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Dominic, Viscount Lethbridge, eased out the open door of the ballroom onto a terrace that was almost as crowded as the dance floor. He vowed, again, that this was the last time his mother would talk him into attending one of these god-awful marriage-market affairs. The unattached females and their predatory mamas made this quite possibly the most dangerous place in England for an eligible, titled male. He looked around for Jeremy Benford, his best friend since their school days and a frequent partner in Dom's sexual misadventures. Knowing Benford, he'd managed to escape out here at least half an hour ago, with a toothsome widow no doubt.

Several young ladies grouped together at one end of the terrace turned in his direction with gleaming eyes and bashful snickers and Dom made a hasty retreat down the stairs into the garden, taking the first path he saw into the shrubbery. Thank God Merwell had a forest of trees back here to hide in. He'd look for Benford from there.

Once in the trees Dom searched the visible terrace for his friend to no avail. The trees followed the line of the house, and Dom rounded the corner to the side of the building. There were several lamps burning there, and another door from the ballroom. As Dom watched, a small figure furtively snuck out the door and then leaned back against the wall. It was a woman, a girl actually from the look of her plain white gown, one of the debutantes. Was she meeting someone? A young man, perhaps, for an assignation? Dom smiled in anticipation. He liked watching almost as much as participating.

Suddenly the figure stood away from the wall in alarm, the tense lines of her body telling Dom something was wrong. It was then the voices carried to him. Someone was coming. In the blink of an eye the girl ran from the house into the trees, several yards away from Dom.

He stood perfectly still, not wanting to reveal himself. His reputation was such that a virginal young lady of quality would probably swoon to find herself alone in the woods with him. He could see her more clearly now, and wondered if her white dress would give her away to the small group of young men spilling out the door.

She was pretty in an unconventional way. A little plump with large breasts, not at all the fashion, but Dom liked it on her. She looked as if she'd be a soft, pleasant ride. She'd seemed smaller when she came out the door, but on closer inspection she came to his shoulder at least. Her hair looked dark in the shadows of the trees, absorbing the wan moonlight that filtered through the leaves and reflecting it back as a shimmering gleam. That gleam intrigued him. What color was it? He liked brunettes, liked to see their long dark hair spread across the bed as he fucked hard into them, the contrast of dark hair and white sheets arousing.

He surprised himself with the thought. He never fantasized about these virginal little debutantes. It was an exercise in futility. They were too well guarded, and more often than not too ignorant of men to satisfy his fantasies. So why this one? She had intrigued him the moment she snuck out the door. He could barely discern her features in the dark, and yet he found his cock hard imagining fucking her in a room lit by moonlight, that same gleam in her hair as it streamed across his bed.