It’s just one little bet. Winner takes…all.

_Pleasure Inn, Book 2_

Tired of aspiring actors using her to get close to her movie-producer father, Candace Steele has sworn off relationships. At least until she’s achieved her dream of restoring an old inn on the outskirts of Mason Creek. The new carpenter who’s been hired to help her create bedroom furniture designed for…endurance…is throwing a kink into her plans. Watching his athletic body pound wood is doing things to her hormones that have her rethinking her vow.

When he agreed to take the job, Marc Collins intended to keep the sexy spitfire at arm’s length. But Candace is giving him a run for his money in more ways than one. It’s tough to keep just his eyes on—and hands off—his boss’s daughter when she’s hell-bent on seducing him. And when she pulls a fast one and wins an impromptu bet, what’s a red-blooded guy to do except let her collect her winnings…all of them.

The heat they generate melts the fresh paint off the walls. But when seeds of doubt make Candace put on her running shoes to flee, Marc will have to talk fast—and run faster—to capture her heart.

Warning: This red-hot story contains graphic sex, frank language, wet play, use of orgasm-enhancing props, and to top it all off, it’s all caught on film—just in case you missed anything the first time.
All Worked Up

*Cathryn Fox*
Dedication

To the Wicked Writers, who give new meaning to the word, “wicked”.

Chapter One

Interior designer Candace Steele stood on the cracked and pitted sidewalk fringing the unsightly Victorian inn, which was unquestionably defacing the quaint town of Mason Creek, a small community on the outskirts of Connecticut. As she examined the array of landscapers and painters all milling about in an effort to return the insect-infested yard as well as the paint-chipped cedar shingles to their natural beautiful state, she stretched out her legs in preparation for her habitual early-morning run.

Just because she was on a job, hired by a strange mystical-like woman named Pamina, and was on a tight deadline, it didn’t mean she was about to give up her regular exercise routine—partly due to the upcoming fall triathlon and partly because the exercise filled her sex-deprived body with endorphins. Since she and her colleagues, Lindsay and Anna, childhood friends and co-owners of the bustling interior design shop, Styles for Living, had all recently sworn off men, she damn well had to get her “natural high” from somewhere.

Candace lunged forward, preparing her thigh muscles for a strenuous workout. While she stretched, she thought about the job ahead and the fantasy-inspired theme room each designer had been hired to create. Lindsay had gone for a BDSM theme, Anna for sweet romance. Candace, however, drawing on her experience as a competitive runner, had decided to create a fantasy room for those interested in a little marathon sex. Talk about a room doing double duty for the actively inclined.

She lunged again and stretched her legs as she considered the props she’d need for her project. But her thoughts suddenly careened off-track when she caught sight of a stripper—a paint stripper, that is—who nearly turned said legs to mush.

Shirtless and sexy in a pair of running shorts, he turned her way, giving her a frontal view, and she took in his bronzed skin as it glistened with perspiration beneath the early-morning autumn sun. With those sculpted chest muscles, tight abdominals and long strong legs, it was clear to Candace that he had the body of an athlete, a man straight out of her erotic fantasies. As she perused him longer, taking pleasure in his short, almost military-cut hairstyle, firm square jaw, dark eyes and commanding presence, she wondered if he had the stamina to keep up with her on the track.

Or in the bedroom.

Damned if she didn’t want to go for a test run with him in her soon-to-be-created fantasy-inspired theme room and find out.

Why was it again she’d sworn off men?

As she pondered that a moment longer, wondering if Lindsay and Anna were also questioning the logic behind their pact, her cell phone rang. She pulled it from her zippered pocket and when she glanced at the display name, every reason she had for renouncing the opposite sex came rushing back to her.

Candace didn’t approve of nepotism and believed in making it on her own, which was why she’d pursued a career in design instead of working for her father, Jason Krane, a successful New York movie director who could easily make or break the careers of aspiring actors.

Whereas Lindsay attracted lazy good-for-nothing guys who wanted to separate her from her hard-earned money, Candace attracted the opposite: aggressive, career-driven men who would wine, dine and bed her in an effort to get closer to her father. When some guy seemed too good to be true, he usually was. She’d learned the hard way that men didn’t covet her for who she was, but for who she could introduce them to. The last thing she wanted was for her father to give these guys preference over others or to show favoritism simply because they were dating her.

She flipped open her cell phone. “Hi, Dad.”

“Candace, this is Olive. Your father asked me to connect to you. One moment please and I’ll transfer the call.”

As her father’s secretary put her through, she stole another glance at the sexy paint stripper and the way he carefully worked his hands over the cedar walls, taking his good old time, laboring slowly, methodically, conscientiously. He was a professional through and through, clearly determined to get the job done right. A warm tingle moved all the way through her body and settled deep between her thighs as she considered the way those large capable hands would feel brushing over her body, Mr. Shirtless taking the utmost care to get that particular job done right.

The deep sound of her father’s breathless voice came through the line and pulled her from her musings. “Candace, honey, how are you?”
She smiled, giving her father her full concentration. “I’m great. How about you?”

God, it was so good to hear his voice. Even though talking with him made it feel like he was close by, he was far away in New York. Candace had been only a child when her parents had split and she’d moved to Connecticut with her mother. She couldn’t remember much about New York or her time with her father, since he’d spent most of his days on the movie set, neglecting his family at home. Oh, granted, he’d given to her in other ways and tried to show his love by showering her with toys and money, but as a child Candace couldn’t really understand those gestures and only ever wanted his fatherly attention.

When her father went silent on the other end, Candace shook her head and chuckled. It was no wonder her mother had divorced him some twenty years ago. For as long as she’d known him, he’d never given anyone his undivided attention if it didn’t directly affect his latest movie. This lack of regard had undoubtedly been the downfall of his marriage. She knew as a director his mind was always in two places at once. As she grew up and entered adulthood, Candace had accepted his absent-minded professor disposition and learned to live with it.

“Dad, are you there?”

“Yes, honey, what is it I can do for you?”

She exhaled an exasperated breath. “You were the one who called me.”

“Oh right. Have you read today’s paper?”

Disheartened at the way the media always distorted information and cold-heartedly attacked the rich and famous for the sheer pleasure of it, she plunked herself down on the sunburnt grass and blew a heavy sigh. “Yeah, I read it.”

Her father went silent for a moment. She listened to the sound of papers rustling in the background. “It’s not true,” he piped up.

“I know. You don’t have to call me every time, Dad. I know the accusations aren’t true and you didn’t fire Ginger Simone because she wouldn’t sleep with you.” He’d fired her because during the first week of shooting she never bothered to show up to the set. That woman was a prima donna through and through. Just then Lindsay, Anna, Pamina—along with Pamina’s fat cat, Abra—came sauntering out of the house. Candace gave them a wave and they all shouted a greeting as they walked to the masonry truck that had suddenly materialized in the driveway.

“Candace…” Her father’s voice went serious, and Candace prepared herself for what was coming next. “I think—”

She cut him off before he had the chance to continue. “No. I don’t need a security guard tagging around and smothering me.” She shivered just thinking about it. Sure it was sweet that he cared about her well-being, but she simply wanted to live a normal life. “Most people don’t know who I am anyway.” After the divorce Candace and her mother had both taken on her mother’s maiden name for privacy and safety. But of course, there were those few men who, after doing a little digging, had learned her true identity and tried to use her to get to her father.

“Candace, the letters are getting worse. They’re far more threatening than they used to be.”

She shaded her eyes from the sun and cast a glance around the quaint neighborhood, her focus settling on her two best friends. “Look, Dad, I’m safe here in Connecticut. I’m surrounded by family and friends. And it’s probably Ginger herself sending those letters.”

A heavy sigh and then, “I miss you, kiddo.”

“I miss you too, Dad. Right now I’m swamped with a project but I promise to come see you soon.”

“You know I do, but—”

She let him off the hook and gave a breezy laugh. “It’s okay, Dad. I’ll be in New York later this fall for the state marathon and we’ll get together then.” With that they said their goodbyes. Candace slipped her phone back into her pocket and pulled out her iPod.

When she lifted her chin to look at the house, to take one more longing gaze at the stripper before her run, she noticed he was gone. She darted a glance around, but he’d disappeared without a trace. How very stealthy of him. Oh well. Maybe it was for the best. The less temptation the better.

Fully aware of the heat rising inside her lascivious body, Candace tightened her laces before climbing to her feet. She strapped her iPod to her arm and adjusted the buds in her ears before taking off for the running park circling Blueberry Lake—named after its super clean, crystal blue water. As she approached the water, she watched the waves lap gently against the embankment, undulating, rippling and reminding her of two salacious bodies coming together, over and over.

Dear God, her sex-deprived body was definitely showing signs of stress. Sure she had a good imagination, but conjuring up images of naked bodies in motion simply from watching the swell was over the top. Perhaps a trip to Toys4Gals for a few extra accessories was in order. Her thoughts raced back to Mr. Shirtless, and she suspected the only way to tamp down the flames inside her was by taking a dip in the water, now likely frigid from the cool
Marc Collins didn’t like the way she was watching him. Well, that wasn’t entirely true. He liked it. A little too much. And therein lay the problem. Jason Krane had hired him to watch over his daughter, not for his daughter to watch over him—with interest in her eyes.

Sure he needed to get close to her, but there was a fine line between close, and up close and personal, and he knew better than to cross it.

But did she have to be so damn sexy?

With her tight athletic body, curvy in all the right places, long dark hair pulled back into a ponytail and gorgeous green eyes, she made it hard to remember that he was here on an assignment. And that assignment meant staying alert and aware until investigators found whoever was sending Krane those threatening letters. The last thing he wanted to do was get mixed up with his boss’s daughter. No, Krane deserved better from him. After all, Marc owed his career to Krane, having gone from set designer to security specialist after halting a crazed stalker on the movie set. Krane, grateful for Marc’s quick thinking and bravery, had taken Marc under his wing, had him trained as a security specialist and hired him as one of his own personal bodyguards. He certainly didn’t want to betray his boss or jeopardize his position.

When Candace plunked herself down on the grass and answered her phone, Marc left his post and decided a short run was in order, to clear his head—both of them. Right now Candace was safe and sound, surrounded by her coworkers and friends, and he desperately needed a moment of reprieve from those flirtatious eyes of hers.

The soles of his running shoes tapped a steady beat on the path and helped drone out his thoughts of Candace. As a security specialist, keeping fit, alert and healthy was a necessary part of the job, necessary to keep both him and his clients alive.

Perspiration broke out on his skin as he ran long and hard, exhausting his muscles and focusing his thoughts. He turned his attention from Candace to Pamina, the willowy woman who’d hired him. How fortunate for him that she’d mistaken him for the paint stripper when he’d walked by the house a few days ago, after he’d finished setting up his hidden surveillance cameras.

A sound behind him gained his attention and he turned in time to see Candace closing the distance between them. The swinging of her ponytail, the flush on her cheeks, her quick rapid breathing and the sight of her gorgeous breasts bouncing with each thrust had his mind racing and his cock throbbing. Despite knowing better, his thoughts took off on an erotic journey, and there wasn’t a damn thing he could do about it.

Marc on his back.

Candace on top of him, his hands on her hips.

Her sweet cunt milking his cock.

Fucking...

Christ, what he’d do to amplify that provocative look of hers, and mimic those arousing up and down movements of her lush breasts while they were engaging in other more pleasant yet equally vigorous activities.
Chapter Two

As Candace closed the gap between them, and the sight of Mr. Shirtless’s sculpted back muscles and tight sexy ass came into view, moisture broke out on her skin and she suspected it had little to do with the early-morning sun beating down on her. This scrumptious display of man had her mind wandering, envisioning that toned body climbing over her, his mouth crashing down on hers while those big hands of his used her hips for leverage as he powered his cock into her.

With her mind preoccupied and her knees turning to rubber, it was all she could do to maintain a coherent thought. Totally thrown off her stride as she approached the first turn, Candace faltered. Cripes! Before she could slow her pace and find stability she went flying forward. Arms flailing, looking for something to grip on to, her momentum sent her off the beaten path and onto the grassy embankment fringing the lake. Unfortunately not the fall, or the friction of her body sliding over the leafy blades, could slow her down or stop her from sailing head first into the water.


She opened her mouth to scream but only managed to gurgle as she plunged to the bottom of the lake. The water rushed over her, seeping into her clothes and sneakers and splashing over the bank as she tried to find her footing.

When her feet finally connected with the sandy bottom, she pushed herself out of the water, praying Mr. Shirtless had missed the action and was halfway around the track by now. But when her lids flew open, her stomach plummeted, her day having just gone from bad to worse.

He stood at the embankment, staring down at her. “Jesus, are you okay?”

When she saw genuine concern in his eyes, something inside her softened, and a burst of foreign emotions took a lazy stroll through her body, catching her off guard. Goodness, no man had ever looked at her like that before, with such worry in his eyes, such warmth and compassion, and she didn’t quite know what to make of his careful regard.

Feeling color blossom on her cheeks, Candace wiped her bangs from her face and blinked a big drop of water from her lashes. She shook off the adrenaline rush and nodded. “Yes, I’m fine.” At least her body was. She couldn’t say the same for her ego.

“What happened?”

