

The Science of Submission
An Erotic Steampunk Fantasy

By

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Chapter One

England, 1876

Lord Stefan Cavendish, the Earl of Whitehall, decided to pay a call upon a young man of his acquaintance. It was not entirely a social call, the Earl was toting a bag holding an invention that needed to be repaired. Its inventor called it a ‘Bun Burner’—a most clever gadget that not only toasted Stefan’s morning biscuit but then tossed it onto his plate. He feared he would be quite bereft without it and hoped that young Archibald Westerly, its creator, would be able to repair it while he waited. Archibald was a talented scientist and an inventor of note. Stefan was sponsoring him in the hopes that his multitude of mechanicals would one day pay off and make them both millionaires.

As he approached his destination, 51 Windsor Court in London, the smell of something burning tickled his nostrils. He stopped and looked about, but saw no smoke. *I hope the young lad hasn’t set fire to the house again*, he thought. Archibald took a lot of risks in the pursuit of his craft. Stefan raised his walking stick and rapped sharply on the front door. Soon the landlady appeared, a short, stout woman by the name of Mrs. Marsh.

“What is it then?” she called out sharply as she struggled to open the heavy wooden door. When she saw that it was a member of the nobility, the silly creature instantly adopted airs. “Your Lordship, welcome once again to my most humble establishment,” she said, attempting a deep curtsy. She got herself down but seemed to be unable to get back up. Being a gentleman, he held out his gloved hand and helped her to rise.

“Is young Master Archibald in?” Stefan asked, a silly question since the young man was rarely out. He handed Mrs. Marsh his calling card. She studied it reverently, running her thumb over the engraving on the ivory card stock.

“The lad is indeed in. He’s in the front parlor with his fiancée.”

“Fiancée?” Lord Cavendish lifted one perturbed eyebrow. He was not aware of any fiancée and most unhappy to hear of this turn of events. The young fellow did not need such a distraction from his work. Mrs. Marsh led the way, prattling on in her gravelly voice, which never failed to grate on his nerves.

He found his protégé seated in the rather shabby front parlor. The young man instantly stood and bowed to Lord Cavendish and then introduced him to the fiancée in question, a young woman by the name of Lady Marjorie Hamilton. She stood and extended her hand.

He bowed and kissed it and then frowned, recalling the family name. The deceased Hamilton patriarch had been a minor member of the nobility, a Marquis if he recalled correctly. “Of the Chesterfield Hamiltons?” he asked.

Lady Hamilton flushed and nodded. Stefan understood her discomfort. Being descended from that lineage was not something to be proud of. Rumor had it that generations of gamblers had depleted the family fortune. It was common knowledge that they were ruined aristocrats, fallen upon hard times.

Lord Cavendish handed his bag to the scientist, explaining, “My bun burner has sprung a sprocket, I’m afraid.” While Archibald eagerly started tinkering with it, happy to once again have one of his very first inventions back in his hands, Sir Stefan studied the young woman who was now an impediment to his becoming a millionaire.

Lady Hamilton appeared well enough turned out, given her family’s poverty. A lovely little thing, she flushed under his careful scrutiny. Although undoubtedly destitute, Marjorie still gave off the air of one of good breeding. Physically, she could not have been more than an inch or two over five feet tall, and had a head full of blond curls tucked up under a stylish bonnet. She had delicate features and a most becoming figure, with plump breasts and a womanly bottom that her full skirt only hinted at. She appeared much too high class for young Archibald though. Stefan presumed she had taken up with the fellow for the same reason he had, to cash in on his inventions, thereby restoring her family to their former glory.

He turned back to watch Archibald tinker. The young man’s appearance brought to mind a scientist gone mad; he was tall and gangly, his hair as usual a wild mane of orange curls. He appeared to have attempted to calm it with a comb but it was quickly resuming its usual tangled mess as he tinkered away on the bun burner with one of the many tools he always carried in his long white lab coat pockets.

