her.” Squeezing the arms of the chair, he felt the heaviness seep into his heart. He knew he was disappointing his mother. It was a feeling no child, no matter how old, wanted to have. But some things in life were worth disappointing others for. “I know this will put a strain on our relationship but I do hope you will come around. She’s an amazing woman.”

“I see.” And that was the closest thing to acquiescence that he had ever seen in his mother. It wasn’t over. Not by a long shot. But something had shifted in her.

“Please tell me where she is.”

After a short sigh, she said, “I asked her to arrange some flowers in the cottage for me. I told her we were having a special event there.”

“Why would you do that?”

“You needed time with the ladies I had chosen for you.”

“I had time with them.”

“Time without distractions,” she clarified.

“Philomena is not the distraction. She’s the desired object of my attention.” He knew it to be true. How had he not understood it before? It didn’t matter. So long as he was aware of it now, he could act on it.

“I didn’t think she would stay there all this time. I’m actually...surprised she didn’t come back with the rest of the servants.”

“She’s not a servant.”

“I didn’t mean that.” His mother waved her hand. “I just meant that I’m disappointed she didn’t think clearly enough to return for dinner.”

“She probably stayed to ensure everything was perfect. For you. She knows you dislike her. She’s there trying to impress you. And I’m still here.” Henry flew to his feet. “Why am I still here?” He shot a look at his mother. “I’m going to ask her to marry me. And we will marry. I hope it was worth it to have her arrange those flowers for you. In your new place of residence.”

“Henry!”

“We’ll talk more upon my return.”

So much for needing time. So much for thinking of ways to convince his mother of his plans.

Now they would have to figure all that out after the wedding.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: August 12, 2025, 4:12 am*

T HE RAIN POUNDED LOUDLY against the cottage as Philomena sketched another flower. She had already spent hours arranging the flowers everywhere. Once she had reached perfection, she clasped her hands together and sat down. But then she looked around to observe the room, and the moment she did that, she saw a few more stems to switch around. So it was best for everyone, and every one of her fingers, to sit and sketch for a while.

And so engrossed in her task was she that she didn't notice the banging on the door.

Truly, she credited most sounds to the storm, to thunder, and perhaps even to her mind playing tricks on her, for she hadn't expected anyone to return for her until morning. The sounds could just be the rain crashing down on the roof, desperately showing off its underrated strength.

She had been stoking the fire and sitting close to it to stay warm. Only a few times, or a few times a few times, had she regretted not returning to the house with the servants. But her only focus was to make sure everything was perfect for the dowager duchess. If she had any hope of impressing her, this was her chance.

Yet now, being trapped in the rain-enveloped cottage, she did feel a little foolish. Being warmed by the fire she had maintained was some kind of consolation. At least she knew how to keep herself from freezing to death.

The banging pounded on the door again. This time she heard it over the competing pounding of the rain. Why was someone knocking? She must have locked it after the servants had left.

She rushed to the door and found Henry, soaked to the bone.

“Quick, get in here.” She dragged him inside and shoved the door closed before the slanting rain could make an entrance.

“Philomena.” He grabbed her arms. “Are you all right?” If she thought the rain was desperate, it had nothing on Henry in this moment.

“Yes, I’m fine.” Well, as fine as a single woman alone in a cold cottage trapped by the rain could be. She had better say it again. “I’m fine, Henry.” Some of the desperation dissipated. Perhaps a third time was the charm. “I’m f—“

“Oh my God, Philomena. I love you.”

“What?”

“I love you.” He had a strong grip on her arms, not painful, but commanding. Yet, the grip those three words had on heart was almost painful. How could such long sought-after words be painful? But the truth of them, the weight of them, it cut through her. Those words told her, explicitly, undeniably, of the depths of his heart. And that, miracle of miracles, his depths matched hers. How could it be? It was impossible to accept. He must have known she was struggling to receive the words because then she heard them again.

“I love you,” he shouted to no one but her. Thankfully he had lifted his chin to the ceiling. “Can you hear me, my darling? I love you. However I need to say it so that your heart accepts it, I will say it. And however many times you need to hear it, I will repeat it.” His chin was back down. His eyes were piercing into hers. And those three massive words were not quite so painful. They were...a balm.

