

# Educating His Elinor

By

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## CHAPTER ONE

*Merton Grange, Hampshire, 1820*

Elinor Kendall brushed aside a wisp of straw that blocked her view of the half-naked couple in the barn below. Her nose itched. She had the horrible feeling she was about to sneeze and reveal her presence perched above them in the hayloft. She held her breath, and then her nose, before burying her face in her pinafore to muffle the sound.

The woman pulled her mouth away from the man's rigid member. Elinor stifled a gasp. He was huge. The hard flesh gleamed in the filtered sunlight, reddened and engorged.

"What was that?"

The man looked around, eyes narrowed. "It's nothing, Olivia. Now open your mouth." He fisted his member, and thrust it towards the woman who knelt before him. When she hesitated, he grabbed a rope of her thick red hair, and jerked her head backwards.

"Winter, you're ruining my hair."

"If you don't start sucking, I'm going to come in it. How will you explain that to your husband?"

"Brute." Olivia opened her plump lips.

Winter held the woman's head and thrust into her mouth. Olivia moaned around his flesh. The perfect curve of his buttocks flexed as he pumped her face. His eyes were closed, his teeth clenched. A stray sunbeam illuminated the tawny mane of his hair. He was wild, and in that moment, beautiful. Elinor had never imagined he was hiding all that beneath his untidy clothes.

Winter pressed a hand to the back of the woman's neck, holding her in place. He strained towards her, while she licked and gulped, and then she collapsed, like an obedient slave girl before his brutal majesty. Elinor touched her fingers to her mouth. What did he taste like?

Olivia wiped her face, and smiled like a cat after a dish of cream.

Winter held out his member, still half erect. "Now lick me clean." His stern tone made Elinor quiver as she huddled in the hay above.

The woman bobbed to her knees and licked him thoroughly.

"Good girl."

Elinor heard something outside in the yard, voices nearing the barn. Winter did up his

breeches and shrugged into his coat, while Olivia re-laced her stays and buttoned her bodice. She scabbled on the floor for her pins and swiftly did her hair, with the ease of long practice.

"Will I see you tonight?" She stood on her toes to press a kiss against Winter's mouth.

He grasped her bottom through her skirts, and she gasped.

"We'll see, you little minx."

The woman laughed, and ran out of the barn. Winter reached into his breeches to adjust himself, and strolled after her, whistling.

Elinor fell back in the straw. Her brain whirled. She'd not dreamed that men and women did...that. She had lived in the country, so the basics of mating were no longer a mystery. But what she'd witnessed here was something else altogether. Her loins throbbed. She pressed her legs together to ease the ache. She felt hot and anxious and thoroughly wicked.

Winter had called that woman a "good girl." She felt quite sure that sucking a man's member was something only naughty girls did. It was all very confusing, and yet exciting. The air in the loft was warm. Elinor yawned and curled up in the hay. It seemed like a whole new world had opened before her.

#

Major Caine Winter smothered a yawn, as the Italian soprano reached for another high note. He hated sitting around with a bunch of insipid society types, even more than he hated opera. He pulled out his timepiece -- almost ten. If he could stand this for just a few more moments, it would be time for the tea tray. Then the men would hand the lighted candles to the ladies, and they could all go to bed.

The voracious Olivia would be disappointed when he failed to appear, but he'd promised his ward an early morning ride. He'd sooner disappoint a casual lover than his own lovely girl, who listened to the singer with rapt attention. Elinor loved music, just as she loved books and art. But thank Christ she was also a bruising rider.

Elinor looked up, as though she sensed his gaze, and smiled at him. A dimple appeared in one cheek, and he caught his breath. She'd grown up so much in the last year. When she'd left for school last fall, she hadn't that curve in her bosom. He shook himself mentally. No, that was wrong. Elinor was only sixteen, and he was her guardian, for Christ's sake. He made a mental note to look up those finishing schools in Switzerland. He couldn't have her in the house all the time, tempting her with innocence and sweetness.

She would be upset. Elinor had begged him to allow her to stay at home, but Winter knew that wouldn't work. He didn't trust himself around her.

The song ended, finally, and Elinor ran over to him, her smile bright.

"Wasn't she wonderful, major?"

"Quite."

Elinor's face fell. "You didn't like her."

"Of course, I did. It was a stirring performance." Winter tugged on a curl of her hair, and Elinor wrinkled her nose. "Where were you this afternoon? I didn't see you out playing bowls."

Something passed over her face. "I went for a walk in the shrubbery. It was hot, and I fell asleep on a bench."

"Tell me the next time you want to go out by yourself. I don't want you wandering off alone out there."

"In the wilds of the estate you mean?"

"Saucy. I'm serious, Elinor."

