

The Master's Mistress
Carole Mortimer



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Elizabeth's eyes widened as Rogan strode forcefully across the kitchen towards her. 'What are you doing?' she gasped, even as she took a wary step backwards.

Rogan's mouth twisted with satisfaction as that step brought Elizabeth up against one of the kitchen cupboards, leaving her with nowhere else to go. 'I'm going to seduce you, of course,' he told her, standing so close to her that he could see the nerve pulsing erratically in her throat and the wide apprehension in her eyes. Could feel the heat of her body only inches away from his own. Smell the perfume that was uniquely Elizabeth's.

She blinked nervously. 'Rogan—'

'Elizabeth,' he murmured throatily, his gaze easily holding her wary one as he slowly lowered his head.

Carole Mortimer was born in England, the youngest of three children. She began writing in 1978, and has now written over one hundred and forty books for Mills & Boon. Carole has four sons—Matthew, Joshua, Timothy and Peter—and a bearded collie called Merlyn. She says, 'I'm happily married to Peter senior; we're best friends as well as lovers, which is probably the best recipe for a successful relationship.'

The Master's
Mistress

by

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Chapter One

'...H E STOOD in the shadows of the night. Dark. Dangerous. A lethal predator. Glittering black eyes stared in at the woman through the window as she moved about the bedroom wearing only a towel draped about her silken nakedness. A slight smile curved her lips and she remained completely unaware of the danger that lay in wait for her outside in the darkness.'

Elizabeth felt a shiver down her spine as she looked up from the book she was reading to her own bedroom window, wishing now that she had thought to draw the curtains before getting into bed. Except, like the woman in the story, Elizabeth had believed no one would be able to see into the second storey bedroom window of this remote house, perched high on the rugged Cornish cliffs. The tide must be in, covering the sandy beach, Elizabeth realised as she heard the roughness of the sea pounding against the cliffs.

She repressed another shiver before reading the next paragraph of her book.

'Shoulder-length dark hair framed a face of hard, sensual magnetism. Those intense black eyes focused on the long creamy column of the woman's exposed throat and he could see the blood

pulsing hotly through her veins. He possessed harshly hewn cheeks, a fierce slash of a nose, and chiselled lips that now drew back in a hiss to reveal elongated incisors as the woman dropped the towel to reveal the naked perfection of her body—’

Crash!

So intent had Elizabeth been on the description of the sexy predator stalking the heroine that the sound of glass breaking somewhere downstairs made her gasp out loud, even as her fingers tightened about the book that had already succeeded in frightening the life out of her without this added scare!

What the devil was that?

Not a good choice of words, Elizabeth admonished herself shakily as she clutched the book to her before slowly sliding out from beneath the bedcovers.

There was something—or someone—downstairs!

More than likely someone. Elizabeth didn’t believe for a moment that her own intruder was a real live vampire; the reason she enjoyed books like *Dangerous as the Night* was because she knew that the night monsters and predators in these stories were totally fictional.

No, the intruder wasn’t any monster or a demon. More likely a burglar. There had been several break-ins in the area recently, and no doubt every burglar within a twenty-mile radius was aware by now that Brad Sullivan, the American owner of Sullivan House, had died of a heart attack almost a week ago.

What those burglars probably didn’t know was that academic Dr Elizabeth Brown had arrived two weeks ago, employed for the summer to catalogue the books in the Sullivan library, and, because she didn’t know what else to do until one of Brad’s relatives arrived or contacted her, she was still in residence!

What should she do about the noise downstairs?

What could she do?

Mrs Baines, housekeeper at Sullivan House for the last twenty years, lived in a flat above the stable complex, to where she had disappeared once she had served Elizabeth her dinner and cleared away in the kitchen. Meaning the other woman probably had no idea that the main house had been broken into. There was no telephone extension in Elizabeth’s bedroom, either, and she had stupidly left her mobile in the library earlier, on charge overnight.

Elizabeth’s heart began to pound as she heard more muffled sounds from the floor below. It sounded like a voice muttering. A male voice, its tone impatiently aggressive.

Great. She couldn’t just have a burglar break in; he had to be an angry one into the bargain!

Well, Elizabeth couldn't just stand here and wait for the man to come up the stairs in search of valuables, only to find her cowering under the duvet in one of the bedrooms, hoping not to be noticed. Burglar or not, she would have to go down and confront him. But obviously not without a weapon of some kind!

Tucking her book distractedly under her arm, Elizabeth moved stealthily across the bedroom to the door, opening it quietly to step out into the hallway, and pausing long enough to pick up the heavy brass ornament that stood on a table in the wide corridor. She made her way softly to the top of the stairs on the first floor so that she could look down into the huge reception hall. An eerie glow told her that someone had put a light on somewhere downstairs since she had gone up to bed half an hour or so ago.

Sullivan House was a three-storey mansion, originally built a couple of centuries ago for the head of some now defunct titled family, and several doors led off the marble-pillared reception hall. All of those doors remained firmly closed, with no visible light showing beneath them, not even a flashlight.

