

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



The Ties That Bind

Tesni Morgan

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THE TIES THAT BIND

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Chapter One

SATAN STOOD IN the doorway.

'Hello. You must be Kim,' he said, and his voice was seductive, just as she had always thought the devil's voice would be. It curled round her ear like a secret caress.

'That's right,' she answered, wondering why Jenny hadn't heard the bell. Unlike her imagination's dark devil, this one was blue-eyed, almost angelic, apart from the little pair of horns springing from tawny, spiked hair.

'Trick or treat?' he asked.

This question always flustered her. When children appeared on her doorstep in covered sheets and gruesome face paint, she was never sure what to answer, usually going for her purse and doling out coins.

'It depends what you're offering,' she said guardedly.

'Anything you want,' he replied, and stepped over the threshold.

The entrance hall was full. Everyone wore masquerade costume. Rock music blasted from stereo speakers suspended from the beams. There were black balloons featuring witches on broomsticks, and red ones adorned with imps. Ivy decorated the beams. Plastic spiders and bats jiggled on strings and a realistic skeleton leant on the carved banister rail, leering at the crowd below.

And now the master had arrived to join his followers on Halloween.

Kim didn't know him. Was he one of Oliver's business associates?

She glanced round, but her husband was deep in conversation with Flyte Reynald. Jealousy bit deep. It always did when she was in evidence. Flyte looked stunning, wearing a Queen-of-the-Night costume, a Hathor headdress

on her fiery, crimped hair. She was showing a lot of bosom and leg. Kim was acutely conscious that she could have made more effort with her own costume instead of settling for the trite Dracula victim outfit: white, lawn nightdress; ghastly corpse-face with black, rimmed eyes; crimson-streaked teeth and lips.

Oliver. She melted at the thought of him, a fresh surge of dew dampening her panties. They'd had sex while getting ready for the party. A shared shower, the warmth of their room, the intimacy of the soft bed, his hands, his mouth. His upward-tilting cock; she knew it so well, every inch of smooth skin, every throbbing vein, the silky helm, would have recognised it out of a dozen by feel alone. Like everything else he did, Oliver made love with panache and artistry.

He revelled in gatherings like this. She never had done; she was far too self-conscious. And now she was being scrutinised by Satan in red leather pants so tight that his butt, the hollows in his flanks, and the impressive package behind his fly were all clearly defined.

'Are you on the guest list?' she said stiffly, falling into her wife-of-an-important-man role.

'No,' Satan answered, and his quirky smile did not reach his eyes. His mouth was beautifully shaped. She couldn't stop looking at it. How would it feel to run her tongue-tip over that sensual lower lip or to let that mouth play over her most intimate places?

'Then do you mind telling me who you are?' she asked, making little signals to Oliver, who looked across, raised an eyebrow, and began to saunter towards her.

The conversation dipped and, into the sudden hush, Satan said, 'I'm your brother.'

She stared at him blankly. 'My what?'

'Your brother. Illegitimate, and only half, but it's better than nothing, I suppose. We had the same father.'

He focused on her and his smile faded, replaced by a serious, intent look. There was an element in his ice-blue eyes that she couldn't fathom. Was it mockery, envy, lust, or a mixture of all three?

'You're joking,' she said, making a frantic bid in her mind for sanity. Her brother? She felt instantly guilty. She had been fantasising about kissing him.

He shrugged. His shoulders were broad under the red jacket, his bare arms tanned and muscular. 'It's true. I'm Jack Loring.' His gaze switched to Oliver and he held out his right hand. 'And you must be my brother-in-law.'

'So it appears,' Oliver answered, his tone questioning and slightly ironic, taking the hand and shaking it.

They were mentally stalking round one another. Had they been cats their tails would have been fluffed out to twice normal size. Kim guessed that Oliver was wondering whether to call security and have them deal with Jack. Very discreetly, of course. Glen House contained too many valuables to have unauthorised persons roaming around. Not that Jack looked like a thief, but then, what do thieves look like? she asked herself. A stocking over the head? Carrying a cosh?

'If it's true, then I'm glad to meet you, Jack,' she said, more confident now Oliver was there.

'It's true,' Jack answered blandly, and continued to subject her to a searching appraisal.