A balm she didn’t know she needed. A balm that she could receive and accept.

Absorb into herself.

“You do?”

“Yes. I can’t believe it took me so long to realize I love you. And now I can’t stop saying it. You are my dearest, closest friend, and I must have you as my lover and wife. If you want me.”

“Of course I want you.” She thought she had only voiced the words in her head.

But when he responded, she realized she had loosed her tongue.

“I’m so relieved.” He pressed his damp forehead to hers. “I would hug you right now, but at least one of us should stay dry and warm.”

He grinned at her. One of his big, loopy grins.

“So that’s a yes?”

“What’s a yes?”

“To marrying me. You’ll marry me, won’t you, Mina?”

Dazed, she managed to say, “Yes.” And then to be sure she wasn’t just thinking it, she said it again. “Yes, I’ll marry you. That would make me the happiest person in the world.”

“Only after me. I think I take first place in that.”

“Let’s get you out of those wet clothes.”

“Mina, I never...” He feigned offense but was already stripping out of his layers. Right down to his smallclothes. In under a minute, a sopping wet pile of fabric lay at the door.

And a sopping wet pile of drool lay at her feet. Not quite. She managed to keep her mouth closed. Just barely. But his abdomen. His chest. His biceps. God above, she knew how he felt, but now she knew how he looked underneath it. Something else was pooling between her legs. She squeezed her thighs together as they moved to stand in front of the fire. Which was now making her too warm.

“There’s something I need to do, Mina.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. I need to kiss you.”

He leaned in and pulled her trembling body against his strength. Then he tilted her chin up to meet him.

A gentle brush of his lips swept across hers. She sighed into him and slowly put her hands on his chest. With tenderness she had never expected, he pressed his lips on her mouth and whispered, “You’re divine. You’re my goddess.”

This kiss, her first kiss, was everything she could have hoped for. It was with someone she loved, someone she knew, and someone that she knew loved her. It was the ultimate seal of ownership. She felt owned by him, and felt as though she owned him as well.

His lips took hers and then his tongue trailed along her bottom lip. He gave a soft bite, and when she gasped, his lips locked around her mouth, opening with her. Moving with her. Prodding her. Gently, but with heated desire. Her hands slid up the



corded column of his neck and into his wet hair.

One of his hands slid down to her hip and then further down, across her bottom. With one large hand, he gripped her bum.

And then gentleness split wide open into fierce passion.

Their bodies were on the rug beside the fire, he was on top of her. She was wrapped in his arms. Her breasts were aching for what they knew he could—would—do to her again. And again. And if she had any say, again.

She tugged on her bodice, leaving nothing to chance.

He moaned. “I love that you show me what you want.” His eyes met hers. “And I love that I love what you want more than you do.” His mouth opened wide and she braced for him to draw her flesh into his mouth.

Thank God she did, lest her hips buck him right off of her.

“Don’t hold back, Mina,” he murmured somewhere in the valley of her breasts.

“I can’t hold back anymore with you, Henry. I love you.”

He looked up and latched onto her lips again with a searing kiss. Fire. Passion. Years of friendship. Longing. Truth. And a future. It was all wrapped up in his kisses. “I love you, Philomena.” His whisper trickled into her ear. He smelled of the rain. Of sweetness. And Henry.

She reached down to pull up her skirts. How she needed him. How her body craved him.

The faster she pulled up her skirts, the harder he sucked on her nipple.

And then her pulsating core met its match. Underneath a thin layer of fabric, she felt his throbbing cock rest against her wetness.

“Do you want...” Henry’s eyes had gone dark with passion. “Do you want to make love to me, Philomena?”

“More than anything.”

“Let me make sure of that.” And he pulled his head away from her nipples. Away from exquisite pleasure. Away from—

Oh God, his tongue. Exquisite pleasure was blazing a torturous trail from her quim through each and every limb she had. How many limbs did she have? She couldn’t remember. She was overcome. His tongue was a godsend. She was writhing on the floor. Arching her hips up into his waiting face.

When he sucked on her bud, she cried out. All the coiling and tightening was reaching for something. She could feel it building inside of her.

His tongue dipped inside of her and his thumb pressed gently on her nub.

