



## **The Zodiac Series**

### **Leo**

Rae Monet and Jodi Lynn Copeland

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**Book One**

**Chantilly's Lace**

Rae Monet

## **Dedication**

To my husband, he's my rock!

## Prologue

### Daily horoscope

*At a glance:*

*Today is your day, Taurus. Go with your instincts, throw away your inhibitions and you will taste success. Place your responsibilities on the shelf. It's time to relax and enjoy a fantastic evening.*

*Today:*

*Ignore your difficult day, Taurus, and spend the evening in a sexy place. You are about to be introduced to the sensual side of the LEO. Treat him well and he will respond accordingly. It's safe to make him yours. A classy outfit is on the evening's menu. Black is always in style. Listen to your heart, and go with the flow, Taurus, You're in for an explosive interlude. Know in advance what you want for dessert.*

\*

Chandra threw the paper on the hotel table in disgust. Last week she'd found her boyfriend of three years packed and ready to shack up with his new, way younger, way prettier girlfriend. She didn't see any chance in hell of getting past this life event and having an *explosive* evening. Then, her accountant informed her that Chantilly's Lace, her lingerie company, was on the verge of bankruptcy. To top it off, she'd spent the last three days at the Atlanta apparel conference and hadn't made one good contact. What a wonderful week it had been.

She picked up the paper again and re-read her daily horoscope. Screw it, she thought as she tossed it down. She was going to hit the bar in her best black dress.

## Chapter One

*"You're such a cold fish, Chandra, no man would want you in his bed."*

After downing another drink, Chandra slammed the shot glass onto the bar and grimaced in distaste, more at her own thoughts than the sharp flavor of vodka.

*Cold fish.*

She shook her head as she surveyed the sultry bar. Subtle neon lights reflected off the mirrored background of bottles and booze. *Eve's Interlude*. She chuckled. What an appropriate name to make her fantasies come true. A horoscope message was penned onto the daily specials board, *"Take a Leo home with you tonight and enjoy."* Wasn't that weird, she thought, maybe all the stars were aligned for her and Leo this evening.

The vodka eased through her body, warming her, melting the ice so many men claimed ran through her veins. Brian was right about one thing, though. She had never enjoyed the men in her bed. Never, not once. Making love was a duty. Payment to the man she hoped would change her luck, finally.

But ... there was this devilishly handsome man sitting in the booth across from her ... he'd caught her eye for the thirty minutes. Golden-blond hair lay tousled around chiseled, cut features. He continually ran a hand through his hair, disheveling it even more, making her want to smooth it back down, to feel the silky strands caressing her fingers.

Full, kissable lips pursed in concentration as he studied a mound of papers. Broad, obviously muscular shoulders hunched over as he read. The attractiveness of his straight, hawk-like features and dimpled chin had been teasing her since she'd settled onto her stool, reminding her what a failure she was.

He oozed power and control. A lightweight Armani suit rested nicely on his broad body. The size and shape of his shoulders told her he wasn't a small man, just the opposite, and in good physical condition.

He loosened his tie. Chandra swallowed as she watched the tie slide through his fingers in a waterfall of silk. What would it be like to have him stroke her body with those hands? Sexual awareness jolted through her.

Her brows furrowed at her reaction. *What was that?*

He sat comfortably. Small round spectacles hid his eyes from her. He was engrossed, reading some type of business document. Three glasses, two empty, one almost gone, crowded the table. He was probably well on his way to feeling no pain.

Chandra smiled at the thought. He glanced up, acknowledging the waiter as he replaced the drink. On several occasions, he even focused on her, as if he couldn't resist looking.

Chandra reflected back to this morning's horoscope and the one at the bar. She would meet a hot Leo and have a searing affair. She wondered if he was that man. The notion made her bold enough to move forward with her plan.

*Maybe the fates are at work here.*

She'd dressed and adorned herself tonight for the purpose of seduction. She'd only needed a target, and now she decided he was it. She needed to make love to a man. To prove her former boyfriend wrong and reclaim the three wasted years from the

relationship. She needed to revenge Brian's assertion that she was a cold fish and no other man would touch her with a ten-foot pole. When she told Brian she never loved him, he replied she was lucky to have him for the three years they were together. Even though what she said was true, his angry words haunted her.

The blond man glanced her way again. After she'd spent an hour primping in front of the bathroom mirror, she knew exactly what he saw. She wore a black form-fitting velvet evening gown, draping low in the back and front; a classic Audrey Hepburn ensemble. Black thigh-high nylons matched her dress, allowing for an unbroken line from the slit gliding up the length of right leg. Her curly auburn hair was piled on top of her head with coiled wisps escaping onto her face. She'd gone light on the makeup, accenting her light green eyes. The look, alluring yet innocent, had drawn male glances all night. But she'd only looked back at one man.

Tonight she thanked her mother for handing down the generous curves in all the right places, along with unusual green eyes and the dimple in one cheek. She rarely showed that dimple these days ... a combination of her failing business and a greedy ex-boyfriend. Not much purpose in smiling. But the man sitting across from her made her want to smile. She licked her lips. He made her hot. She could feel the heat gathering, wet.

She hadn't been wet like this in three years. Maybe never.

Chandra crossed her legs and lazily swiveled on the barstool. She made eye contact with the golden-haired man and he dipped his head, as if embarrassed to be caught staring.

She smiled. It was time to put her plan into action. His glass was almost empty, and after two drinks and a sexy horoscope, she was sufficiently motivated to try to pick him up. To seduce him. She waved the bartender over. She was lovely, with one of those chic model haircuts in a sexy sable color. She had that kind of hair, the kind that made Chandra jealous, the sort you could run your fingers through with ease instead of getting all tangled up in the curls and frizz, like hers. And she was curvy, but it wasn't a bad curvy; she had a voluptuous-woman line to her hips Chandra couldn't help envy.

"How long has he been there?" She nodded her head at the blond giant.

"About an hour and a half." The bartender wiped down a newly washed glass and smiled as she glanced at the man.

"Has anyone joined him?" she asked, still looking at her quarry.

"No, ma'am, nor last night either." She put down the glass and picked up another.

She raised her eyebrows. Two nights alone, even better. "What's he drinking?" As she asked, she watched him look up at her, then back down. She had the feeling he guessed she was talking about him.

"Scotch, the best we have, on the rocks. Nothing but the best for him. He's a nice guy." She replaced the glass and reached for another.

She nodded. Of course he'd drink their best. He didn't appear to be a man who would accept anything less. And there was one vote for him already, *great*.

"Send him over another and let him know it's from me, but," she re-crossed her legs to the other side, allowing the side slit to open and reveal a good portion of her leg, "give me one first."

Following her instructions with a slight grin on her face, the bartender handed her the drink and placed the other on a tray, then started the short trek across the bar. She saw the

blond man peek up again, but this time his gaze momentarily stopped at her exposed thigh and leg, then shifted to the approaching bartender.

Chandra smiled. *Ah, good, he's not immune to me.* As the bartender stepped toward him, she leaned an arm back along the bar and waited. The bartender presented the drink and pointed to Chandra. The man's eyes lit up as he glanced at her. She raised her drink in a salute and inclined her head, smiling and showing her dimple. His eyes narrowed slightly. He raised the drink to his lips and took a long swallow, matching hers. Replacing the drink on the table, he tipped his head, acknowledging her gift.

Okay, Chandra thought, time to go in for the kill. She slid off the barstool, allowing her dress to rise a little higher, and strode to his table. He watched her move as if he was calculating each step. Drink in hand, she paused at his table and smiled.

"May I join you?" Her voice came out sultry and sinful; she barely recognized it. This man was really turning her on. Or was it the damn horoscope, driving her to drop all inhibitions?

He didn't say anything initially, just waved a hand, indicating for her to sit, then he spoke in a sexy, alluring voice, one Chandra wanted to listen to all day. "By all means."

He had a slight accent, one she couldn't place, but she adored it. Before she sat, he surveyed her body up and down. Where his eyes grazed, her skin tingled. Easing across from him into the long curved booth, she leaned forward and prepared to shock him.

"What's your sign?" she asked while she calculated her next move.

"I'm a Leo," he said, his head tilting to study her. He picked up his drink, slowly raising it to his lips, his eyes never leaving hers.

*A Leo, holy shit.*

Chandra tried not to appear too stunned. She wasn't thinking clearly. Picking up a strange man in a bar wasn't the smartest thing she'd ever done. Her eyes wandered over his expensive suit and the Rolex on his wrist. He definitely had a job. He was obviously a businessman, likely there for the conference, as she was.

She gulped, took a deep breath, and said, "I'd like to seduce you into taking me to your room and making love to me all night long, no questions asked." She leaned back, waiting for his reaction.

It was instantaneous. His eyes widened as he slammed his glass down. He choked on the gulp of Scotch. Coughing, he placed a fisted hand next to his throat and pounded, coughing some more.

She smiled.

His voice was strangled as he asked, "Pardon?"

She eased out of her side of the booth and slid next to him. She inched closer, her hips, thighs and arms touching his. She felt a burning sensation where their bodies met. Boy, she was really on fire for him. Strange, she thought, she had never felt that type of reaction with Brian. Her heartbeat speeded, fluttering against her breast. Her breathing grew rapid and shallow. Maybe this wasn't going to be so hard after all. So far she was enjoying herself. And the evening was just beginning.

She leaned forward, removed his glasses and placed them on the table. He gawked at her as if she was crazy. She scooted in closer, her breast touching his suit jacket. She smelled his scent, expensive masculine cologne mixed with aged Scotch. Hedy. She breathed him in. Something strange was happening to her. Her pulse throbbed in her neck



and she was beginning to tingle all over. She had never felt this way before, with any man.

