

Sangue Volli

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/32222917) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/32222917>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Robert Devereux- Donizetti/Cammarano
Relationship:	Roberto Devereux/Earl of Nottingham
Characters:	Roberto Devereux , Earl of Nottingham (Roberto Devereux)
Additional Tags:	Canonical Character Death , Prostitution , Vaginal Sex , Anal Fingering , Blow Jobs , Historical Inaccuracy , boot kink
Language:	English
Collections:	Opera Fics
Stats:	Published: 2021-06-27 Words: 4,617 Chapters: 1/1

Sangue Volli

by [Vera_dAuriac](#)

Summary

sangue volli, e sangue ottenni
(Blood I wanted, and blood I got.)

As the cannon fires signaling Devereux's death, Nottingham remembers back to when he first fell in love with his friend.

Notes

As always, thank you to the folks who encouraged me to write this one.

I don't own these characters, but I feel pretty good about what I decided to do with them.

by Vera d'Auriac

The canon fired. No one breathed or moved, and the full weight of what Nottingham had done pressed down on him until he could not have taken a breath even if he had wanted to. Robert was gone. His friend, dead, if not at his hand, then at his will. His friend, who had loved him, had shown him a new way to love, who had made court bearable when all he had longed to do was run home to his estate or off to war again in an attempt to blot out the world.

And that was when Nottingham fully understood that his friend was no more. All he would have now until his own death were memories of when they met, the times they laughed. The nights they made love. The nights when he was still simply Charles Howard.

TEN YEARS EARLIER

"Come. Let me introduce you to the new man, Devereux. He's just arrived in London and strikes me as even more naive than you were when you first arrived."

Howard followed the man, Sir John Ryan, a happy knight who played at cynicism, but who Howard found enjoyable for all that. Part of him, though, did not appreciate being called "naive," even in retrospect. He promised himself that he would try to save the new man from any of Sir John's more aggressive jokes, until he grew accustomed to Sir John's sense of humor. Ready to do his best by this new man, Howard was putting his brightest smile into place when the sight of Devereux took his breath away.

If Howard thought he could produce a bright smile, Devereux was a sun no other man could eclipse. Handsome, energetic, and yet somehow soft in a comforting sort of way, the small crowd around the new man circled transfixed. Howard longed to join that orbit, and he felt himself being inextricably drawn closer and closer.

"Devereux!" Sir John said, butting right in the middle of the group and the conversation. "I have someone I would like you to meet." He wrapped an arm around Howard's shoulders and pulled him forward to stand before the light that was Devereux. "My good friend, Charles, Baron Howard of Effingham. And Howard, this is Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex."

Howard bowed, only as low as decorum dictated, even though he already had an urge he'd never experienced before to drop at this man's feet. "A pleasure. Welcome to court."

Devereux gave a quick, little bow in return, all easy smiles and gestures. "Good to meet you. What does one do in London these days for fun? I've heard so many suggestions, but I can't believe half of them are true."

Everyone laughed, Howard along with them, but unfortunately his mind went entirely blank, and he could not recall what he had done earlier that day, let alone what he had ever done for fun. Luckily, rather than perhaps joking too roughly as Howard had feared, Sir John came to his rescue. (Then again, how could anyone be rough with Devereux? Everyone must long to

caress him with their words, surely. Howard even felt the desire, perhaps, to caress him with his hands. But he must be a bit mad.)

“Well, Howard here will give you quite a challenge in a joust, if that’s your sort of thing,” Sir John said. “But don’t argue politics with him. He’s far too earnest to be any fun at all on that front.”

The group all laughed, and Howard could feel his face flushing. But then he noticed that Devereux was not laughing. Devereux, instead, studied Howard, as though, unfathomably, he had found something interesting in a humorless, jousting baron. If only that might be true, Howard would sacrifice anything.

After that first meeting, they saw each other often at court. Devereux was always about, an in-demand companion who everyone longed to include in their party. Howard had been hoping to leave court for a while before Devereux’s arrival, but not only did he remain in London, he tried to find out where Robert would be and then contrive to get himself invited to the same place. He had no shame and would have thrown himself at the mercy of any host or hostess necessary, but he needed Devereux to like him at least half as much as Howard liked him. So, he forced himself to show some decorum in this and temper the worst of his tenacity.

To Howard's utter delight, Devereux did, indeed, seem pleased to see him on all occasions. The evening they were at a feast held by Sir John, Devereux even went out of his way to spend time with Howard. Everyone spoke of them as fast friends, and after that night, Howard believed it himself.

