

## CHAPTER 1

Fair to say that Prinny had done himself proud when he and old Henry Holland rebuilt Carlton House. By all accounts our noble Prince of Wales had spent upwards of £60,000 of his old man's pelf on turning the original run down, rambling residence into an opulent neoclassical palace decorated in the style of Louis XVI, hung with a collection of magnificent paintings, and stuffed to the gunwales with his favourite Chinese and Japanese porcelain and other objects d'art. And, for a salty sea dog like me, nearly twenty years in the Navy and brought up on the wild Essex saltmarshes, I confess that seeing the house at close quarters for the first time took me right aback. I gazed open mouthed as the Hackney coach within which I was travelling that evening clattered onto Pall Mall and drew up in front of that magnificent colonnaded portico, wondering, and not for the first time, how I had come to be mixing in such exalted company.

It was the spring of 1802, and at that time (if I may paraphrase something that the mad, bad Lord Byron was to say some years later) I had awoken to find myself to be somewhat of a hero. You see, the previous July, just a few days after Saumarez had served out a drubbing to the French and Spanish fleets at the second battle of Algeciras, I had effected the capture of a Spanish 32 in a singular, albeit relatively minor, single ship action off the Straights of Gibraltar and it seemed that this feat had brought with it a good deal of popular acclaim. As to the exact circumstances of this happy occurrence I will say that, after a brief period ashore in '95, I had shipped aboard HMS *Eros* for a three year cruise to the West Indies which, though largely uneventful (in naval terms, at least - I myself having had a devilishly exciting time partaking of all manner of debauchery in the fleshpots of Kingston and Port Royal) nevertheless resulted in my being appointed Commander of the *Liberté*, a captured French 16 gun brig sloop later renamed HMS *Bacchus*. A trim little barky, *Bacchus* was exceeding swift when running and highly manoeuvrable, both qualities proving right handy when we were shortly thereafter transferred to the Mediterranean fleet and eventually came to fall foul of the Spanish frigate, *Mozza*

*Dispuesta*. By rights the sheer weight of metal carried by the Don should have meant the end of us, but we made good use of false colours in a legitimate *ruse de guerre* which enabled us to come right close before revealing our true identity. And, as I say, *Bacchus* was taut and yare so that we were thus able to evade the enemy's broadside and get in alongside her, right under her batteries. This meant that, with our guns fully elevated and double-shotted, we were able to pound the Spaniard's hull to splinters whilst the best her people could do was to shoot through our spars and rigging. When forbye we contrived to board, blood was running freely from the frigate's scuppers and the Dons were sore depleted in numbers so that they were soon put to flight, enabling us to tear down the *Moza Dispuesta's* flag and demand her immediate surrender.

Damned lucky, you might think, and for sure I for one would not dispute that fact. In truth, I was aware that Dame Fortune had been inclined to favour me for some while. But, be that as it may, the taking of the *Moza Dispuesta* was hailed as a great victory, Commander Roger Ellis of the *Bacchus* was quickly made post off the back of it, and then packed off back to England to await further orders, and perforce a new ship. And thus it was that I arrived back in London in November 1801 to be generally lionised and *fêted* all around town. Why, scarcely a day passed without an invitation or two arriving addressed to me at my rooms in Fenton's Hotel on St James's Street by some of the most fashionable and well respected ladies in society (and some of the more disreputable, too, it must be said) all of them eager to hear details of my heroics.

It was in this way that I came to know Lady Charlotte Mountjoy. Frank, flirty, and just shy of forty, Charlotte, the wife of Sir Hugo Mountjoy, the Tory Member for some godforsaken backwater up in Northamptonshire, was urbane, elegant, and insanely beautiful. Mark you, she could also, on occasion, be cruel and hard hearted; and she had the morals of a Covent Garden Nun, God love her, caring not one jot about what she or other folk did, provided all concerned were discreet about it. I wanted her from the moment I first saw her in the drawing room of her house in Piccadilly and it was evident from the wolfish glances she cast in my direction that Charlotte was of the same mind; the upshot being that she and I had been engaged in an exciting and frenetic dalliance e'er since. Those who knew me when last I spent time in our fair Capital might well be shocked by this as I was in those days damnably priggish and, like the prophet Isaiah, much, much holier than thou. But the events of one wild summer spent in the remote Essex village of Canewdon had unlocked certain feelings within me that had been hitherto suppressed, and my experiences with the people there had taught me right well that

to indulge freely in the physical manifestations of love and sex, always provided that no harm be caused to anyone as a result, was no sin and was, on the contrary, an essential part of nature's cycle of birth, death and rebirth, so there.