Without censoring her words and somewhat rattled by the strange way he made her feel, she blurted out, “It was all your fault.”

His head jerked back. “How was it my fault?”

“I didn’t expect to see you on the track.” Candace pulled the buds from her ears, removed her wet iPod from her arm and tossed them onto the grass. Damn thing was probably ruined.

He cocked his head. “Again, how is that my fault?”

Deciding she’d said too much and completely flustered by the whole incident, she looked at him and took note of his sexy smile. “What?” she asked.

His grin widened. “Nothing. It’s nothing.”

“If it’s nothing, then why are you grinning at me like that?”

He shrugged, and his eyes raced over her clothes. In that instant her nipples hardened, and she wondered if he noticed her arousal through her training jacket. So much for the crystal blue water cooling down her lustful body. She was pretty damned sure she’d just heated the entire lake up a few degrees.

“I don’t know. I guess it’s because you look like a drowned cat.”

“Thanks,” she shot back and tried to smooth her hair from her face. “I’m glad I could amuse you with my appalling state.”

“Not appalling. Adorable.”

“Oh.” Inexplicably, something in the way he said “adorable” brought warmth to her face, not to mention one other part of her body.

*He thinks I’m adorable.*

With the back of his hand, he wiped perspiration from his brow. She took pleasure in the sexy shift of his muscles and the heat in his dark eyes as they raked over her. Fire whipped through her veins and she dropped deeper into the water, a futile attempt to tamp down the flames.

“Here give me your hand. Let me help you.”
As he reached for her and she saw those big, strong calloused hands of his, she did a quick tally. One, it was his fault she’d faltered in the first place. Two, he did get to see her all wet and aroused. And three, he too looked like he could use a little cooling off.

His palm closed over hers and he gave slight tug. She in turn braced her feet, gave a tug of her own and stepped aside as he came crashing into the water next to her.

A moment later he found his footing and stood. His gaze locked on hers and he wiped the water from his eyes. “What the hell—?”

His voice fell off and she guessed he’d read her desire, taking note of the way she was looking at him with longing in her eyes. Water dripped down his chest and she practically salivated, aching to trail those tiny droplets with the tip of her tongue. The cool water settled just above his waistband, prohibiting her from seeing the wet outline of his cock. She swallowed and resisted the urge to dive under the surface for a glimpse. Jesus, she couldn’t believe how lusty her thoughts had turned. A result of no sex for the last few months, she supposed.

She did a brief perusal of the area. All was quiet. Not a runner to be found. When she turned back to him, he ran his tongue over his bottom lip, drinking in the refreshing splashes of Blueberry Lake from his mouth. Her gaze centered on his luscious lips and her libido roared for attention, demanding she do something about her sex life or lack thereof.

Maybe one little kiss, one quick romp in the water would help clear her head. Heck, it wasn’t in her nature to just jump into bed with a man—a stranger, at that—and she could hardly believe the direction her brain had gone. After all, she didn’t even know his name. Then again, maybe that was a good thing. He was nearly finished with the job at the inn and come nightfall she’d never set eyes on him again. Tomorrow she’d be refreshed and ready to go back to celibate Candace, no one the wiser that she’d gotten a little sidetracked.

He must have read her mind. His eyes darkened and turned serious. She watched his throat work as he swallowed, and he moved a measured step closer. As his body loomed over hers, he dipped his head and for a brief moment she thought he was going to kiss her. He reached out and pushed her hair off her face. She tipped her head to meet his gaze, and when a low moan rose up from her throat, something flashed in his eyes and he hesitated. A second later he gave his head a brisk shake, as if to clear it. Then he took a distancing step back and walked to the embankment.

What the heck?

“So we’re even then?” Even though he’d tried for light, she could hear the underlying lust in his voice.

“Even? Why would we be even?”

“You said it was my fault you fell into the lake. I can only assume that’s why you pulled me in here with you. To square things up? A little tit for tat?” When she didn’t respond, he turned to her. “Wasn’t that your reason, Candace?”

“Yeah, that was my reason.” One of many, but he didn’t need to know that just yet. Then something else occurred to her and she tightened, memories of the threatening letters filling her thoughts. Suddenly feeling very foolish and very vulnerable, she questioned, “How do you know my name?”

Without missing a beat he said, “I heard your friends call out to you. Earlier, at the inn.”

“Oh, right.” She’d forgotten he was within earshot when Lindsay and Anna had greeted her as she stretched on the front lawn.

“I’m Marc. Marc Collins.” He held his hand out, and as she shook it, she studied him a moment. Good guys were rare, but something in her gut told her Marc Collins just might be one of them, not that she’d always been such a great judge of character. But he had a strength of character about him, unlike the men she usually found herself attracted to. It also occurred to her that he gave off a protective vibe, making her feel absurdly safe with him. Truthfully, there was something about this man. Something trustworthy and fiercely protective that put her at ease.

Intuition told her she had nothing to fear from him. That he was a gentleman, a man of integrity. She considered things a minute longer. Marc was a paint stripper hired by Pamina, not some aspiring actor using her to get close to her father—heck he didn’t even respond to her advances, which proved he was different from any other man she’d ever met. And the painstaking care he took with his work proved he was a skilled laborer.

Candace was pretty damn certain he didn’t know who she was. Was there a chance there could be something more between them, that he could like her for who she really was, not for her daddy’s power and influence? Damned if she didn’t want to find out. But sadly, he hadn’t tried to hit on her. Even when presented with the opportunity.

That was definitely something she’d have to rectify.

Marc mentally gave himself a good hard scolding and lectured himself on keeping his hands off her, despite the sexual sparks arcing between them. What the hell had he been thinking? He’d nearly kissed her. Thank God common sense had dictated, and sound reason found its way back into his brain before he did something he’d regret later. Yeah, later. Because he certainly wouldn’t regret it while he was doing it with her. Oh no. Not at all. If he had
her in his arms, he’d enjoy every damn minute of it. Exploring that curvaceous body of hers, kissing that lush mouth, running his thumbs and his tongue over her gorgeous pink nipples. Yeah, he’d glimpsed those pert buds through her track jacket. All hard and swollen and begging for his mouth.

His cock swelled almost painfully, and he shifted to hide his arousal. Marc clenched his jaw to stifle a moan and moved to the embankment. He turned to her. “Need a hand?”

Her eyes snapped up, as if she too had been lost in thought. “No, I’m good, thanks.”

She climbed from the water and he followed behind her. She grabbed her iPod, murmured something under her breath about it being ruined, and walked to the running track. When she reached the trail, she turned to him, soaking wet. A cool fall breeze blew over them and she gave a slight shiver. As he took in the bedraggled sight of her, his protective instincts kicked into high gear. Sure he was a security specialist, a bodyguard for a living, but whatever had suddenly come over him went deeper than that. Candace was strong and capable, but there was a guarded vulnerability in her eyes that really got to him. Had she been hurt in the past?

She jerked her thumb toward the inn. “I need to head back.”

“I’m with you on that.”

Candace scanned the length of him, then her eyes widened, almost apologetically. “I never thought. You probably don’t have a change of clothes with you.”

“I do. In my van. I come equipped.” He neglected to tell her that his van also came equipped with a security camera, recording their actions even now, as they stood there staring at each other.

She exhaled a relieved breath and began to make her way back. “Good. I’d hate to cost you a day’s work by having you go home to change.”

Jesus, how refreshing. Marc was used to hanging around pampered movie stars who didn’t give a rat’s ass if their actions resulted in him losing a day’s work. Candace really was different from those divas. She seemed so natural, so down to earth.

Marc hurried his steps to catch up and decided to probe for information. If he was going to protect her without her knowledge, he needed to know more about her.

“How long have you been a designer?”

“Officially for about five years now. Although, in reality more like twenty-five.”

“Twenty-five?”

She laughed. “Yeah, Lindsay, Anna and I have been tearing our rooms apart and putting them back together since we were kids.”

Testing her, he said, “Your mom and dad must have loved that.”

She hesitated for a moment before continuing, “Oh, they sure did. I can’t tell you how many times they grounded me until I put everything in order again.”

The fact that she included her father in the picture didn’t elude him. “Tell me, Candace, what do you do for fun in Mason Creek?”

“You mean you’re not from around here?”

Damn. So much for blending in as a local and keeping his cover. It was a small town, yet still big enough that not everyone knew everyone else. “I’m new in town. Been sleeping in my van until my new shop is ready.” He resisted the urge to cringe at his bold-faced lie.

“New shop?”

“Yeah, new workshop,” he said, not bothering to elaborate.

“Your parents aren’t from around here?”

“No. We’re from the city.” He neglected to tell her which city.

“Relatives?”

“No.”

“Then what brings a city boy to Mason Creek?”

He gestured toward his van. “Work. So you never did tell me what you do around here for fun.”

Ignoring his comment, she said, “Maybe once we get the inn finished, you’ll be able to get a room until your place is ready.” She crinkled her nose and her green eyes glistened in the sunlight. “On the other hand, maybe it’s not such a great idea.”

“Why?”

“Well, I never thought to consider—”

“Consider what?”

“That any of the rooms would appeal to you.”

He furrowed his brow, confused. “Why wouldn’t they appeal to me?”

“It’s just that, well, we’re designing fantasy-inspired theme rooms.”
That took him by surprise. “Really?”
Candace grinned. “Yeah, really.”
“You mean to tell me Pamina hired you to create sex rooms?”
She nodded and chuckled lightly, obviously enjoying the easy flow of conversation as much as he was. “I know. Who would have thought? She doesn’t seem the type, does she?”
Suddenly intrigued, he said, “Speaking of types, tell me more about these rooms and exactly what you’re planning on doing with yours.”
Chapter Three

Oh God, she was smitten.

As they walked back to the inn, she described with both enthusiasm and detail how she wanted to create a room designed for stamina to accommodate the actively inclined. With genuine interest, Marc listened to her ramble on, and she really liked that about him. Most men couldn’t care less about what she had to say and would tune her out whenever she talked about her work. But not Marc. He really paid attention to every detail, even asking intelligent questions, making her wonder if he had a background in design.

She enjoyed talking to him, and it occurred to her that they had a lot in common, a lot of similar interests. Candace appreciated the way his dark passionate eyes widened with intrigue and fascination as she described her concepts, and the way that nice mouth of his turned up at the corners when he smiled or probed for more information. He was strong and protective and so damn adorable, it had her feeling all weird inside. Just being in his presence, standing close to that hewn body of his, had her all worked up.

They reached the house and Marc glanced at her clothes. “I guess you’d better get changed.”

She perused his now-dry chest, and as her fingers tingled with longing to touch him, she resisted the urge to run her hands along his body.

“You too.” Except neither made a move to go. They both stood there, enjoying the conversation and the easy intimacy blossoming between them.

Just then Pamina stepped outside and made her way toward them, her long, lithe body practically floating over the walkway. She called out to Candace as she approached.

Candace grabbed her ponytail to wring it out. As water slid down her chest, Marc cleared his throat and took a step back. “It looks like you’re needed, and you’d better get changed. You’re dripping.”

Oh, he had no idea.

Candace nodded and could barely pull her focus away as he made his way to his van. Pamina touched her on the arm. “I see you’ve met Marc.”

Before Candace could respond, Pamina’s fat cat Abra jumped into Candace’s arms and licked a water droplet off her chest.

“Whoa,” Candace said as his wet scratchy tongue pulled her thoughts back.

“Abra,” Pamina admonished and tapped him on the nose, a gentle reproach. “You keep that up and you’ll never convince me you’ve changed your ways.”

As Candace watched the exchange, she grinned. What a strange relationship this mystical woman had with her cat. Sometimes she treated him like he was human. Then again, maybe he was. Perhaps Pamina really was a magical being and had turned him into a feline as punishment for misconduct. He did seem to be quite the devilish little feline. When Abra gave a loud purr, Candace scoffed at her crazy imagination, pushed those ridiculous thoughts aside and focused on the task ahead.

“Pamina,” she began as Abra jumped from her arms and leisurely made his way to Marc’s van. “I think I’m going to have to hire a carpenter to help out with the room. I need some sturdy furniture made. Sturdier than I can purchase.”

Pamina’s long golden hair blew in the early-morning breeze and she narrowed her knowledgeable eyes in thought. “Do you have a carpenter in mind?”

“I usually use a local guy—”

“I’ll do it.”

Candace didn’t have to turn around to know who’d spoken. There was only one man who had such a deep sexy voice. Lust shot through her body at his rich desirous tone. She took a brief moment to gather herself before she spun to face him and tried for normal.

“You can build furniture?” He’d changed into a worn pair of jeans that hugged his body in all the right places, and a white T-shirt did wonders for his upper torso. Scrupulous.