Soon, they were inseparable—training together, drinking together, never accepting an invitation unless it included the other. It was probably no surprise, Howard realized later, that they should end up fucking together as well. And yet, when it first happened, it had been so unexpected Howard had nearly crawled out of his skin with joy.

Fashionable young men in London often visited professional women, and it was entirely common to go with a friend or two. Most men could afford their own prostitute and a private room alone, but no one ever thought anything of two men sharing a woman, or paying for their own women, but sharing a room. The first time Devereux had suggested Howard taking him to one of London's finest establishments, they had done everything separately other than arrive and leave together. And this was fine with Howard, who still could not understand his feelings.

Obviously, he knew that throughout all of history, men had laid together with other men, whatever prohibitions the current religion might place on such activities. For a long time, Howard labored to convince himself that he did not want this with Devereux. His stomach may flutter at the sight of the man, and he may have woken hard from dreams of Devereux more than once. But this did not mean he wished to lay with Devereux.

The thrill, though, could not be denied when next he and Devereux visited the brothel and Devereux casually said, "There isn't any reason for two rooms is there?" When Howard realized that he would see how Devereux fucked and be seen by Devereux in turn, he barely had the ability to answer.

"Oh, I don't think so. Should we go up now?"

The ladies, Abby and Louise, led them up the stairs to a large room in the back. Abby poured everyone wine, and Howard settled into the corner of the long couch hoping to master his nerves. He was not aided in this endeavor by Devereux taking his own wine and crawling on the bed to rest against the cushioned headboard. He legs stretched out in front of him, shining black boots resting atop the silk coverlet, feet crossed at the ankles. After taking a sip of wine, he leaned his head back, eyes closed, and sighed. He looked utterly ready to be ravaged, Howard thought, and it was that thought which started his cock to stiffening.

"So, were you two gentlemen hoping to do this individually or as a group?" Louise asked. "Me and Abby are up for it either way, and you've certainly paid enough to get your hearts' desires."

Howard held his breath. Devereux never opened his eyes, but a smile curved his lips. What would he answer? Howard realized that he feared the answer more than anything—war, the queen's displeasure, truly anything. If Devereux said separately, Howard's heart would break. If he said together, Howard feared all the desire and affection he could not deny would be too obvious for either of them to ignore. He could not allow Devereux to answer.

"I think individually will suit us just fine," Howard answered. He drained his glass of wine and refused to look at the bed to see Devereux's reaction.

"If that is what pleases you gentlemen, we are pleased to oblige," said Abby. "More wine, my lord?" She brought the decanter over to the couch, and he gratefully held out his glass, needing immediate fortification.

He took along drink but forced himself to stop before emptying it in one go. "Thank you," he said with a polite nod.

"My lord seems a might tense, if you do not mind me saying so," Abby put to him with a simpering smile. "I'd be more than happy to fix that for you, my lord."

He met her eyes but did not feel up to a verbal answer. After another deep drink, he nodded. Thankfully, she required no more, and dropped to her knees before him, in much the same posture as he had envisioned himself so many times before Devereux.

She set to work opening his trousers with the assured movements of her profession. He finished his wine and deposited the empty glass on the table beside him. Only at that moment did he finally allow himself a look at the bed.

Louise, a lovely brunette, nearly as slim as a boy, had curled herself up at Devereux's side. Her lips explored his throat and ear, all to Devereux's enjoyment if his soft purrs could be trusted. Howard's attention was so trained on the pleasure evident on Devereux's face, that he did not realize that Abby had opened his laces until her hand wrapped around his cock. He gasped. Just sitting there, watching Devereux, it had grown fully hard.

"On, look at that," Abby whispered "That's a fine-looking thing, that is. I bet it tastes even better." She swallowed him without any further warning.

Devereux and Louise had begun undressing each other while Howard had been distracted by Abby. Devereux's doublet fell open, and the loosened laces at his throat revealed wisps of chest hair. Howard wondered what it would feel like to lace his fingers through that hair. A low growl he tried to contain rumbled in his throat.

"Why don't we get these all the way off you?" Abby suggested, tugging at his trousers. "We'll both be more comfortable, and there are so many interesting things I can do with them out of the way."

"Yes. Let's do that."

She slipped her dress off her shoulder. "Would you like me naked? Give you something to look at while I'm taking care of your needs."