While they sat silently, the door to the parlor opened and several knee-high robotics rolled into the room bringing the tea service. Stefan and Marjorie watched, fascinated, as the machines rolled to a stop and, with a great deal of grinding and whirring, set out cups and plates and napkins on the serving table in front of them. Mrs. Marsh was following along behind, carrying

the pot of tea and a plate of cookies. Apparently she did not trust the gadgets, having given them nothing of value to transport, and rightfully so as one of the machines rolled to a stop and crashed into the low table, threatening to knock over the entire thing. The landlady steadied the table with her knee as she set down the repast. Marjorie pointed to one of the robotics, which was sporting a maid's cap and apron, stifling a giggle behind her gloved hand. Mrs. Marsh poured and then backed out of the room after once again curtsying to the noble assemblage, the robotics rolling after her like little ducklings.

Stefan and Marjorie regained their composure, carrying on as if the sight of small mechanical beings serving tea was a common one. As they consumed their nourishment, Stefan attempted small talk with the girl. "I say, Lady Hamilton, how did you come to make the acquaintance of young Archibald?"

"We were introduced at the science exhibition held in Grover Park last fall," she explained, giving him a winning smile.

Lord Cavendish raised one haughty eyebrow. "Forgive me madam, but you don't strike me as the scientific type."

"Oh, but I am, Lord Cavendish!" she corrected him. "I've always been fascinated by science; always, since the beginning of time, and particularly Archie's work." She smiled admiringly at her increasingly unkempt suitor, who now sported a streak of oil on one cheek. "Archie dear, stop for a moment and drink your tea."

Archibald lifted his head and smiled endearingly at the two of them. He was quite a sweet fellow but possessed few social skills. "Forgive me," he said to no one in particular and set aside the bun burner. "I'm afraid I'll need to keep the gadget for a few days, Lord Cavendish," he needlessly added. The device was now in pieces, with whirligigs and sprockets spilling out of it. Marjorie handed her fiancé his cup of tea, which she had taken the liberty of adding milk and sugar to. Archie sipped it carefully and began to talk.

"I am sure you are both most interested in how the time machine is coming." Stefan and Marjorie looked at one another surprised. Each had thought they were the only ones aware of Archibald's ultimate invention, which he called the 'Time Trekker'.

"I am Archibald's sponsor," Lord Cavendish explained to the young woman, watching her careful smile dim. Clearly she had not been aware that Archibald had sponsorship. Her

beautiful eyes clouded at the realization that this meant that any profits from his inventions would have to be shared, undoubtedly most unwelcome news.

“His sponsor. Of course,” she murmured politely, her smile once more firmly in place, taking a sip of her tea. She studied Lord Cavendish over the edge of her cup. He was a tall man with a powerful build appearing to be in his mid-30’s. He was clean shaven with dark hair and most elegant with his morning coat and polished cravat, several rings upon his manicured fingers. No one would have mistaken him as anything but a nobleman of the highest ranking. There was currently a sneer upon his handsome face though, which gave him an air of cruelty. She realized that she had met her match. The man sitting across from her, watching her intently, was as interested in her fiancé’s unfolding fortunes as she.

“The machine is coming along splendidly,” Archibald announced, reaching inside his pocket to retrieve an elaborate set of goggles. They were most unusual, appearing to be constructed of both iron and brass, with gold scrolls at the temple. The lenses extended quite far off the face. Both Stefan and Marjorie leaned forward, keenly interested. On closer inspection, one of the lenses appeared to be a compass. Archibald stood and led both of them to the front window that looked out over the house across the street. He adjusted a lever on the side of the glasses and they began to whir and ping. He handed them to his fiancée saying, “Ladies first.” She held them to her face and looked out the window.

“What am I looking at, darling?” she asked.

“What do you see?” he inquired playfully, smiling over her head at Lord Cavendish.