She pulled a face. "You're always so worried about my reputation. Maybe you should spend more time worrying about your own." She turned and flounced off. Two of the other girls joined her and they ran away together, giggling.

What the devil had she meant by that?

#

His hostess, Lady Avebury, handed Winter a teacup. He accepted it, repressing a shudder. He thought longingly of the brandy tucked away in his travel bag.

"Major! What the hell are you doing here?"

"Family visit. Avebury's my cousin. Couldn't get out of it." Winter shrugged. "At least Elinor is enjoying herself."

"The lovely Elinor. Where is she anyway?" Julian Beaufort, the Earl of Snow, and his closest friend, turned to look at the company.

"Blast it." Winter shoved his teacup at his friend and strode out of the room. He'd told the little baggage not to wander off again. He checked all the downstairs room, before finally running Elinor to ground in the billiard room. She laughed as she tried to line up her shot. Young Lord Henry stood behind her, guiding her arm, a little too close for Winter's comfort. He cleared his throat. The young people looked up, and Lord Henry hastily dropped Elinor's arm and moved

away.

"We are having tea, Elinor. Lord Snow was asking after you."

She bit her lip. "I'm sorry, sir. I'm coming." She smiled at Lord Henry, who bowed and turned back to the table where several other young people waited their turn. At least the brat hadn't been alone with the boy.

He gestured towards the door, and Elinor swept through like a duchess. Once the door closed, she hissed over her shoulder, "How could you embarrass me like that?" Then she headed for the stairs.

Winter grabbed her arm, and pulled her to a stop.

"You are sixteen years old and a guest in this house. I warned you not to wander off. You know there will be consequences."

She paled. "I wasn't alone."

"No, you were partnered with that rake Henry and his crew of reprobates. Those girls were no better, either. You must have a care, Elinor. I have no desire to see you wed to someone at age sixteen with a brat in the basket."

"You're crude."

Winter pulled her closer. "I really am. Go to your room and wait for me."

Elinor jerked her arm away and dashed up the stairs. He stared after her. Blast the girl.

"So that is Elinor. She's delightful, old man." Leighton Frost stood beside him, his eyes on Elinor as she mounted the stairs.

The major bared his teeth. "If you ever go near her, I will slice off your balls and serve them to you on a plate. Understood?"

Frost held up his hands. "You mistake me, major. My observation was meant solely as a compliment. I have no taste for the nursery."

"Comforting to know that even a perverse bastard like you has his limits." Winter started back to the salon. "Christ, I need a drink. Did you see Julian?"

"I did. He was selecting his bed partner for this evening."

"Oh? Who is it tonight?"

"Lord Sever's wife, a little brunette with a wicked eye."

"Good for him. And you?"

"The Merlow twins are here."

"Christ almighty. Both of them?"

"I merely do my poor best to keep the party from getting stale."

The major snorted. "The perfect guest, are you?"

"Always."

They found Snow in the dining room, staring moodily at the tip of his smoldering cigar.

"You look pretty grim for someone who's already wrapped up their cunt for the night."

"What? Oh, Audrey. She's a sprightly piece, no doubt. I've enjoyed her charms on a number of occasions." Snow took a long pull of his cigar. "It all gets a bit tedious sometimes."

Frost folded himself into a wing chair and pulled out his snuff box. "Doesn't everything, after the war?"

The major found a decanter and poured three glasses of the port left over from dinner. He rolled a mouthful around his palate and then handed the other glasses to his friends.

"War changes you, and not for the better," Winter said as he flung himself into a chair.

"So however did a reprobate like you obtain guardianship of a young girl like Elinor?" Frost flicked open his snuffbox with a fingernail, while the major regarded him with distaste. He loathed dandies.

"She is a distant connection. Her grandmother was my grandfather's niece. There was no one else, so I took the girl."

"What the major has left out is that Elinor's parents left her destitute, after they dragged her over Europe for most of her young life. When they died, the family lawyer tracked down Winter, and he agreed to be her guardian. He could have chosen not to, but you know our major. Ever the patriarch."

"Fuck off, Julian." Winter kept his tone amiable, but the scowl on his face should warn his friends to change the subject. Elinor was off limits to everyone, including himself. "So, Leighton, how's the company doing?"

Frost shrugged with the hauteur of an aristocrat, though his fortune had been made by a relative in some kind of manufacturing. "Shipping's a risky business at the best of times, though the profits are considerable."

"Still swimming in lard, then?"

Frost smiled faintly. "I've doubled the family fortune in the last ten years." He lifted a pinch of snuff to one nostril with a graceful turn of his wrist. "It passes the time."



The major regarded this affectation with disfavor. "Quite the beau, ain't you?"