“Yes, I’m good with my hands.” His grin was slow and he fixed her with a look that told her just how capable he was. She sucked in a breath and a fine shiver moved through her as heat arched between them. God, she wanted him. Oh how she wanted him. Masking her enthusiasm, she clamped her thighs and pretended to ponder his offer for a moment.
“What a great idea, Marc,” Pamina said. “For your services, we can offer you room and board as well.”
Marc gave her an odd look. “How do you know—?”
Without answering his question, Pamina continued. “It’s just me and Abra in this big old place and we quite enjoy
the company. Like the girls, you’re welcome to the pantry and all the facilities, including the shower. I understand
that such an undertaking can sometimes get a little messy.” Then she turned to Candace. “What do you think?”
I think things are going to get a whole lot more interesting.
She cast Marc a glance and examined his sensual mouth, wondering how it would feel on her body, and deciding
then and there that she most definitely needed to find out. Now how to get him to make a move on her?
“Sometimes I work late.”
He pushed his hands into his jeans, pulling them low on his hips. “I don’t mind working late.”
“If you’re roaming here, I might keep you up.”
In more ways than one.
“I don’t mind being kept up.”
Visions of him being…up…while the two of them were working out the kinks in her fantasy room raced through
her mind. She swallowed down a moan and held her hand out.
“Welcome aboard.”

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Just off the back deck, Marc leaned over the table saw and ran a piece of wood through the sharp blade. He’d
forgotten how much he liked working with his hands and building things. He glanced around, taking note of the
birds chirping and the simple life outside the city. This was definitely something he could get used to.
He turned his attention back to constructing the sturdy king-sized bed Candace had designed, a bed created for
marathon sex. As he worked, he tried to convince himself that he’d volunteered for the job so he could keep a better
eye on Candace. Not because he wanted to be in that bedroom with her. Up close and personal.
He’d been working with her for a couple of days now, helping her carry in sex equipment, which included a
Tantra chair, a sex swing, some strange-looking glider, and a dance pole that, he had to admit, was a personal
favorite. He also had to admit it was becoming harder and harder to keep his hands off her lush body, especially with
the way she continually looked at him, lust smoldering in the depths of her passionate green eyes. And Christ, when
he’d helped her secure the floor-to-ceiling pole and watched her swing around it to ensure it was safe and bolted
correctly, it was all he could do not to imagine her shimmying down it—naked. Her teasing and taunting had him
walking around with a constant boner. If she was waiting for him to make the first move, she could forget it. No
way, no how was he going to seduce her.
He had to keep his hands to himself, as much as that seemed to frustrate her. And him. He owed it to Krane. If
this assignment proved successful, all his hard work over the last year was going to pay off and Krane was going to
offer him the job as head of security, moving him up the ladder a few rungs.
He pulled the board away, made his way to the side of the house for another piece of lumber, and spotted Candace
and Anna walking down the driveway. A quick glance at his watch told him it was lunchtime and he wondered why
Lindsay wasn’t joining them for a bite to eat. Come to think of it, he hadn’t seen Lindsay in a few days. In passing,
he had come across the carpenter she’d hired to help her tear down a wall, and with the way he looked at Lindsay,
Marc wondered if he too was having a hell of a time focusing on the job. Then again there was always the masonry
guy, who’d been keeping an awfully close eye on Anna.
He didn’t miss the sexy look Candace cast his way as she sauntered down the sidewalk. His cock thickened when
she gave a sexy shake of her ass. What the hell was the little spitfire trying to do to him anyway? Didn’t she know
he was working with power tools?
And one tool in particular was swelling at an alarming rate.
Fuck…
He dropped the boards and peeled off his shirt as he made his way to his van, knowing he had to follow close
behind. Close enough to keep her in sight but far enough to remain inconspicuous. Perhaps a run would help him let
off some steam. Before he reached the door, Pamina suddenly appeared before him, coming out of nowhere. Maybe
he’d been so lost in his thoughts he hadn’t heard her approach.
“She’s a lovely girl, don’t you think?” Insightful eyes met his, and for a brief moment he wondered if she knew
how lusty his thoughts had been for the last few days.
“Yeah, lovely,” he responded.
Pamina smoothed her golden hair from her face and gestured toward his pile of lumber. “She was lucky to have
found someone who could build furniture on such short notice.”
He gave an easy shrug. “I guess I was at the right place at the right time.”
She pursed her lips and studied him for a long moment before saying, “Funny about that, isn’t it?”
Suddenly uncomfortable, Marc shifted. Christ, did she know who he was?
“She’s not one to just hire someone on the spot.”
“No?” Marc looked past her shoulders and glimpsed Candace before she disappeared around the corner with her friend.
“No, she’s careful who she associates with.” Pamina leaned in close and lowered her voice in secrecy. “You see her daddy is a big New York director. In the past men have tried to get close to her,winning and dining and deceiving her in order to get in with her father. Which is why she’s sworn off men, I suppose.”
“She’s sworn off men?” That must have been the guarded vulnerable look he’d spotted in her eyes. Men had been using her—betraying her. Catching him off guard, anger raced through him, and he wanted to find and pummel every guy who had hurt her. His jaw clenched and his nostrils flared, and he wondered when protecting her had become so personal to him.
“Yes, so she must really trust you if she hired you without doing a background check. You must have made a very big impression on her.”
He swallowed, guilt closing in on him from all angles. He wasn’t using her, but he was deceiving her because he’d been pretending to be a handyman. He had strict orders to keep his identity a secret.
“I see,” he said, for lack of anything better.
Pamina put her hand on his shoulder. “But you and I both know you’d never deceive her, isn’t that right?”
“Yeah, that’s right,” he agreed and sidestepped her, knowing he had to get going before Candace was too far out of his sight. “If you’ll excuse me. I’m late for my run.”
Marc slipped into a T-shirt and his running shorts, and jogged down the sidewalk. He took the corner he’d seen Candace negotiate earlier. As he made his way along the main street, he spotted the two women having lunch inside a quaint curbside café. He continued to run, keeping the door to the café within sight at all times. A short while later Candace and Anna exited the building and walked back to the inn. Maintaining a reasonable pace behind them, Marc kept her under surveillance. Once she stepped inside the inn, safe and sound, surrounded by her friends, he decided to take a quick jaunt around Blueberry Lake to give his muscles a good, strenuous workout.
As he approached the spot where Candace had pulled him into the water, his pace slowed and his mind raced, recalling the way her nipples had tightened beneath her tracksuit. He spent a long moment staring at the water and considered taking a dip to cool himself down.
“Going in?”
He tightened at the sound of her voice behind him. When he spun around and took in the warm flush on her cheeks, the sexy way her nipples pressed against her tank top and the way her long, tanned legs looked in her provocative short shorts, he almost gave in to temptation.
The hungry look in her eyes made him ache. Fuck he wanted her so badly, he could barely think straight. Pleasure raced through him, and his cock swelled inside his running shorts. Candace cast a glance down, and when her eyes traveled back to his face, they were gleaming with mischief. Okay, he needed to put a stop to this and he needed to do it now.
As he ran over every reason to back away, he said, “Candace, I—”
Jesus, what was he going to tell her? That he was hired by her father to watch over her? That he wasn’t who she thought he was? The last thing he wanted to do was hurt her or deceive her. After all, she trusted him enough to try to seduce him.
Okay, he needed to put some distance between them. But when she went up on her tippy toes and put her mouth close to his, every reason he had for keeping his distance suddenly dissolved.
“I think going for a swim is a great idea.” The soft seduction in her voice pulled him in and shattered any semblance of control he thought he had.
Without warning, she climbed into the water. At the sight of her gorgeous, wet body, need exploded inside him.
Ah, Jesus…
Unable to contain the heat rising in him, he jumped into the water with her, knowing there was only one way to feed the hunger gnawing at his insides. When she stepped close, and skin touched skin, she poised her mouth open in invitation. His cock took over where his brain left off and his lips crashed down on hers. Aware of her desire, he gripped her by the hips and pulled her to him, meshing their bodies together and lining up their nether regions. When he pushed his cock against her pussy, she gyrated and moaned into his mouth.
As the warm afternoon sun beat down on them, it occurred to him that they were outdoors, in plain sight. Hell, he needed to get behind closed doors with her before someone stumbled upon them. “The path…people.” He felt a tremor move through her and realized how much that excited her. He gave a low, heated laugh, intrigued by her
boldness. “I had no idea you were so naughty,” he whispered into her mouth.

Her laughter churned with passion and expressive eyes brimmed with desire. “Neither did I. Until just now. You must bring that out in me.” She cupped his cock and gave a gentle squeeze. “Now let’s see what I can bring out in you.”

Christ, he knew better than to get intimate with her—especially in public—but the look in her eyes and the thrill it gave her to play this little exhibitionist game prompted him into action. Every damn reason he had for staying away from her suddenly seemed so insignificant, and giving her everything she ever wanted had become more important than his own well-being.

He gripped her tank top and peeled it over her head, exposing her luscious breasts. With pleasure racing through him, Marc moaned and wet his mouth. “So beautiful,” he murmured and brushed the pad of his thumb over one perfect nipple.

She arched into him, and he could hear the note of desperation lacing her voice when she asked, “Would you like a taste?”

Cravings like he’d never before experienced swamped him. “Hell, you know I would.” Trembling and entirely lost in the moment, he inclined his head and drew her hard bud into his mouth. *Fuck…* Her fingers raked through his hair and held him tight. As she swelled in his mouth, she gave a low erotic whimper and he damn near erupted on the spot.

Her hands raced over him with aroused eagerness, tugging at his shirt and shorts almost frantically. Wanting to slow her down so they could enjoy and savor every sinful moment, he inched back, gripped her hands and placed them at her sides. His gaze moved to hers, and when his glance was met with heat, passion and vulnerability swirling around in a sea of green, his heart softened and everything inside him reached out to her. Tenderness stole over him as emotions gathered in a knot deep in his gut, and he instinctively knew he had to make this good for her. So damn good it would help her fight every last demon that plagued her darkest corner.

He pitched his voice low. “Come here, sweetheart.”

She stepped into him and he backed her up against the embankment. Once he had her caged between his body and the grass, he leaned in for a slow soul-searching kiss.

She tugged at him, heat reflecting in her eyes. “Easy, baby,” he responded, and once again secured her hands to her sides.

Their gazes collided. “Marc, please…”

Reining in his lust, he took in the erotic sight of her and the way she had so readily opened up to him, trusting him with her pleasure. “You can beg all you want,” he assured her with a grin, as the cool water lapped at his waist. “But I’m not in any hurry. Now that I have you where I want you, I’m going to leisurely explore your body.” With that he gently shaped her contours, kneading her flesh and enjoying the feel of her soft curves in his palms. His mouth moved to her neck. With slow, easy movements, he properly introduced himself to her. Trailing lower, he paid homage to her breasts using his hands, mouth and tongue, sucking, nibbling and licking and taking his sweet-ass time before moving to her belly button, which was just inches out of the water.

Needing to go lower, he lifted her by the hips and set her on the bank, lining her pussy up with his mouth. He gripped her shorts and toyed with the waistband.

“Marc…?”

“Yeah, babe.” The strange look on her face spoke volumes. She didn’t understand his slow seduction, his need to please her. Didn’t understand that it gave him pleasure just to please her.

Her eyes clouded and he felt a curious shift inside him. “I…I—”

“I know, babe. Really, I do.” And he did know. That every asshole she’d been with had cared more about his needs than hers. Deciding to show her another side of lovemaking, Marc proceeded to inch her shorts down her silky legs, leaving her lacy panties behind.

She sat before him, quivering, her eyes watching his every move carefully. She reached for him, to touch him in return, her soft hands greedily sliding over his skin, and even though he liked it, he anchored her hands to her sides, intent on making this all about her.

Candace inched her legs open and when the enticing scent of her arousal hit him, he damn near lost all his hard-fought control. As desire slammed into him, he drew a deep, labored breath and tried to tame his raging erection as it begged him to answer the pull in his groin.

Turning his focus back to Candace, he touched the lace of her panties, running the fabric through his fingers as he leaned forward and licked her sweet pussy through the thin material.

She gave a low moan of longing that nearly drove him to his knees. Steadying himself between her legs, he darted a quick glance upward and watched the way her eyes glazed with desire. The heat on her cheeks and the way she looked at him with such lust, such want, filled him with an unfamiliar need. Jesus, he loved that he’d put that look
on her face and he couldn’t deny that bringing pleasure to her, taking painstaking care of her every craving, made him feel all weird inside.

“Widen your legs for me.” As emotions and sensations ripped through him, he hardly recognized his own voice. He drew a breath to center himself and questioned what it was about her that softened his resolve and made him feel fiercely protective.

He gripped her thighs as she widened them, granting him access to her most private places. Using the tip of his index finger, he pushed the lace to the side to expose her pubis. With slow, deliberate movements, he stroked her groomed strip of silky wet dark hair, his thumb purposely brushing over her engorged clit. Undeniably, she had the nicest pussy he’d ever set eyes on.

“Mmm, nice.” As he continued to stroke her, he leaned in for a taste. Her hips came off the bank as he lightly brushed his tongue over her cunt.

“Oh God, Marc,” she cried out, and he wondered if anyone in the vicinity had heard her. But none of that mattered right now. All that mattered was getting his fill of her pussy and making her come for him.

As he indulged in her heat, she grew wetter and her sweet cream tasted like candy as it dripped languidly down his chin. He could tell she was close by the way her body was quivering, but he wasn’t quite ready to bring her over the precipice. He slipped a finger inside her and stilled.

Fuck… She was so goddamn tight that his cock ached to replace his digit. He was ready to erupt just from the feel of her firm walls closing around him.