“I no longer see the house across the street, just some bricks lying on the ground.” She pulled away and handed the glasses back to Archibald and he handed them to his sponsor. Lord Cavendish eagerly peered through them. He instantly realized what he was seeing, the townhouse across the street before it was built. There were piles of bricks lying on the ground and workmen stacking building materials.

Archibald explained. “With these glasses you can see into both the past and the future. They are an integral part of my machine. First you focus in on the place and time you wish to visit and then the machine takes you there.”

“And how far along is this machine?” Lord Cavendish inquired, his patience wearing thin. He was growing weary of having no return from his sizeable investment. Archie was tinkering with the goggles, moving the lever about and then handed them back to his fiancée.

“The goggles are the first, most crucial part of it,” Archibald explained. “After all, we can’t travel through time until we know where we are going, can we?”

Lady Hamilton once again donned the goggles and peered through them. “Why, what am I seeing?” she cried. “I can’t take it in, it appears to be large buildings soaring to the sky and some sort of mechanical bugs moving about on the ground. Oh, there are people inside! The bugs are some sort of carriage, but where are the horses?”

Lord Cavendish was keenly disappointed when the goggles suddenly began to smoke and some sort of sprocket sprang loose and fell to the ground. He grabbed them from Marjorie and held them to his face but the glasses had gone dark.

“What did you see? Explain to me exactly,” he hissed at the young woman, grabbing her by the upper arms and giving her a shake.

Lady Hamilton looked shocked to suddenly find herself being accosted by an angry Lord Cavendish. She looked to her fiancé for help, but he was oblivious to both of them, chasing the sprocket that fell from the goggles across the floor. He returned to Lord Cavendish, who by this time had regained his composure and released the young woman, apologizing with a bow for manhandling her. He reluctantly handed the goggles over to the young scientist.

“Forgive me, sir, but as you can see work on the Time Trekker has its challenges,” Archibald said as he retrieved the goggles. “This glimpse into the past and the future was a tantalizing incentive, was it not? The premise is somewhat complex, but to simplify it, the machine is based on centrifugal force. Turn one way fast enough and one returns to the past, go the other way and one spins into the future. I believe that I am on the right track. The goggles just confirmed it.”

“Oh dear, It sounds rather nauseating,” Lady Hamilton replied, taking her seat once again and fanning herself with her handkerchief. She watched Lord Cavendish carefully, his passionate display had taken her by surprise. It had been a fascinating glimpse into the soul of the man that lay so carefully hidden beneath his impeccably-groomed, aloof exterior.

Lord Cavendish held his handkerchief up to his mouth, trying to still the bile rising up the back of his throat. He was keenly disappointed at having missed out on the opportunity to look into the future. It did not take a genius to realize that one could make a great deal of money by glimpsing the future and investing accordingly.

“I don’t believe I would want to visit the future even if I survived the trip,” Marjorie went on to say thoughtfully, shaking her head from side to side. “Everything was going by so quickly. I imagine it would be most unnerving.”

“Yes, I suppose the trip would be somewhat unpleasant but well worth it in the end,” Archibald replied. “Think of it, my dear; why just the possibility of being able to examine future inventions boggles the mind! Why, the technology alone would be fascinating.”

“And when do you expect to have the goggles operational again?” Stefan asked, trying to keep his voice even.

“Soon,” Archibald replied. “By the end of the day tomorrow, I’m sure of it,” he promised.

“Remember, darling, you are coming to services with my family tomorrow morning and then over for Sunday supper,” Marjorie reminded him.

Archibald smiled lovingly at his fiancée, “You are so good for me, my dear, getting me away from my laboratory on a regular basis.”

Lord Cavendish again felt the bile rising in his throat. The situation was rapidly becoming intolerable. It was outrageous to ponder the fact that instead of spending the rest of the weekend repairing his goggles, the young man would be paying social calls. Stefan had no patience with this unfolding scenario. He vowed to put an end to this turn of events, but how to motivate Archibald to work harder while discouraging Lady Hamilton from her pursuit? He sat down across from the young woman and studied her as he considered his course of action.