Elizabeth leant further over the polished oak banister, able to see now that the light was coming from the back of the house. The kitchen, most probably. Although what a burglar would find of value to steal in there, she had no idea; the only things that weren't integral parts of the kitchen were a microwave and an electric mixer. But there was also a set of sharp knives on top of one of the work surfaces, Elizabeth remembered in alarm. Any one of which could do serious damage to a person who dared to disturb the burglar!

Get a grip, Elizabeth, she instructed herself sternly, and she straightened her shoulders determinedly. There was no way she could cower and hide and hope that the burglar would just quickly take what he wanted and then go away. Whether she liked it or not—and she didn't!—Elizabeth had to confront the man and hope that her presence here would be enough to scare him off.

If it didn't...

She wasn't going to think about what would happen if the situation backfired on her. She was an independent woman of twenty-eight. A university lecturer who had lived and worked in London for the last ten years. She seriously doubted a Cornish burglar would be half as dangerous as some of the strange people she was forced to share the tube with on a daily basis!

Had the wooden staircase always creaked like this? Elizabeth wondered in alarm as she began to descend it. She hadn't noticed it before, but she did now, as every step she took seemed to make the stairs groan in an alarming way that might alert the burglar to her presence before she was ready to confront him!

'Damn and double damn!'

The curse came from inside the kitchen even as Elizabeth crept stealthily down the hallway and saw the door was slightly ajar, allowing her to look into the kitchen through the narrow crack

between the hinges of the door. She pressed herself urgently back against the wall as a dark-clothed figure moved across the brightly lit room.

Of course the man was wearing dark clothing; didn't all burglars?

Elizabeth drew in a deep breath, the shaking fingers of her left hand tightening about the brass ornament even as she reached out with her right hand to push the kitchen door inwards. She stepped inside the room, her blue gaze intent as she quickly scanned the kitchen, looking for the location of the intruder.

'Who the hell are you?'

Elizabeth was so shocked to hear the harsh but melodic voice coming from behind her that as she turned the brass ornament slipped from between her fingers.

'Ow!'

Straight onto the burglar's foot, she realised, as the man turned his back on her to bend down and grasp the top of his boot, where the heavy ornament had obviously landed, with painful results, before dropping to the tiled floor and rolling well out of Elizabeth's reach.

She looked around for another weapon to defend herself with, and very quickly realised that the burglar stood between her and that block of sharp knives.

The book she had been reading! Elizabeth had forgotten it was still tucked under her arm, but she grabbed it now and proceeded to hit the man repeatedly over the head with it.

'What the—!' The man straightened and turned, before reaching out to grasp both of Elizabeth's wrists and hold her hands up and away from him, well out of hitting distance. 'Will you stop attacking me, woman?' he growled.

Elizabeth became very still, eyes wide as she stared up at him.

It was the man from the book she had been reading!

The same narrowed and glittering black eyes. The same shoulder-length, silky dark hair. The same harshly sculptured face; prominent cheekbones, a hard slash of a nose, chiselled lips set in a grim line, and a square, determined jaw. The same very tall and lithely muscled body, completely dressed in black...

The same predator?

For the first time in her life Elizabeth fainted...

'Well, that was certainly different!' Rogan drawled derisively, as the woman he had picked up in his arms and then carried to the sitting-room sofa finally began to stir and regain consciousness.

She was a tiny woman, probably aged in her late twenties, and a whole foot shorter than him at only a couple of inches over five feet. She had short, auburn spiky-styled hair, a creamy, heart-shaped face; delicate cheekbones, a short, straight nose, a full bow of a mouth, and a small pointed chin that could be raised determinedly if she felt so inclined. As it had been earlier, when she'd attacked him—first with a brass ornament and then with a book, of all things!

Her eyes, as they opened, were a deep sky-blue, and surrounded by the thickest, darkest lashes Rogan had ever seen, he discovered as she sat up abruptly on the sofa to look across at him with the apprehension of a startled deer.

‘Why are you still here?’ she breathed warily.

‘Why am I still here?’ he repeated incredulously.

The woman moistened dry lips. ‘You had plenty of time to get away when I—when I...’

‘Swooned?’ Rogan suggested mockingly.

‘Fainted!’ A dark frown appeared between those blue eyes. ‘A perfectly normal reaction to being attacked by a burglar!’

Yes, that chin could definitely be very determined when this woman wished it to be! The bristling stance of that slender body beneath her slightly over-large cotton pyjamas also attested to her indignation.

Rogan had never particularly cared for the idea of women wearing pyjamas, preferring the woman in his bed to wear either nothing at all or something feminine in silk. Except this woman somehow managed to wear unflattering blue cotton pyjamas and still look sexy!

Maybe it was the way the material only hinted at the curves beneath? Or could it be that the pale blue material made her eyes look bigger and bluer? Whatever it was, his little attacker was one very sexy package.

So what she was doing at Sullivan House?