“Henr—” Before she could finish saying his name, her moans overtook her voice. She came. She came all over his face.

“God, I didn’t think anything could taste better than your breasts, but...oh my God.” He licked at her again, and she shivered. “Yes, you are definitely ready for making love.”

“I loved that,” she said between breaths.

“And you’ll love this, too. There might be a bit of pain. If it’s too much, just tell me and I’ll stop.”

He rose up on his knees and pressed his slick tip against her still sensitive cunny. She already knew she was going to love this. He was gentle and wet. Tender. Yet hard. He was holding back, she could see the self-control on his face. But she trusted him and his reasons.

She exhaled to relax and receive him inside of her. To be joined together as one. Something nudged inside of her. It was completely foreign. Indescribable. But beautiful. Filling.

He was filling her.

He pushed in a little further. As she exhaled, she drew him in and he groaned. His sound of desire and complete offering to her made her burn for him even more.

“Don’t hold back, Henry. Just like you told me.”

“My goddess, in a few moments I don’t think I’ll be able to hold back. But for now, I just want to soak up every feeling of bliss that this is.”

“I love you, Henry.”

“I love you, Philomena.”

She pushed her hips up to suck him in even more. “I want all of it, Henry.”

He pushed deeper, faster than she expected. She cried out.

He stopped. “Are you all right?”

“Yes. God, Henry, give it to me. I want it so bad.”

He thrust again and she shouted louder.

“There’s no one around to hear us, Mina. Scream as loud as you want.” He thrust again and she screamed.

The scream unleashed something inside of her. Something too quiet. Something scared. But she wasn’t afraid anymore.

“Henry! Give it to me.”

“Uhh,” he grunted as he moved deeper and faster inside of her.

And then there was a rhythm to the madness. He was seated so far inside of her that she could feel him touching every single part of her. This was life and love. And peace. Knowing the one you loved also loved you.

He placed his thumb on her bud, so sensitive. Rubbing gentle circles, she could feel herself completely under his command.

Then he lowered his head to her breast and took it in his mouth. He was inside of her, and she was inside of him. They were entwined. When he let out another moan, she was undone. Fully given over to him. Surrendered to her future with him.

He grunted and pulled out of her to soak her thighs.

They lay, drained but full, together for several minutes. Almost dozing off to sleep. Completely at peace.

After a while, Henry poked his head up. “I almost forgot something.”

“There’s more?”

He chuckled. “Well, yes, but perhaps not right now.”

He pulled up his smallclothes from around his ankles and walked over to his clothes. He brought them over to the fire and laid them out to dry. Then he reached into one of his pockets.

“This is for you. Well, I might have to get another one, but it’s all I could find on short notice. And then I guess the rain got its hands on her.”

Outstretched in his hand was a wilted flower. Almost impossible to identify except that Philomena was pretty sure it was a dahlia.

“I don’t think I’ve ever given you flowers before.”

She shook her head. She would most certainly have remembered if he had given her flowers before.

“Well, this won’t be the last time.” He tried to prop up the drooping petals.

“Thank you, Henry. I love it. I’ll treasure this forever. This shall be my lucky flower.”

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*Source Creation Date: August 12, 2025, 4:12 am*

### A Little Later

PHILOMENA LOOKED AT HER betrothed as he picked her up for the ball that evening. Her betrothed. Her fiancé. The man she never would have thought could be all hers. And here he was picking her up, escorting her to a ball.

She couldn't wait to start planning the wedding, but more than that, their future together.

"You're even lovelier tonight than I imagined, Mina." He twirled her in her deep purple dress, and she felt like she could float up onto the air.

She had wanted Henry for so long, she almost couldn't believe he was all hers. Wrapping her hand around his neck, she gazed up into his eyes. The air sparked between them.

With a smoldering look in his eyes, he leaned in and whispered, "I shan't kiss you here, where anyone could peer out through the windows and observe us. Let's get into the carriage, I have something to tell you."

Philomena's nipples tingled at his suggestion. In the carriage? God, that sounded divine. Since she had spent more time with Henry getting to know him, she had felt more brave in opening up that pink leather bound book, *The One With the Wanton Woman*. And there had been an image of a woman and man in a carriage. For the first time, she was grateful to Paulina for introducing her to the book, and she wondered how many other women knew about it.