But what of Charlotte's poor husband, you will undoubtedly ask, were we not by our adultery causing harm to that worthy gentleman? And mayhap you are right. Indeed, I had once heard it said in an extraordinary sermon delivered by the vicar of Canewdon that, whilst fornication outside the bounds of wedlock might be celebrated as part of the very order of creation, the act of adultery is a sin that can lead to scars and wounds that cut deeper than any blade. But Charlotte and I were e'er at great pains to maintain a veil of secrecy about our affair and, thus far, keeping any hint of our liaison from her husband had been but a simple matter as Sir Hugo was wont to spend long hours away from home, either sitting in the House or gambling at the tables in White's. And so, to my eternal shame, and on the premise that what he did not know would do him no harm, I gave but little thought to my cuckolding of the honourable member, or to the likely consequences should he suddenly become aware of his being so hornified.

Somewhat *naïvely* however, we also placed some degree of trust in the discretion of Charlotte's close circle of friends whom, being a fast set themselves and well versed in the arts of seduction and wantonness were, or so she maintained, well used to keeping each other's confidences. Among these rather dubious people were numbered certain prominent members of *le bon ton* and some other celebrated courtiers of the day, including that sneering little toad eater George Bryan, or as he liked to call himself, 'Beau', Brummel. In addition, there was the celebrated courtesan Harriette Wilson and the aristocratic Russian, Olga Alexandrovna Zherebzova, both of whom were enthusiastic lovers of the Prince of Wales, and of course there was also Fat George himself, a man openly dedicated to sensual pleasure and notoriously careless of the feelings of others.

It was this association with the Prince that had led to me being invited to Carlton House on that fateful night of 29 April. As if two mistresses were not enough for him, I had become aware that Prinny had been sniffing around Charlotte for some while (although so far only, I'm glad to say, to be soundly rebuffed) and he had lately asked her and her unmarried sister-in-law Emily, a lovely girl of around twenty five years of age who was possessed of a voluptuous figure and a roving eye, to arrange a celebration for him in honour of the final ratification of the Treaty of Amiens. It was to be a wonderful, and very unusual, banquet in the Oriental style, Charlotte told me, and would be an experience like no other. I

must come, she said, and i'faith I was pleased to accept her invitation, if only to make sure that my new wife in water colours was kept out of the Prince's greasy clutches.

The Treaty of Amiens effectively ended our country's war with revolutionary France and had been greeted with great joy throughout the land. Before making my way to Carlton House I had been present at St James's Palace Gate where George Harrison, Norroy King of Arms, stood to read the royal proclamation of peace. This reading being completed, a troop of Life Guards advanced to clear the way for a grand procession of constables, bailiffs and other officers all decked out in full regalia to Charing Cross, accompanied by a discordant cacophony of drums and trumpets. I followed and, on reaching Charing Cross, saw Mr Bigland, the Richmond Herald, read the royal proclamation again before the procession lumbered on to the gates of Temple Bar. The thousands of cheering spectators who had lined the streets through which the procession passed fell silent as trumpets were sounded and the Blue Mantle Pursuivant of Arms rode up to the gates, hammering on them with his cane to demand entry into the City. I waited amongst the crowd until the gates reopened to allow the procession to pass through on to Chancery Lane, and thence to Cheapside and the Royal Exchange, where the Lancaster Herald read the proclamation for the last time to universal acclaim from all those gathered around.

I will admit though that my own mood did not quite match that of the general populace. In the late afternoon as the crowd began to disperse, full of excitement for the splendid displays of illuminations and fireworks that were to take place that night all over the metropolis, and as I myself headed back to Fenton's to prepare for my own evening's entertainment, I could only but mourn the loss of prospects that attended the end of the conflict. Nine years of war had been good to me and I thanked my lucky stars that I had been confirmed post before peace was declared - but, in terms of my career, the future was now starting to look increasingly bleak. I had e'er suffered from a lack of interest or influence in high places and without further opportunity to make a name for myself at sea I was like to languish on shore for ever more. That is unless I took service with John Company, of course, which was always an option, and one which could very often prove to be considerably lucrative. But I was a Navy man through and through and despite my lack of patronage I had high ambitions in the Service. Perhaps this new association with the Prince of Wales might be turned to my advantage, I mused, as I got myself up in full fig: gleaming white waistcoat, breeches and stockings, blue coat trimmed with gold lace and brass buttons,