His mouth tightened slightly. ‘Perfectly natural,’ he acknowledged. ‘Except for two things. Firstly,’ he bit out harshly as she raised questioning brows, ‘I’m not a burglar. Secondly,’ he continued, when she would have interrupted him, ‘you were the one doing the attacking. As evidenced by my bruised foot and battered head!’

Elizabeth felt the warm colour in her cheeks. She had attacked him. Firstly by dropping the ornament on his foot, and then by hitting him with the book.

The same book that now lay open across one muscled, denim-clad thigh! As if he had been reading it while waiting for Elizabeth to regain consciousness. Oh, good grief...!

Her chin rose defensively. ‘I very much doubt that the police will be too interested in my efforts to defend myself considering that you’re the one who broke in!’

‘I wouldn’t be too sure about that,’ the man taunted. ‘I’ve seen several cases in the English newspapers recently where the burglar was given compensation for being attacked by the owner of the house he had just broken into.’

Elizabeth had seen the same newspaper reports—and she questioned the sanity of the legal system!

‘There’s also the fact,’ the man continued relentlessly, ‘that I didn’t break in.’

‘You—’

‘I unlocked the door into the kitchen by using the key from under the third flowerpot to the left on the windowsill outside,’ he explained.

What key under the third flowerpot to the left on the windowsill outside? More to the point, how had this man known there was a key under that particular flowerpot in the first place?

‘Have you been watching the house?’ she gasped accusingly.

‘Casing the joint, you mean?’ he said scathingly.

‘Yes!’ Elizabeth glared at him indignantly, hating even the thought of someone—this man!—watching the recent daily comings and goings of the members of the household before attempting to break in.

‘Interesting thought.’ He nodded. ‘This house is certainly remote enough; there isn’t another house for miles. The spare key was conveniently left under a plant pot outside. No dog to bark at unusual noises in the night. In fact, no real security to talk of. At least none that’s actually active at the moment.’

‘How do you know that?’ Elizabeth screeched. Not even the movement-sensor alarm in the house had been put on at night since Brad Sullivan had been rushed to hospital a week ago, as neither Mrs Baines nor Elizabeth knew how to set it.

‘No flashing red light on the sensor.’ He gave a pointed look at the monitor near the ceiling in the corner of the sitting room. ‘Burglars have to be a bit more high-tech these days.’ He shrugged dismissive shoulders beneath a thin black sweater.

Elizabeth’s mouth tightened. ‘Are you going to leave quietly and empty handed? Or do you intend to wait until the police arrive? I called them before coming downstairs,’ she added defiantly as he raised dark, questioning brows.

‘Did you?’

‘Yes!’

She was a plucky little thing; Rogan would give her that. She showed a lot of courage in the face of adversity. Although he very much doubted that a real burglar would have stopped to chat like this, let alone bothered to carry a woman to the sitting room after she had fainted!

He gave her a considering look. ‘Did you know that when you lie you tend to bunch your left hand into a fist?’

‘I do no—’ She broke off her protest to stare down at her clenched fist, carefully unclenching it before adding, ‘I did call the police, and they will be arriving any minute!’

Rogan relaxed back in his chair to place the ankle of one booted foot on top of his other black-denim-covered knee with a distinct lack of concern. ‘That’s going to be rather embarrassing for you,’ he drawled ruefully.

Her eyes widened. ‘For me?’ she said. ‘You’re the one who broke in—’

‘I used a key, remember?’

‘Only because you knew it was under the plant pot!’ she accused.

Rogan chuckled softly at her obvious indignation. ‘Perhaps you ought to consider another reason than my having “cased the joint” to explain how I knew the key was there? It might also be an idea, when you go to bed at night, to read something a little less...’ he picked up the book and read the first paragraph ‘...graphic, is probably the most polite description I can come up with!’ He read the next paragraph. And the next. ‘I had no idea that books about vampires could be so—’

‘Give me that!’ The fiery little redhead almost flew across the room to snatch the book out of his hand and thrust it behind her back, before glaring down at him. ‘Are you going to leave now or not?’

Rogan mildly returned that fierce gaze. ‘Not.’

She frowned her consternation at his reply. ‘Surely you don’t want to be arrested?’

He gave another shrug. ‘That isn’t going to happen any time soon.’

‘When the police get here—’

‘If the police get here,’ he corrected pointedly, before continuing softly, ‘I assure you they aren’t going to arrest me.’

Elizabeth stared down at him in frustration, totally at a loss to know what to do or say next now that this man—no, this burglar!—actually refused to leave the house before the police got here.

The fact that she'd had no telephone upstairs with which to call the police was irrelevant; he should have made good his escape long ago!

For the first time she noticed the blood-soaked paper towel wrapped about the palm of one long hard hand. 'How did you cut your hand if you didn't break a window to get in?' she pounced triumphantly.

He glanced down at his hand before looking back up at her. 'I dropped the damned milk bottle when I was getting it out of the fridge.' He scowled darkly. 'A piece of the glass pierced my hand when I got down on the floor to mop up the mess.'