His arm inched toward her. *Yes. He wanted it as much as she did.*

"I don't think I need to repeat myself," she whispered in his ear. "You heard me the first time." Her words exhaled against his ear, and she felt him shiver. She brought her hand up and laid it on the other side of his neck to bring his head down to her mouth. For some reason, she wanted to be connected to him. She felt the rapid beat of his pulse throbbing in unison with hers.

"You have two choices." She eased her hand from his neck and slowly traveled down to his beating heart. Deftly, she undid one of his shirt buttons and pushed her hand against his well-muscled chest. *Nice.*

Lust hit her right in her stomach. She sucked in a breath in response to the foreign sensation.

He watched her hand, not moving away. His head came up. His eyes met hers.

"You can say no and I will simply get up and walk out of this bar and never see you again."

He didn't speak, but circled his arm around her waist, pulling her against him.

Her heart stopped momentarily. She was drunk with the smell of him. Up close his eyes were a piercing blue and his hair was like golden silk. She badly wanted to rake her hands through it.

"And the other option?" he said in his low, deep voice that set all her nerves endings on edge.

"You can say yes and take me to your room. We can slowly remove each other's clothes and play as much as we want. We can do it all night, just tonight. First names only, no questions asked."

"Are you seducing me?"

"I'm trying. How am I doing?" she asked, caressing his chest.

"Very well," he answered in a low growl. He tightened his arms and tugged her even closer against him, her breast pressing into his chest. His sensual blue gaze caught hers; then studied her face, roving over each feature.

She looked back, her greedy eyes eating him like he was her favorite ice cream, vanilla with chocolate chunks and cherries. He was the most perfect man she had ever seen, and at that moment, she wanted to make love with him very badly.

"Why me?" he asked, his lips closing in on hers.

She set two fingers between their mouths and held them on his lips. She shook her head, indicating he had been bad.

"Rule number one, no questions." she reminded him.

"And rule two?" he asked, but his tongue reached out to outline her lips, stopping her from talking.

The effect on Chandra was incredible. She wanted to suck his tongue, milk his mouth and take every bit of what he had to offer. She reached her hand up and ran it through the hair at the back of his neck. Yes, as soft and silky as she had imagined. His eyes closed momentarily and then reopened to focus on her.

"Rule number two is one night only. This one night is all I'm offering. Yes or no?" She massaged his neck and he moaned in response.

His hand left her waist and she felt its loss. Did this mean he didn't want her? Yet his eyes never left hers, a fire smoldering in the blue depths. Before she could say anything, he lifted his hand, lining it up in her eyesight. Between his fingers dangled a white card. His room key.

Her eyes strayed to the card then back to him.

"Yes," he said. His lips closed in on hers, sealing them together.

The kiss shattered and consumed her, blew up her cozy world. Heat, lust, need, want, all sensations mixed in a jumble of arousal. His lips were gentle to start, then as his arms surrounded her, his kiss became insistent, passionate. His tongue slowly tangled with hers. The taste of Scotch flavored his mouth, and he tipped his head to deepen the kiss. Chandra's hands strained in his hair as she pressed her mouth harder against his.

Finally he broke the kiss, his lips still resting against hers. Their breath mingled as they both panted, inhaling and exhaling swiftly. She let her hands travel back to his chest.

They faced each other in the seat. No one could see her exploration, but the thought that they were in a public place, visible to others' eyes, added danger and excitement to their foreplay.

His eyes shifted, watching her progress. She inched her way down his chest, feeling the firmness of his sculptured muscles beneath his shirt. Her hand turned around. He inhaled sharply. With a smile, she continued her exploration over his stomach and lower. Finally she traced the thick erection that pressed against his slacks. A moan came from deep inside him. She moved lower, cupping him, then stroking up and down his length. He strained against her hand, gently thrusting.

"Keep that up and it will be over sooner than we both desire," he rumbled, glancing down at her hand.

She laughed softly. "Then we'll have to start all over again."

His gaze traveled from her hand to her face. His light blue eyes were almost navy with desire.

"I've got a better idea." Continuing to stroke him, she nodded toward his hand.

"Let's go use that key."

He stared at his hand holding the key as if he'd gone crazy. Then he grabbed her hand and hauled her out of the booth. As if it were an afterthought, he drew a money clip from his pocket and threw a hundred dollar bill at the bartender.

"Will you grab my stuff and store it at the front desk for me?"

The bartender nodded, smiling at him and Chandra with a knowing look. Chandra imagined the whole world would look at her and this gorgeous man and guess what they were up to.

## Chapter Two

The blond man pulled her through the lobby to the elevator. As they approached, elevator doors opened and two women walked out, laughing and talking. The man dragged Chandra into the empty elevator. He turned her to face him, propelling her body into his as he punched his floor.

"My name is Chandra." She smiled at his dimpled chin, congratulating herself on her assessment of his frame. She loved big men, and he was even taller and bigger than she guessed, towering her five-foot, seven-inch frame by eight inches.

He stared at her intently at her. "A beautiful name for a beautiful lady."

She melted against him. Besides being gorgeous and sexy, he was romantic too, with this thick foreign accent. She was getting lucky tonight—in every way possible.

"My name is Scott," his arms curled around her waist. He bent down, his breath puffing against her face as he talked. It was evident he wanted to be closer to her. Usually she liked her space ... but that was before Scott.

"A strong, handsome name for a strong, handsome man," she said.

"We don't even know each other." He leaned down and aligned his lips with hers, then swooped in for another wet kiss.

She made a mewling sound and hoped the elevator was very slow. "What do we need to know about each other, besides the fact we are aroused and burning for each other? Are you a crazy axe murderer? Do you have a strange disease I should know about?"

"God, no, I'm here for the apparel conference and I've never had unprotected sex." He pulled away and straightened, as if offended by her questions.

She believed him. Maybe it was the way he looked her straight in the eyes. Maybe the way her body responded to him. She felt a connection to him so strong she was willing to throw away her inhibitions to be with him.

Smiling, she beckoned him back with one crook of her finger. He grinned and leaned back down, resting his forehead against hers.

"See, do we really need to analyze this?" she asked.

"Point taken." His hands caressed her shoulders, dropping down to her lower back.

She laughed and heard the throatiness of her voice, like an old-time French chanteuse. She'd never heard herself sound so sexy.

"This is crazy, you know," he said, then his mouth came down and devoured hers.

She sighed against his lips. Pressing her hands against his hard chest, she stepped back. He immediately released her.

Maybe it had been a stupid idea to pick up a stranger in the hotel bar.

She reached over and punched the lobby button.

"Listen. Scott, if you have doubts about this night, about us, I completely understand and I'll drop you off and be on my way. I want you to be one hundred percent comfortable, with no misgivings."

Scott stared at her, but didn't move away. "Will you return to the bar and pick out another man?"

Chandra smiled at him and sighed. Men, she thought, they were so Neanderthal. “No,” she confessed. She hadn’t wanted any other man in the bar besides him, and the idea of choosing another had lost its appeal.

Scott grabbed her back into his arms and turned her against the wall of the elevator.

“Why me?” he asked again.

She had avoided the question the first time. He wasn’t letting her get away with it again, it appeared.

She shrugged her shoulders. “Moth to the flame, I guess. I was drawn to you. I’m not sure why, I just was.”

He smiled at her answer. The elevator button dinged. He joined her hand with his and drew her out of the elevator and down the hall.

“Scott?”

He didn’t answer as he unlocked the suite door and pulled her inside.

As soon as the door closed, he hauled her against him and thoroughly kissing her. Her question died a sweet death. She lost herself to his mouth, in the sensations he was creating in her, and the most blinding sexual arousal she had ever experienced. Everywhere he touched, she burned.

“Are you sure?” she asked in between his mind-drugging kisses.

“I’m sure, *ma belle*,” he said. “Tonight you are mine and mine only.” He said it forcefully, claiming her.

She shivered. This primitive display should dismay her, but she was thrilled. “Yours for tonight!”

Her hands went to his shirt. She began to unbutton it, purposely moving slowly, her eyes teasing him.

“Faster,” he said.

She laughed at him. “No.”

His hands covered hers as he tried to unbutton his shirt. Their hands became a tangle of fingers and it took even longer to loosen his shirt down the front.

She took control again, pushing him toward the bed, walking him in reverse until the back of his legs hit the mattress. Busy releasing the buttons on his cuffs, he wasn’t paying attention to his direction.

Chandra took a deep breath as she placed her hands inside his shirt, against his chest. With deliberate, calculated movements, she ran her hands up his chest and pushed his shirt off his shoulders.

“Ahhhh, nice,” she said, her voice a sigh.

He was perfectly formed, his chest large and well muscled, not one spare inch of flesh. Golden hair curled on his lightly tanned skin around the nipples, then ran down his chest and flat abdomen in a narrowing vee, disappearing at the waistband of his pants.

Unable to resist, Chandra sucked in her breath and set her mouth on his tanned chest, placing light kisses over his warm skin. Her hands gently pressed him back against the bed.

“Whoa,” he said. His arms encircled her as they tumbled onto the bed together, Chandra on top of him. She pushed herself up on her elbows and continued her exploration of his chest with her lips and tongue.

She felt like a wild woman. She’d never wanted a man so badly in her life.

“Ahhhh.” He leaned his head back against the bed and groaned in response as she circled his nipple with her tongue.

The more she touched him, the more she wanted. Heat radiated from her aroused breasts to her wet vagina. She smiled when she thought of Brian’s remark. *Cold fish* nothing. She was on fire for this man.

“Do you have protection? I have condoms if you don’t,” she ran small biting kisses down his chest.

“Are you protected against pregnancy?” He leaned forward, his arms resting on the bed.

“Yes, I’m on the pill.”

“Can we...”

She remembered his remark about never having had unprotected sex in the elevator. She nodded. “Yes.” Her voice against his skin came out as a husky murmur. She bit and sucked, then traveled down his chest to his concave abdomen, only to be stopped by the waistband of his pants.

Raising her head, she glanced up at him.