and, sitting proud on my right shoulder, the single plain gold epaulette denoting my new rank. Well, I thought, as I buckled on my (beautiful, but useless, it being blunt as Old Harry) fifty guinea sword that had been presented to me by the Lloyd's Patriotic Fund in recognition of my gallant conduct in the capture of the *Mozza Dispuesta*, it was worth considering, for sure.

I was still contemplating this intriguing possibility as, with my new fore and aft bicorne hat tucked underneath my arm, I alighted from the Hackney outside Carlton House and entered through the portico into the Great Hall, with its high vaulted ceiling and imposing columns flanking the wide double doorways that led into the main apartments. Almost immediately I was met by a gaggle of liveried servants who took my hat and sword and hustled me through into the Crimson Drawing Room - a large room that had evidently acquired its name from the acres of crimson satin damask draperies that hung from the cornice and festooned the windows. Huge chandeliers descended from a ceiling decorated with gilt neo-stucco work, a black marble chimney piece dominated one wall, and a blue velvet carpet covered the floor. Many of the guests had already arrived, some lounging on the red and gold chairs and settles that were situated around the room, and others standing to admire the fine mirrors and artwork on show between the windows, or the myriad ornaments and statuettes that were set forth upon any available surface. I spied George Brummel at the far end of the room deep in conversation with the Prince. Brummel was dressed in his customary fashion: a modest blue coat, white waistcoat and stock, ludicrous black 'trousers' of his own invention that reached only down to his ankles so as to display his hideous striped silk socks and black slippers. The Prince, in contrast, was resplendent in an unashamedly gaudy version of that which was then known as the 'Windsor uniform': a dark blue frock coat with black cuffs, gold frogging, and Brandenburg embroidery.

Several ladies were also present. Harriette and Olga were there, of course, together with several other young tits, all with their hair arranged *à la Titus* in imitation of Lady Caroline Lamb, and sporting the latest fashion in short-waisted dresses of white, almost transparent, muslin which clung deliciously to their bodies to provide more than a hint of what lay beneath. Scanning the room with an appreciative eye I was pleased to see Charlotte break off from conversation with a young officer of the Foot Guards and advance to greet me.

"Ah, Roger," she exclaimed, flashing me a brilliant smile. "It is so lovely to see you. And you look quite the dashing blade in your new uniform. Why, the ladies will find it devilishly hard to

keep their eyes off you!”

“Whilst I myself will only have eyes for you, Lady Mountjoy,” I responded gallantly, making a leg.

And, b’Gad, this was no idle flim-flam. I most certainly did have eyes only for her, for though she was *coiffured* in a similar style to the other ladies of the party and, like them, she was also clad in a gown of white muslin, Charlotte, supremely confident in her status amongst her peers, had chosen this night to make an outrageously daring statement with a dazzling display of nudity *à la grecque* unequalled even by any of David’s painted *Sabines*. Her neckline, cut low, fully revealed her alabaster bust, but, where others might have been content to end there, Charlotte’s strategic positioning of the thinnest of layers of translucent gauze across her bosom had allowed her to afford her admirers full view of those most bounteous bobbies surmounted as they were by a beautifully matched pair of slightly raised nipples, artfully rouged for maximum visibility. And her skirts..! Worn *sans chemise* or petticoat, the thin fabric of Charlotte’s dress had clearly been dampened so that it adhered tightly to the contours of her hips, belly and buttocks, working its way between her well-formed legs whenever she moved to render in stark relief the delicately enticing space between. Damme, if the effect was anything less than completely breath-taking.

“You look positively ravishing, m’dear,” I whispered. “Must we stay to endure this tiresome dinner? I ache to get you alone.”

“Have patience, Roger; there will be time enough for that later. Besides, I think that you may be pleasantly surprised by the entertainment this evening.”

“H’rumph!” I snorted, sulkily. “I’d much rather be entertained by you any day, Charlotte.”

“We shall see how the evening progresses,” replied Charlotte, tapping my arm with her fan. “Hmm, I do believe everyone is now here. Time to make a start, I think.”