This snapped him back to the realities of the situation. He had been staring at Devereux the entire time Abby had been sucking him. Had she made this offer because she had noticed? And if she noticed, anyone might. He must control these feelings for Devereux. He might be finally admitting them to himself, but no one else could know. Certainly not Devereux.

"Yes," he said. "That would be very nice."

That prompting was all she required. Abby, in fact, made undressing herself quite the show—a slow unlacing of her bodice, a wink as she flashed a bit of thigh. He watched her, part of him enjoying her curves and wild red hair, but another part of him most enjoyed when she twisted in some way that he might view the bed. Louise and Devereux had continued their own disrobing, but with none of Abby's seductive slowness. Louise was already down to her shift as she pulled off Devereux's boots and he whipped his shirt over his head. The sight of Devereux's bare chest made Howard hot, and he pushed off his own doublet and loosened the laces at his throat.

Abby sped up her actions, stepping out of the last of her clothes a moment later. She fell back to her knees, getting his boots off a blink later. At this point, she did take the time to grin up at him seductively. "Up just a bit and we'll be all set." She lightly smacked his hip, and he raised himself so she might complete her mission of stripping him from the waist down.

"Now that is an improvement," she said, kneeling forward to kiss him while also taking him in her hand. "Not only can I get at this better," she went on stroking him roughly, "but I can get at other things, too." Her other hand cradled his balls, one finger drifting behind them. "If you trust me, I can make you spend harder than you ever have before."

He understood her offer, but he could not give it any real thought, as Devereux and Louise were now completely naked on the bed, her straddling him, ready to lower herself on to his waiting cock. Without giving it any more thought, he answered a husky, "Yes."

After one more wet kiss, Abby moved away from him, opening the top drawer of the table where he had set down his wine glass. He had no desire to watch what she did, as lovely as she might be. Instead, his attention was entirely committed to the bed and watching Devereux fuck the slim Louise. She moved vigorously, his hands on her narrow hips. His head was tossed back, pleased moans emanating from his throat.

"Let's see what we might do to make you happy, my lord, " Abby said, as though anything could make him happier than the sight before him.

But Abby was a determined professional, and in a moment she had him back in her mouth. He was as stiff as ever from the glorious beauty before him on the bed. His cock bumped the back of Abby's throat, and the hum it elicited sent a shiver up his spine. A few long, deep sucks later, and a slicked finger pushed at his entrance. (He realized now that she must have been getting oil from the drawer.) It was his turn to hum now, surprised at the pleasant sensation.

Then she pushed that finger inside him, and he sucked in a sharp breath. The sound caught Devereux's attention. He opened his eyes, met Howard's gaze, smiled a small, blissful smile. Howard nearly spent that very second.

His mind immediately drifted to the thought of this being Devereux's finger inside him. Eventually, maybe, even Devereux's cock. Again, he almost spent.

Devereux lifted Louise from him and pushed her to the foot of the bed. She scrambled up on to all fours, quickly comprehending his intention. A heartbeat later, he knelt behind her, and took her once more by the hips. Logically, Howard knew where Devereux was fucking her, but the position so easily allowed him to picture himself there. Would Devereux fuck him as hard, grip his hips until the knuckles turned white?

Abby pushed her finger a bit deeper, moved it a bit, and in a flash, his world was ablaze with the most intense pleasure of his life. He called out incoherently, hands grasping at the cushion beneath him. Nothing had ever felt like this, and coupled with the hard, wet sucks Abby continued to give to his cock, he was powerless to hold on a heartbeat longer. He spent into Abby's mouth, wordless curses of ecstasy pouring from between his lips.

Abby had been right—he had never experienced anything like this. He felt boneless, literally questioning his ability to stand. It took what felt like an age for him to focus. He saw Abby out of the corner of his eye, cleaning herself. But his real attention, once he could manage it, was back on the bed and Devereux and Louise.

They had continued on, him thrusting behind her. The speed had increased, with Louise's calls of pleasure grown louder. The most significant change, however, was in Devereux's attentions. He no longer so much as pretended to be looking at or concentrating on the person he penetrated. He looked directly, *intently*, at Howard. Their eyes locked, and Devereux spilled inside her.

Abby and Louise left after getting both men washed and more wine poured. Howard and Devereux had paid more than enough to lounge about the room and take their time dressing, so they did. Well, they both immediately pulled back on underclothes and trousers, but they felt no rush about the rest as they sipped wine.