“God, yes,” he said, “touch me.”

She reached for his belt. Her movements efficient, she unzipped his pants, then slowly eased them down his legs. He lay on his back, lightly panting, sweat breaking out on his body while letting her do the work. Her position on top of him filled her with passion, desire, and power. She wanted to ride him long and hard.

Finally, she pulled off his pants and tossed them on the floor. Next she placed her hand on the front of his briefs where his penis was bulging, straining against its confines. She rotated her hand up and down, smiling in satisfaction when he groaned. Only then did she ease down his briefs, freeing his cock. He sprang heavy and hard into her hand from a smattering of masculine hair.

She touched him with the tip of her index finger and he pulsed against her. It was like touching the finest quality velvet. Her hand shook. He was huge, bigger than any man she’d had. She paused, a shiver running through her, then tugged off his briefs.

Standing, she reached down to remove his socks, her hands trailing over each well-formed calf. He remained on the bed, allowing her to take the lead, watching what she did next.

When she dropped to her knees, he sprang into a sitting position, sliding his legs over the side of the bed. She held his penis in her hands and caressed it for a moment. It pleased her to touch his warm skin, to smell his musky scent, to hear his gasping breaths. Finally, she leaned forward and took his huge erection fully into her mouth. Using her tongue, she wrapped it around him, moving up and down, her hands cupping his sack.

“Chandra, Chandra,” he said, his voice almost a moan. “Chandra, God.”

Using her middle finger, she applied pressure just below his cock, something she knew would stimulate him further.

“Chandra!” This time her name was a strangled shout. He leaned forward, grabbing her head, as if to pull her up.

She gently pushed his shoulder, letting him know it was okay to sit and enjoy the blowjob.

He fell back onto his elbows, his head dropping back.

“Ahhhhh, yes, touch me, baby.”

His moans and encouragement elevated her excitement. His primitive sounds of pleasure stirred her own juices. She loved the control she had over him, she loved the way he squirmed and called out her name as if she were a sex goddess, how she was fully clothed and he wasn't. She had this strange feeling of power

His hips began to thrust up to meet her mouth. She knew he was powerless to stop her, caught in his own pleasure, his groans telling her so.

"Oh fuck, yes, that feels so good." He moaned.

His hips began to drive faster as her mouth wrapped around him, moving up and down over his silkiness, her hands pressing him in key stimulating areas. His breath panted faster, his groans matching his breathing. Both hands came to her head in an attempt to stop her.

"Wait, baby, I'm going to..."

Her teeth came out and nipped at his tip, causing him to cry out in pleasure and a little pain.

"Come," he finished his sentence with a groan when she pressed her hand below his erection and gently squeezed the sack that held his seed. He arched up.

She lifted her head an inch. "Don't hold back, come. Give it to me." She took his erection inside her mouth again, increasing the rhythm of her hands. Her gaze lifted; she watched him writhe in ecstasy. God, he was beautiful. Drops of sweat made his tanned, muscled body glisten. His neck arched back, his arms strained in an attempt to hold himself up. His hands fisted in the blanket, and he chanted foreign words she didn't recognize.

She wanted to end his torment. She gently applied more pressure under his balls as she laved her tongue around his tip, attacking a particularly sensitive area.

Suddenly he cried out, more like a roar. His back arched and his hips thrust as he spilled himself. She sucked him in.

His mouth was open, his breath exhaling, he was incredible, a bundle of sex all wrapped up in a fantastic package. She wanted him. When he raised his head, she licked her lips and crawled up his body. She wrapped her hands around his shoulders and slid them into his golden hair. She rubbed her body against his, feeling like a pleased pussycat.

His hand delved in her hair, scattering her pins as he lowered her zipper and slipped his hand onto her bare skin.

"Let's get you out of this."

She didn't have any undergarments on underneath the dress. He smiled as the zipper reached the end of the track. "Oh yeah," he said.

Amazingly, his cock lengthened again.

Then he rolled her onto her back and slid off her dress, hurling it aside.

All she wore now were her thigh-high hose, her slick vagina fully exposed to him. He meticulously rolled each nylon off her leg, baring her to him completely. Then he stalked forward like a lion, settling between her legs, his wet cock hard and ready to go again. He moved against her clit, probing her with his hardness, stimulating, testing her wetness.

She whimpered his name. "Scott, I'm on fire for you." Her legs automatically wrapped around his ass, her hands followed as she grabbed him.

He pressed against her. "And I'm ready to make that fire flame higher."

His lips mated with hers. In one movement, he drove powerfully into her.

“Yesss.” It was her turn to moan. “Ready again already, lover?” she asked, smiling against his mouth.

“Oh, yes, my beauty. I’m hard and ready and I’m at your disposal all evening.” He thrust in further, as if to prove his point. It was his turn to take command. Bending his knees, he pulled her over him. Her legs straddled him. The position settled his erection even deeper into her body, impaling her, filling her.

“Ahhhh, Scott”

He smiled at her reaction. He reached down with one hand and slid his finger into her heat alongside his cock, riding it back and forth, in and out. He hadn’t even started to move inside her yet. Her back arched and her head fell back. His finger added more friction to his huge cock. The feeling was incredible. She felt like she had been hit by a freight train full of desire.

“Ummm, ahhh,” she moaned as his finger drove deeper and faster, bringing her to a sweet, piercing orgasm. She pulsed around him, her hands clasping his muscled arms.

Finally she leaned forward, spent. He laughed softly. With strong hands, he slowly pulled her up a few inches, lowered her body onto him, then brought her back up, sliding in and out. His body moved counter to hers as he thrust into her over and over.

The wave of pleasure returned. She groaned with the extraordinary feeling of him buried so deep inside her. He stopped to lean in for a kiss. Then he let her body slide down completely. Positioning himself between her legs, he wrapped them even tighter around him and pushed his hands under her ass. He began the rhythm of love once again, propelling deeply into her with thrust after thrust.

He breathed rapidly against her lips, his slick, wet body strained against hers, hard and fast, pushing in and out, bringing her to the pinnacle of pleasure. She wrapped her arms around him and urged him on. She smelled him—man, sweat and arousal. She breathed it in, the scent more arousing than the most expensive cologne. Running her hands down his back, she reveled the feel of him.

He was holding back. She knew he was waiting for her to join him. He continued to drive in, his mouth and tongue dancing with hers. The delicious pressure built inside her and she began to tighten around him. Then the flame overtook her. Her body bowed and she cried out as she reached for the stars in another mind-blowing orgasm.

“Ahhh, yeeesss, Scott. Yes!”

He joined her, spilling himself. She whimpered, holding onto his back. Christ, she had never had two orgasms. Never.

His forehead rested against hers. With his eyes closed, she heard him attempt to catch his breath. He rolled to the side, bringing her with him. Wrapping his arms around her, he hugged her close. A nice place to be, she thought.

Their wet bodies began to cool. Chandra reached down to pull the spare blanket over them. He held her tightly, as if worried that if he fell asleep, she would leave him. His legs tangled with hers and he tucked her head under his chin.

She smiled against his chin. *Multi-orgasmic, what the hell.* She’d read about it ... never knew it was possible. Always thought it was one of those urban myths. How wonderful.

“Don’t worry, lover,” she murmured. “I’m not going anywhere for a while.”

She heard him sigh and his breath became even as he fell into a light sleep. She leaned slightly back to look at him. He was so attractive. She ran her hand over his face. Five o'clock shadow roughened his cheeks. She touched the indent on his chin. So alluring. He'd snared her from the first moment she saw him.

She had been drawn to him, even in the bar. But she was starting to realize it wasn't the malicious remarks of her ex-boyfriend or a horoscope that had driven her to offer herself to Scott. It was the man himself. She'd wanted to seduce him. Even at the bar, sitting at the table, glasses pushed up on his nose, brow furrowed in concentration, she'd been attracted to him.

She never thought she could do it. Never felt she had enough woman-power to seduce a gorgeous man like him. Much to her surprise, she had. And it had been fantastic, beyond fantastic, beyond anything she had every known. Now she wanted more, for as long as she could get it.

He moaned when her hand strayed down his side and over his hip to rest on his ass. She massaged it lightly and his arms tightened around her to slide her closer. She kissed his chest, then rested her head beneath his chin to join him in sleep.

\* \* \* \*

Chandra was having the most erotic dream. Scott, her lover, was kissing her all over, his tongue lapping her body. He tasted her breasts, running his tongue around her areolas, and sucked in her nipples. She smiled and moaned his name in response.

*"Scott."*

"Come alive for me, my beauty."

His voice woke her. Opening her eyes, she realized her vision was not a dream, it was reality.

"Ah, my belle, you're enjoying yourself, yes?" She heard his accent again. He laved each breast, then nibbled down her body, teeth and tongue touching every sensitive area she owned and some she didn't know she had.

After kissing the inside of her thighs, he settled between her legs. He pushed apart her nether lips, licked, then settled in to suck on her clit. She moaned and moved her head from side to side, calling out his name.

"Scott, Scott, Scott!"

"Ummmm."

Arching, she cried out as he shifted his hands under her rear and brought her up to his mouth. He ate her like she was his last meal, with mouth, tongue and teeth. Her hips thrust naturally to the motion of his mouth. Her legs spread further apart. Bracing her feet, she pushed her wet clit into his mouth. She would take as much as he gave.

Her heart tripped. She saw stars as she climaxed, flying higher and higher as if she would never land. Then she settled and started to come down, her body melting into the mattress.

Not giving her a reprieve, he flipped her on her stomach, raised her to her knees and entered her from behind with his huge cock.

"Scott, oh, God." She arched her body, throwing her head back as his hands drifted up to cover her breasts, lightly pinching her nipples, prolonging her ecstasy. He plunged in long, fluid, unbreaking motions, deeper and deeper with each thrust, rubbing against her G spot.