That explained the crash Elizabeth had heard earlier.

Although not the reason this man had been taking a milk bottle from the fridge in the first place...

'You don't seriously expect me, or the police, to believe that explanation, do you?' she scorned.

Rogan had been travelling for hours. Fraught, tense hours, during which he hadn't been able to sleep. Consequently he was tired and still thirsty, and, amusing as this woman undoubtedly was, he was tired of answering her questions. Especially when for him there was still the more obvious question to be answered of what she was doing at Sullivan House at all!

He stood up, his expression becoming impatient as the redhead immediately took a step away from him. 'I would really rather drink a cup of the tea I was making earlier than your blood!'

'You were in the kitchen making a cup of tea?' she echoed incredulously.

Rogan raised dark brows. 'So?'

'So I don't—For your information, I read those sort of books purely for escapism!' she snapped defensively, as his earlier remark about not wanting to drink her blood suddenly registered with her.

Rogan smiled slightly. 'From the little I just read, I should think they might give you sexual inspiration, too!'

Her cheeks coloured bright red at his obvious mockery. 'Who are you?'

'Ah, at last a sensible question,' he murmured appreciatively, before turning to stroll from the room and return down the hallway to the kitchen, to lift the teapot and pour himself a cup of the dark liquid that was no doubt completely stewed by now.

So much for his intention of drinking a leisurely cup of tea before going upstairs and grabbing a decent night's sleep!

‘Well?’ The little firebrand had followed him to the kitchen and was now standing challengingly in the doorway.

Rogan took a sip of the tea before attempting to answer her. As he had suspected, it was slightly bitter. ‘Well, what?’ he snapped as he turned to refill the kettle before switching it on.

‘Who are you?’ she repeated forcefully.

His mouth twisted derisively. ‘Obviously not a burglar!’

Elizabeth was very quickly coming to appreciate that fact. This man might look like every forbidden fantasy she had ever had, but a burglar wouldn’t have stopped in the kitchen to make himself a cup of tea before stealing all the valuables! Or cleaned up the mess when a bottle of milk fell and smashed on the floor. Neither would he bother lifting a fainting female from that same floor in order to carry her to a comfortable sofa. And he certainly wouldn’t enter into conversation about the book Elizabeth had been reading before she went to sleep...

How embarrassing was it that this man—a man whose every movement was as smoothly lethal as the predator hero in her book—had discovered her weakness for sexy vampire stories?

It wasn’t just embarrassing—it was mortifying!

‘Are you a relative of Mrs Baines?’ Although what a relative of the housekeeper would be doing in the main house was beyond Elizabeth.

The intruder obviously thought the same thing, as he gave her a mocking glance before replying, ‘Nope.’

‘Are you going to tell me who you are, or—?’

‘Or what?’ He leant back against one of the work-units, arms folded across the broad width of that seriously muscled chest, those dark eyes narrowed on her ominously. ‘I think a more interesting question to answer might be who are you?’ he grated. ‘More to the point, what the hell are you doing in Brad Sullivan’s house?’

Elizabeth, momentarily mesmerised by the ripple of muscle clearly shown beneath the man’s tight black sweater, now recoiled as she heard the anger in his voice. ‘I work here.’

‘As what?’

Elizabeth wasn’t sure she particularly cared for the insult that she detected in his tone. ‘Not that it’s any of your business, but my name is Elizabeth Brown, and I’ve been staying at Sullivan House so that I might catalogue Mr Sullivan’s extensive library for him.’

‘You’re Dr E. Brown?’ The man straightened, his dark gaze incredulous as it ran over Elizabeth from her head to her toes.

‘That’s correct, yes,’ she confirmed guardedly, wondering why her name should mean anything to him. At the same time she felt incredibly warm under the intensity of his dark gaze.

‘Dr Elizabeth Brown?’

She swallowed hard. ‘Well...yes. It’s an academic title rather than a medical one.’ Why was she explaining herself to this man? What was it about him that compelled her to answer him? That made the very air about him seem to crackle with the force of his will?

‘And here I was, expecting the good doctor to be a man,’ the burglar-who-wasn’t-a-burglar murmured, with a self-derisive shake of his head. ‘Would that be the same Dr E. Brown who, a week ago, sent a next-day delivery letter to one Rogan Sullivan, at a PO Box in New York, to inform him that his father had suffered a heart attack and was seriously ill in hospital?’

Elizabeth gaped at him. There was no other word to describe it.

Dr Elizabeth Brown, respected university lecturer, most definitely gaped!

Surely the only way that this tall, dark and magnetically handsome man could know about that urgently sent letter would be if he was Rogan Sullivan himself?

The son of Brad Sullivan, who, as Mrs Baines had informed Elizabeth, hadn’t been back to the family home in Cornwall for over fifteen years!

Chapter Two

‘TEA...?’ Rogan prompted mockingly as Elizabeth Brown—Dr Elizabeth Brown—moved dazedly across the kitchen to sit down on one of the breakfast stools, even while she continued to stare at him with a frown on her face.