But they also did not speak or make eye contact again. Well, Howard could not say if Devereux attempted to catch his eye, as the blue of the rug and the red of his wine required

all of his attention. It was not until Devereux pulled on a boot and let out an exasperated sigh that Howard looked up and Devereux finally spoke.

"This bloody boot is going to see me thrown out of court," Devereux said.

"Why? Is your boot contemplating treason?"

"I wish it were that straightforward. If so, I could burn it at the stake and be done with it. No. There is a hole that defies mending. And you know how her majesty feels about proper appearance. We're all supposed to ride out to Greenwich in a couple days, and I doubt I can get a new pair worth wearing made in that time."

"Come by my rooms tomorrow," Howard said impulsively. Devereux looked up hopefully, as Howard's stomach fluttered. "I just had a new pair made." He picked them up and turned them about as evidence. "My old pair is nothing spectacular, but at least they do not have a hole. With a little polishing, they are still quite respectable."

Devereux's smile made Howard nearly as boneless as Abby had. "I don't know what I would do without you, Charles. I really don't."

Charles swallowed the last of his wine to cover the flush he felt on his cheeks at the sound of his name on those lips. "And you'll never have to find out, Robert."

The next day, they raced up the stairs together like a couple of excited boys. The night before, Charles had found the boots in the back of his wardrobe. He had thought about asking a servant to polish them in preparation for Robert, but he felt embarrassed, somehow afraid the servant would know his feelings, rather than assuming it was a simple loan of boots to a friend. So he had polished them himself until the soft, black leather gleamed even more than when they had been new. And now, Charles was about to present them to Robert. He could not wait to see the expression on Robert's face—surely he would be pleased.

Outside, the sun was shining, and the court at that moment seemed to exist for their amusement. To them, the queen was only riding out the next day to provide an excuse for Charles to loan Robert boots, and supper that night would happen because Charles and Robert would long for food and distraction. The world was about the two of them, or so it felt to Charles as they fell laughing into his rooms. His spirits were so high when he closed the door behind them, that he did not even think twice about flinging his arm around Robert's shoulders.

In a natural, fluid movement, Robert curled against Charles and kissed his cheek. Charles turned his face and returned the kiss on Robert's cheek. Then as naturally as they had done everything else, Robert brought his lips to meet Charles's.

That kiss was everything Charles had dreamed of and more. Robert's lips were even softer than he had imagined, his mouth warmer. Even more remarkable to Charles was Robert's eagerness. Could it possibly be that Robert's desires ran as strongly as his own? It seemed

true, with Robert's fingers threading into Charles's hair while moans passed between their lips, one to the other.

Charles immediately wanted more from Robert, though, even as he relished the warmth of Robert's mouth and the gentleness of his touch. He saw himself stripping away Robert's clothes, Robert reaching into his pants, Robert wearing nothing but the boots he had come here to borrow. This last image would not leave him, and Charles pulled back slightly from Robert's lips so he might speak and begin making it reality.

"Let me get my boots for you."

"Charles, don't pull away from me. Don't act as if this is not what you want. I can feel it. I saw it in your eyes yesterday."

Charles leaned back in, brushed his lips once more over Robert's. "You're right. Of course, you are. But I want to see you in the boots."

Robert grinned with a mix of delight and understanding. "What else you want to see me in?"

Before answering, Charles kissed him, this time deeply, passionately, so much of his need finally on full display. "Nothing," he answered. "I want to in see you in nothing else."

As soon as he stepped away and started toward the wardrobe, Robert began undressing, deft fingers flying over laces and buttons. Charles enjoyed the sight afforded, and backed slowly toward his goal, not taking his eyes from Robert. Skin emerged from under clothes, skin that called for the touch of Charles's fingers and swipes from his tongue. It was such a magnificent sight that Robert was already stepping out of his trousers before Charles remembered he was meant to be fetching the boots.

He grabbed them from the front of the wardrobe where he had set them the night before after giving them a thorough polishing. Robert's shirt, unlaced at the throat, hung loose, brushing the tops of his bare thighs, the hint of his erection pushing it slightly away from his body. Charles rushed back, dropping the boots at the foot of the bed so he might embrace Robert and kiss him once again. In a moment, their tongues were in each other's mouths, and Robert was tugging at Charles's clothes.

