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# ELIZABETH GEORGE

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**A Suitable**  

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**VENGEANCE**  
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALSO BY ELIZABETH GEORGE

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*For my husband, Ira Toibin,  
in gratitude for twenty years of  
patience, support, and devotion.*

*And for my cousin,  
David Silvestri.*

*Of all affliction taught a lover yet,  
'Tis sure the hardest science to forget!  
How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense,  
And love the offender, yet detest th' offence?  
How the dear object from the crime remove,  
Or how distinguish penitence from love?*

ALEXANDER POPE

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## **SOHO NIGHTS**

## PROLOGUE

**T**ina Cogin knew how to make the most of what little she had. She liked to believe it was a natural talent.

Some floors above the rumble of nighttime traffic, her naked silhouette gargoyle against the wall of her half-darkened room, and she smiled as her movements made the shadow shift, creating ever new forms of black upon white like a Rorschach test. And what a test, she thought, practising a gesture of come-hither quality. What a sight for some psycho!

Chuckling at her talent for self-deprecation, she went to the chest of drawers and affectionately appraised her collection of underwear. She pretended hesitation to prolong her enjoyment before reaching for an appealing arrangement of black silk and lace. Bra and briefs, they'd been made in France, cleverly designed with unobtrusive padding. She donned them both. Her fingers felt clumsy, largely unused to such delicate clothing.

She began to hum quietly, a throaty sound without identifiable melody. It served as a paean to the evening, to three days and nights of unrestricted freedom, to the excitement of venturing out into the streets of London without knowing precisely what would come of the night's mild summertime promise. She slid a long, painted fingernail under the sealed flap of a package of stockings, but when she shook them out, they caught against skin that was more work-hardened than she liked to admit. The material snagged. She allowed herself a single-word curse, freed the stocking from her skin, and examined the damage, an incipient ladder high on the inner thigh. She would have to be more careful.

As she pulled on the stockings, her eyelids lowered, and she sighed with pleasure. The material slid so easily against her skin. She savoured the sensation—it felt just like a lover's caress—and heightened her own pleasure by running her hands from ankles to calves to thighs to hips. Firm, she thought, nice. And she paused to admire her shape in the cheval glass before removing a black silk petticoat from the chest of drawers.

The gown that she took from the wardrobe was black. The neck high, the sleeves long, she had purchased it solely for the manner in which it clung to her body like a midnight liquid. A belt cinched in its waist; a profusion of jet beadwork decorated its bodice. It was a Knightsbridge creation whose cost—mounting on all the other calls upon her finances—had finally precluded the indulgence of travel by taxi for the rest of the summer. But that inconvenience was no matter, really. Tina knew that some