Panting, she gyrated, letting him know in no uncertain terms what she wanted. As his finger slipped in deeper, he circled her clit with his tongue. He gave a light caress over the bundle of nerves inside her pussy and when she cried out, he nearly went out of his mind. Need exploded inside him and his balls ached so badly it was all he could do to breathe.

He gave another brush over her G-spot and watched her eyes flare hot. “You like that do you?” he managed to get out.

Instead of answering, she slipped her hands around his head and guided his mouth back to her pussy, which was wet and glistening under the afternoon sun. Chuckling at her boldness, he slipped another finger inside, and she arched into him. As he moved his finger in and out, finding a nice steady rhythm, he licked her engorged clit and rolled it between his teeth. The dual assault quickly pushed her over the edge and in no time at all breath rushed from her lungs and her feminine scent filled the air.

“Marc,” she cried out, as she reached the edge of oblivion.

“That’s it, Candace. Let me taste you.”

Her sweet nectar poured into his mouth and he let loose a groan of pleasure, his body needy for her in ways that left him speechless.

He worked his tongue over her cunt, drinking in every last drop and soothing her swollen sex with the soft pad of his thumb. After her muscles stopped spasming, he inched back to look at her naked body, and she slipped into the water with him.

With a new air of contentment about her, she laced her hands around his neck and pulled his mouth to hers. She kissed him. Deeply. Her tongue sliding inside his mouth in the most seductive manner. Jesus, she was a damn good kisser. She moved to his neck and her long lashes fluttered against his skin, eliciting a shudder from deep within. Her hand slipped between their bodies and she palmed his massive erection. Marc moaned and pressed against her.

The sound of running shoes slapping against the ground and pulled his attention away. “Candace—”

“Mmm,” she murmured as her hand inched inside his shorts.

He was so damn hard, he could barely keep a coherent thought. He pressed his body over hers, shielding her from the joggers, and spoke in whispered words.

“Someone’s coming.”

She gave him an odd look, then he got a clue. “Not me,” he assured her, then gestured with a nod. “Joggers.”

Her eyes widened in understanding. “Oh.”

“We need to go.”

Confusion clouded her eyes. “But what about you? I haven’t—”

He pressed his finger to her lips. “I wanted this to be about you, Candace.” Her mouth slowly inched open and she blinked, not at all understanding what he was getting at.

“What about your pleasure?”

“What you don’t understand, babe, is I’m happy just to satisfy you.”

She stood there staring at him for a long moment, then as comprehension dawned, she touched his face. When their eyes met and locked, warmth blanketed them and a strange new intimacy pulled him under.

“Who are you?” she asked, her voice teasing. “And when did you land on Earth?”
They shared a laugh and with their bodies melded together, she ran her finger over his cheek, then traced the outline of his mouth, her eyes moving over his face, her gaze caressing, probing. His muscles rippled and his breathing grew shallow as her gentle touch went right through him. Heat bombarded him and all he could think about was ripping off his clothes and ramming his cock all the way up inside her.

He gathered himself and transferred his thoughts back to the present, realizing exactly who he was. The man who was hired to watch over her, not fuck her.

Bloody hell.
Chapter Four

With her legs rubbery and a permanent smile etched on her flushed face, Candace made her way back to the inn, Marc at her side. A comfortable silence fell over them as birds chirped and nestled in the huge apple trees beside the house. Juicy red apples weighed down the branches and glistened beneath the sun. Candace did a double take. She had a designer’s eye that took in everything, but she certainly couldn’t remember ever seeing those ripe trees before.

When she reached the front lawn she turned to Marc, and the heated look in his eyes had her aching to go back to the lake, to touch and kiss him all over, the way he’d touched and kissed her. Her mouth watered and liquid heat poured through her veins in anticipation.

He nodded toward the power tools. “I’d better get back to work.”

“Me too,” she said, not really interested in moving anywhere without him but knowing she needed to get the painting completed before Marc finished the bed and brought it inside. They also had to work together to install the hanging sex swing, position the love glider and Tantra chair. All devices that combined sex and exercise. Not to mention the already installed floor-to-ceiling pole, which was perfect for dancing, an excellent cardiovascular workout.

Marc leaned close and for a second she thought he was going to kiss her, then once again she saw something in his eyes before he stepped back, abruptly. Hesitation. One minute he was making crazy love to her with his hands and mouth, and the next he was pulling back, physically and emotionally. The same way he had earlier, during their first trip into the water.

A loud noise inside the house drew their attention, and Candace jumped. Marc laughed and his knuckles brushed her skin, a comforting gesture. “There seems to be quite a bit of banging going on up there.”

She wouldn’t mind doing a little banging of her own. “Must be Brad tearing down that wall.”

Marc inclined his head, and heat churned in his eyes. “Yeah, must be,” he agreed, his voice deeper, huskier. When she caught the strange look moving over his face, she followed his gaze. For a brief second she thought she caught the outline of Lindsay pressed against the window, but the image disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.

Marc cleared his throat, suddenly flustered, and she wondered exactly what he’d seen in that window. What was going on up there?

“You’d better get back at it,” he said. “I’m close to finishing the bedframe.”

With that they both went back to the task at hand. Candace made her way through the old house, calling out to Pamina but unable to find her anywhere. Everyone was hard at work, she supposed. She hurried up the gorgeous winding staircase, climbed into her coveralls and readied her supplies.

Now here she was, her mind wandering, thinking about how she wanted to set up the furniture and how she’d like to try out every sinful piece with Marc. God, she couldn’t believe how intimate she’d been with him, a man she barely knew but felt completely comfortable with. A man who was concerned with her needs and desires, and admitted that pleasuring her had pleasured him. Nor could she believe how he’d so easily read her, and the excitement she felt from having sex outdoors with the possibility of getting caught. A fine shiver moved down her spine and she knew she wanted to do that again.

He had to be some visiting alien, she decided.

But seriously, who was he and where had he come from? He’d only recently moved to Mason Creek. Where had he moved from, and where exactly was this shop he was setting up? Perhaps Pamina would know, since she’d hired him in the first place.

And why did he go from hot to cold so quickly, displaying passion one second and hesitation the next?

As she pondered that longer, wondering if past hurts were holding him back, Candace wiped her brow, then put the finishing touches on the back wall. She stood back to admire her work. Satisfied with the job and happy she was half-done with only two walls left, she glanced out the window and spotted Marc walking to his van. Would he be sleeping in there tonight? She noted the king-sized mattress on her floor, brand-new sheets and plush comforter beside it. Sure the room wasn’t ready yet, but even if he didn’t get the frame made, there was no reason why he couldn’t crash on that perfectly comfortable makeshift bed.

Returning to matters, Candace went to work on finishing her painting just as Abra came sauntering into the room. “Hey, kitty.” She stopped to give him a pat.

Abra curled around her legs, brushing up against her and purring in delight. She stroked his massive underbelly
and made a tsking sound.

“Vous save, Abra, maybe you should come on one of my runs. It wouldn’t hurt you to shed a few pounds.”

With that he hissed and hopped up onto her windowsill, where he gave her his back and proceeded to groom himself.

Candace laughed at his ornery behavior. “You really are a strange kitty.” Paying him no more attention, she went back to painting. Day bled into night as Candace completed the walls and cleaned up her supplies. The grumbling of her stomach told her it was dinnertime.

When she heard loud banging noises coming from Lindsay’s room, she thought about investigating, but Anna popped her head in, her cheeks flushed, her big blue eyes wide and glossy.

“You okay?” Candace asked and furrowed her brow in concern.

“Fine, I just wanted to let you know I can’t meet up for dinner after all. Looks like we’ll be working well into the night.”

Candace frowned. Lindsay had been unable to join them for lunch and she could only assume she was still too busy to quit for the night. “Is your project going okay? Do you need help?”

“No,” Anna rushed out. “We’re right on schedule. But my masonry guy doesn’t want to leave smack-dab in the middle of the…job.”

Okay, so why did she pause before saying job? What exactly was going on in there anyway? Not that it was any of Candace’s business. After all, she’d broken the pact. Or had she? Did oral sex count as breaking the pact? Nah, she didn’t think so. She’d simply dented it. Only full-blown intercourse counted as breaking it, right?

“Will you be driving home tonight?” Anna asked.

“Yeah, why? Do you want me to wait and give you a lift?”

“No, I just wouldn’t want to keep you up with any noise next door. Laying brick can get noisy.”

“No worries, I’m heading home.”

“I’ll see you in the morning,” she said, a twinkle in her eye as she disappeared. Feeling fatigued, Candace carried her brushes to the washtub on the main level, off the laundry area, and rinsed them out. Once her task was complete, she pulled off her coveralls, hopped into a warm shower and washed herself up before heading back to the room to climb into a fresh pair of clothes, which she always brought with her when there was a possibility of staying overnight on a job. She moved through the old inn in search of Pamina but when she couldn’t find her, she stepped out into the night.

A refreshing burst of cool evening air brushed over her, giving her a second wind, and her eyes went from Marc’s van to the track and back to his van again. There was nothing she liked better than a brisk run after sunset, then maybe she’d grab something to eat.

She wondered if Marc was interested in eating with her…

Marc paced in his van with half of his brain kicking his ass for his stupidity at the lake and the other half unable to stop thinking about the way Candace had felt in his arms or tasted on his tongue. Wincing, he threw himself into his small desk chair and ran his hands through his hair, noting that the erotic scent of her still lingered on his skin. Jesus…

Restless in his wobbly seat, he moved from side to side and turned on his security monitors. Apprehension moved through him as he zeroed in on the camera overlooking the lake. Son of a bitch! He’d been so caught up in the moment he’d forgotten the camera had been on them, recording their every salacious action. He held his hand over the delete button, knowing he had to remove any evidence of them together, but then suddenly, he couldn’t seem to bring himself to do it just yet. Perhaps a quick look, purely for research purposes, he assured himself, to confirm that the cameras were in working order before he deleted the entire file. He hit the rewind button, taking it back to the exact time he’d jumped into the water.

The erotic sight of him pleasuring Candace came on screen and he immediately hardened. His cock thickened and his balls tightened, demanding he finally do something about his rock-hard erection before he went off like a supernova.

Groaning and feeling like a hormonal teenager, he slipped his hands inside his shorts, gripped his cock and began to stroke himself. Hard. If he wanted to get his mind back on the job, the only way to do it was with a clear head. Both of them. And if this was the answer, then so be it.

When he heard Candace’s cries of ecstasy, he pumped faster, the need to release the brewing pressure inside him growing at an alarming rate. Another low groan crawled out of his throat as he worked his palm over his throbbing cock. He closed his eyes briefly, letting his wild imagination take him back to that lake with Candace.

Erotic visions of the way she’d offered herself to him filled his thoughts; her pussy poised at his mouth and his
fingers pumping inside her and brushing over her G-spot until she quaked with urgency. Jesus he loved how he’d
made her quake.

He opened his eyes in time to watch the way he licked her pussy, his face moving between her thighs and inching
open her swollen lips as he ravished her sweet spot. With his senses exploding he dragged in air and knew his
orgasm was only a stroke away. His hands began to work harder over his dick as he fantasized how it would feel to
slide his cock into her tight sex, and pump in and out of her until they both shattered into a million pieces, their
orgasms overtaking them and leaving them drained, sated.

“Fuck…” He moaned out loud as pressure mounted inside him. He cupped his sac and stroked his dick faster.
With his cock thickening to the point of no return, he bit down on his bottom lip, his brain no longer functioning.

But then, seconds before he found release, a knock came on his door and had his mind careening back. He grunted
something incoherent, summoned what little brainpower he had left and clicked off the monitors, praying that
whoever was on the other side of that door hadn’t heard anything.

The knock came again, and he worked to stuff his swollen cock back into his shorts and adjust his T-shirt to hide
the huge bulge.

“Marc, are you in there?”

Holy hell!

He cleared his throat. “Yeah, just a second,” he bit out and drew on an old teenage trick, thinking about sports and
old television shows, in an effort to shrink his erection.

“Is everything okay?”

Hell no, everything wasn’t okay. Here he was whacking off in a van while he watched himself pleasure his boss’s
daughter on video. Not only that. He liked her. Really liked her. Candace was open, giving, fun and refreshing. She
was natural and lacked pretense. So unlike any other woman he’d ever met. And what was he doing in return?
Deceiving her.

“Yeah, I’ll be right out.” After taming his arousal, he erased the video, drew a centering breath and pulled open
the door. He stepped out and closed the door behind him, but the minute she leaned forward, breaching his
personal space, a rush of sexual energy hit him. Hard.

“What was that noise I heard?”

Feeling flustered, something that never happened to him—until he set eyes on Candace, that is—he rushed out.

“Radio…yeah, the radio.”

She tried to look past his shoulders, but he moved, blocking her path and slamming his door tight.

“Are you finished for the day?” she asked.

“All done.” He put his hands into the pockets of his shorts to inconspicuously adjust himself. Christ, everything
about her reduced him to a hormonal juvenile.

“I was just thinking about taking a run, then afterwards grabbing something to… eat.”

Marc’s heart missed a beat as he took in the lust in her eyes and something about the way she said eat had his
libido roaring to life once again. He should say no and just get the hell out of there and ask his boss to put someone
else on the case. But he didn’t trust anyone else to look out for her. Or touch her.