Once Robert had the doublet pushed from Charles's shoulders, he yanked the shirt free of the waistband and had it over Charles's head. Taking advantage of the kiss having been broken, Charles also pulled the shirt over Robert's head. For a moment, he could only stand, trembling, talking in the vision of his friend, the man he had loved for so long, completely exposed before him. He was glorious and unabashed under Charles's gaze. Instinct then propelled Charles forward to push Robert backward a few steps to the edge of the bed. Robert sank down of his own accord, and Charles fell to his knees.

What Charles wanted to do was press his mouth to Robert's body and touch every inch of his skin. But he could not forget the boots and the vision he had conjured, more beautiful than any miraculous sight at the tomb of a saint. And so he forced his hands steady and slipped first one boot onto Robert's foot, up his leg, and over the knee, and then the other. Once in place, he ran his hands over the supple leather, his eyes fixed on the glistening tip of Robert's

cock. He thought of everything Abby had done to him the day before, and he vowed he would try his hardest to do the same.

As he leaned forward, Robert's fingers caught his jaw, lifting his face up. Robert smiled and said, "You can't image how long I have wanted this."

Robert had wanted him, and Charles had held back, afraid. He wanted to curse his blindness and hesitance, but he could not go back, only forward. And from this moment on, he would give all of himself to Robert and any desire he might have.

Sliding one hand up Robert's thigh, Charles took hold of Robert at the base, then lowered his mouth. At first, he just licked the tip, entirely engrossed in just these few inches of flesh. Robert tasted magnificent, musky and all man, and for at least this moment, all his. Only after licking him clean, Robert's soft hums a most delicious sound, did Charles finally take Robert in his month.

The moan that produced was even more glorious, and Charles did his best to replicate the motion and suction that had given him such pleasure the day before. Robert's gentle caresses as his hand fell into Charles's hair and the soft "Yes," repeated over and over served as perfect reassurance. He licked and took Robert deeper and tried different techniques, searching for what Robert responded to most strongly. Eventually, Robert gripped Charles's hair, guiding the depth and speed, and Charles relaxed into Robert's desires, simply concentrating on sucking and keeping his teeth covered.

"Charles, I... Oh God."

Robert tried to pull Charles off, but that was the one moment Charles refused to heed Robert's directions. Instead, he forced himself to find a way to suck just a bit harder, and in a matter of heartbeats, Robert spent into his mouth. Charles focused on Robert through every last drop, this taste even more exceptional than when he first licked Robert's dripping cock.

"Enough," Robert whispered at last.

Reluctantly, Charles let Robert fall from between his lips. He settled back on his heels, cheek resting on Robert's leather-clad knee. His eyes were closed, his reluctance to let this moment end overwhelming every other sensation from his aching jaw to his sore knees. But as long as he rested here with his eyes closed, it would go on forever, he and Robert alone and unafraid to share all that they felt for one another.

PRESENT

Charles need not have worried about holding on to that specific moment, he soon discovered. It was only the first of many encounters. He would find out not long after that afternoon in his room the answers to everything he had wondered about in the brothel. He discovered that Robert's fingers opening him could only be bested by having Robert's cock inside him. And he did, indeed, take Charles by the hips, fingertips sinking into flesh, as he thrust and then spent.

But it was even more than that. It was nights in the same bed together, limbs and breath tangled as they kissed and talked and slept so soundly. For years, whenever they might, they would be with one another, Charles understanding the depth and breadth of true love and physical passions. It quickly became all he truly wanted.

Until Sarah arrived. The queen wished for Charles to marry. She had advanced him and shown him great favor, even making him Duke of Nottingham. He could not refuse Elizabeth, and Robert was gone at the time, and Nottingham felt entirely at sea. And so he had agreed.

At the time, though, he did not know how much his future wife was missing Devereux as well. He had his suspicions of how deeply Elizabeth missed him, but that was the one topic he and Devereux never discussed. What in the end hurt Nottingham to the point he could no longer think clearly was when he discovered who Devereux had most missed.

And in that jealous rage, he had deprived his wife of the man she loved, taken a man who meant everything to his queen, and ended the only thing that truly mattered to him. All in one act of omission that might have saved his friend and lover. Devereux was gone. Robert was dead. Would anything ever provide meaning to his life again? He could not see how. He would muddle through with his wife and remain at his monarch's side, but he would never truly live again now that Robert was dead. The cannon marking his execution might as well have been aimed at Nottingham's chest.

He had wanted blood; he just had failed to realize that it would be his own broken heart doing the bleeding.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!