A slow burn began at the base of her spine, travelling upwards and manifesting itself as a blush that spread over her face and neck. It was embarrassing. She wanted to end this uncomfortable encounter, and get back to being Oliver Buckley's much-envied wife. He was so good-looking and talented, such a catch, as other people called him. She didn't see him like that. She loved him. She had everything she desired. Their two years of marriage had been blissful.

Steady! she said inwardly. Who are you trying to convince? Then, she thought: Hell. I don't need this.

‘You want proof that I’m really who I say I am?’ Jack offered nonchalantly. He fished in a back pocket and brought out a business card. ‘There you go.’

Oliver took it and turned it over in his thin fingers. ‘Now I remember,’ he said. ‘Loring, the architect. I accepted your designs on behalf of Transglobe. You’re going to oversee the construction of their new site on Aldermar Street. Forgive me. How remiss. If I’d known you’d already arrived in London I’d have made sure you were invited.’ His eyes narrowed as he added, ‘I had no idea you and Kim were related.’

‘Neither did I till recently. My mother told me after she’d read James Millard’s obituary in *The Times*.’ He made a rueful grimace and added, ‘It’s a long story, Kim, and I’ll tell you later. If you want proof of that, too, then I’ve plenty back at my hotel.’

‘I’d like to see it,’ Oliver said. ‘In fact, it’s essential that we do. Don’t you agree? Such a claim can’t be taken lightly. Meanwhile, what would you like to drink?’

‘A shandy, please. I’m driving.’

‘OK. Please help yourself to food.’

Logs blazed in monumental fireplaces set each end of the fifty-foot long Victorian Gothic hall. The night was cold and rain thrashed the curved bay windows. The bar ran along one side, and Kim wedged herself against a marble pillar, waiting for Oliver to return with the drinks.

‘I like those,’ Jack said, nodding towards two grotesque, grinning pumpkins shining in a darkened corner. ‘Reminds me of America. Halloween’s big there.’

‘I carved them, with a bit of help from Jenny. She’s the housekeeper. Is that where you come from, America?’ she asked, thinking: he doesn’t have an American accent, only British public school, rather like Oliver’s. My brother. This man is my brother? She struggled to get to grips with the concept but it still didn’t gel.

'I did some studying there: New York, San Francisco and L.A. But I was born in the West Country. Bristol, to be exact. Have you been to the States?'

'Never. You've travelled a lot?'

'Oh yes.'

'How old are you?'

'Twenty-five.'

'So I was two when you were born. I've always wanted a baby brother.'

'And now you've got one.'

Why is Oliver taking so long? she fretted, aware of the flimsy nature of her nightdress, the bodice now raised into two sharp points by nipples which were as hard as cob-nuts. She didn't want to be left alone with this disturbing individual, relative or not. He was too sure of himself, too smug. She wasn't sure that she liked him.

'Care for a cigarette?' he asked, smiling down at her from his six-foot-plus height. As he drew a pack from the waistcoat which was laced over his chest, crisp hair sprung from firm, sun-browned flesh, and poked between the thongs.

'I'm trying to give them up. I was doing really well, until tonight,' she said, wanting to add, until I set eyes on you.

'Have another go tomorrow,' he advised with that trace of mockery in his voice. Little flames sparked in his pupils as he lit her cigarette. 'We've got to get to know each other, Kim. Think of all those wasted years. Think of the Christmases we could have had together, and bonfires and fireworks and nights like tonight.'

'I've survived very well as an only child,' she replied, trying to avoid his eyes. Outlined with a kohl pencil, they were compelling. She always had liked make-up on men. Something to do with her passion for the ballet. An erotic world of athletic dancers effortlessly lifting their partners, a world of fantasy, where bodies made graceful patterns, a

world of strong males and fragile-looking yet steely-muscled girls.

‘I’ve survived, too,’ Jack said. ‘But it’s going to be better with the two of us. I feel like we’ve met before. Do you feel that? It must be blood calling to blood, old man Millard’s blood.’

She looked at the scarlet leather, devil horns, bare arms, studded wristbands, a naked midriff and those lean, ultra-sexy hips. He was enough to tempt a saint into sin.

‘You knew him?’ she floundered. It was as if an abyss were yawning at her feet. She found herself smoking furiously, welcoming the nicotine hit.