That last thought made him realize he’d gotten himself in deep.

Too deep.

If he knew what was good for him, he’d just get the fuck out of Dodge. Tonight.

She began to back up, picking up the pace to give herself a head start. “Come on. I’ll race you to the lake. Winner
takes all,” she said with a mischievous gleam in her eyes. When she turned her back to him and took off on a flat-out
run, he bent down and tightened his laces.

So it would appear he didn’t know what was good for him, after all.
Chapter Five

Candace darted a glance over her shoulder to see if he was coming as she raced to the lake. Oh yeah, he was coming all right, and quickly closing the distance between them. A smile pulled at her and she knew if she wanted to win this race she’d better put everything she had into it. Deciding to do just that, Candace lengthened her stride, but Marc was too fast and too strong.

He caught up to her in seconds flat and hadn’t broken a sweat yet. “What exactly do you mean, winner takes all?” he asked, keeping pace beside her.

“You see,” she managed through labored breathing, knowing she needed to throw him off his stride the same way he’d thrown her off her game the other day. She planned to win the race using any means possible. “When I win, I’m going to take you back to the inn and show you another way to exercise.”

His eyes lit. “Yeah, how?” She could see the genuine interest in his gaze.

“Well there is the new Tantra chair I’d like to try out. You know, to ensure it works properly and is sturdy enough before we open the room to guests.” She watched his face change as understanding dawned. Deciding to play, to push him a little more, she added, “And then there’s the hanging sex swing, the love glider and the floor-to-ceiling pole for a little seductive dancing.”

His jaw dropped and his stride slowed, his body language conveying his shock at her boldness. Or perhaps he was too busy thinking about what they could do on said equipment to focus on running. Fortunately his reprieve gave her the opportunity she needed to win. Once she reached the embankment, she stopped running and twisted around to glimpse Marc, who still stood there gawking at her, need and desire flitting across his handsome face.

He quickly caught up to her, grabbed her hips and anchored her to him, and her entire body shivered in sensual delight. He put his back to a tree and cast a glance around. “What the hell are you trying to do to me?”

There was something about the way he moved, talked and continually scanned the area that reminded her of a cop or a bodyguard. With her father’s line of work, she’d been around enough of them to pick up on their little nuances. But as heat poured through her and her pussy throbbed, aching to feel him again, her brain was too far gone to consider that point further. Right now all she could think about was the way his hands were touching her body, the feel of his growing arousal pressed against her abdomen. The way her mouth watered, thirsting for a taste of him.

“Well, I’m trying to get you naked so I can have my wicked way with you. It’s only fair, don’t you think? After all, you’ve seen me naked.”


His eyes smoldered, as if he was remembering every delicious detail of their erotic encounter.

Candace wet her lips, and he watched the action very carefully as his eyes moved over her face. Candace shifted her hips, positioning his cock right where she needed it as she gauged his reactions. His hard erection told her how much he wanted this, but would he hesitate or would he go for it?

“You know. A little tit for tat…” she added for good measure.

His laugh was edgy, churning with passion. His nostrils flared, and his jaw clenched like he was fighting some internal battle. Then something came over him, a shift of some sort, and he grabbed her hand. “Let’s go.”

“Go?”

“Yeah, you won, and winner takes all, remember?”

“Oh yeah. I remember.” Candace’s heart began to pound, as she was both excited and frightened by the intensity she’d spotted in his eyes.

Without preamble, Marc ushered them back to the inn, up the stairs and straight into the room. Once inside, she watched him close the door, set the lock and press his back to it. Candace drew a breath as excitement coiled through her veins. God, she hadn’t seen such fervor in his eyes before. He tossed her a wild, predatory look and panned the length of her. “So tell me more about this tit for tat,” he said, his voice husky with desire.

As moisture pooled between her thighs, she stepped back and ran her hands over the Tantra chair, wondering if he caught the sweet tang of her arousal. She lifted one eyebrow. “Have you used one of these before, Marc?” She pulled out the brochure and scanned the numerous positions, her hands trembling with need. “It’s great for a thigh workout, if you’re riding on top, that is.”

The air around them charged, and her body quaked as she pictured herself on top of Marc, riding his cock with wild abandon. Then she took note of another possible position. Her on her knees, Marc’s cock in her mouth, and she
knew exactly what she wanted to do first. She placed her hand on her stomach, where need gathered in a ball, and Marc’s gaze shifted to her breasts.

Before she knew what was happening, he took charge and was on her, his hungry lips on hers, his hands moving over her body, pushing, pulling, giving and taking like he couldn’t get enough of her. As much as she wanted him to take her again, pleasure her the way no other man ever had, she grabbed his hands and anchored them to his sides.

“Uh-uh. I’m the winner. I get to play it my way.”

“You’re only the winner because you cheated.”

She put her hands on his abdomen, taking pleasure in his tight muscles, and grinned. “Such a sore loser.”

Candace slipped her hand into his shorts and captured his cock, his words of protests suddenly forgotten, replaced by a heated moan. Now that she had him right where she wanted him—not a speck of hesitation on his face—she tugged at his shirt determined to find out if there could be more between them. If he was a man who could like her for who she was, because so far she liked everything about him.

She gestured with nod of her head. “I want these clothes gone, and then I want you to lie down on that chair for me. I’m in need of a thigh workout.”

He brushed the back of his hands over her face and his touch went right through her. “Only if you let me undress you. I want you naked with me.”

She sensed he was a man used to taking charge and taking care of others. But she wanted him to let his guard down with her so she could show him how good it was let someone take care of his needs. She was so used to men taking what they wanted that until Marc she had no idea such giving, considerate men existed.

“Will you get naked with me, sweetheart?”

The vulnerability she heard in his voice tugged at her insides. When she nodded, he slipped his big rough hands under her shirt and slowly removed it, her bra quickly following. He then dropped to his knees and inched her shorts and panties down, his mouth so close to her skin she could feel his hot breath whispering over her thighs.

Once he had her naked, he stood, took a step back and just stared at her, his gaze caressing her body. “You’re so damn sexy.”

Candace quivered under his lusty glance, her breasts swollen, hot, aching to feel his mouth. But first, she wanted to taste him, to have her wicked way with him, the way he’d had it with her.

“Winner takes all,” she whispered before she closed her mouth over his cock, taking as much of him in as possible but knowing she’d never be able to take all where his impressive size was concerned.

As she worked her mouth up and down his cock, she tilted her head to see him. His dark eyes smoldered and his breathing hitched as he watched her. When her hair fell forward, he brushed it back and gave her a tender smile.

“Do you like that, baby? Do you like to suck my cock?”

Instead of answering she slipped her hand lower and cradled his balls. As her hand milked his rock-hard shaft, it occurred to her that being with him felt so intimate, so right. A riot of emotions erupted inside her, and she rocked forward, her pussy aching to feel him inside her.

His muscles spasmed, and as she continued to take pleasure in kissing and tasting him, she could sense his tension. When her fingers stroked over his beautiful cock, she could feel herself burning up, sparks shooting through her body. He gripped her hair and began to ease her off, but she shook her head, and continued to work her tongue over his tip while she ran her hand up and down the length of him, her other hand cupping and massaging his balls.
With single-minded determination, she made one more pass with her tongue, escalating his tension. A moment later his entire body tightened and he groaned. “Oh, Christ.”

His cock tightened and contracted, then he erupted and Candace opened her mouth to drink in his salty sweetness. She stayed there for a long time, lapping up every last drop. Once he stopped spasming, she glanced up at him.

“Candace, sweetheart. Come here.” The urgency and emotion in his voice made her tremble.

She slid up the chair until she was positioned over him. With her legs wrapped around his waist, she leaned forward, her breasts pressed against his moist chest. He drew her mouth to his, which brought them to an even deeper level of intimacy. His kiss was so full of emotion and tenderness it was all she could do to keep herself together. He lifted her higher and took one nipple into his mouth. As he laved her tight bud, he gripped her hips and moved them back and forth, rubbing her clit over his stomach, preparing her for him. She swallowed the lump in her throat, loving the way he was prepping her, concerned about her needs.

When he groaned, she reached behind her and touched his cock, excited to find it swollen and ready to go again. She inched away, needing him inside her more than she needed air, but he gripped her hips tighter and held her still.

Concerned eyes met hers. “You’re not ready for me.”

He slipped a hand between their bodies and brushed his thumb over her clit, his touch more emotional than physical. God, she couldn’t believe how considerate he was. Honestly, he was too good to be true.

When his finger met with her drenched pussy, a moan of need sounded in her throat, and she threw her head back. He grinned, his soft chuckle washing over her. “So it seems you are ready.” Then the smile fell from his mouth and something flitted over his face, something like pride, and he pitched his voice low. “I like how wet you get for me.”

Frantic to feel him inside her, she tried to shimmy lower, but he held her and spoke in whispered words full of need. “Candace, sweetheart, slow down. We need a condom.”

Cripes, she’d been so far gone, she hadn’t stopped to consider it. “I don’t—”

His cock probed her opening and he clenched his jaw. “I do, but my wallet is in the van.”

Just then a noise on the windowsill gained their attention and they both turned. Abra jumped from his perch, and a box of condoms seemed to magically appear on the window shelf.

“When. How?” they said in unison.

Candace shook her head, perplexed at the oddness of it all but thankful for small miracles. “I don’t know. But right now, I don’t care.” She climbed from the chair, crossed the room and grabbed the box of condoms. She removed one from the package, and as she placed it on the crown of his gorgeous cock, he never took his eyes off her, and his hands roamed her flesh, like he needed the intimate contact at all times. Once she completed sheathing him, she slid her leg around his waist, to position herself over his shaft. With her feet planted on the floor, she lowered herself, and his cock probed her pussy.

His fingers bit into her hips, and the passion that grew in his eyes nearly stopped her heart. She loved that he wanted her every bit as much as she wanted him. She bent forward and brushed her lips over his, the position of the chair enhancing intimacy between partners.

Abra purred and Marc asked in broken words, “Uh…Candace. Should we…put the cat out?”

“Yes,” she whispered with effort, then sank down onto his cock, all thought of Abra forgotten.

Every ounce of bottled-up lust she had came rushing to the surface, and her need for Marc grew to insurmountable portions. She removed one from the package, and as she placed it on the crown of his gorgeous cock, he never took his eyes off her, and his hands roamed her flesh, like he needed the intimate contact at all times. Once she completed sheathing him, she slid her leg around his waist, to position herself over his shaft. With her feet planted on the floor, she lowered herself, and his cock probed her pussy.

Engulfed in desire, she pressed her palms to his chest and lifted herself up and down, up and down, driving his cock all the way inside her and reveling in the way his girth pressed against her walls and stroked the tiny bundle of nerves that made her delirious with want.

“You are so beautiful,” he murmured, his voice rough, and when he bent forward to run his tongue over her nipples, a shudder overtook her. She gave a broken gasp and gripped his shoulders, bringing them chest to chest.

The rich scent of lovemaking curled around them, and Marc growled, his mouth finding hers. As he impaled her with his tongue, he cupped her buttocks and squeezed. Then his hand slipped around to the front where he stroked her with expertise. He parted her lips and sinuously circled her clit. Slow, torturous circles that nearly drove her mad with need. The man sure knew how to prolong a seduction.

As she shivered under his touch, she angled her body for deeper thrusts and her flesh moistened from the stab of pleasure. Her nails bit into his skin, and she pumped harder, her sex muscles tightening.

His eyes caressed hers with sultry heat. His gaze was dark, intense and unguarded. “Candace, baby. That’s it, sweetheart, come for me,” Marc encouraged, so in tune with her body and her every desire as he let down his shields and gave himself over to the pleasure.

She gave a throaty purr as a fine tremble moved through her. “So good…”
He pressed his finger harder against her clit and it obliterated all her control. Her soft quakes turned to heated tremors, and her body responded with a hot flow of release. She let herself go, giving herself over to Marc and to the pleasure he was bestowing upon her. As she tumbled into an orgasm, she bent forward and ran her teeth over his shoulder. He plunged deeper as her cunt pulsed and spasmed, her body going up in a burst of flames.

“Marc…” she cried out, completely lost in the sensation.

As she called his name, her cream dripped down his shaft, bathing him in her syrupy arousal. Then suddenly he stilled his movements, his dark turbulent eyes met hers as he let himself go. She squeezed her cunt, absorbing every delicious tremor, and he released inside her.

He pulled her in tight and she melted against him. They held each other for a long time, both breathing hard and gripping one another like their lives depended on it. A moment later she inched back and met his mouth. He kissed her deep, and her arms tightened around him, holding him impossibly closer. As she found solace in his embrace, his cock still buried inside her, she gave a contented sigh, deciding she never wanted to move, never wanted to break the intimate contact.

Marc shifted his mouth from hers to her neck to her ear and whispered, “That’s one hell of a chair you got yourself here.”

Candace gave an easy laugh. “Don’t get too used to it.”

He pulled back to see her and a perplexed look came over his handsome face. “No?”

“Nope.” She nodded toward the equipment still awaiting setup. “We’ve yet to try out the swing, and then there’s the glider and the—”

His lips crashed down on hers, and her words were lost on a moan.