She was floating again, wave after wave of passion buoying her up, pulsing through her body. But this time it wasn't a dream and this man was taking her there. Her body began to throb, her vaginal walls convulsing around his cock. She cried out in pleasure, then relief as he thrust two more times and joined her. His mouth came to rest on her neck, his arms wrapping around her ribs, pulling her up against his body. He shifted to the side, spooning with her. His cock pulsed inside of her.

As she fell asleep, he was still inside her.

When Chandra woke, the room held a light hue from the early morning sun. Ensuring she didn't wake Scott, she eased out of the bed. Quietly she pulled on his hotel robe. Holding the fabric to her nose, she inhaled the scent. She smelled him, musky and sexy as hell.

Realizing the fantasy was over, she mentally shook herself and hunted for her clothes. Scott hadn't wakened. He looked peaceful, almost childlike in his sleep. An unknown force drew her to his side. Leaning over his sleeping form, she studied his handsome face.

Tears formed in her eyes. What started as a fun game was now ending in heartache. Leaving him was the most difficult thing she'd ever had to do. Gently, she stroked his hair. He was sprawled on his stomach, face turned toward her. The blanket had eased down to his waist. He had a spectacular body. She lightly stroked down his muscular back to his butt. She sighed. He was beyond spectacular.

She shook her head. He'd taught her so much about herself. She wasn't a cold fish, she just needed the right man to inspire her. She shook her head, thinking about the raw sexual passion and the things they had done to each other.

A blush warmed her body. She ran her hand up his back and stroked his face. He sighed and his arm rose and locked on the back of her head. He opened his sleepy eyes, then tugged her into him for a single kiss, which soon deepened into more. She allowed him to continue the sensual assault.

Reluctantly, she pulled back. "I have to go, it's morning," she whispered.

His brows lowered as he frowned. His hand tightened in her unruly, curly hair. He swept her in again for another deep kiss, then he tumbled her onto the bed. He pushed the robe off her shoulders and rolled her under him. Pulling her legs around his ass, he slid home.

She groaned, then sighed in satisfaction. Yes, this man had a place inside her, deep inside her.

"Not quite yet, my beauty, not quite yet." He kissed her, close-mouthed, then outlined her lips with his kiss. Finally, he opened his mouth and plundered hers.

She knew she should be sore. No man had ever used her so often in a short time. And he was so big and she felt so tight. But her body stretched to hold him, and he filled her as she'd never been filled before.

Scott moved his body, thrusting in unison to his tongue. In reply, her hips met his as she rode his wave, loving the feel of him in her.

"God, Chandra, God," his breath puffed against her forehead. His movements quickened, his hands reaching out to join with hers. It was an intimate action, one she wouldn't have expected from a one-night lover. He squeezed her hands, his eyes met hers, until the pleasure took them both to their own sensual place. Bliss overcame her.

Her heart thundered, trying to keep up with her arousal, her climb. Chandra arched to meet his final drive in an explosion so intense she felt one unshed tear form.

“Yessss,” she moaned as the tear rolled down her face.

Scott rested on top of her, his body heavy, his gasping breaths fanning her cheeks, his heartbeat drumming against hers. When his breaths quieted and his heartbeat slowed, he lifted his head and gently wiped away the tear on her cheek with his thumb. His hand lingered on her face, then ran down her neck to her shoulder. His action made her want to cry more.

He held her like that, lying on top of her as if making sure she couldn’t break out of his hold, until he fell asleep again. This time it was a deep sleep.

Chandra wiggled out from beneath him, rolled off the bed, dressed and gave him a lingering kiss goodbye without waking him. On impulse, she plucked a yellow rose from the vase on the dresser and placed it on the pillow next to his head.

With one final glance, she left the room and his life forever. She went to her room, packed, checked out, and caught the next flight back to Seattle.

Her Atlanta adventure was over.

\* \* \* \*

When Scott awoke next, it was light, maybe beyond noon. He stretched leisurely and rolled his head toward the lingering smell of the sex and honeysuckle perfume of his lover. The pillow next to his was indented, yet empty. It held a single yellow rose.

Scott lifted his head and glanced around. “Chandra.”

He called out, hoping the musical voice would answer. When no response came, he got up and swung his feet over the edge of the bed.

Surveying the room, he realized the obvious.

She was gone.

Her clothes were gone, her scent was gone, and she was gone.

He leaned his head in his hands. For the first time since he could remember, he wanted to cry. Not even his estrangement from his twin had made him feel this gut-wrenching sadness.

He’d had sex with the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, ever had, and she was gone.

This time he did groan in agony, cursing himself for his idiocy. Hadn’t she told him one evening only? Hadn’t she made it clear they were simply there to use each other’s bodies for the night? Still, it didn’t make her departure sit any better. From the way she had approached him, he guessed she’d covered her tracks too well for him to find her again. He sank his head further into his hands, depression engulfing him.

He had been told he was one of the youngest successful businessmen of his field. The newspapers and magazine articles on him always added, “most attractive.” He had a tendency to get what he wanted. But today was a dark day, because he would never see Chandra again.

### Chapter Three

“Buy them!” Scott ordered his financial manager.

“Pardon me, sir. Buy them, like that?” Allen snapped his fingers as he repeated Scott’s order.

Scott pulled the small lingerie catalog, *Chantilly’s Lace*, toward him. He admired the attractive, scantily clad lingerie model on the cover.

“I will not repeat myself. Buy them. They’re hemorrhaging. Tried to expand too fast. The lingerie business will not support the diverse line they purchased. With the rights to the *Chantilly* name, we can make a fortune. We can integrate their remaining stock into our current line. Our lingerie line’s been a burden for years. This is perfect, just what it needs to pep it up.” *Sex it up*, he thought, looking at the cover. “Set up meeting with the owner and propose a buyout.” He tossed the catalog on top of a stack of papers on his desk.

“Sir, the owner is stubborn. She built this business from the ground up and has been hostile to selling. I’ve heard she’s a cold fish, an iceberg, unwilling to budge.”

Scott snorted. “Offer her enough money and the opportunity to keep a small team of her key employees, and I guarantee she will sell. If she doesn’t, she’s going to be in bankruptcy court before the year is up. Her small monopoly on my market with her lingerie line has become an annoyance. Set up the meeting in two days, here in my office, and I don’t care where she is coming from.”

“Yes sir,” Allen hustled out of Scott’s office.

Scott reached over and picked up the catalog again. *Chantilly’s Lace*. Catchy name. For a second, the name brought back a flood of memories that had disturbed him for months. Chandra. Scott threw the magazine in the trash with a snort of disgust. He turned around in his chair. His nervous energy drove him to the window overlooking downtown San Francisco.

*Chandra*. Why did his brain always stray to her? Her memory invaded him in the car, on the tennis court, in his sleep and every minute of his spare time.

He worked like a dog trying to forget her, making his already multi-million dollar apparel company even more successful, and himself along with it.

That night in Atlanta, when Chandra had sauntered over to him and explained the rules for his seduction, had been the most intimate and sensual of his life. It still haunted him. His hand went to his pants as he adjusted himself. Thinking about her mouth wrapped around his cock sent his brain swirling and made him rock hard.

“*Merde*,” he swore in French as he ran a hand through his hair. He retrieved the magazine from the trash and threw it across the room. He hadn’t been with another woman since that night. No woman would compare, and his aggravated state combined with his sexual frustration made him a devil to be around. He knew it, but couldn’t stop himself. Not while her memory haunted him.

His intercom buzzed, interrupting his thoughts. “Sir, I set up the meeting with the owner of *Chantilly’s Lace* for tomorrow. She’s in the Seattle area and can easily fly in tonight. She seemed skeptical, but wanted to hear your proposal.”

“Fine, get back to her. Tell her I’ll expect her in my office at nine a.m. tomorrow. I have too many other meetings to let this mess up my day, *n’est ce que pas?*” he asked, his very slight French accent coming out in his last statement. When he was highly emotional, his accent was stronger, his French mother’s teachings coming back.

“Yes, sir.”

Scott grabbed his suit jacket and strode out of the office, calling to his secretary, “I’m going up, Rose, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Yes, Mr. Chase, have a nice evening.” she said.

He punched the elevator button, saying, “*Et toi aussi*, and you too.”

## Chapter Four

Chandra struggled to remove her briefcase from the overhead compartment, cursing the contraption. Finally managing to tug it down, she followed the remaining passengers out of the plane.

Flying made her think of her teary trip home from Atlanta three months ago. Although the conference had been uneventful, the evening that followed could only be described as intense. That night she had seduced Scott, then ran from his room early the next morning. What a coward she'd been, too embarrassed to face him in the morning. She'd acted no better than a common whore.

Oh, but what a night it had been. She found herself thinking of it at the most inappropriate times ... while she was sitting at her desk, during her evening bath, and most frequently in bed at night. Her wanton behavior and the way she had seduced that poor, beautiful man shamed her. But she wasn't sorry. He'd shown her she was definitely not a cold fish, and for that she was grateful.

But there were times when the desire was so strong not even masturbation and her dildo could quench the fire he had left in her body. She didn't want a substitute, she wanted *him*. She thought after all these months her feelings would have died, she was wrong. Instead they had grown stronger, becoming more consuming. She shook her head and ran a hand over her face, making her way through the San Francisco Airport. She was about to lose everything to an apparel shark. Instead of trying to think up ways to save her company, she was daydreaming about a fantasy man she would never see again.

For five years, she had worked to build Chantilly's Lace into the small but booming business it had been until last year. Her business analysis, coupled with the urgings of her idiot ex-boyfriend, convinced her to expand into another market, buying a bathing suit line. Little did she know it would be the death of her company.

Tomorrow she would meet the man who had outshone all others in the apparel industry, the one man who could afford to buy a small company like hers without even an afterthought. Frederick Chase, French born, American educated, was a business tycoon and a genius.