‘Never met him in my life. I was his guilty secret. Loring is my mother’s name. He supported me though, through boarding school and university. She didn’t marry. She preferred her independence. She owns a hotel, and makes money from the tourist trade. But I think she still carried a torch for our father. Would you like to meet her?’

‘I don’t know. Not yet. Let me get used to this first.’

Kim was chilled to the bone. The house was centrally heated and fires were roaring up the chimneys, yet old, unhappy memories touched her: her father conducting a life apart from her mother and herself. He hadn’t been the upright, moral man he pretended to be. All this time he had been keeping a woman and her son, deceiving his wife, and hiding it from his daughter.

Kim had loved her father, but this revelation had turned her world upside down. I’m glad he’s dead, she thought bitterly. I kid myself I’m open-minded, but this is too close to home. Thank God mother never realised. Or did she? The horrible thought struck her that maybe she had known, but had kept quiet about it. And now I’ll never be able to ask her, or either of them. They can’t give me answers from beyond the grave.

‘It’s been a shock. I’m sorry. I should have called you,’ Jack said, and moved a little closer.

Don't, she wanted to scream. Keep away. But she could feel his body's warmth through his clothes.

He took the cigarette butt from her and ground it out, then enveloped her cold, pale fingers in his large, tanned hands. 'I had hoped you'd be as excited as I am. We should stick together.' He reached up to touch her loose, ringletted hair. 'Wicked. Just right for a vampire's bride. Viv told me that my father was dark. You obviously get this from him. I take after her.'

'Viv?'

'I always call my mother that. Everyone does. It's short for Vivien.'

'I know what it's short for.'

Vivien. Her father's mistress. Had he stayed at her hotel during a business trip? Is that when it had happened? And what kind of a woman was she?

'Oliver's dressed as a vampire, too,' she stammered, as if his name was a talisman against her father's secret life and the fair woman he had slept with, and the child resulting from this union. 'But not the Hammer House of Horror kind,' she rushed on. 'More the Anne Rice, elegant gentleman sort. Very sexy.'

'He is, and so are you,' Jack agreed, and lifted her hands to his lips.

His mouth barely grazed her skin, but the heat of his breath seemed to scorch. Her nipples tightened and her belly clenched. She was aglow with nerves and unwilling arousal. She trembled. He straightened up and slowly stroked the mock blood on her lips, tracing the soft curves with his thumb. She opened her mouth, her tongue flickering out, wanting to lick his fingers and draw them into the warm, wet cavity.

He made no attempt to do anything other than caress her lips, but she was unable to stop herself from leaning into him. Her breasts chafed against the supple leather, and her pubis lifted towards the pronounced fullness between his

legs. She'd only had one glass of wine, yet she felt intoxicated, her body urging her into a rash course of action, her mind struggling to maintain control. No man had ever made her feel like this before, not even Oliver.

'Who's the guy in red?' Flyte said, leaning her firm breasts against Oliver's shoulder as she reached for a gin and tonic.

'Jack Loring,' he said, handing it to her, ice tinkling in the glass. 'He's come from the States to work on the Transglobe project. A brilliant architect by all accounts. Odd thing is, he says he's Kim's brother, one of Jim Millard's indiscretions. She'd never even heard of him. I'll get to the bottom of it, investigate his background.'

'Intriguing,' Flyte murmured.

She could tell he was agitated. Having been his lover and friend for over a decade, if anyone could claim to know him, then it was her. Life had dealt her a cruel blow on the day that Kim had applied for a post at Oliver's office. She hadn't got the job, but had got him instead.

'She's the one, Flyte,' he had said. 'I'm going to marry her.'

Flyte had shed her tears in private. She later found that she liked Kim. She was a serious young woman, and very beautiful. Her mass of dark hair surrounded a heart-shaped face, and with clear grey guileless eyes and a slim, straight body, she had an air of vulnerability that had appealed to Oliver.

Oliver was outstandingly bright and had always been surrounded by clever people. He could have had his pick among any number of highly eligible women, but had chosen Kim. Flyte knew him to be bossy, but never unpleasantly so. He liked to organise his life and those in it. She sometimes chided him for taking Kim over so completely.

'She's much younger than you. Be careful you don't make her feel small,' she had warned.