With that he took her again and again. Sometime throughout the night, they put the cat outside and made their way to the mattress, where he gathered her tight in his arms and covered them with a plush blanket. A wave of fulfillment and gratification came over her, but as she drifted off to sleep, one thought plagued her exhausted mind.

Marc Collins was too good to be true.

As sunlight poured into the room, Marc twisted sideways to take in the gorgeous sight before him. He sucked in a tight breath, hungering for her in ways that left him confused. He perused her naked body, his cock responding with interest. Oh fuck, he needed her again, needed her so much it left him dizzy. Needed her more than he’d ever needed anyone, or anything, in fact.

He touched her arm, trailing his hand over her silky skin. She moaned in her sleep, unconsciously rolling toward him in search of his touch, his heat.

Marc leaned forward and lightly brushed his tongue over her nipple, watching it harden and loving the way she responded to his mouth, even in sleep. Desire twisted his insides as he trailed lower, kissing and savoring her stomach and her bellybutton until he reached her pubis.

With delicious thoughts filling his mind, he eased her onto her back, inched open her thighs and climbed between. He braced a hand on either side of her hips and pressed his tongue to her pussy, brushing her clit ever so slightly and watching the way she writhed on the satin sheets.

So nice…

Blood pounding through his veins as he continued to indulge in her liquid heat. A moment later her hands raced through his hair and he darted a glance upward. “Good morning, sweetheart.”

“Great morning,” she murmured, looking lazy, rumpled, sexy and so damn satisfied his chest puffed with pride. She nudged his head, guiding him back down. Chuckling, he went back to tasting her sweetness, and she gave a whimper of delight in response.

He ravished her with his tongue, then slipped a finger inside. Her hips came off the mattress and he could tell by the small tremors that it wasn’t going to take much to push her over. She was already incredibly aroused.

As her fingers played through his hair she drew a shaky breath. “Marc…”

“That’s my girl.” Her body tightened and she let herself go, creaming into his hungry mouth. “Mmm.” He drank in every last drop.

When her tremors subsided, he slid up her body and hovered over her. A riot of emotions overcame him when he met her sleepy green eyes, and thought about the way she’d pushed him to let down his guard last night, to show him that he didn’t always have to be in charge.

“Thanks for last night, sweetheart.” Jesus, was that his voice? Just then he heard workers milling about outside and a wicked idea raced through his mind and brought on a tremble. It was his turn to play with her.

She smiled. “Thanks for this morning.”

“Don’t thank me just yet.” He tossed her a mischievous grin and watched one sexy brow raise with intrigue.

“Marc?”
“Up,” he demanded in a soft tone.
“What—?”
“There is something I want you to do for me.”
Her eyes lit with interest, and her warm breath washed over him. “Oh yeah?”
“Yeah, you see that pole over there?”
Her gaze went from his face to the pole and she gave an excited gasp.
“I need you to show me something.”
Her voice thinned to a whisper. “What’s that?”
“Well, last night you showed me how to use the chair for exercise, so now I need to see how you use that pole. After all, if I’m going to be spending time in this room, I really should know how everything works, don’t you think?”

Candace moistened her lips and her cheeks flushed pink as she slowly climbed from the mattress. “What I think is that you’re a very bad boy.” She made her way across the room, looking beautiful and naked and so alluring he nearly lost all coherent thought. As fierce possessiveness whipped through his blood, she wrapped one palm around the pole and swayed back and forth, her gorgeous breasts catching his attention.

Marc leaned back on the mattress, eager to take in the show. Warm early-morning sunlight poured in from the window and bathed her body in a golden glow. She lifted herself higher on the pole, wrapped her legs around it and slid downward. His cock throbbed to the point of pain as his eyes tracked down her body, taking in her lush softness and the way she pressed against that pole. Provocatively.

He cleared his throat. “You know, Candace, if anyone glances up here they’ll see you.”
She glanced toward the window and fire lit in her eyes. Working her way back up the pole, she turned her attention back to him, and the sultry, playful look on her face rattled his insides. As a burst of warmth rushed to his heart, he knew he was done for. Completely and utterly done for.

“Tell me. Did you position it in front of the window on purpose?”
“It’s quite possible,” she said in a breathless whisper.
He made a tsking sound and smiled at her, loving her honesty and her adventurous nature, but mostly loving the way she looked at him with pure adoration. “I think you’re a very bad girl, Candace.”
Her grin turned wicked, and he could hear the underlying question lacing her voice when she said, “Then that makes us quite the team.”

It sure as hell did.
He looked into her eyes and saw need shining there. Intuition told him she felt the same way he did, but she was testing him, gauging his reactions as though wondering if there could be more between them. Sure they’d only recently met, but never had he reached such a deep level of intimacy or comfort with anyone before. It was as if some magical force had brought them together because they belonged to one another and were meant to be together forever.

Unable to take one more minute of her sexy act and needing to be inside her more than he needed to breathe, he climbed from the mattress, crossed the room and roughly pulled her to him. He jammed a leg between her thighs and felt her warm, wet pussy on his skin. Fuck, he loved how she was always ready for him. She locked her fingers together behind his head and kissed him long and deep.

She gyrated against his leg and he pressed against her harder, grinding his cock into her stomach. Beautiful expressive eyes met his and she poked him in the chest, fully aware of what he was up to. “Was that little show in front of the window for you or was it really for me?” There was so much emotion in her voice, it seeped under his skin and touched his soul.

His smile was as shaky as his hands as they raced over her. “Let’s just say it was for both of us.”
With that he lifted her ass, put her on the window ledge and pressed her back against the pane. “And so is this.”
He quickly sheathed himself, positioned his body between her spread legs and, with one powerful thrust, drove his cock all the way up inside her. “Sweet fuck,” he murmured and knew he was in a heap load of trouble here.

He was crazy about Candace. She was fun and wild and adventurous, and unlike any woman he’d met before. He wanted her. All of her. And not just in the bedroom.

As her heat closed around him, he cupped her face and kissed her on the mouth. Hard.

What was it Pamina had said to him again? Sometimes things can get quite...messy. He’d made a mess of things all right. A big fucking mess. But Candace was so damn impossible to resist.
Regardless, he needed to make it right. For his sake and for Candace’s.
Chapter Six

After Marc left her bedroom, assuring her he had business in the city to take care of, Candace descended the winding staircase in search of Pamina. Her mind raced, sorting through the whirlwind of events over the last few days.

They had a lot in common, but really she didn’t know anything about him at all. Then again, he didn’t know anything about her. Like him, she was vague when he questioned her about her family. Was he too hiding something? And what exactly was this business he had to take care of in the city?

Once again, too good to be true rushed through her mind.

When Candace reached the main level, Pamina came around the corner with Abra in her arms, his fur a tattered mess.

Candace furrowed her brow and took in his bedraggled state. “What the heck has he been up to?”

Pamina glared at Abra. “Nothing good, I can assure you of that.”

Candace picked what looked like a chunk of brick mortar from his fur. “I think he needs a bath.”

When Abra hissed at her, Pamina tapped his nose. “I definitely think a bath is in order and I don’t care how much you dislike it.”

As Pamina walked to the kitchen, Candace followed. “Pamina, I wanted to ask you about Marc.”

With a squirming Abra tucked under her arm, Pamina grabbed two apples from the bowl and handed one to Candace. Candace polished it on her shirt then took a big bite.

“What about him?” Pamina asked, her mystical green eyes glistening.

“He’s new in town and hasn’t set up shop yet, so I was just wondering how you found him.”

Pamina got quiet for a moment, thoughtful. “Well, he was walking toward the house the other day, and I assumed he was the paint stripper I’d hired. When I questioned him, he said he was the right man for the job.” She gave a light chuckle, bit into her own apple. “Who knows? Maybe I accidentally hired the wrong guy. The wrong guy who happened to be in the right place at the right time. Just like he was in the right place at the right time when you needed a woodworker.”

Candace swallowed hard as an uneasy feeling moved through her.

Pamina gave an easy shrug. “But what does it matter really? He’s proven himself to be the perfect man for the job, don’t you think?”

Yeah, in more ways than one.

“So who he is and where he’s come from shouldn’t matter, Candace. What matters is what he’s done since he’s been here.”

Before she could comment, her cell phone rang and she excused herself.

Five minutes later, she hung up with her father. As she considered his tone, a knot settled into her stomach. There had been something in her father’s voice that upset her. Although he’d assured her everything was fine, she sensed he was hiding something from her.

Deciding then and there that she needed to see him, she hopped into her car, drove to the station and boarded a train to Grand Central Station.

Marc paced outside Krane’s office, catching glimpses of him talking to his secretary through his glass door. Jesus, what the hell was he supposed to say to him? Oh yeah, everything is going just fine, sir. Sure I’ve been keeping an eye on your daughter.

And a hand on her.

A tongue on her.

A cock in her.

Oh fuck!

He knew he was going to be out of a job, but none of that mattered to him. All that mattered was that he wanted to come clean with Candace so they could begin this relationship on the right foot and take it to the next level. If it wasn’t too late for that. And the last thing he wanted was to be paid to take care of her. It was a job he’d happily do for free.

He just hoped Candace would understand and forgive him for his deceit.
A moment later Krane’s door opened, and his secretary ushered him inside.

With Krane seated at his desk, Marc faced him straight on and said, “We need to talk.”

Candace stepped off the elevator and moved through the marble foyer as she made her way to her father’s office. Stepping up to Olive’s desk, Candace greeted her with a smile.

Excited to see her, Olive rose from her chair and gave Candace a hug. “Candace, how are you?”

Candace hugged her back. “I’m great. I was just in the area and I thought I’d stop in to see my father.”

“He’s with one of his security guards right now, but go on through. I’m sure he’ll be happy to see you.”

Candace slipped past Olive’s desk and walked down the hall. As she neared her father’s office, she took in the very familiar outline of the man with him, his legs wide, his back to the glass door. Candace’s heart began to pound against her chest, and her knees went weak beneath her.

Oh good God, no.

She took a measured step closer, praying she was wrong but suspecting she wasn’t. There was only one man she knew of who had that short military-cut hairstyle, broad shoulders that tapered to a trim waist and long powerful legs that she’d felt wrapped around her body. Intimately.

Her father looked past the man’s shoulder and his eyes widened, surprised. But wait. Was that surprise that had registered on his face, or was it something else entirely?

The man with his back to the door—the security guard as Olive had identified him—angled his head and met her glance, confirming what she already knew. It was none other than Marc Collins.

As intense dark eyes met hers, she understood the look on her father’s face because Marc was wearing the exact same expression. Guilt.

Candace felt her blood drain to her feet as understanding dawned. Her father had hired Marc to guard her without her knowledge. They’d both been deceiving her. She suddenly remembered an old conversation with her father after he’d been attacked on set, and how he’d hired and trained the set designer to be his guard. That had to have been Marc, seeing as how he could so easily talk shop with her.

Every emotion from confusion to mortification to anger whipped through her blood as she spun around and rushed down the hall. Tears poured down her cheeks, blurring her vision. She could hear Marc chasing after her as she wiped the moisture from her eyes and hurried toward the waiting elevator.

Candace pressed the button and watched the metal ping shut, drowning out the noise and closing both the door and her heart to him. Numbly she tracked back to the train station, wanting to be as far away from Marc as possible.

Sure, what her father had done was wrong, but at least he did it because he cared. What about Marc? He took the job to guard her because he was getting paid, and he jumped at the chance to be her woodworker simply to keep an eye on her. Was sleeping with her a fringe benefit, or was he getting paid for that too?

Her mind raced, trying to sort through the godawful turn of events as she boarded the train to Connecticut. Marc might not have been using her to get to her father, but he had been deceiving her, pretending to be someone he wasn’t. Which made him no different from the other men who’d used her. She should have known he was too good to be true. The signs were there—the haircut, the way he moved, the way he continually scanned the area. But she had been too damn smitten to pay attention. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.

A long while later Candace made her way to the inn, both physically and mentally drained. With her emotions in a tangled mess, she needed to be alone, to come to terms with everything that had happened. As she entered the front door and made her way to the staircase, she wondered why the hell she’d broken the pact she’d made with her best friends—to stay away from all men. Hadn’t lessons learned long ago taught her anything?

She put her foot on the first stair, but the sound of Marc’s voice behind her stilled her movement.

“Candace, wait.”

Her whole body tightened, and she wrapped her arms around herself, not wanting to hear any more lies from him. “I think you should go.”

“I think you need to hear what I have to say.” The emotions in his voice made her heart clench.

She spun to face him and bit out, “Why do I need to hear what you have to say? I don’t even know who you are.”

“Yes, you do, Candace. Everything between us is real.”

The pained look on his face touched her deeply, and the soft tone of his voice spoke of sadness and distress, and made it so damn difficult to keep hold of her anger. “How can I believe that?”

“I never meant to hurt you,” he admitted. She was astonished by the sincerity and tenderness in his tone. “I wanted to tell you who I was, and I tried to keep my distance from you, but I couldn’t. I wanted you so much I just couldn’t fight it anymore.” His hands clenched at his sides and she could see the way his breathing had changed, become harder, more erratic.