Trying out one of those poses in the carriage with Henry, though? A shiver danced up her back and down her limbs.

Henry helped her into the carriage and sat across from her. Once they were settled, he tapped the ceiling and they were off to the ball.

“Can I tell you something now?” he asked with a slight grin. He was reaching into his pocket as he started to say, “I found this new coin—”

“Oh. A coin?” Philomena’s face fell. “You wanted to tell me about a coin?”

He grinned up at her. “Is that a bad thing?”

“I just thought—no, never mind.” She waved her hand in the air feeling a bit foolish. Their time together wasn’t all about being intimate. She wanted to know everything about him. Talk. The way it had always been. Really, she wanted to hear about the coin. “Go ahead. Tell me about the coin,” she said, with a genuine and friendly smile.

“I don’t actually want to tell you about a coin right now, Mina. I want to talk about something else entirely.”

“Oh, you do?”

“Yes. I want to talk about how that dress will never look the same, no matter how much I try to put it to rights.” His eyes fixated on her breasts, and she couldn’t stop them from heaving.

“Oh?”

“Yes. And I want to talk about how I need to taste you.” He licked his bottom lip and her quim pulsated in response. “Now.”

“Right now?” she squeaked out.

“Right. Now. Lift your skirts.” The authority in his voice brooked no argument (not that she had any) nor any delay (not that she wanted any).

Her hands grasped her skirts and pulled them up as he dropped to his knees and put his face between her legs.

His hands pushed her thighs apart while he licked between her folds with a groan.

“Oh, God. Henry,” she whimpered.

“I can’t get enough of your taste. This is every meal for me. Right here.”

His lips sucked on her. He lapped, nipped, and flicked his tongue over here. Panting, she asked for more while his fingers slid inside of her. She could already feel herself leaking, and his words edged her on.

The love of her love was doing one of the most intimate acts a man could give to a woman, while they were in a carriage. It was a fantasy that she would have never laid claim to before, but now, she wasn’t sure she could ever ride in a carriage alone with him the same way.

Hot, blinding streaks flashed behind her eyes, across her mind, searing her body. She was primed for him. All he needed to do was look at her and she felt aroused. But this. This licking, sucking, kissing. On her pearl. Uh. This was enough to push her up the mountain, greet the view, and then tumble over it.

“Come for me, Mina. Come, my love. Come all over my face.”

And she did. Her release soaked its way down her legs while he lapped at her flavor.



He pulled out a handkerchief and wiped up what remained, then ducked out of her skirts.

“Mmm...I’m a well fed man.” He sat back looking satisfied, but she was still thrumming.

“You do me so good, Henry. What about you?”

With his large hand, he cupped the bulge in his pants and a new wave of arousal descended on her. “This can wait,” he said, with a raspy voice.

“Let me suck on you, Henry.”

“Not if you say that, it can’t.” His head dropped to the squabs, and instinctively he opened his falls. It was her turn to get on her knees in front of him. With her hands on his thighs, she darted her tongue out of her mouth and licked the head of his cock. She had seen images of this, but only briefly. She hadn’t been sure that it was ever something she would do. But with this man, her love, all she wanted was to taste him.

Her lips found their way around his head, and his groan spurred her on. She sucked harder wanting to devour all of him, and she was rewarded with his taste.

“Uh...Mina,” he moaned. His hand reached to the back of her neck. “That feels so good. I want more. But right now I want to be inside of you.”

He pulled her up and together they clumped her skirts enough to enable her to straddle him. When she sunk down on his shaft, she mewled her delight.

“God, Henry, you know how to fill me up.”

“You feel so good.” His kisses slanted across her lips with urgency. Deepening the kiss, his tongue mimicked what they were about to do. On a breath, he said, “Ride

me, Mina.”

And once she started the movement, she could not stop. Not even if the carriage ground to a halt and called out their destination.

She rode him until they both smothered their final shouts with sloppy kisses.

They spent the remainder of the carriage ride limp in each other arms, his cock still warm inside of her.

This was what she had always wanted, and now she finally had him. Forever.

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