‘What d’you mean, small?’ He had reacted so violently that she knew she had hit the mark. ‘There’s so much I want to show her.’

‘Teach her?’

‘Well, maybe,’ he had conceded.

‘She’s a woman, not a little girl.’

‘I know, but she has led a rather sheltered life.’

‘She went to college, took a degree, and had boyfriends before you.’

‘She’s never touched the seamy side. She’s not at all streetwise.’

Tonight Flyte felt again that same raw sense of loss. The gracious, old-world ambience of the recently purchased, riverside house in Richmond suited Oliver to perfection, as did his outdated evening garb of a vampire. His only concession to being one of the Undead was the black cloak lined with red satin swinging from his shoulders. His mid-brown hair straggled around his collar, one untidy lock falling forward to meet those peaked eyebrows and lupine eyes.

Flyte always thought of them as wolf’s eyes. Amber flecked with green, slanting slightly at the corners where tiny lines, sharp as incisors, radiated outwards. He was as lean and agile as a wolf, too, and his body, though spare, was strong. His appetite for sex was that of a sensualist. If it could be said that Flyte loved any man, then it was Oliver Buckley.

Now she walked with him towards Kim and the stranger who claimed to be her brother. Flyte perused him with an experienced eye.

Oh, yes, he was a hunk, all right, and he knew it, she concluded, glancing over him appreciatively. Hard-faced, hard-eyed, hard-bodied. Young, but not too young. Age differences never bothered her. She was firm-bosomed and supple-hipped, and worked hard to keep herself that way.

She took herself off to health farms, went to yoga classes, dieted, worked out, watched every inch and every pound.

She met Jack's eyes as they were introduced and read volumes. His glance flicked over her breasts which were tightly encased in a silver bustier, and went lower to where the shadowy triangle of her pubic mound could be seen through her black, chiffon skirt. Here was no innocent, he thought. He'd been round the block a few times. He knew about women, though maybe he didn't exactly like them very much.

A warning frisson prickled down Flyte's spine, coupled with instant animal attraction. Jack was potential trouble.

'So, Mr Loring, Oliver tells me you're Kim's brother,' she began, while a waiter in formal attire proffered the drinks on a salver.

'That's right. And won't you call me Jack?' he replied.

He was polite and perfectly controlled, but Flyte decided he didn't like being interrogated. She refused to play ball, asking, 'Have you been to London before?'

'Only on short visits. Now I'm going to settle here for a while. I'm house-hunting. I was hoping Kim would help me.'

'Why yes. She must,' Oliver insisted, politely but insincerely. 'What sort of property are you looking for?'

'Something unusual and challenging. An old church, perhaps, or a warehouse. They make fine conversions.'

'They're also sold for astronomical figures, if you can find one,' Oliver reminded him, leaning languidly against the pillar and sipping his drink. He was relaxed on the surface but like coiled steel inside.

Flyte noticed that Kim was jittery. Well, wouldn't you be, she thought, if a handsome young man had turned up out of nowhere and announced that he was closely related to you?

Jack smiled knowingly at her, as if daring her to say or do anything that might spoil his story.

'It's close on midnight, the witching hour, when water and bread are placed around the house for ghostly visitors and

mirrors are covered so the dead don't have to look at themselves,' Oliver said dramatically. 'But we're not yet fallen to the Grim Reaper so let's dance.' He led Kim away.

'That leaves us,' Jack said, following them with his eyes.

'It appears so,' Flyte answered dryly. 'Come on then. Let's see what you can do, Jack.'

In the reception room, now a ballroom, the carpets had been removed and the floor waxed. Strobe lights punctured the gloom and the crowd swung to the rhythm of salsa. Their costumes were weird and wonderful. Spectres, werewolves, zombies and *nosferatu* partnered witches, banshees, hell-hags and succubi in a macabre dance.

'They love it, don't they?' Jack murmured, his breath tickling Flyte's ear. 'These middle-class straights can't wait to embrace evil. But do they know what it really is?'

'Do you?' she countered, as he led her into the writhing, sweating crowd.

'Perhaps,' he answered. 'You do, too, I think.'

'Not evil. Depravity, maybe. As some might call it.'

'The uninitiated, you mean.'