She had never seen him, only heard of him through other sources in the business. He was young and attractive, they said, with a keen business acuity that made him one of the richest bachelors in the world.

Briefly she wondered what drove a man like that to such success. She shook her head again. She already resented his victory.

Tomorrow would be a day of mourning for her as she sold the business she had labored over every day for the past five years. She had put her heart and soul into the business. She had hand-selected a staff who counted on her. Tears formed in her eyes as she hailed a cab to take her to her hotel.

Yes, tomorrow would be a dark day for her because it would prove once again what a miserable failure she was at everything: love, running a business, making something of herself. She berated herself for the self-pity party, but couldn't stop. She felt like a loser. All her staff was counting on her, and she hated to let them down.

She made up her mind. She'd insist he keep her staff, but wouldn't offer to stay on to run Chantilly's Lace. She needed to close this chapter and move on.

## Chapter Five

Scott stood at the window again, gazing out when his intercom buzzed.

"Mr. Chase, Allen is here with Ms. Tilly for your nine a.m. appointment."

"Thank you, Rose," he said, looking at the landscape of San Francisco, tall buildings, green parks dotted the area, rushing traffic completed the picture. His private detective had told him he'd found nothing new on Chandra, and he didn't have his normal enthusiasm for conducting business.

He heard Allen enter and suddenly a fragrance washed over him. Honeysuckle. He sucked in a breath as the memories assaulted him.

Allen's voice interrupted his recollections. "Mr. Chase, I would like to introduce Alexandra Tilly of *Chantilly's Lace*."

"Please, people call me Chandra," a woman said in a familiar, honey-dipped drawl.

Scott's heart stopped momentarily and he closed his eyes for a split second. Then he spun around. What he saw made his heart jump and hammer.

"Chandra," he murmured.

Stunned green eyes locked with his and he saw panic in her expression.

"Scott," she whispered. Her beautiful, darkly lashed green eyes widened in stunned surprise. Her hand went up to cover what he suspected was her rapidly beating heart. They both stood silent, neither moving. Their eyes drank in each other in equal measure, running over each other's faces and bodies as if to verify they weren't dreaming. He saw emotion flicker over her face.

Allen broke the spell. "Do you two know each other? We call Frederick by his middle name, Scott."

Neither of them answered for a moment, both standing frozen. Chandra turned her eyes away first.

"In passing," she said, "at the Atlanta conference."

She looked toward Scott, as if confirming the tale she was spinning met with his approval.

He nodded, his gaze wandering to Allen. "Briefly," he confirmed.

"This is wonderful." Allen clapped his hands together. He had *no* idea what was going through their heads.

\* \* \* \*

Chandra unconsciously sighed at the sound of Scott's voice, closing her eyes. She remembered the words he whispered in her ear as he locked their hands and body intimately together. Some had been foreign, French, she briefly remembered, and they had washed over her in a sweet seduction. His touch, his scent, his voice, everything about him made her feel passion like no other man had.

Why hadn't she guessed he was Frederick Scott Chase, the apparel genius? It all came together now, adding up, making sense—the money, his accent, and his appearance at the conference.

She opened her eyes only to have them captured by his. She glimpsed his underlying desire. She recognized his expression, his smoldering eyes, had seen it many times that night.

Chandra experienced a moment of panic, looking at this sensual man, remembering the need he had wrought in her—and then fulfilled so gloriously. Suddenly, she was scared. Scared to meet the real man, scared of what he thought of her, scared she wouldn't meet the expectation he had invented for her. He would discover quickly the sensual, confident siren was actually a fraud. She felt an urgent need to run.

She leaned over and whispered to Allen, her hand resting on his arm to get his attention. She saw Scott's expression momentarily flare.

"Will you excuse me for a moment? I must find the ladies room. I would really appreciate it if I could get some coffee, as well."

Allen nodded, placing his hand briefly on top of hers in a fatherly manner.

"Certainly. Turn to your right outside the door and it's down the hall on your left. Mr. Chase and I will meet you in the conference room at the end of the hall. A continental breakfast will be served, coffee included."

She smiled, realizing he was trying to make this experience as painless as possible. But she couldn't do it. Her smile ebbed as she glanced toward Scott.

\* \* \* \*

Scott inclined his head in acknowledgment of her request, but his eyes narrowed. He'd seen something in her face he didn't like. It looked like fear.

He stepped around his desk to walk toward her. At his movement, her eyes widened even further and she rushed out of his office, the door closing behind her. He stood next to Allen as they both stared at the door.

"I can't believe they call *her* a cold fish." Allen said appreciation evident in his voice. "There's something about her. Draws you in. She's an alluring woman with a shrewd business mind. Strange she knew your nickname."

He glanced at Scott as if to gauge his reaction.

Scott absently nodded, his eyes remaining on the door. He frowned. Her expression before she left the room still bothered him. Something was wrong.

The intercom on his desk buzzed. He reached over to pick up the receiver. He had a bad feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"Mr. Chase, are you positive you want me to brew that coffee?" Rose asked.

"Why do you ask?" His eyes shifted to the door, awaiting Chandra's return.

"Because Ms. Tilly just headed toward the elevator. I assumed your meeting didn't go as planned."

Scott froze in shock for one second, then slammed the phone down and sprinted into immediate action. Allen watched him with his mouth open.

"Stay here," Scott bellowed. He ran out his office, slamming the door against the wall as he dashed toward the elevators.

Now he knew why her expression had concerned him. It was the look of someone right before they fled in terror.

He rounded the corner as the elevator doors began to close. He leapt the last three feet and jammed his arm between the sliding doors, causing them to stop and re-open.



Chandra's full mouth rounded in an O, her hand clasped over her heart. Without a word, he typed a code into the keypad and punched the penthouse button.

Now that he'd found her, he was never going to let her go.

He moved into her space, trapping her. She backed up until the silver elevator wall forced her to stop. She glanced away from his accusatory gaze to the other wall. With a flicker, her eyes finally met his. He knew what she would see in his eyes: anger, desire and passion were just a few of the emotions he felt. Most of all, he wondered, *Why. Why leave him? Why be afraid of him? Why?*

"Running, *ma belle*?" he asked, his voice low.

The elevator beeped and the door opened to the penthouse, his home. He grabbed her arm and drew her into his residence. With a push of a button, he sent the elevator back on its way. Then he slowly backed her into the wall again, imprisoning her with his arms beside her head.

Her sweet honeysuckle fragrance wafted over him. His heart pounded, his body tingled. She appeared to be having the same reaction. A rosy flush colored her face, making him want to tear off her suit to see if her flush spread over her entire body.

"Answer me, Chandra," he said.

Her lips quivered at his question and tears pooled in her eyes as she looked up at him. A single tear rolled down her cheek. Her mouth opened, but nothing came out.

Her reaction softened him. He never wanted to hurt her.

Her hand came up and rested on his chest. He covered it with his own, trying to comfort her.

"Oh, my God, Scott, what you must think of me. I can't even imagine. I never dreamed we would ever see each other again. I have never in my life done anything like what I did to you. I am so mortified at my behavior."

A soft cry broke from her trembling lips. Scott felt as stunned as if she'd hit him over the head with a baseball bat.

He searched her face for the sincerity of her declaration and knew she told the truth. Another tear made its way down her creamy cheek. He raised his hand to her face and fingered the tear, wiping it away. He moved closer, inching his lips to hers. He watched her eyes close and felt a warm puff as she exhaled against his lips.

"I could never, never think of you that way," he whispered, his lips a breath away from hers. "I dream about it, Chandra, I dream about it every night. And I see a strong, intelligent, beautiful woman before me. A woman who succumbed to her desire for one night of passion with a consenting, willing man. A woman I suspected had too much to drink and finally decided to dispel those malicious rumors that she had ice running through her veins."

Her eyes opened and she gasped at his statement. He felt adrenaline surge through him. He had been right, and he knew it.

"That's not all I see," he continued. "I see a man who was mutually attracted to the woman across a smoky bar, and felt drawn to that beautiful, sensual package. I loved showing you passion, Chandra. I agreed that we would only have one night and never see each other again." He shifted his other hand away from the wall and delved it into her lush hair. "And I know a man who doesn't want to abide by that agreement anymore."

She whimpered as he claimed her mouth. Her breath hissed against his mouth and he felt her surrender.

She couldn't fight their attraction any more than he could. Her hands traveled up his chest and entwined around his neck. She leaned into him, taking his kiss and returning it with fervor. He never wanted to let go of her. Her smell, her taste, the feel of her curved body nestled in his arms felt so right. Now he was truly whole. She'd taken a piece of him with her when she left him alone in the hotel room that morning. A piece he hadn't gotten back, until now.

His tongue reached out and caressed the inside of her mouth as hers tentatively touched his. Her timid response inflamed his desire. Groaning, he pulled her closer into his embrace, his lips moving frantically across her face, tasting her, sucking on her bottom lip, mating his tongue with hers.

He couldn't get enough, he craved her. Out of control, he felt as if nothing would stop him from making love with her.

"Chandra, Chandra," he chanted her name, his lips moving downward, his hands stroking her neck. He licked, sucked, and then laved the sensitive point of her neck.

"Ahhh, Scott." She moaned.

"I haven't stopped thinking about you, reliving that night." Panting against her neck, he tried to pull himself together.

"Me too," she confessed.

Attempting to cool his desire, he leaned back and rested his forehead against hers. He wanted to bury himself in her, right there and right then. She gently ran her fingers over his face, then she slid against him and hugged him tightly.

His temperature soared. He tightened his arms around her, his heart thumping like a drum in his chest. Enjoying the feel of her in his arms, he breathed in her scent.

Finally, he'd found her. What a miracle, her in his arms. It felt so right.

"I know you're here under strange circumstances, but I can't say I'm sorry. I'm grateful you're here," he confessed, squeezing her tighter against him.