She suddenly remembered the conflict in his eyes. The hesitation. Had he been trying to pull back, to fend off her
advances? Honestly, what chance did he have? There was no denying the attraction between them was palpable, and
with the way she’d been teasing and tormenting him, she’d made it impossible for him to fight the attraction.
Perhaps she too carried some of the blame.
“I went to your father’s office to quit, Candace.”
That caught her by surprise. “You quit?”
“Yes.”
“Why?”
“Because I don’t want money to protect you. That’s a job I’d gladly do for free.”
She gulped air. “You can’t just quit. What are you going to do? Where will you work?”
“I don’t know. Working here with you has reminded me how much I love to use my hands. How much I miss set
design and woodworking. Maybe I will set up that shop after all.”
“What about all your training as a security guard? You’re going to let that go to waste?”
“Not a chance, because if you’ll let me, I’d like to spend the rest of my life protecting you.”
Her heart leapt, aware of what he was asking of her. She planted her hands on her hips, not ready to let him off the
hook just yet, but deep in her heart knowing she would. Because he was warm and kind and loving and gentle. A
fiercely protective man who gave without taking, and to her that spoke volumes. He was a man who’d made a
mistake and was now suffering every bit as much as she was. “Who says I need protection?”
“I do.” He stepped closer and brushed his thumb over her cheek. “Your father has enemies, Candace, and I plan
on making sure none of them ever finds or touches you.”
As she leaned into him, absorbing the heat from his hand, she knew he truly was sorry and hadn’t intentionally
hurt her. In that instant she felt her anger melt and thought more about what Pamina had to say. Pamina might have
mistaken him for someone else, but there was no doubt that he was right guy at the right time. And forget about too
good to be true. This guy was good. Great, in fact. And he was true, honest and giving. Not to mention the best thing
that had ever happened to her. It also occurred to her that she didn’t feel smothered by him or his protective nature.
She felt loved and cherished.
He must have sensed the shift in her because he pulled her tight. “But the only question is, who’s going to protect
you from me?”
She pressed against him and chuckled. “Uh, do you have something in your pocket or are you just happy to see
me?”
He laughed. “I picked something up for you while I was in the city today.” Sadness crossed his eyes. “Then I was
worried you’d never speak to me again, and I’d never get the chance to give it to you.” He reached into his pocket
and pulled out a new iPod. “After all, I was responsible for damaging yours in the first place.”
Warmth moved through her as she recalled their seductive encounter at the lake. “You really are one of a kind,
aren’t you?”
He turned serious. “Candace, I really am sorry I never told you who I was. I don’t want there to be any secrets
between us.”
“We can put that behind us, Marc.” Once again she recalled the mystical Pamina’s words. “What matters is what
you’ve done since you’ve been here. And what you’ve done is opened my eyes and shown me what love really is.”
With that she grinned and held her hand out. “I’m Candace Steele and I’m an interior designer. I’m also the daughter
of Jason Krane, famous New York movie director. Oh, and I’ve recently discovered I’m a regular old exhibitionist.”
Marc covered her hand with his and visibly relaxed. “I’m Marc Collins, set designer turned security guard for
Jason Krane, famous New York movie director. And I’m totally in love with his daughter. Oh, and I’m a regular old
voyeur.”
Candace laughed out loud, the love she felt for him filling her darkest corners. “Then that makes us quite the
team.”
“That’s right Candace, we do make a good team, and always know this, that I love you for who you are.”
Her heart soared. He loved her. “I love you too.”
“Come with me.”
“Where are we going?”
“To the bedroom.”
Desire moved through her. “Oh, yeah.”
“There are some other things we need to square up.”
“Like what?”
“Well, like this.” He pulled her tight and pressed his cock against her. “And since you had your wicked way with
me this morning…”
Candace smiled and wet her mouth, knowing full well it was Marc who’d had his wicked way with her that
morning. “So what exactly are you suggesting. A little tit for tat?”
“I believe I might be, Candace. I believe I just might be.”
A former government financial officer, Cathryn Fox graduated from university with a bachelor of business degree. Shortly into her career, Cathryn quickly figured out that corporate life wasn’t for her. Needing an outlet for her creative energy, she turned in her briefcase and calculator and began writing erotic romance full-time. Cathryn enjoys writing dark paranormals and humorous contemporaries. She lives in eastern Canada with her husband, two kids and chocolate Labrador retriever.

To learn more about Cathryn Fox, please visit www.cathrynfox.com Send an email to Cathryn@Cathrynfox.com or join her chat group, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/wicked_writers/.
Look for these titles by Cathryn Fox

Now Available:

Blood Ties
One on One
All Tied Up
Dance of the Dragon
All Worked Up
Need the job done right? Get a handyman with the right...tools.

All Tied Up
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Pleasure Inn, Book 1
Interior decorator Lindsay Bell jumped at the chance to help restore the old inn at Mason Creek. What could be more fun than letting her imagination run wild on an unlimited budget? Eagerly she plans to turn her assigned room into a fantasy BDSM playground.

All she expected from her newly hired handyman was to help her tear down a support wall. She certainly didn’t expect Brad Caldwell to be so drop-dead gorgeous in a tool belt. When he proves to be a steady, hardworking, stand-up guy—unlike the men she’s dated—Lindsay has a new and wicked idea.

To take her new creation on a test drive down the road of their deepest, darkest, most delicious desires—and seduce her way into his heart.

Warning: Smokin’ hot sex with creative use of toys, and a dash of magic.

Enjoy the following excerpt for All Tied Up:

He shut the door. Lindsay’s eyes widened at the sound of the lock clicking in place. He could almost see her body stir to life. Almost hear her mind reeling with possibilities.

“What—”

In two long strides he closed the distance between them and pressed his fingers to her lips. “Shh.”

He watched her throat work as she swallowed and knew, by the heated look in her eyes, her untamed passion and desires matched his. She wanted this as much as he did. No questions about it.

He gripped her slim waist and packaged her soft body against his. Christ, she felt so incredible in his arms, he could only imagine how wonderful she’d feel trapped between his legs. Nudging her feet with his, he backed her up until the rear of her knees hit the padded table. Eyes wide, questioning, her chest rose and fell with her erratic breathing.

He tugged her T-shirt out from her tight jeans. When his fingers connected with her soft skin, his brain nearly shut down. “I’m going to give you what you want, Lindsay.”

Her voice hitched, color bloomed high on her cheeks. “How do you know what I want?” He heard the intrigue in her voice and felt her hips push against him. It was a slight movement but hadn’t gone unnoticed.

He offered her a slow smile. “You’re going to have to trust me on that one.”

“I can’t possibly see—”

He pitched his voice low and demanded in a deep tone. “Take off your clothes. Nice and slow.” He touched her arm and felt her body shake with excitement.

“You’ve got to be kidding me?” Her voice betrayed her emotions. He could see the passion, the invitation building in her eyes.

He shook his head. “Not even for a minute.”

“Brad—”

“Take them off, Lindsay. Now. Nice and slow like I told you. If you don’t follow the rules, I’m afraid you’ll be punished.”

He slid his hand between her legs and cupped her sex, just to prove just how serious he was.

An edgy laugh morphed into a heated moan. He noted the way her legs wobbled. “Sweet mother of God,” she whispered under her breath. Then she starched her spine and met his gaze. “What if I don’t want to?” Her voice lacked conviction. They both knew it.

He trailed his finger over her arm and felt the goose bumps on her flesh. “You do. Now take them off. Then I want you sprawled out on that bench. I want you naked, hot and wet, and begging me to fuck you.”

“Ohmigod,” he heard her gasp as his lips closed over hers for a deep, intense, mind-numbing kiss. He slipped his tongue inside her delicious mouth and spent a long moment just tasting her lush sweetness. Jesus, he wanted to devour her. All of her. Right now.

Lindsay inched back, her eyes clouded with emotion, her voice breathless. “This can only be about sex, Brad. Just to help ease the tension between us. Nothing more.”

“Naturally,” he agreed, lightheartedly, feeling anything but. He might have readily agreed with her, the truth was, he wanted to see where this led them. With that he gave her a gentle push.

Lindsay landed on the bench, her legs spread. Brad let out an agonized groan as his groin tightened and throbbed
in heated anticipation. Jesus, he’d never felt such intense desire before. It took all his strength and willpower not to act on his natural urges and answer the demands of his body. At the moment he’d like nothing more than to strip her clothes off, spread her legs wide open and sink his cock into her damp heat. Honestly, it practically killed him not to ravish her caveman style, to push inside her pussy and fuck her until sundown. But, right now, this was about Lindsay, so he needed to control those urges for the time being.

He growled low in his throat as she sat there, eyes glazed with lust as she awaited his instructions. God dammit he wanted her. So much so that he ached to the point of pain. He took a moment to get himself under control before he fucked her with wild abandon.

Obviously not wanting to give him time to catch up and anxious to get the game started, she asked, “What is it you’d like me to do?”

It didn’t take her long to assume her role of submissive, which led him to believe she’d been fantasizing about this for quite some time. It also led him to believe no man had ever taken the time to get to know her on a deeper lever and understand her needs and desires. Stupid bastards. With a girl this incredible, this amazing, a guy had to be a total asshole not to spend all his time getting to know the real her. And give her what she wanted.

“Take you pants off and then resume that position.”

Lindsay obliged without hesitation. She lowered herself onto her back and brought her legs onto the bench. She unsnapped her pants, pulled the zipper and wiggled her gorgeous, curvy ass. Once her jeans were at her ankles she kicked them away. Without inhibition, she sprawled across the bench. He was pleased at how comfortable she was in her own skin. He met her glance. The look in her eyes conveyed without words just how excited she was. Which pleased him immensely.

Brad walked around her, devouring her with his eyes. With exquisite gentleness, he touched her bare legs, his fingers trailing lightly over her soft skin, going higher and higher, coming perilously close to her pussy. Her body quaked. Her legs inched open in invitation.

He lowered his voice. “Very, very nice.” He inhaled and could already smell the tang of her arousal.

“Brad please,” she begged, and reached for him, her fingers brushing against his throbbing cock.

He shackled her hands and put them to her sides. “Sit up,” he commanded. “And take off your shirt.”

Lindsay sat up, her legs wide open, straddling the bench. As he took in the sight of her, he thought he’d go mad with want. The need to fuck her made him edgy, shaky.

He swallowed and worked to control his voice. “Spread your legs wider.” She did, but it wasn’t nearly wide enough for him to have a full, unobstructed view of her sweet spot. “Wider, Lindsay,” he whispered his glance going to the unpacked box of BDSM toys in the corner of the room. “If you’re not going to listen, I’ll have to punish you.”

Her face flushed from heat, her dark eyes glazed with passion. A soft mewl caught in her throat. He stroked her again. Her body buzzed, her skin felt hot to the touch.

She shimmied to the end of the bench and spread her legs impossibly wider, offering her pussy up to him so nicely.

“That’s a girl.”

Twin folds opened for him, affording him a view of her luscious pink softness. Jesus, her pussy was drenched with desire. He did this to her. Damn that pleased him, knowing he could raise her passions to such height and make her soaked with need.

He lowered himself to his knees to get a better look. He leaned in and inhaled, pulling her feminine scent into his lungs. Then he blew a warm breath over her pussy. Her damp hairs bristled.

She drew a shaky breath. “Oh God,” she whispered and tilted her pelvis forward, an obvious plea for more.

Her heat beckoned him and he wanted to touch her. No. He needed to touch her. If he didn’t soon feel her softness, he was certain an artery would blow. His jeans tightened painfully reminding him just how much he wanted her, just how much she affected him. Brad couldn’t ever remember feeling so crazed, so out of control.

He drew a breath, gathering himself. “You are incredible, babe,” he breathed the words over her pussy and watched her sex muscles tighten and throb.

After a light brush of his knuckle over her swollen clit, his finger moved her moist opening. He probed her pussy and knew, as well as he knew his own name, that once he entered her, once she branded him with her heat, he’d never be the same again. With her hips bucking forward, she drove his finger inside.

“Jesus,” he said, loving the way the tight walls of her pussy closed over him. He’d never felt anything so divine.

Brad pressed a finger inside her, unmoving. His gaze went to her shirt. “Didn’t I tell you to take your top off?”

“No, but—”

“Oh, he silenced with a frown. “Don’t question me. Just do as I say.” His glance went to the box of toys a second time. “Otherwise, you’ll be punished.”
The higher she climbs, the harder he falls…

Bridging the Gap
© 2009 Annmarie McKenna

Carter Malone is usually the first one to make tracks before a woman starts getting any ideas. Permanent relationships don’t fit into his personal blueprint. Now, for the first time in his life, he’s burning up the sheets with a woman who makes him think about something more permanent...like spending the night. But she’s holding something back, something he can’t quite pin down.

As a woman in a man’s world, Ryan Cooper is used to wearing a target on her back—and hiding her vulnerabilities. She hasn’t let anything, not even the ever-present threat of an epileptic seizure, stop her from working her butt off to get the foreman’s job with her stepfather’s construction company. Then she discovers the guy she’s been dating—okay, having the hottest sex of her life with—is the architect who designed the building she’ll be overseeing. The last thing she needs is anyone thinking she slept with Carter to get the job.

Or worse, feeling sorry for her.

Before the dust clears, things get a lot more complicated. The previous foreman’s injury was no accident, and whoever caused it is taking aim—at the target on Ryan’s back.