She did not reply, refusing to be drawn. This man had the power to wheedle secrets from your soul and she had no intention of giving him any hold over her.

He held her tightly, and she could feel his cock pressing into her thigh like a fleshy finger. To start with, his hand was at her waist, then it slipped lower, and dragged her skirt into the crease of her bottom, mapping out the line of her G-string and the swell of her buttocks. The tip of one finger went even further, working into the tight pucker of her anus.

He smelt of expensive perfume, male sexuality and the feral odour of leather. He felt good. Strong and virile. He was in his prime, and so was Flyte. She speculated on how many orgasms she could extract from him. More than him, she reckoned. If he knew his stuff, that was.

Jack was exciting, a new stud on the scene. She liked to think she'd be the first to fuck him.

Above the low-cut bodice, her nipples rose, café au lait circles crowned by erect, pink tips. As they danced, these sensitive points rubbed against his leather-covered chest. She could feel his hot body, and a prick that was growing larger by the second. Flyte smiled, getting his measure.

He lowered his head and nibbled her ear, then her throat, sucking and biting. She gritted her teeth, refusing to let him know that he was arousing her. But he gave her no respite, no time to regain control. All she could sense was the music, the dizzying lights and plunging darkness, her hunger and him; nothing else.

His erection was nudging her belly, and she gyrated her hips against it. Not yet, she said to herself, not tonight. You'll dance to my tune, boy. You've disturbed Oliver, and I want to know what this is all about.

Almost as cunning as her, he reached a hand between their bodies, and rucked up her skirt. He cupped her mons and, parting her petals with a finger, found her hard nub and rubbed it until she was wet. He uncovered it, his thumb pushing the Lurex to one side, and his finger stroked her cream over the pearl-shaped node, sending tremors through her entire body.

The crowd around them were oblivious to what he was doing, blinded by the strobes, absorbed in their own amusements. Jack did not stop, stroking her firmly and bringing her to a quick climax.

'Jesus Christ!' she muttered.

Someone tapped Jack on the shoulder. He half turned, still with his fingers buried in her folds. Flyte looked up and recognised one of her clients from the Harlequin Gallery.

'Hello, Flyte,' he said. He was a large man, made larger by his hunchback costume. 'Can I have the next dance?'

She disengaged herself from Jack, and said breathlessly to him, 'Catch you later,' then slid into Quasimodo's hot, sweaty embrace.

Jack inclined his head, his face distorted by the whirling colours. 'You certainly will. I'll be around for a while yet.'

The music was deafening, yet even through the noise Flyte picked up on a tone in his voice that gave her goose bumps.

It was two o'clock in the morning, and Kim was dozing in her bed. Lily-shaped pewter lamps provided subdued light. The sheets were cool and fragrant, the pillows frilled with lace. It was like being in the heart of a flower, the foot and headboard alive with stylised leaves and stems.

Kim shared Oliver's love of art nouveau, so feminine in essence, expressing fertility and growth and life. They had been ecstatic to find this house filled with such perfect examples. Nothing much had been changed since the 1890s, except the heating system. Of course, these valuable items had pushed the price sky-high, but Oliver could afford it.

She dozed, but something kept dragging her back to reality: the disturbing announcement made by Jack Loring. She hadn't yet talked about it properly to Oliver, and this didn't seem to be the right moment.

He was wide awake, hyped up. He didn't need drugs to make him fly; all it took was stimulating conversation, the exchange of ideas, the companionship of intelligent people and the adrenaline rush he got from entertaining. Not exactly a party animal, he did, however, adore playing the host, making sure his guests enjoyed their visit.

He couldn't relax when the last of them had gone, though there were a few - Flyte included - who had decided to stay. The new drink-driving laws had turned even the most informal gathering into a house party.

'I like house parties like this,' he announced, emerging from the en suite bathroom, a towel looped round his hips. 'It must have been like that when this house was built: weekend parties, people being driven from town in their

carriages, or in those wonderful, early motors. Convenient little brass plaques on bedroom doors, so that everyone knew where everyone else slept. Frightfully naughty, but utterly discreet. No sex scandals making the headlines. I wish I'd lived then.'

'You might have been killed in the Boer War,' Kim reminded him.

'True. You're always so sensible,' he said, and dropped the towel and walked towards the bed, his erection bobbing. She wanted to feel him inside her.