"Ah, Scott. I think we're a little crazy. Right now we should be downstairs conducting business, instead here we're in your..." She waved her hand. "Home, doing..." She stopped, turning her head. "And we still don't know anything about each other, except we have this lust." She eased out of his arms.

Her disheveled appearance stirred him. With the combs knocked from her hair, the sexy auburn mass swirled around her face. Her lips were wet and throbbing pink from his kisses, and her cheeks flushed rosy red from her elevated pulse.

Scott couldn't resist. Drawing her to him, he swept her into another kiss. "We're making love." He said, filling in the blank from her earlier sentence.

"Hum?" she said between his kisses.

"Making love is what we're doing, *cheri*, and as far as conducting business and getting to know each other... Don't worry, *amour*, we will, I assure you ... later." he said with confidence, because he wasn't going to let this woman out of his sight. Not again.

"Oh, Scott." She moaned as his lips again began to explore her neck, one hand moving from her hair to roam down her blouse and over her breast. Her nipples hardened under his touch, and he fingered the pearled peaks.

Scott lifted her into his arms, cuddling her against his chest. Moving quickly to the bedroom, before she protested, he laid her on the bed and followed her down. He straddled her as he worked to remove her clothing. Pulling her blouse off her shoulder, he followed with her lacy camisole. Much to his enjoyment, she wore nothing underneath.

Bending down, he claimed her breast with his mouth, teasing her nipple with his teeth and tongue.

*He wanted her.*

She arched against him. He ached when he pulled away to remove her slacks. He finally rolled down her thigh-high nylons, one at a time, then pulled off her panties. God, this was killing him.

She tugged his shirt from his pants and slowly unbuttoned it. Running her mouth over the plane of his chest, she whispered, "I love your chest." She lifted her head, reaching up to taste his nipple.

Scott growled, his temperature soaring through the roof. He needed like he had never needed before. She was making him crazy.

"I want you," he said, his voice rough. She was completely naked. Running his fingers down her breasts and over her stomach, he delved into the curly auburn hair that surrounded her heat. Arching against his hand, her moisture dampened his fingers. She was wet and ready for him, and he was happy to accommodate her. He'd waited three months for this moment.

"Scott, I need to feel you inside me."

He allowed her to take the lead, pushing him back against the bed. They worked together, a tangle of hands to remove all his clothes. When she cupped his balls, he almost came, right then. She straddled him, then she hesitated.

"Guide me, Chandra," he whispered, gasping.

Panting, she moved her small hand to his erection and guided him into her folds, settling him inside her heat. Her wetness eased his entry.

Gliding in, he sighed in satisfaction.

*Oh, yeah, this was where he was supposed to be.*

Placing her hands on his shoulders, he took over, thrusting powerfully, allowing her to take every last inch of him inside her body. Groaning, he locked his mouth with hers as she began a slow rhythm, her hips riding against him.

French words flowed from his mouth. "*Mon dieu*, Chandra," he cried out, his hands anchored on her ass. Tightening his grip, he tried to squeeze her further onto him.

*I never want to leave here.*

"Ahhh." Tingling, his entire body on fire, he arched his back, crying out at the same time as Chandra. Finally, she collapsed onto his body. He loved it. Loved the feel of her against him.

Easing her onto her back, he stayed inside her. He couldn't withdraw quite yet; he enjoyed the sheath of her warmth, the touch of the wet bodies, the scent of their union too much. Running his hands over her face, he slicked sweat-dampened hair off of her face. His eyes locked with hers and he smiled. She smiled in return. He loved that little dimple in her cheek. Then he gently kissed her.

Reluctantly, he eased out and slid to her side, wrapping her in his arms. Their bodies cooled together. Scott fingered the dark circles under Chandra's eyes.

"This is difficult for you, selling your business, is it not?" he asked.

She nodded. Pulling a blanket around them, he reached forward and tucked her head under his chin. The position comforted him, made him feel close to her.

"Sleep, Chandra," he whispered against her hair. He felt a deep need to protect her, to care for her. "All will be well."

He felt her relax and heard her sigh in surrender. Shivering with desire, he suppressed his need. He ran his hand over her head in a soothing gesture. Now that he had found her, there would be time for loving later.

## Chapter Six

When Chandra awoke, she felt more rested than she had been in weeks. More like months, she corrected herself. Three months. Between her fantasies about Scott and her concerns over the business, she'd slept fitfully since the night she'd left Scott in the hotel.

She gazed around the room, trying to locate the object of her satisfaction. *Scott*. She sighed just thinking about him. His skill as a lover was unsurpassed, his allure unquestionable. The second his lips had touched hers, she knew she was lost—again.

Easing from the bed, she reached for Scott's robe. Wrapping it around her, she smelled him and smiled, remembering another robe, another time, and some very erotic play. She padded to the main room and searched for the kitchen. Spying the wall clock, she was stunned to discover it was two o'clock. She whirled, wondering where Scott was. He must have gone back to work, she thought. Walking back to the bedroom, she retrieved her clothes and headed for the bathroom.

She had a flight out at five tonight. Finding the bathroom, she dumped her clothes by the sink and headed for a quick shower.

After toweling off, she piled her wet hair on top of her head and shoved in the combs she had retrieved by the elevator. She tugged on her clothes, then tore out of the bedroom to find her purse, only to come to a halt. Sitting in the living room was the man she had been thinking about. Reddening in embarrassment, she gave him a shy smile.

"Scott," she said breathlessly, her hand automatically covering her thudding heart. "I didn't know you were here."

"You're planning on leaving, *ma belle*?" he asked, a note of sadness in his voice. He strolled toward her, his hands in his pockets.

"I have to. I have flight at five. I didn't expect our business to last that long."

Moving closer, he pulled his hands out of his pocket. He reached up and rested them on her shoulders.

"Stay," he said.

She started to shake her head when two large, gentle hands came up to frame her face. Leisurely, he touched his soft lips to hers. His thumbs stroked her cheeks.

She melted. He lit a fire in her every time he touched her. How could she resist him?

"Chandra." He said her name like a caress. "Please stay, we'll do normal things. I'll take you to dinner and to a movie. We can walk through the park. Give us a chance to get to know each other, before you run."

She momentarily stiffened at his words, then she relaxed. He was right. She had been running, escaping from her feelings.

"I'll show you my business and you can decide at leisure if you want to team with me." As he spoke, his lips continued their exploration from her mouth to her cheeks. His tongue started a lazy discovery to her ear, and she shivered in response.

"I've only packed for overnight," she argued.

"I'll buy you new clothes. Hell, Chandra, we'll fly back to Seattle to get your clothes if you want. I don't care, as long as we're together."

Her resistance faded as his hot lips traveled down her neck. She groaned at his kisses. Desire hit her, almost taking her down for the count. She circled his neck with her

arms. He thrust his hands into her hair and knocked the combs back out. She laughed as they went flying and her hair cascaded over his hands.

“Scott, I’ll never keep my hair up if you keep doing that,” she said, then moaned as one of his hands traveled to her blouse and began unbuttoning it.

“That’s the point, *m’amour*.” He panted against her neck, then he pushed her blouse off her shoulders, leaving her in her skimpy camisole. His mouth moved to the tip of her breasts. Through her camisole, he outlined around her nipple with his tongue.

She moaned in response, straining against his mouth. Her hands lifted to clasp his head.

“You’ll stay, right?” He stopped his caresses. His mouth hovered over hers.

Chandra smiled at his expectant expression and nodded her head. She laughed when he grinned. Wrapping his large arms around her, he hugged her to him. Then he picked her up and twirled her around. Sealing his lips on hers, he claimed a celebratory kiss, slowing as her feet came back to rest on the floor. Then they were still. His lips grew from gentle to insistent, then demanding.

Chandra laughed in delight and happiness. She felt as if a hundred pound weight had tumbled off her shoulders. Pulling back, he fingered her dimpled cheek.

“So will you be taking me out for dinner this evening, Mr. Chase?” she asked as his hands worked on removing her clothing.

“Later,” he said, his voice muffled as his lips and tongue began worshipping her body.

She laughed again and gave herself to his lovemaking.

## Chapter Seven

One day grew to two months. Chandra thought the passion would subside—it didn't. With each passing day their connection grew hotter. Determined, Scott constantly urged her to share his life. Keeping his promise, he took her to the movies, opera, dinner, dancing and walks in the park.

Occupying her every spare moment, he shared his life and business. She came to respect him as a businessman as well as a lover. The rumors were correct, and his business acuity was unsurpassed. He was a genius. Relentless, his gentle seduction both in bed and out wore on her. He wanted her to join his team. Chandra was confident he would make a success of her failing business. He showed her where she had gone wrong, expanding too quickly and sinking money into a line that wasn't right for her business.

Where she was confused was her role in his life. He never spoke of love or commitment or of their continued personal relationship. He had on many occasions attempted to persuade her he needed her in his business. She was convinced, but her fear of failure continued to grow and overshadow her happiness. If he would say he needed her, she would re-think her decisions. But he didn't.

In her eyes, Scott was so big, powerful, attractive and intelligent. She worried that her record of failures, in her business and her past relationships, would never measure up to his success. She would drag him down. He deserved better.

Making her way to Allen's office, Chandra negotiated through the maze of halls. Scott's building was huge. Compared to her two-room small establishment, his office was further evidence of his accomplishments. Scott was scheduled for a barrage of meetings and this was the perfect opportunity for her to give the news to Allen.

She opened the door and walked in. Allen didn't hear her footsteps on the carpet. The walls of his office were darkened glass. His desk was modern, with a computer on the desktop. Frowning, he was looking at figures in a ledger.

"Allen, do you have a moment?"

Looking up from his ledger, he immediately smiled. They had grown close in the last couple months. Although he understood Scott and she were together, he never said anything to embarrass her.

"Chandra." Rising from his desk, he clasped her arm in his and escorted her to the chair next to his desk.