Snow laughed. "Oh, he's exquisite."

Frost sneezed delicately and dabbed his nose with a handkerchief. "So kind of you both to notice."

The major stood and tossed back his drink. "I have to go. Elinor is waiting for me."

"Lucky you," Frost murmured.

"Stop taunting him, Leighton. It can only end in tears. Or blood." Snow sipped his port.

"A thousand pardons, major."

"Fuck you, Leighton." Winter left the room and strode toward the stairs. His lovely, naughty girl. His palm itched in anticipation. He was only doing his duty, wasn't he?

#

Elinor slammed her door shut. She paced the floor, fuming. How could he act like that in front of everyone? As if she was six instead of sixteen. She'd been having fun. Oh, that was not allowed either. The tyrant. After what she'd seen him do, and to someone else's wife? What a hypocrite.

The door swung open. Elinor turned, protest in every bone. Winter shut the door. He crossed his arms and looked at her. He waited.

She wanted to stick her tongue out at him, but didn't dare. Her guardian was a big man, several inches over six feet with wide shoulders and a muscular build. Elinor was a tall woman, but she barely reached his shoulder. She swallowed. She'd known exactly what would happen when she'd sassed him.

"Well, Elinor?"

She thrust out her bottom lip.

"I'm not sorry. You made a fool of me in front of those people."

Winter blew out a breath. "Taking proper care of my ward is my duty, just as it is your duty to obey me. Behaving in an appropriate manner does not make either of us fools. You, carrying on unchaperoned with a young man, does. A woman's reputation is a precarious thing."

Elinor snorted. "You should talk."

"That is enough, young lady." He walked towards her. "Bend over the bed."

Elinor's eyes flashed. "I will not."

The major ignored her. He grasped her arm, and placed a hand on her back, forcing her

into position. It didn't hurt. He was just so strong it made opposition nearly impossible.

She slumped on the bed. What was the point? If Winter decided he was going to spank her, it would happen, regardless of what she wanted. She started to pull up her skirts.

"What in hell do you think you're doing?"

Elinor turned her head and met Winter's furious gaze.

"You're going to spank me, so I'm pulling up my dress. You always spanked me bare."

She heard his indrawn breath.

"When you were a child, Elinor! You are a young lady now. Fix your skirts."

She complied, then waited for the first strike. It had been years since he spanked her. She closed her eyes, remembering him with that woman in the barn. Her thoughts were muddled, rife with confusing sensations.

Thwack. His first slap landed, stinging even through the layers of cloth. That brought her back to the present. He spanked her again, and then again. After ten strokes, he stopped, and bent down to look in her face. She turned away.

"Ten more, I think." And he spanked her again. This time, when he stopped, she just lay there, looking at him. He nodded and helped her up. She stood, her lips working, and then she burst into tears. She hated to disappoint him.

Immediately, he was all kindness. Winter scooped her up in his arms and held her on his knee. She cried for a moment, and he whipped out a large handkerchief. He wiped her cheeks with a tender hand, and then her eyes.

"Blow your nose."

She laughed a little and took the cloth from him.

"Now, Elinor..."

"I'm sorry I didn't listen and went off on my own. I'm sorry I wasn't careful about my reputation."

"And?"

"I'm sorry I was rude and disrespectful."

"Good girl. You are forgiven." Winter set her on her feet and brushed away a strand of her loosened hair. "Now get ready for bed. I'll see you in the morning for our ride."

"We're still going?"

"Of course. I wouldn't miss it." He smiled at her, his amber eyes warm with affection.

"Good night, then." When she was younger, her guardian would have hugged her and kissed her cheek. But he stepped back and walked to the door, without a backward glance.

Elinor sat down, wincing when her spanked bottom made contact with the bed. She'd been naughty and deserved her punishment, but she couldn't help wishing for something more. She pulled the pins from her hair. She could never tell the major what she'd witnessed in the barn. He would be shocked and angry, with himself, and probably with her as well. A girl could dream though.

#

Winter closed the door and leaned back. Christ, he was as hard as stone. He was becoming as perverse as that damned libertine Frost. When she'd started to pull her dress up, he'd nearly come in his breeches. He took a deep, calming breath. Switzerland, that was the solution. He'd take Elinor back home to Winterhill, and then go to London to make the arrangements. Then he'd make sure he was never alone with her again.

Olivia. She wanted a good swiving. He'd rid himself of his lecherous impulses in her ample and willing flesh. He'd be tired on the morrow, but it would be worth it. It was even necessary. Elinor must never suspect his sexual interest. It would ruin her trust, and he couldn't bear that. Winter walked along the corridor and around the corner, then knocked softly on the door. Needs must.