'I thought you were the sensible one,' she teased, watching his erection's progress. It was long and thick, with his heavy balls swinging, one slightly lower than the other.

She glowed with satisfaction. The party was a job well done. Everyone had said how much they had enjoyed themselves. Now she needed to rest, though it was Sunday and she had no reason to get up till noon.

She had showered, too - just a quick one - and her skin felt soft under her hands. When she combed her fingers through her pubic bush they came away smelling of soap and the faintest whiff of her own personal essence. She was ready for Oliver.

'Yummy.' He drew in her smell approvingly, folding back the duvet and climbing in beside her. 'There's nothing quite like the scent of a woman in one's bed.'

'Any woman?' she asked, squirming against him, as he cushioned her head on his shoulder.

'Stop fishing. Not just any woman. You, darling.'

'But you've had other women. Why don't you ever talk about them?'

'I'm sure you don't want to hear details of my sordid past,' he replied with a chuckle, one hand cradling her breast, his thumb revolving around on the hardened nipple.

'I do. I do,' she answered eagerly, and fastened her palm round his cock, then moved it up and down, the foreskin

sliding back over the swollen end. 'Tell me about your first time.'

'You want to know how I lost my cherry?' His voice was low, his touch on her teat sending fiery darts down to the hardening sliver of flesh crowning her slit. His cock jerked in her fist. 'Good God, can I remember? It was so long ago.'

'Of course you can. Everyone always remembers the first time. Go on. Please. I love it when you tell me stories.'

'All right, if you insist. Well, I was eighteen; late to lose my virginity, but I'd dabbled here and there.'

'Go on,' she whispered, and wriggled down his body, lipping over his chest, lingering on the discs of his nipples, then circling his navel and burying her nose in the crisp, brown hair that coated his underbelly.

His bare thighs were warm against her breasts, his cock a smooth bar brushing her cheek. She turned her head and ran her tongue up its length, as if she were licking an ice-cream. It tasted even better than ice-cream, especially when she reached the tip and worked her tongue's point into the single eye, extracting a drop of pre-come juice.

'Oh, darling, I think I've died and gone to heaven,' he murmured, his fingers clenched in her hair, holding her to him.

She lifted her lips away from his cock long enough to demand, 'The story.'

'How the hell am I supposed to concentrate when you're doing that?' he growled. 'No, don't stop. I'll give it my best shot. I was staying with friends in New Orleans and had gone into the French Quarter on my own. It was a hot night and Royal Street was crowded. They were celebrating Mardi Gras, and there were carnival floats and jazz bands, bead necklaces and flowers thrown from the balconies, and the wonderful smell of Cajun cooking. They certainly know how to party down South.'

'A group of whores stood outside a bar. Music blared from the open door. Two were white with blonde hair, skirts so

short I could see their pussy lips, and big tits that strained against their T-shirts. Another was a Creole in jeans that fitted so tightly round the crotch that the seam disappeared between her slit. She was scrawny, and her little breasts were supported by a scarlet bra. Her nipples rose out of the cups.

'I was so hard it was difficult to walk. I was used to wanking - in fact, I couldn't leave it alone - and had touched up girls back home, but I was serious about my studies at Oxford, and didn't spend my time drinking and shagging like the other undergrads. But that night in New Orleans I was remembering the smell that had lingered on my fingers when I had tried it on with one of the barmaids, meeting her round the back of the pub and having a feel of her pussy. That smell seemed to be wafting from those women.'

'I can't believe you weren't always experienced,' Kim sighed, as Oliver dipped a finger between her legs, coated it with her juice and then lifted it to his nose.

'That's flattering, darling, but no, I was a shy boy, and she opened my eyes to pleasure.'

'Was it the Creole? I'm jealous. It should have been me,' Kim complained, reaching up to tweak his nipples.

'What typically female logic,' he teased, tugging gently at her pubic hair. 'Have I ever grumbled because you weren't a virgin bride?'

'I might as well have been. Neither Sam nor Jerry were much good in bed.'

'I don't think I want to be reminded of your former lovers,' he said edgily. 'Unlike you, I've no urge to hear the squalid facts.'

'It's exciting. And so is that,' she whispered, opening her legs to let his finger penetrate her slippery entrance.