Archibald’s guests lingered longer than they should have, neither wanting to be the first to leave. The sky had darkened imperceptibly as they emerged from 51 Windsor Court. Being the gentleman that he was, Lord Cavendish offered to escort Lady Hamilton to the hired hack stand. His motives were not entirely selfless; he wished to have a word with the young woman. Perhaps if he pointed out the obvious, that Archibald’s time would be better spent devoted to his inventions rather than socializing, she might understand. She seemed to be an intelligent young woman, he was sure she would see the logic of his argument. As he placed himself between the young lady and the street, they began to stroll down the sidewalk. Never being one to waste time on pleasantries, Stefan dove right in.

“Lady Hamilton,” he began.

“Marjorie, if you please,” she corrected him. Stefan did not acknowledge this, he had no intention of calling her by her Christian name. Young women of today were too modern for his taste.

“As you know, Archibald’s work requires a great deal of his undivided attention, Lady Hamilton. Surely you can see that spending his time socializing with you and your family will cut into his productivity.”

Marjorie turned and looked at him sharply. Clearly, his lordship was motivated by one thing and one thing only, greed. The man was a fool if he thought that Archie’s work was going to pay off anytime soon. She wondered how much he’d invested in her fiancé to date. She doubted that Archibald was keeping a careful accounting.

She cleared her throat, “Surely this visit showed you that it will be quite some time before one of Archie’s inventions is going to be stable enough to turn a profit, my lord. Even a man as logical as yourself must know that a young man cannot live on work alone, he has to have a well rounded life.”

They had reached the hack stand, Lord Cavendish tipped his hat and held the door open for her.

“Shall we share the hack, my dear? My treat,” he offered, watching her carefully. He saw relief flood her eyes, no doubt the cab fare would have stretched the limits of her pocketbook. He helped her up the steps and into the carriage. As her leather, high heeled boot peeked from beneath her skirts to take the top step, he felt a foreign sensation welling up deep within. He realized to his surprise that he’d become aroused by the glimpse of ankle that had flashed briefly before her foot had once again disappeared beneath her skirts as she took her seat. He followed her inside the cab and took the seat opposite.

“I beg to disagree, my dear. Surely a young woman as astute as yourself knows that time is money. Instead of working on his goggles tomorrow, Archibald will be visiting with your family; a visit which will, no doubt, lead to further invitations to yet more social engagements.”

“Yes, my lord,” she murmured, flashing a playful look at him with her beautiful blue eyes. “I hope to be spending a great deal of time with my fiancé. How else will we forge a bond that will see us through the years to come?”

The years to come, her words echoed through his mind. Lord Cavendish pursed his lips, displeased, and looked over at the young woman who was smiling triumphantly at him.

Marriage, children, these things would slow Archibald's work down almost to a standstill. He was not pleased, not pleased at all. Despite his best attempt to contain himself, he snapped.

"If you were my daughter, I would turn you over my knee for a well deserved spanking, young lady," he thundered, glaring at Marjorie with his most intimidating expression.

Marjorie stared at his lordship, shocked beyond words. Finally she found her voice. "A – a spanking ... How dare you, sir!" she said, blushing furiously. Her temper flared and she found herself, perhaps unwisely, declaring her intentions. "I strongly suggest that you treat me with more respect, Lord Cavendish. I intend to become Mrs. Archibald Westerly and you will be dealing with me for many years to come. That is until I can find a way to end your association with my future husband. It will be a long time indeed, if ever, before you profit from my fiance's hard work." *Never, if I have anything to say about it,* she thought to herself.

The two glowered at one another as the horses drew their carriage towards the address the young woman had given. Stefan unnerved her by smiling slowly as he imagined turning her over his knee, lifting her skirts, applying his hand sharply to her curved bare buttocks. She would be singing a different tune by the time he finished with her. Right then and there he began to devise a plan whereby he would have the beautiful Lady Hamilton at his mercy and out of Archibald's way.