Warning: This book contains almost fully clothed sex with a little bit o’ spanking on an OCD-clean desk inside a construction trailer, a rogue set of pencils that just won’t take stay for an answer, and sweet loving in a tub.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Bridging the Gap:

Aware that he was smashing the beautiful woman beneath him, Carter Malone slowly extracted himself from the tight sheath still gripping his cock and rolled to his side. Ryan groaned with what he hoped was reluctance to let him go. He removed the spent condom, reached for a tissue to wrap it in and dropped it on the floor to deal with later, then fell to his back.

She was consuming him alive. Two weeks into their...dating—is that what she would call their relationship? Because there hadn’t been many dates—and he was already more aware of her than he’d ever been about any other woman. And if he knew a lot about anything other than architecture, it was women. Precious, soft, willing women.

He didn’t get off on forcing them to do his bidding, though tying one up now and then might add to the sexual tension.

He wondered what Ryan would think of the direction his thoughts had gone. Would she run? Profess her undying love? Invite him to seek the advice of a psychologist?

Hell, what was he thinking? Outside of fucking, he didn’t know a great deal about her. They’d literally bumped into each other at a charity event he’d attended at his mother’s request. He didn’t even remember what the hell the event had been held for. Raising money for some affliction or another. From there they’d ended up at her place, something he was sure she’d either A) never done before or B) if she had, rarely. He had the feeling he was her first.

Not partner, but taking a man home immediately after meeting him.

Made him feel possessive as all shit.

Carter rubbed a hand over his face as his breathing finally subsided into a more normal rhythm. He must be getting old.

Jesus. Was his clock ticking? Did that happen to men?

“I think I’m dead,” she groaned next to him.

He smiled and propped himself on his elbow. Unable to resist, he ran his fingertips over the sweat-slicked skin between her breasts. Her nipples puckered and she shivered. “Nah. If you were dead, we wouldn’t be able to do that again, and that would be a damn shame.”

She lifted her head and glanced down his torso to find his dick echoing his words and hardening.

“Right this second?”

Carter laughed at the incredulous look on her face. “I’ll give you a few minutes recovery time first.”

“You’re so gracious.” She sighed and threw an arm over her eyes. “I have to get up.”

“How?”

“That too.”

Thank God the fact her face was covered hid his confusion. What other reason would she have to get up? “You got a hot date?”

“Yep. With my bed.” She dragged herself to a sitting position and Carter swallowed.

Why should he care if she wanted to run out on him? He typically led his dates back to their house so he could...
make the getaway before things got to the point of wanting to stay the night.

“I was kinda thinking you might stay the night.” Pathetic, man. Pathetic.

“I can’t. Have to start a new job tomorrow which requires sleep. Staying the night here might net me an hour, two
tops, knowing you.” A sly smile split her lips and succeeded in completely renewing his erection.

Carter leaned forward and licked a pert nipple. It shouldn’t be too hard to convince her to stay. They definitely
had chemistry between them even if they didn’t know too many other aspects of each other’s lives.
She pushed his head away, giggling. “Don’t think you can distract me, Carter.”

“Damn it.” He trailed his fingers down her abdomen and across her hip when she rose. Sweaty blonde bangs
clung to her forehead. The rest of her shoulder-length hair she gathered in one hand while she fanned her neck with
the other. He loved that she didn’t try and hide her body from him. The idea was pointless really since he’d more
than looked at every millimeter of her skin.
He’d nibbled, tasted, kissed, licked, bit, touched and smelled all of it. She was his addiction and he wanted more.
His fingers itched to pull her tall, slender body back to the bed. He’d kind of shocked himself being attracted to
her. He usually gravitated toward women with a little more build, more voluptuous breasts for sure. Ryan’s breasts
weren’t even what he’d call a handful, but damn if they didn’t respond to the slightest touch.
She cleared her throat, drawing his attention to her face where her pale blue eyes glittered in mischief.
“You’re staring.”
“Yep. And they”—he nodded toward her breasts—“would like to play some more.”
“They might want to but they aren’t going to get to.”
“Damn it.”
She looked back over her shoulder as she headed for the restroom. “You’ve said that already.”
“I mean it. And it’s not nice to keep a man hanging like this,” he called then collapsed onto his back. Where had
he gone wrong? He didn’t normally cause women to feel the need to run off the minute he pulled out.
“I hardly see anything hanging. Perhaps standing is a better word,” she said through the crack of the door.
The toilet flushed and water ran before she returned, naked and swaying her hips.
“If you’re wanting to leave, then perhaps you should stop trying to tempt me.”
“Me walking is tempting?” She dropped to her hands and knees. “Where the hell is my underwear?”
“Everything you do is tempting, babe.” Jesus Christ, didn’t she realize what that particular position made him
think of?
“Oh yeah?” She shook her ass.
“Son of a bitch.” Carter launched himself off the bed and knelt behind that wiggling backside to press his cock
against her folds. Little nymph knew exactly what she was doing.
Ryan squealed and jerked in his hands, but he held fast to her hips.
“You better be damn glad there isn’t a condom in my hand or you wouldn’t be leaving right now.”
She lowered her head to the floor, and in the light spilling from the bathroom, he saw her suck her lower lip in.
She looked like the perfect little submissive. He ran his index finger down the length of her spine, between the
crease of her buttocks, over the rosy aperture and then to her opening. Gathering the wetness there, he slipped
further and circled her clit. Ryan moaned and arched her back into his touch.
He had her.
Lana Green is looking for a lover. At twenty-three, she’s more than ready to shed her shyness and shake up the status quo. Lucky her, the aloof bad boy she’s always wanted to shake it with, Brody Nash, is back in town. Too bad he barely knows she’s alive. Then an unexpected kiss makes her think her days of lusting from a distance are over. Despite the fact she’s no femme fatale and has zero clue how to seduce a man, she sets out to do exactly that.

Brody hardly recognizes the alluring woman as the same gawky computer geek he left in Graceville six months ago. Lana has him spellbound, but his temporary stay in town is strictly business—running his friend’s restaurant while the man’s on his honeymoon. Brody doesn’t do relationships, and he doesn’t do permanent. But when he finds her asleep on his boat, he can’t keep his hands, or any other part of his anatomy, to himself.

Things get complicated when he discovers what he thought was a casual sexual encounter has just cured her of the one thing she wanted to get rid of—her virginity.

Warning: Contains sex that simmers and sizzles, featuring shenanigans in a moving automobile, light bondage, hanky spanky, chocolate cupcakes, chocolate condoms, and a good girl learning how much fun it is to be bad.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Sunset Knight:

“You shouldn’t have come.”

Annoyance sparked to life. “You asked me to.”

Brody’s touch was soft on her cheek as his eyes roamed over her face. “I know, but Drew reminded me we’re supposed to be working together.”

“So? I can handle going to bed with someone I work with.”

He scowled. “Really?”

Lana realized she’d made it sound like a habit she’d acquired. Not wanting to follow that conversational path, she decided instead to concentrate on him. On the fact that he was here, that he hadn’t moved away as a man who wanted her to leave might have.

The moonlight filtering in through the hatch in the ceiling of the cabin bathed him in cerulean light. He’d removed his bow tie and jacket, and the crisp white of his dress shirt took on a fluorescent appearance. Lana’s gaze drifted downward to examine the V of skin revealed by the two buttons he’d undone, and her mouth dried out. Lana reached out and toyed with the shirt. She felt the heat of his flesh through the soft fabric and knew hers must be as hot to the touch.

His breath caught sharply when she released the next button, his shock mirrored by the way her heart slammed against her ribs. Even as the audacity of her own actions stunned her, Lana slid her fingers down and worked on the next button until it too was free of its hole.

Her question was barely audible. “Do you want me to leave?”

She was terrified he’d say yes, but he said nothing at all as she slowly, methodically released every last fastening. When she was done the material hung open to reveal a strip of his chest—toned flesh covered in fine dark hair. She’d never seen him with his shirt off before, and he looked better than she’d ever imagined.

Reaching out, she touched her fingers to all that hard packed muscle. He was so strong, so solid. Touching him alone made the wetness between her thighs increase, made her true feelings slip out. “Wow. You’re so sexy.”

“Hell, Lana.” His voice was raspy, making Lana aware her actions had impacted him. “You make it impossible for a man to kick you out of bed.”

“Are you trying to?”

“Yes.” He encircled her wrist with his fingers, stilling the wandering exploration of her hand. Glancing up, she met his gaze. His dark chocolate eyes shone in the dim light, their depths reflecting the battle going on inside him. Tense lines bracketed his mouth, and his heart beat a rapid tattoo against her palm. “You should get out of here while you still have the chance.”

Lana shook her head, never tearing her eyes from his. “I’ve used up all my chances tonight. If you want me to leave, you might have to carry me out.”

He snaked an arm around her back and grasped her thigh with his other hand. For a moment Lana was sure he was going to do exactly as she’d suggested. Mortification ripped through her. That would be a great look, being hauled down the wharf and unceremoniously dumped in the parking lot.

Perhaps it was his intention to get rid of her, but the instant he pulled her forward and their chests meshed
together, he stilled. The action had brought their faces close, and Lana watched as the fight in his eyes turned to surrender. His grip on her thigh tightened and he drew her leg snugly around his hip. Then he made a guttural sound and leaned forward to capture her lips with his.

He devoured her mouth like a man starved. Lana tried to keep up, to give as good as she got, but the sensuous thrust of his tongue, the tantalizing scrape of his teeth overwhelmed her so all she was capable of was a primal response. Where he led, she followed. When he touched—her face, her hair, her breasts—she offered herself outright. What he demanded, she let him take.

His movements were hurried as he pulled her arms out of the straps of her dress. “Do you have any idea how much I’ve wanted to do this all night?” His move had exposed her bra, and he brushed his fingers over the lace. “Pink. You’re such a cute little surprise package.”

With a deft flick of his fingers her bra disappeared. Instinctively, Lana crossed her arms over her chest. She’d tried not to think about the part of this plan of hers that involved Brody seeing her naked. “It was padded.” From the astounded look on his face, she deduced he was wondering how her cleavage could have been so misleading. “I can eat whatever I want and I never seem to put on weight. Other women hate me for it but I always wished I had more…” She glanced down at herself. “Well, more of everything.”

Something in his eyes softened, and his smile reassured her. His touch became gentle as he uncrossed her arms and set them away from her body. Lana tried not to squirm as he looked at her. “You’re gorgeous,” he uttered.

Lana released a nervous laugh, which died in her throat when Brody dipped his head and nuzzled her breasts. His breath was hot on her flesh, the slight rasp of his chin an erotic sensation. When he took her nipple into his mouth and rolled his tongue over it, she cried out at the shock of exquisiteness. All the times she’d imagined what this would be like hadn’t prepared her for the wonderful whirlpool of pleasure that spun inside her. “Oh, I can’t believe how good that feels.”

“You’re unbelievable. Taste like honey. God, Lana.” She fell back on the bed as he moved over her, his touch growing more urgent as it skimmed down her side and tugged off her dress. He slid his hand over her hip and into the valley between her thighs. When he encountered her exposed folds, a groan spilled out of him and his teeth grazed her throat. “No panties. Jesus.”

Lana’s hips jolted from the mattress when he ran his finger over her clit. She clutched his shoulders and whimpered, tugging at his dress shirt. “Off. Take this off.”

With jerky movements, Brody stripped away the shirt and discarded it, falling on her once again to feast on her breasts.

Sensation burned inside her, heat mounting, spiraling from the inside out. His mouth on her flesh was incredible, the untamed desperation of his kisses exhilarating. Her hands moved to his waistband, a blatant urging that he had no trouble interpreting. He yanked down his zipper and pushed his pants down his legs.

He reached above her head to open a hideaway cabinet and rifled through it. Lana took the opportunity to satisfy her curiosity, slipping her hands down his hair-roughened chest and flat stomach until she came up against something rigid and hot. And big. She curled her fingers around it and her heart thundered. He was larger, thicker and more unyielding than she’d ever expected.

“You okay?”

Returning her gaze to his face she saw a sardonic smile curving his lips. Was he beginning to realize how inexperienced she was? She schooled herself to smile, hoping she would appear worldly and eager, instead of daunted by his potential to hurt her. “Never been better.”

He moved his hips a little, the action causing his hard length to tunnel through her cupped hand. His skin was so smooth and sleek, the strain of his flesh so strongly masculine that Lana’s feminine muscles quivered in anticipation, anxiety fleeting for the moment. Experimentally, she ran her fingers up and down his shaft, fascinated by the slight protrusion of veins running along the front of it. The tip of his penis was smooth and round, dampened by a drop of shiny, translucent liquid. Collecting some with her index finger, Lana brought it to her mouth and tasted him.

“Fuck. Lana, Christ, I need to…” He ran his hand up her thigh and dipped a finger into her moist center. “Tell me you can come while I’m inside you, because I don’t want to wait.”

Lana had no idea, but she doubted it, under the circumstances. She supposed now might be a good time to enlighten Brody of that particular situation, but somehow she knew he wouldn’t be happy to hear he was breaking new territory. It was close to dark, he was half-drunk. If she could keep it together he might never know. Lana would much prefer he never knew. “Maybe. Let’s try.”
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