She probably had to sit down before she fell down, Rogan acknowledged ruefully. No doubt it had been unnerving earlier, for this woman to suddenly hear someone banging and crashing about the kitchen and believing it to be a burglar. Only to now discover it was Brad Sullivan’s long-lost son come to visit. A very short visit, if Rogan had his way.

‘Tea would be...lovely,’ she accepted. ‘Um...Did you also receive the second letter I sent you?’

‘Nope,’ Rogan said shortly.

‘Oh.’

Rogan’s mouth twisted as he took pity on her dismayed expression. ‘I know my father died, Elizabeth.’

How could Elizabeth have missed the fact that this man talked with an American accent? Probably because she had been too captivated by those deep and melodious tones to notice!

If she hadn't been so mesmerised then she might have added two and two together and realised this man was probably related to Brad Sullivan. That he was, in fact, Brad Sullivan's son...

'Don't look for any physical resemblance between Brad and me,' Rogan Sullivan rasped harshly, the bitterness of his tone unmistakable. 'Or any other resemblance, for that matter. There isn't one, thank God!'

'I was just thinking what a pity it was that you had to learn of your father's death from a hospital official,' she said defensively.

He grimaced. 'I haven't been to the hospital. I did call, but they refused to give out any information on Brad's condition over the telephone. Luckily his lawyer was more forthcoming,' he added. 'About Brad's death and the instructions he gave him to arrange the funeral.'

Elizabeth gave a pained wince at this reminder that the funeral was arranged for three days' time. 'I'm really sorry your father died before you were able to get here.'

'Are you?'

'Of course.' She frowned at his sceptical tone.

'From what I can gather from his lawyer, Brad knew exactly how ill he was, and had been living on borrowed time for some years,' Rogan Sullivan revealed.

Borrowed time that Brad Sullivan had obviously chosen not to inform his only son about...

An only son who, Elizabeth now realised, was looking at her with far too much familiarity. That warm chocolate gaze moved slowly over her pyjama-clad body, pausing on the firm thrust of her breasts against the thin cotton material.

Elizabeth moved uncomfortably as she felt that gaze like a lick of heat across her skin. 'Would you excuse me for a few moments? If we're going to continue this conversation I would like to go upstairs and collect a robe,' she added pointedly, as Rogan Sullivan raised questioning brows.

'Oh, we're going to continue it,' he confirmed. 'And isn't it a little late for modesty?'

Elizabeth's cheeks coloured warmly as she stood up, thinking of being carried in this man's strong arms wearing nothing more than a pair of thin cotton pyjamas... 'Nevertheless, I believe I would feel more comfortable in my robe,' she said firmly.

'Fine,' Rogan accepted uninterestedly and he turned away, pretty sure that the good doctor was going upstairs in order to regroup as much as anything else.

She certainly looked more comfortable when she returned a few minutes later, wearing a serviceable blue and white striped robe tied neatly at the waist over those cotton pyjamas.

Obviously Dr E. Brown was an altogether no-nonsense sort of woman. Not his father's type, he would have thought...

Rogan placed two fresh mugs of tea down forcefully onto the breakfast bar, before sitting on the stool opposite Elizabeth Brown's to regard her with narrowed, assessing eyes.

She straightened, obviously extremely uncomfortable. 'I thought that you might have telephoned once you had received my letter...'

He gave a humourless smile. 'Your very businesslike letter, informing me that "Mr Sullivan has suffered a heart attack"?' Rogan already regretted the impulse that had made him jump on a plane and fly to England, even though he had already known his father was dead, without having the prim Dr Elizabeth Brown pointing out the futility of his actions!

Had her letter had been businesslike? Elizabeth worried. Perhaps, she acknowledged with an inner grimace. But she hadn't known Brad Sullivan very well, and knew his son not at all, and, considering the obvious lack of warmth in their relationship, she had found it a very difficult letter to write. She could maybe have signed it with something a little less formal than 'Dr E. Brown', though...

Elizabeth had suggested that it might be better if Mrs Baines wrote the letter to Rogan Sullivan, but, faced with the housekeeper's almost hysterical distress after Brad's initial collapse, Elizabeth hadn't liked to press the point.

'I'm sorry if you found my letter a little—formal.' She picked up the mug of tea and took a reviving sip, some of the colour returning to her cheeks. 'Although it may have been more convenient if you had telephoned Mrs Baines to let her know of your imminent arrival. There have been several burglaries in the area recently, and if we had been expecting you I wouldn't have attacked you!' she added, slightly accusingly.

Elizabeth Brown was now embarrassed by her earlier behaviour, Rogan guessed easily. Not that she had any reason to be. His decision to come to England, after talking to his father's lawyer, had been a purely gut reaction. A need to see for himself that his father really was dead.

Consequently, Rogan hadn't thought to let anyone know of his arrival. Mrs Baines would have recognised him instantly, of course, despite the fact that he hadn't so much as been back to Sullivan House once for the last fifteen years, but there was no reason why Elizabeth Brown should have done so.