"Allen, I've reviewed the acquisition document." She handed him a manila envelope, "I just added a few small items. I wondered if you could notarize my signature, then give them to Scott."

Allen took out the documents and started thumbing through them.

"Did you have an attorney review these for you?" he asked. He examined the attached addendum with the changes.

"I trust both you and Scott. You've been both more than fair with Chantilly's Lace. I feel good it's going into capable hands. I've attached the list of staff I feel would best help your transition of the business and will be excellent acquisitions to head up the division for you. I only ask for one small conciliation."

Allen read the attached document. His eyes widening, he read it a second time.

“Chandra,” he began to protest her request.

She held up a hand to stop him. “That one is a deal breaker. I won’t have it any other way. The staff I’ve recommended will be adequate for the transition, you won’t need me.”

“But...” Allen paused. “What will you do?”

Chandra smiled as tears formed in her eyes. She shrugged. “Scott doesn’t need me; he’ll do fine without me. I need to make a clean break from this situation. I don’t expect you to understand, please just...” She snatched the documents out of his hand. Standing, she picked up a pen from his desk and signed and dated them.

“Just present them to Scott.” She set down the pen and started to walk out of his office.

“Chandra, I don’t think he’ll accept this addendum.”

She stopped at the door. She didn’t turn, she simply said, “Tell him if he doesn’t, I’ll declare bankruptcy by the end of the year and the Chantilly name will be sold with all the other assets.”

With that statement, she exited his office.



## Chapter Eight

Allen strode into Scott's office just as dusk began to fall over the Bay.

"I'm sorry my schedule was so full today," Scott said. "I couldn't see you any earlier. What's this urgent issue you need to discuss?"

Allen held the Chantilly's Lace merger documents in his hand. He set them down in front of Scott.

"Chandra signed the merger documents today. I witnessed her signature for her..." He stopped as Scott smiled and picked up the papers.

"Excellent, this is good news indeed!"

Sighing, Allen predicted what was next to come would not be pleasant.

"Mr. Chase ... Scott, we've been business associates and friends for many years."

Scott's smile dropped. He recognized the expression on Allen's face. "What's the matter?"

"She's made an addendum." Allen pointed to the last page. "She says it's a deal breaker. She asked not to be included in the merger. She wishes to relinquish full rights of management to you and her team. She's essentially telling us she won't be coming with the company."

Scott's heart stopped in his chest, then skipped, rapidly beating. He began to sweat.

"Allen," he said, "I can't..." He stood and went to the window. His thinking place. In front of this window he had made some critical life decisions.

"I can't do that, I can't let her go," he confessed, his voice agonized.

"She says if you don't accept her addendum, she'll place the company in bankruptcy by the end of the year and the Chantilly name will go with it."

Scott voice rumbled. "Why is she ... I thought..." He stopped, unable to continue. Allen moved to his side and put his hand on his shoulder. Scott turned his head and looked at him.

"I think she's afraid," Allen said.

"Afraid of what? There's nothing to be afraid of. We can make her company soar. I know we can—but not without her..." His voice trailed off.

"I think she's afraid of failing. She's hurting, Scott. She worked for five years to make her company successful and to have it end like this... She said she needed to make a clean break. She said..." Allen paused, as if what he was going to say would be hurtful.

"What?" Scott asked.

"She said you didn't need her."

Grimacing, Scott laughed, the sound bitter. "If she only knew how wrong she was, if she only knew." He pivoted back to look out the window.

"Then *tell* her," Allen advised.

Scott sighed. He had never been good with words. "You know how bad I am at declaring my emotions. I always seem to make things worse."

"I don't think you have a choice on this one, Scott. You're close to losing her." Allen's comment made Scott lean his head against the window and close his eyes.

"Thanks Allen, go home, go home to your wife and kids. For me, okay?" He didn't move. He felt Allen's hand drop from his shoulder. Despair filled him. He thought he'd

done everything he could to make Chandra understand how much he needed her. He had failed.

“Okay, Scott.”

Scott sighed at Allen’s departure. Tapping the intercom on his desk, he dismissed his secretary for the day, then went back to the window. Dusk had fallen and he stood in the darkened room wondering how he had been so miserably unsuccessful with Chandra and how to make it right.

## Chapter Nine

Chandra found Scott in his darkened office two hours later. Her gaze swung to the moonlit room and the silhouette of the man she loved. She lightly tapped on the doorframe.

"Scott?" Her call met with no reply. He remained cemented by the window, so she stepped into the room. Guided by the moonlight, she made her way to his side.

"Scott." She gently ran her hand over his cheek.

As if startled, he sucked in a breath and finally acknowledged her. His hand came up to overlap hers against his cheek. He closed his eyes and seemed to take in her touch. Immediately, she sensed his distress. His hands came up to frame her face and his kiss whispered against her lips.

"What's wrong?" she asked as his breath mingled with hers.

"It's simple, I failed you."

His statement shocked her. She shook her head. "You've talked to Allen." Sighing against his lips, she pulled back slightly. "You've not failed me, that's ludicrous."

Feeling defensive, she wrapped her arms around herself. Following his lead, she stared out at the winking lights of the San Francisco night skyline. "Scott, you don't need me to run Chantilly's Lace."

Chandra stiffened when he moved behind her and replaced her arms with his own. Then she relaxed into his embrace. It always felt so right, so good with him.

"See, that's where I've failed you, because I need you much more than you seem to believe." His declaration had her turning in his arms, challenging him.

"Scott, you have a brilliant business mind. You have far more connections than I could dream of having. I'll bring nothing to this relationship. You don't need to pay out that large a salary. The small team I assembled will be excellent."

"You're wrong." His voice lowered, his lips pursued hers. Drawing her against his chest, he tasted her, his lips slanting over hers, taking, possessing, showing her his longing.

"I need you so much," he whispered, releasing her lips. "I need you in my life, by my side, in my bed, hand-in-hand with me at the park, beside me at the movies, across from me at the dinner table."

With one quick movement, he swept everything off of his desk onto the floor. Lifting her, he set her on the desk and stepped between her legs. Fumbling with his pants, he released his cock, then slid up her skirt. He tore her flimsy panties completely off her body, then slowly ran his hands up her legs to cup her ass.

Chandra sucked in a breath and arched. She loved him, his feel, and the excitement he produced in her every time he touched her. She locked gazes with him. His eyes were smoky dark with desire.

Pulling her inch by inch, he moved her to the edge of the desk and entered her.

"Scott, ahhhh."

Locking his hands against her rear, he brought her more fully onto him, thrusting hard, withdrawing and then driving in deeper.

“Scott.” Turned on beyond belief, she climaxed, her heart pounding so hard it felt as if it would burst in her chest.

“I need you to be here every day of our lives.” To demonstrate, he thrust forward again and kissed her, melding their lips together, sweeping away all her protests.

“I need you by my side as my partner in more than just lovemaking. I want you to be beside me, equal in every way. I want you to be my wife.” He stopped talking and rode her, loving her, taking her over the edge and following her.

A few minutes later, when they had calmed enough to talk, Chandra tentatively asked, “Did you just ask me to marry you?”

His smile answered her question. “Did I manage to get that out all right? Obviously I’m not good with words of love or you would have never considered leaving,” he said, shifting his body, pressing his cock into her.

She hissed out her pleasure. “Yes.”

“Yes, what?” he asked, moving his hips, running his hand up her back, stroking her fire, heating her veins.

“Yes, you managed to get it out.”

“And?” he asked.

Chandra smiled, elated. Finally, she knew he needed her. “Yes,” she said. “Yes, I’ll marry you.”

“Whooooop!” he hollered and punched a fist in the air, the action pushing him into her.

She moaned.

“Let me show you how much I love you.” He leaned forward and sucked on her neck.

“Ahhh.”

“You’ll work with me?” He licked the area he had just sucked.

“Yes.”

He groaned and began thrusting. “Now you’re making sense.”

She laughed and groaned. Yes, she thought, now she was making sense.

“I’m glad I read my horoscope the day I met you, Scott.”

He leaned back. “What horoscope?”

“The one that told me I was going to meet a sexy Leo and spelled out your seduction.”

“Truly?” He laughed

“Oh yeah.” She smiled at him.

“Well, thank God for horoscopes,” he said

“Yes, thank God.”

**The End**

### **About the Author:**

Rae Monet writes sensual romance novels for Liquid Silver Books. See her site at [www.RaeMonet.com](http://www.RaeMonet.com)

## **Book Two**

### **Eve's Interlude**

Jodi Lynn Copeland

## **Dedication**

To Tina... How could I not appreciate someone who'll read anything I write, no matter how bad it is, or how much time you don't have? I love you, hon!

\*

To my family... Without you around to make me smile and laugh, and share in my happiness and sorrows, life would seem pretty pointless.

\*

To my friends... Thanks for being you and letting me be me, no matter how quirky that might be.

\*

And to all those at NASCAR... Not only do you make my weekends that much more entertaining, you give me hours of quality time to spend relaxing with my hubby and kids.

## Chapter One

*Gemini, today is going to be the day from hell.*

Eve Jameson swiped the words off the chalkboard that listed the bar's daily drink specials and her personalized horoscopes. Just because her week had started out god-awful didn't mean she had to influence every other person who had the misfortune to fall under her sign.

She put the chalk back to the green board accentuated by white Christmas lights, dashed out another forecast, and stepped back to admire her handiwork with a wicked smile.

*Gemini, today you will strangle your well-meaning jerk of an older brother.*

Ah, now that was much better.

And if Eric came in the bar, the makings of another whopper fight.

Groaning, Eve swiped at the words. For the first time since starting up the bar in her family's headquarters hotel, *The Orion*, she opened without the daily horoscopes. The thought added to her moodiness as she moved behind the bar's counter and pulled a tray of garnishes from the cooler.