The hack pulled up in front of a rather shabby townhouse. It was in a good neighborhood and had probably belonged to the family for generations, but it was rundown and in a sad state of disrepair. Lord Cavendish was surprised that it had not been sold off to pay gambling debts, perhaps it was tied up in trust? He decided to see if the taxes on the villa were paid up to date at the first opportunity.

His composure restored, Lord Cavendish opened the door of the carriage and stepped down. He helped Lady Hamilton alight, although she had been reluctant to take his hand to descend the steps. She pulled her gloved hand back as soon as she reached solid ground. He bowed and tipped his hat, his brown eyes glittering at the young woman in a predatory way.

Lady Hamilton walked away from him without a backward glance. She knew she should have thanked him for the carriage ride but could not bring herself to give him the satisfaction. She strode in to the townhouse and slammed the door behind her, locking it. She leaned back against the door and suddenly felt as if the life were draining right out of her.

“Welcome home, Marjorie. There’s tea in the parlor,” her little sister Hilary said, giving her a buss on the cheek in greeting. “How was Mr. Westerly?”

“I have just met the rudest man,” Marjorie declared. “He spoke to me most disrespectfully.” At Hilary’s surprised expression, she added, “Oh, Archie was fine. I’ll tell you all about it at tea.” Hilary did not get out as often as Marjorie did. She was still underage and could not leave the house without an escort. The ways of the world were a great mystery to her and she always enjoyed hearing about Marjorie’s outings.

Marjorie thought about Lord Cavendish as she was sipping her tea, tuning out her mother and sister as they prattled on about their boring day. Clearly, she and he were locked in mortal combat over her fiancé. She, however, had a weapon that his distinguished lordship did not possess. She had begun to awaken sensations within Archie, a thirst that only she could quench. A touch of her hand to the side of his face, a brush of her bottom to the front of his pants, the press of the side of her breast to his arm, these small things had made him quite stimulated. It seemed her fiancé was a virgin and long overdue for physical intimacy.

Marjorie was a woman of experience. She had been engaged once before to a distinguished doctor and had allowed certain intimacies with her fiancé, hoping to bind him to her before he discovered the state of her family’s finances. She had been quite bereft when he’d broken their engagement upon learning of her lack of a dowry. When she had seen Archie at the science exhibition, she knew that she’d found the perfect man. His inventions had been quite impressive, and he was an innocent, completely without guile. She knew he would be putty in her experienced hands. Within a very short time she had won his heart and he had proposed without realizing he was doing so. She had twisted his words of affection, pretending to misunderstand that he was just sharing his happiness at knowing her. He was too honorable a young man to announce that he had not been proposing at all, instead he had gone along with it, as she knew he would. Yes, she nodded her head in satisfaction, she would have him walking down the aisle before he knew what hit him, the sooner the better.

Marjorie’s circumstances were quite dire. It had taken the last of her inheritance, a pitiful stipend, to create a wardrobe that would show her off to the best advantage. With her voluptuous figure and pretty face, she was her family’s last and best hope for respectability. She was well aware those assets would not last forever. At twenty-two years of age, she had no doubt that the bloom was about to fall off the rose.

A thought occurred which made her smile. She probably did deserve a spanking! She had no intention of letting it be by Lord Cavendish's hand though, he both frightened and excited her. He was devilishly handsome, his family name above reproach, one of the wealthiest of the landed gentry. His commanding manner unnerved her. It was as if he could see right through her. She decided then and there to have as little to do with him as possible until after she and Archie were safely wed. Then she would excise him from their lives.

On second thought, his income could be important to them. She decided she would play him, use the same tricks she had used on Archibald to keep him titillated until they had gotten as much money from him as possible. Then she would get rid of him. Once Archibald was receiving her experienced affections on a regular basis, he would do whatever she said. She would rule their household and their lives and have a great deal of fun spending his income as his inventions began to pay off.