All the same, that embarrassed colour in the good doctor's cheeks was rather attractive, making her eyes appear a deeper, more sparkling blue. Embarrassment, no doubt, at having made such a monumental error as to accuse the son of the house of being a burglar!

Well, she needn't worry on that score. Rogan hadn't considered himself as the son of the house for years. The ten years he had spent in the American army had given him a new family. One he could depend on a damn sight more than the one he had been born into!

He gave a dismissive shrug. 'Forget it. It isn't important.'

Maybe not to him, Elizabeth accepted. But if she had known of Rogan's imminent arrival it might have saved her from embarrassing herself in that ridiculous way. And there was no way she could forget she had attacked him with a book, of all things. The brass ornament dropping on his foot had probably left a bruise too, despite the heavy black boots he was wearing.

Elizabeth looked across at him with new, assessing eyes. Rogan had been right when he'd claimed he bore no resemblance to his father, in looks or nature.

Brad Sullivan's hair had been blond and thinning, his eyes a steely blue, and although he might once have been as tall and muscular as his son, the older man had been painfully thin and slightly stooped before his death. Not even the facial bone structure was the same: Brad's face had been more rounded, where Rogan Sullivan's was all harshly sculptured angles.

All harshly sculptured extremely handsome angles...

Rogan Sullivan really did resemble those darkly dangerous and sexy heroes who so often appeared in the vampire and demon books Elizabeth read for relaxation after spending her days and evenings totally immersed in teaching history to university students. No excuse, she admitted, but she enjoyed reading those types of books because of their complete escapism. She certainly hadn't appreciated having this man taunt her about them!

This man who had so far shown remarkably little emotion over his father's recent death...

Mrs Baines had briefly explained the situation between father and son to her; Brad and Rogan Sullivan had argued after the death of Rogan's mother, Brad's wife, Maggie, fifteen years ago, when Rogan had been aged only eighteen. Rogan had apparently left home shortly after that, and the next time his father had heard from him it had been to learn he had returned to his native America and joined the army.

Not that Elizabeth had needed to be told that the relationship was a strained one after learning that Brad's only way of contacting his only child was through a post office box in New York!

'Don't presume to make judgements based on things you can't possibly understand,' Rogan advised as he saw the emotions flickering across Elizabeth Brown's expressive face: curiosity, quickly followed by a faintly disapproving curl of that sensually fuller top lip.

She arched auburn brows. 'I wasn't aware I was doing so.'

'No?'

'No.' She frowned her irritation with the challenge.

Rogan gave a humourless smile. 'You were sitting there thinking that I don't seem very upset for someone whose father has just died!'

That was exactly what Elizabeth had been thinking!

But perhaps she was misjudging Rogan? After all, she had no idea why father and son had argued only months after the death of Rogan's mother, followed by long years of estrangement. For all she knew Brad could have been a terrible husband and father.

Much like her own...

Except it was all too easy, now that the politely charming Brad was dead, to blame the mocking and seemingly uncaring Rogan Sullivan for the strained relationship that had existed between father and son.

'So, what are you doing here?' Those dark eyes were hard as onyx as Rogan Sullivan looked across at her in an uncomfortably assessing manner.

Elizabeth frowned. 'I believe I already told you. I'm here to catalogue your father's library.'

'You said that, yeah...' he drawled. 'I meant what are you still doing here now that he's dead?'

'I didn't know what else to do,' Elizabeth admitted ruefully. 'Your father engaged my services for six weeks, and...' She shook her head. 'I didn't know what else to do,' she repeated lamely.

Those chiselled lips curled disdainfully. 'Do a lot of cataloguing, do you?'

'During the summer holidays, yes. Exactly what are you implying, Mr Sullivan?' Elizabeth demanded indignantly, as she saw speculation in those mocking eyes.

He shrugged. 'That maybe physical over-exertion could be the reason my father had a heart attack a week ago?'

Elizabeth gasped. 'Are you implying that I had a—a personal relationship with your father?'

'You tell me,' Rogan taunted; this woman really was very beautiful when she lost her temper!

Her eyes glittered deeply blue, and there was heated colour in her cheeks. The fullness of her lips was set determinedly, her pointed chin was raised challengingly, and the spiky style of that red hair gave the overall impression of an indignant hedgehog!

'The library was here when we moved to England twenty years ago and my father bought this house; I don't recall him even considering having it catalogued before,' Rogan goaded deliberately.

A nerve pulsed in her stubbornly set jaw. 'And how would you know what your father may or may not have considered doing when the only contact you've had with him, for the last five years at least, has been through a PO Box?'

Rogan narrowed his eyes menacingly. ‘I warned you not to speculate about things you don’t understand, Liza.’

That angry colour drained as quickly from her cheeks as it had appeared. ‘I prefer to be called Elizabeth or Dr Brown!’ she bit out stiltedly.