And so saying she turned to address the room, steadfastly ignoring me as I ventured a quick squeeze of her stern.

“Ladies and gentlemen, if it please you to repair to the Circular Dining Room you will find that dinner is ready to be served.”

That this was to be a select gathering was clear from the fact that it was only fourteen of us that trooped through into the Circular Dining Room. In the centre of this room, which, like the drawing room, was brilliantly lit by several enormous silver and crystal chandeliers suspended from a domed ceiling finely

painted in bright blue and white to resemble a cloudy sky, a set of heavy blue velvet curtains had been rigged so as to fully enclose a large part of the floor within. The impression given out by this imposing structure was not unlike that of a gigantic four poster bed and I confess that it fair piqued my interest as to what the exact nature of this ‘experience like no other’ might be. And indeed, my curiosity was further aroused by the presence of a trio of blind fiddlers at the far end of the room who had taken to tormenting the catgut as soon as we entered. It struck me that mayhap we were to be treated to a performance of *risqué* attitudes such as those that had been recently popularised by the notorious Emma Hamilton.

Once we were all congregated in front of the drapes, Charlotte nodded to a squat little bald fellow who was sitting to one side, clad in naught but a meagre piece of cloth draped about his loins. In response, this curious half naked minikin produced a brass gong that was almost as big as he, and fell to belabouring it for all he was worth. At this apparent signal, there emerged two prime articles, white faced and dressed in richly embroidered silk robes, belted around the waist in the Japanese style and with sides slit seductively to mid-thigh, their long hair piled high upon their heads and secured in place by ivory pins. These two cockish chick-a-biddies moved to the front of the improvised ‘stage’ and stooped to lay hold of the edges of the curtains, slowly drawing them back to disclose the secret within.

The wondrous sight that then met our eyes first elicited a chorus of sighs and sharply drawn gasps of astonishment that was quickly followed by a ripple of enthusiastic applause. A magnificent mahogany banqueting table, easily capable of seating two dozen people, had been sumptuously laid out with champagne, and Japanese *saké* liquor to complement a myriad of exotic oriental fare that included fish and vegetable dishes, such as lobster and cod served with some strange variety of seaweed, rice boiled with red beans, boiled leaves, roasted chestnuts, chilled vermicelli, buckwheat noodles, and juicy persimmons and mandarin oranges. But it was the table’s centrepiece that had truly drawn our admiration, for there amongst the gossamer thin porcelain bowls and gleaming glassware lay a young girl, fully stripped to the skin save for a black lace masquerade mask, and positioned as if she were but another serving dish, the curves and crevices of her body adorned with an array of small parcels of what looked to be raw meat and fish set upon a confection of tea or vine leaves.

“Capital show!” hooted the Prince. “Well done, Lady Mountjoy, well done indeed!”

“Thank you, your Royal Highness,” said Charlotte, nodding

graciously in the Prince's direction. "I believe that the Orientals call the practice of dining off the body of a naked girl *nyotaimori*. It is supposed to have originated in the Samurai period as a celebration of victory over an enemy and so I thought that it would be particularly appropriate to recreate such a feast to mark the end of these recent hostilities."

"Haw, haw! Quite so," chortled Prinny. "Celebrate the defeat of the damned Jacobins, eh? Splendid notion, madam. Quite splendid!"

In truth the Prince was somewhat deluding himself by claiming victory over the French in this way, for it seemed to me that the terms of the peace negotiated by Lord Cornwallis had been very unfavourable to us and that Cornwallis had succeeded only in squandering all Britain's gains for very little return, but I supposed it was best to indulge the fat fool nonetheless.

According to custom, Prinny sat himself in the centre of the table directly in front of its nubile focal point, flanked by his two delectable paramours. Brummel, Charlotte and I sat opposite whilst the other guests took station on either side 'below the salt'. As I settled myself into my chair our living platter turned her head slowly towards me and smiled broadly. And damme, if it wasn't Emily Mountjoy who lay before us, evidently delighting in the intense eroticism of being utterly exposed before the assembled company. I returned her smile and she hiccupped gently, indicating no doubt that she had already by this time a modicum of drink taken.