'The girl was exotic, her hennaed hair falling in ringlets down her back, and her skin like olive velvet. I approached her nervously and her friends laughed. They called me names: "Pretty boy, baby doll". Their mockery made me

harder still. I didn't know what to do. Whores were an unknown quantity and I was afraid of picking up a disease. But they looked at the aching bulge in my trousers, and the girl I wanted shrugged and moved closer to me.

““You want to fuck?” she said, and grabbed my hand, holding it close to her breast.

‘I couldn't speak. My heart was hammering against my ribs, my cock throbbing painfully, and any movement on my part threatened to topple me over the brink and make me come in my pants.

‘I remember that she leant back a little, holding my eyes with her dark, predatory ones and saying, “What's the matter, little boy? You got a rocket there just waiting to be launched? You want to come in me?”

““Yes, please,” I stammered.

““You got money? I don't turn no tricks for free,” she said, and even her crudity was exciting.

‘Close up I could see she was not much older than me, but she was wise in ways I would never be. My awe of her and my raging desire increased as her fingers moved across my face, tickling my ear, while the tip of her tongue licked across her full, red lips.

‘My friends had warned me not to carry much cash, but I had about twenty dollars on me. Would it be enough to buy the favours of this sultry goddess? I had no idea of the going rate for a whore's services.’

‘I wonder how it feels to be paid for sex,’ Kim said, and pushed Oliver on to his back. Stretching her thighs wide and kneeling each side of him, she lowered her mouth to his sky-pointing cock.

She felt wanton, her breasts and clit tingling as she imagined herself to be the Creole girl. ‘It must be great to have such power over men, to rouse them, tease them, get them so worked up they'd pay a fortune to be milked of their spunk.’ Her crudity surprised her, but she was enjoying it.

'I can't tell you how she felt,' he said, almost purring with pleasure as she tongued the ridge of his foreskin. 'She didn't seem to find it degrading; she was enjoying her domination. All I know is that I had to have her. I was driven demented by the smell of her, the heat and my throbbing dick. If she had refused me, then I'd have had to stand there in front of them, expose myself and masturbate.'

Kim released her lips from him to say, 'But she didn't refuse you.'

'Oh, no. She took me into a dark alley and through a gate leading to a yard. It was cobbled and full of vines and flowers and the scent was overpowering. I could hear the clamour of the carnival close by, but couldn't think of anything but the pressure in my balls. We went up an iron staircase to a balcony, and through a door. The interior was dimly lit, one of those crumbling, once-splendid rooms typical of the Quarter.'

'And then? Tell me what happened next,' she begged, and cupped her hand round his bulky penis, working her fingers along its entire length. She went lower and felt his balls contract.

He reached between her legs, parted her swollen lips and rubbed back and forth over the rose-red bud. He started to speak again, and, despite the steadiness of his voice, Kim knew that her arousal added to his.

'She was a kind girl, and gentle with me. I just stood there, and she unbuckled my belt and tugged at the zipper tag. My cock sprang out like something possessed. I grabbed at her, wanting to plunge myself into her hot body.'

"Wait," she said, and I almost came as she rolled a condom up my prick.

'I tried to kiss her, and it was then that I learnt that whores don't kiss clients. She said a kiss was too personal, and that it was reserved for lovers or friends or children.'

'She undressed for me, slowly, unfastening her bra and letting it fall away from her breasts. Her nipples were large

and dark, set in wide, brown circles. Then she pulled her jeans down, and between her legs was a mass of black hair that almost hid her crack. I could smell her sweat and her pussy, warm and sensuous, in contrast to her cheap perfume.

‘She kicked off her shoes, got out of her jeans and then lay back on the tumbled bed. Her eyes were heavy-lidded, her body stretched out with a natural grace. In all my turmoil, I remember wishing I was a painter, able to capture that moment on canvas.’

Kim closed her eyes, visualising the dusky room, the bed, the naked whore, and the young Oliver, wanting, needing, his rampant cock a thing quite apart from himself.

‘Tell me how you felt when you put your cock in her,’ she said, holding and caressing it.

‘I couldn’t slow down. Once she had me between her legs, and my dick at her hole, that was it. She guided me in, I think. It’s a blur, and I’m afraid it didn’t last long. A couple of thrusts and I was there, coming into the condom violently.’