Rogan eyed her consideringly. Obviously he had hit on a raw nerve of some kind by the shortening of her name. ‘Okay, so don’t speculate about things you don’t understand...Elizabeth,’ he conceded dryly.

What Elizabeth didn’t understand was why she was responding to this man’s taunts and insinuations at all!

As Dr Brown, highly qualified lecturer in history at one of the most prestigious universities in the country, she was held in deep respect by students and faculty colleagues alike. As Elizabeth Brown, a woman of considerable financial independence, she made a point of avoiding any and all situations that might lead to emotional confrontation of any kind. Especially with a man whose very presence unnerved her!

‘Unlike you, I’m not so hot on formality,’ Rogan said. ‘My friends call me Rogue,’ he explained, and Elizabeth gave a confused frown.

Rogue?

How fitting a name was that for this dangerously disturbing man!

‘How lucky for me, then, that I don’t happen to be one of your friends,’ Elizabeth answered coolly. ‘I would prefer to use Mr Sullivan, or Rogan if you insist on informality.’

‘Oh, I do, Elizabeth, I most certainly do,’ he murmured huskily.

She avoided meeting that warm and mocking dark gaze. ‘Perhaps we should resume this conversation in the morning, Rogan? We don’t seem to be achieving very much tonight.’

‘Except being rude to each other,’ Rogan pointed out.

‘Exactly.’ She nodded briskly. ‘You are obviously tired after your journey—’ She broke off as Rogan gave a chuckle, a disconcerted frown on her brow as she looked across at him questioningly. And she felt the lurch in her chest, the swelling of her breasts and tightening of her nipples, at the way the amusement in his face made him appear even more dangerous...

Appear dangerous? This man was dangerous! And he induced an awareness in Elizabeth, a physical arousal, that was totally alien to her.

‘Nice cop-out, Elizabeth,’ Rogan jeered, stretching wearily. ‘But I’m afraid I’m always this outspoken—what’s your excuse?’

It took all of Elizabeth's will-power to drag her gaze away from the flexing of those muscles in the broadness of Rogan Sullivan's shoulders. Even so, her nipples actually ached now, and there was an unaccustomed warmth between her thighs...

Her mouth firmed and she straightened suddenly. 'It's late, I was terrified out of my wits a short time ago, and I'm tired...'

'Terrified out of your wits?' he echoed incredulously, that dark gaze once again compelling. 'I'd hate to see what your response would be if you weren't so terrified!' He touched his temple pointedly, a slight redness of the skin showing where Elizabeth had struck him with her book.

A book whose predatory hero was no doubt going to seem very one-dimensional after she had come face to face with the very real—and very disturbing—flesh-and-blood man!

Elizabeth watched his long fingers as they ran lightly across his bruised flesh before pushing back the long length of his dark hair in a movement that seemed habitual. That hair looked as soft as silk. A silkiness Elizabeth longed to touch and thread her own fingers into before pulling his head down and—

She gathered herself up. 'No doubt you know which bedroom to use?' she bit out sharply.

'No doubt,' Rogan Sullivan drawled, those black eyes openly laughing at her.

Elizabeth had almost reached the kitchen door, almost made her dignified exit, and was congratulating herself on how well she had regrouped after physically attacking Rogan Sullivan in his own family home, when he made his own last mocking comment.

'Don't forget to get your book from the drawing room...'

She faltered slightly, her eyes closing briefly in embarrassment at this second taunting reminder of the book she had been reading earlier.

'The cover alone would be enough to shock Mrs Baines senseless, let alone its contents!' Rogan Sullivan added.

Elizabeth drew in a deep, controlling breath before she turned to glare across the room at him. 'I should put something on that cut on your hand, if I were you. It would be such a pity if it were to become infected. It might even result in lockjaw!' she added with saccharin sweetness.

'I can imagine how much that might bother you.' He gave an appreciative chuckle.

'You have no idea!' Elizabeth gave him one last scathing glance before sweeping out of the kitchen. Well, sweeping as much as she could when she was wearing a pair of blue cotton pyjamas and a striped bathrobe!

She paused long enough in the drawing room to take advantage of Rogan Sullivan's jeering advice concerning taking her book back upstairs with her.

All the time she was aware that any dreams or erotic fantasies she might have tonight would all be about a dark-haired, dark-eyed, dangerous man dressed completely in black.

A man known to his friends as Rogue...

'Mrs Baines seemed to be of the opinion that we would be eating breakfast together, and I didn't like to disappoint her,' Rogan said the following morning, as Elizabeth came to an abrupt halt in the doorway of the breakfast room the moment she saw he was already seated at the small table.

A slightly more officious-looking Elizabeth Brown than the night before; she wore a silky cream blouse tucked into black tailored trousers, with flat court shoes. That red hair was as perky and spiky as the previous evening, but she had added mascara to those already dark, sooty lashes, and a deep peach gloss to the fullness of her lips.