At first I and my fellow diners concentrated solely upon the side dishes, seemingly reticent to be the first to sample the main course, but with the wine and *saké* flowing, it was not long before we were emboldened to take more of an interest, beginning to stare openly and occasionally poking gently at Emily's bare flesh as some speculated on whether a sheer silk body stocking had been employed to preserve her modesty. Of course, it was the Prince who opened the main proceedings. Rising somewhat unsteadily to his feet with a loud view halloo, he bent over the table and seized a morsel from Emily's left breast betwixt his rubbery lips, shaking it like a hound and scattering the vine leaves upon which it had been laid all around. Thereupon there ensued a merry free for all as we followed Prinny's example and stood to navigate the buffet, enthusiastically eating our fill from Emily's freshly scrubbed and perfumed epidermis. Indeed, so clean and fresh did the girl appear before us that, upon removing a leafy parcel from below her midriff, I was delighted to perceive that she was completely shaven, with that gently protruding mound that is situate above Cupid's arbour having been shorn as smooth as a



polished stone.

It was not ere long before our pleasingly provocative plate was cleared and Emily was thus rendered naked in her entirety (apart from a few dabs of sauce here and there). And at that point Charlotte made to propose the traditional toast to His Majesty, King George III.

“Ladies and gentlemen!” she called loudly. “Please stand for the Loyal Toast, which on this auspicious occasion will be led by our noble Prince of Wales in the Japanese *wakamezake* tradition.”

In answer to this call, all around the table were upstanding with glasses in hand, whilst Emily, herself rising in one fluid movement to stand upon the table, took up an opened bottle of champagne and came to kneel directly in front of the Prince, closing her legs tight so that the triangle between her thighs formed the shape of a cup.

“The King!” declared Charlotte, lustily.

Emily arched her back and lifted her chin, pouring the champagne down her neck and chest so that the foaming liquid cascaded over her breasts to pool in her lap. The Prince was ecstatic, plunging his face into this extraordinary chalice and licking at the sparkling wine so that he looked for all the world like a great overfed tomcat taking a saucer of milk, as we loyal subjects echoed Charlotte’s toast to the rafters.

“I knew he would like that,” Charlotte said, turning to me. “The name *wakamezake* comes from the absurd notion that the woman’s pubic hair in the wine resembles soft seaweed floating in the water. It is such a shame, however, that the effect is slightly spoiled by our having, by necessity of hygiene, to present Emily’s undeniably delightful little quim in its denuded state. But in truth, that does not seem to have dampened George’s ardour in the least.”

“By Heaven, you have the right of it there, Charlotte,” says I. “Look at the lascivious little bugger now - there’s no stopping him!”

For, having drunk his fill, the Prince had laid hold of *la* Wilson and was covering her with passionate kisses whilst the redoubtable Olga Zherebzova frantically worked at the buttons of his breeches in search of the royal plug tail. And, forsooth, the rest of the party too, by now similarly enflamed, had begun to descend into an orgy of depravity worthy of the Roman emperor Nero himself. All except Emily that is, who now sat cross-legged amidst the detritus left upon the table, mask discarded and with tousled hair, guzzling the rest of the champagne straight from the bottle. This must surely be my cue, I thought, happily.

“Lady Mountjoy,” I said, taking Charlotte’s hand. “Shall we make ourselves comfortable on the *chaise longue*?”

“Why, it would be an honour, Captain Ellis,” Charlotte replied, a wicked twinkle lighting her eye.

Leaving the table, Charlotte and I made our way to one of the couches that stood beneath the deeply recessed dining room windows and settled down. Then, after some initial tender caresses, it was up with her skirts and down with my breeches as we set to in earnest. My passions had long been heightened by the additional frisson experienced when performing under the watchful eyes of others and I was going at it like the town bull when I became aware of some commotion at the door. Looking over, I saw Brummel and one of the Prince’s footmen seemingly restraining a large red-faced fellow who was clearly in an agitated state. As I idly wondered what was to do, the Prince looked up from attending to his doxies and warbled a greeting.

“Mountjoy!” he called. “Well met, sir. So glad you could make it. Come in there’s still scran to be had, and light-heeled wenches aplenty. Come in, Sir Hugo, eat, drink and swive with us in celebration of Albion’s greatest triumph since the *Annus Mirabilis* of 1759!”

“Christ on his cross!” I exclaimed as I hurriedly disengaged and scrambled to hike up my inexpressibles. “We’ve been found out!”

Extracted from *The Moon on the Water*, the latest novel in John Pitman’s *Moon Dancers* series

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