‘Like this,’ she murmured, and breathed on his cock, sucking it into her mouth. It swelled, filled her, and butted against the back of her throat.

He gasped, and grabbed her closer, his hips pushed upwards to meet her. She held him firmly at the base with one hand, the other hand caressing his tight, full balls, and swirled her tongue around his glans. His balls contracted, his shaft stiffened a little bit more, and he started to come, flooding her with his rich-tasting semen. It spurting from him once, twice, three times, and then he pulsed in her mouth before slipping his penis out and slumping down on the mattress, sighing deeply with relief.

‘Darling,’ he said, totally relaxed. ‘Give me a moment, well, more like a half hour, and we’ll do it again. You didn’t come and that’s churlish of me. I hate men who are bad-mannered in bed.’

'That's all right,' she said, knowing that Oliver wouldn't fall asleep beside her, snoring, as less considerate lovers tended to do. He would make sure she was satisfied. She could afford to carry on with the game a little longer.

'Did you pay her, Oliver?' she said, wiping his juice from her lips and chin.

'All I had. Twenty dollars.' He looked up, surprised.

'Will you pay me?'

'If you like. How much do you charge?' He was indulging her, entering into the fantasy.

She pretended to think it over, then said, 'How much have you got?'

Oliver reached for his wallet on the bedside table. 'Ten quid for a blow-job?' he offered.

'That's tight,' she fenced, feeling foolish.

'It's about right.'

'How do you know?'

'I don't. I'm guessing.'

She gave up then. It didn't seem natural to be bargaining with her own husband. 'Oh, Oliver,' she said. 'You know I love you, don't you?'

'Of course I do.'

'And do you love me?'

'Of course I do.' He ruffled her hair.

'Why d'you put up with me?'

'I've just told you why.'

'What are we going to do about him?' she asked, making patterns in his fine chest hair with her nail.

'Who?' Oliver sounded sleepy.

'Jack Loring.'

His arm tightened around her. 'Don't worry. I'll sort it.'

'Do you think he really is my brother?'

'Could very well be. You didn't know, darling, but your old man put it about a bit.'

This cut like a knife. Damn, she thought, it's going to hurt for ages.

Sensitive to her bruised feelings, Oliver soothed and petted her, playing with the wet warmth of her pussy, sucking her nipples, making her forget everything in the urgent need to reach her own climax. She came, crying out in a single, sharp gasp, her body racked with acute pleasure.

Afterwards she lay cuddled in his arms, her fingers in his hair, safe in that warm intimacy which she thought was the best part of marriage. But even as she caressed him, sleepily and fondly, she was thinking about Jack, speculating on this man who had so unexpectedly walked into her life.

Chapter Two

THREE IN THE morning. Lights burned over the empty London streets, reflected in puddles. It was cold and quiet. Jack reached Bloomsbury and turned his car into the car park of the Byron Hotel.

Elsewhere clubs would be buzzing and he was raring to go, but no: Oliver had invited him to tea at Glen House. 'Proper English Sunday tea at four p.m. precisely. Earl Grey and muffins, cucumber sandwiches and scones,' he had said in an irritatingly patronising way.

You asked for it, old boy! Jack thought sardonically, and ran up the steps to the Byron's entrance.

A manager was on duty. 'Can I get you anything, sir?' he asked from behind the reception desk.

'Send a pot of coffee to my room, scalding hot and black,' Jack said, picking up his key from the mahogany counter.

'Yes, sir,' the manager replied, then called across to the white-coated young man lingering in the foyer. 'Coffee for Room 30. See to it, Andy.'

'Yes, Mr Baird,' Andy said, glancing at Jack.

He's about nineteen, Jack thought. I noticed him when I checked in. Short and dark, nice body, neat tush, possibly Greek extraction. He's got bedroom eyes and that unmistakable sexual aura that makes women cream their knickers, and gets men of a certain persuasion going, too. He knows what his cock's for without a doubt.

Jack nodded, then made for the elevator. The Byron reminded him of his mother's hotel, which dated from the last half of the eighteenth century. There were many similarities: spacious rooms with lofty ceilings; red velvet drapes; crystal chandeliers; gilt-framed mirrors. It reeked of gracious living.