Officious, but still beautiful, Rogan decided approvingly as he stood up to hold a chair for her to sit down after she had reluctantly entered the room. 'Just so that you know I do remember some of the manners my mother taught me all those years ago,' he bent to murmur derisively beside her left ear.

'I'm pleased to hear it!' Elizabeth ignored his close proximity and picked up her napkin. She placed it purposefully across her trouser-clad knees before continuing to ignore him as she looked over the contents of the table.

All the time she was completely aware of how devastatingly male Rogan looked, with that long dark hair still damp from the shower. He was wearing a black T-shirt that clearly defined his muscled chest and arms, with black combat trousers sitting low down on the leanness of his waist and emphasising the powerful length of his legs...

'Would you like me to pour you some coffee?' Rogan offered as he raised the cafetière invitingly, and in the process once again stood just a little too close to Elizabeth for comfort.

The feral grin he gave as Elizabeth shot him a slightly nervous glance told her that he was totally aware of the effect his close proximity was having on her equilibrium. That he'd already noted the flush in her cheeks, the way she couldn't seem to breathe properly, and the slight trembling of her hands.

How could she not be affected? Elizabeth accepted ruefully. Men like Rogan Sullivan—hard, tough, dangerous—were completely beyond her everyday acquaintance. The only males she usually met on a day-to-day basis were either other academics or students much younger than herself.

She occasionally accepted an innocuous luncheon or dinner invitation from one of her male colleagues, but other than that Elizabeth preferred to keep her life uncomplicated by personal relationships. She had certainly never met anyone even remotely like Rogan before!

But she certainly wasn't so disconcerted by all this blatantly displayed testosterone that she was willing to forego her morning cup of coffee because of it! 'Thank you,' she accepted, with a dismissive glance in his direction.

Mistake!

As she had known she would, Elizabeth had dreamt about this man last night. Once she had finally managed to fall asleep at all, that was. Intense, disturbing dreams that had included fulfilling the fantasy she'd had last night of running her fingers through that over-long dark hair, before moving lower to caress the width of those muscled shoulders and down the hardness of his back. In her dream she had also caressed other places she would really rather not think about right now!

But the reality of the man was so much more disturbing than any dream. He simply oozed hard masculinity from every pore in his muscled body, from that hewn and ruggedly handsome face to the strength of his perfectly toned body. He even smelt male, his aftershave sharp and tangy, with a hint of spice that tantalised the senses almost as much as the man did himself.

He knew it too, and was perfectly comfortable with all that blatant masculinity, Elizabeth acknowledged slightly resentfully. 'Are you expecting to suddenly have to go into combat here in the wilds of Cornwall?' she taunted, with a scathing glance at the dark clothing and heavy black boots he seemed to favour wearing.

He shrugged. 'I just threw a few things into a holdall after receiving your letter. Besides, I find it's always best to be prepared.' Rogan eyed her mockingly as he resumed his seat opposite her at the intimately small table. 'After all, one never knows when and where one might be attacked!'

Warm colour entered those slightly hollow cheeks at the deliberateness of Rogan's taunt. 'Mrs Baines mentioned you left the army five years ago?' She obviously chose to take his taunt at face value.

'Yes,' he confirmed evenly.

'What career do you have now?'

'I keep busy with this and that.'

'What sort of this and that?'

Rogan narrowed his gaze darkly. 'You're very nosy for someone who supposedly only came here to catalogue my father's library for him.'

‘There’s no “supposedly” about it,’ she assured primly. ‘I was merely attempting to make conversation.’

‘Make it about something else,’ he bit out curtly.

Rogan didn’t discuss the work he did. With anyone. Least of all a woman he had only met eight hours ago.

Although it was starting to seem much longer than that...

‘If I’m nosy, then you’re completely lacking in manners!’ She frowned at his rudeness.

Rogan gave an uninterested shrug. ‘What else did you expect from a man whose father’s only means of contacting him was through a PO Box!’

A nerve pulsed in her cheek. ‘I wasn’t meaning to be rude when I made that comment.’

‘Weren’t you?’ Rogan asked knowingly.

Okay, yes, she had been, Elizabeth accepted guiltily. Which was a little unfair of her when she really knew nothing about their family situation. When this man’s father had just died...

‘What about you, Elizabeth?’ Rogan Sullivan arched a dark brow in query. ‘What does Dr E. Brown do when she isn’t cataloguing someone’s library?’

‘She teaches. History. At a London university,’ she expanded as he seemed to be expecting more.

‘Wow.’

‘It’s a subject I happen to love.’ She bristled defensively at the obvious lack of enthusiasm in his voice.

‘You’re comfortable with things that have already happened rather than those that haven’t?’

Elizabeth had never thought of it in that particular way before... ‘Is there something wrong with that?’ she asked.

A shrug stretched the black material of his T-shirt tighter across the wide width of his shoulders. ‘Not at all. Except a life with no surprises must be...’

‘Comfortable?’ Elizabeth supplied tersely.

‘Boring,’ Rogan Sullivan finished with an unrepentant grin, his teeth very white and even against that lightly bronzed skin.