She loved making up the horoscopes and until today had given them a sensual twist. Like the name of the bar, *Eve's Interlude*, and the sultry theme of the place, she wanted the forecasts to inspire fantasies in her patron's minds. Fantasies derived with either their partners, or, if they were single, then another customer in mind. And from what she'd seen, the many happy couples who'd left the bar hand-in-hand and throwing off enough heat to give her a sunburn, the name, the theme, the horoscopes worked.

She added excitement to people's lives and made them happy, if only for a night or two. And Eric wanted to rip that pleasure from her hands and thrust her into a life of servitude.

He wanted her to get married.

But his wants—more like demands, since he had the power to shut down her bar and had threatened to do it—didn't end there. He wanted her to marry the son of *The Orion's* biggest competitor, so that someday the two hotel chains could merge. It was a logical business decision, Eric had claimed, one that would have made their late father proud. And, besides, she wasn't getting any younger at twenty-nine. When was the last time she'd had a date anyway? Since it seemed like forever, setting her up and then settling her down with a man as stable as Greg Almont would be doing her a favor.

A favor, hah!

Eve plucked olives from the large garnish tray and jammed them into the smaller ones settled around the counter. She knew exactly what life with Greg would be like. Boring, boring and more boring. Even if she was desperate for a man, she wouldn't say "I do" to the uber-dull Greg. For a date, a kiss, and for sure as hell not marriage.

"I don't," she growled, stuffing the lid on the relish tray and putting it back in the cooler.

"Smart girl. Keep up that mindset and you'll be happy forever," a masculine voice with a light foreign accent returned from behind her.

Heat rushing into her cheeks for being caught behaving so irritably on the job, Eve swiveled around. The familiar and undeniably handsome face of Scott Chase settled her temper some. The tall blond stayed at *The Orion* several times a year for business. The last time he'd been here he'd been half of one of those happy couples who'd rushed from the bar hand in hand.

The way those two had acted, like the short trip to the nearest hotel room might be more than they could endure, Eve was sure they would last more than a night. Scott's piercing blue gaze roaming appreciatively over her body said otherwise.

He was too nice of a guy to look so blatantly at another woman when he already had one at home. Only as Eve turned around to fix his usual drink, and caught the open lust in his eyes reflected in the mirrored wall lined with liquor and mixers, he didn't look so nice.

The shiver that slid through her as their gazes met didn't feel nice. No, as his lips parted, so she could see the tip of his tongue, watch it moving over his teeth, imagine it stroking over her breasts, then lower still, Eve felt something she hadn't felt in way too long. She felt horny.

She fumbled the bottle of his favorite scotch as she lifted it from the row that lined the wall. The bottle clanked against the counter, and she stabilized it with unsteady hands.

What the hell? Scott had been coming into the bar for almost two years, and she never reacted this way to him. Obviously it really had been too long since she'd gone out on a date, let alone gotten horizontal with a man.

Either that, or it was the fact that he wasn't wearing his usual attire of an Armani suit, perfectly knotted tie, and a Rolex that looked more expensive than her entire wardrobe. She could have a watch as expensive if she gave into Eric's demands—before their father had died he'd left behind a will granting her access to a hefty bank account upon the day of her marriage. She knew exactly why he'd left behind that stipulation, too. He'd thought she was incapable of settling down with a man, a job, or anything else for more than a year or two. Eric believed the same. And well, hell, maybe they were right, but Eve wasn't falling for the bait. She didn't want a Rolex any more than she wanted to be tied down by the tedium of marriage, and she never got turned on by a man who looked and smelled of money.

Only today Scott didn't look or smell of money.

She gave another attempt at pouring his drink, thankful when she succeeded, then flicked her gaze back to the mirror.

He was gone.

Eve's heart thumped in her chest. She swiveled around, sighing when she spotted him in front of the jukebox. Today, she thought, getting back to her assessment, he looked like her favorite wet dream in a simple black T-shirt and jeans that hugged his tight ass to perfection when he bent over and popped a handful of quarters into the jukebox.

And he smelled...

She inhaled as a popular rock song started up and Scott took a seat at the bar. Rich cologne assailed her senses and made everyone of her female zones scream to life with awareness. Okay, so he still smelled expensive, no one was perfect.

"How goes life, stranger?" Eve asked, setting the drink in front of him.



He looked at the drink, an odd expression on his face, then with a shrug lifted the glass to his mouth and drank.

She watched, mesmerized by the play of his lips around the rim of the glass and the subtle movement of his throat as he swallowed the fine liquor back.

She'd like to lick that patch of skin, tease her tongue along his throat, move up over the cleft in his chin and straight to the delicacy of his mouth. He would taste slightly of Scotch, completely masculine. The kind of full-bodied masculinity that a single taste of made her wet. Made her want to throw herself against his big body and start stripping away his clothes, feel his strong hands tugging at her own until she was naked and he was buried deeply inside her. Making her pant, shout. Come.

The ring of his glass hitting the counter shattered Eve's fantasy. The effects it had on her body stayed intact, moistness making itself known between her thighs as she shifted.

She stared at his empty glass. He never drank that fast. "Rough day?"

"Not sure yet." He smiled. "Just rolled out of bed."

Scott never slept until noon, either. At least, not that she would have guessed. She'd never actually slept with him. Never wanted to sleep with him until now.

Oh, yeah, it had been way too long since she'd last been even remotely physical that a known moneyed-man could make her hot.

She picked up a bar rag and, wiping at the counter, struggled for casualness. "Late night?"

"Aren't they all?"

Was he purposefully acting out of nature, quizzical almost? "In this business, sure. But then compared to your job, I have it easy."

His smile faltered. For an instant, Eve thought something bad had happened with his job. Then his gaze slid over her, down her neck, along her low-cut uniform shirt where her too plentiful cleavage pressed hard—harder under his scrutiny—then farther still to the short skirt. The outfit was purposefully risqué to add to the sultry theme of the bar, but until now she'd never felt quite so naked in it. Or alluring.

Scott's smile returned, bringing a teasing glint to his eyes. "You're a fan?"

*A fan?* She forced herself to think through the sensual haze overtaking her brain.

He was the owner of a multimillion dollar apparel company, so he had to mean of his clothing lines. "I'm a woman, how could I not be?"

He tossed back his head. Thick blond hair, darker and longer than she'd ever seen it, brushed his nape, and a full-bodied laugh rolled out. A laugh that settled along every inch of Eve's flesh and left her already beaded nipples throbbing. Wetness gushed between her thighs, and she thought she might have drool dripping from the corners of her mouth.

God, he wasn't just handsome, he was sexy in that slightly cocky way that made her bad girl side want to jump on the bar and start singing a "take me" song.

Why hadn't she noticed that before?

Scott stood and caught the hand that had ceased cleaning the bar during her ogle session. The heat of his hand on hers was nearly as hot as the lust burning in his now midnight-blue eyes. "Are you trying to seduce me, Eve?"

No, she wanted to say. He was a customer, and she didn't seduce customers—it was a personal rule, as well as hotel one. Only she couldn't say no, because this once she wanted to break the rules. She leaned against the counter, aware the action had her cleavage risking the confines of her top. "Can I?"

His gaze flitted from her eyes to her chest and back again. “The outlook’s favorable.”

So much for that “today will be hell” forecast.

Eve remembered Eric then and the conversation about his shutting down the bar if she didn’t start to consider settling down, preferably with his self-picked candidate. As much as Eric was being an ass, normally she got along with her brother, loved him. She didn’t want to argue with him. Breaking company rules would be the fastest way to piss him off in a big way.

Her belly gave a disappointed rumble. So much for the “take me” song. “Look, Sc...”

“Eve?” a disturbed male voice called from the other end of the bar.

Shit, Eric. Eve glanced over and smiled. “Be right there, Eric.”

Scott raised a blond eyebrow, asked for her ears only, “Lover?”

She laughed. “Brother. Boss, if you will.”

“Ah, family matters, always a pleasure.”

Then why did he look like he didn’t believe that? “If you say so.”

With a squeeze, he lifted his hand from hers and stood. She mourned the loss of his heat, the soon-to-be-loss of his invitation. It was for the best that she turn him down. He was a regular of sorts, and things would likely be uncomfortable in the future if they were to get physical. And she wanted to be here, at this bar, in the future. Unlike every other job she’d had—and she’d had plenty of them—running the bar didn’t leave her itching to run minutes after she started the day.

Scott pulled out his wallet and tossed a ten on the counter. “I’m staying on the top floor, room 1420. If anyone tries to stop you from coming up, tell them you’re there to see Nicolas.”

Eve opened her mouth to tell him she couldn’t accept his offer, when the name caught up with her. “Nicolas?”

“Security measure. Everyone knows my nickname.” A large hand cupped her chin, and she found herself staring up into his arresting eyes. “Will I see you later, Eve?”

His lightly accented voice slid over her nerves like the finest whiskey. She fought off a shiver. Tried to tell him no again, but only managed, “I don’t get off until eight.”

His mouth kicked into a grin so yummy she had to hold her tongue back from reaching out and licking it. “Tonight you’ll be getting off a number of times.” He released her chin and turned around, started for the door. He turned back when he reached it, called, “*J’attendrai, cheri*. I’ll be waiting,” and then disappeared around the corner.

“What the hell was that?” Eric barked, coming to stand in front of her.

That was as close as Eve had ever come to climaxing with only a touch.

She trembled a last time over the silk of Scott’s voice, his uncharacteristically arrogant moves. The way she hadn’t been able to say no, even though common sense dictated it. “Nothing. He’s a friend of sorts. We were joking around.”

The flint of Eric’s eyes lessened. “Good, because you have plans tonight. Greg called to congratulate me on the acquisition of *The Bayside*. I mentioned you were free tonight. He’s expecting a call. Dropping by would be even better.”

Every spark of lust in Eve's body died as anger stole through her. How dare he make plans for her with Greg! She turned her attention on the bar rag, scrubbed at the counter furiously. "I'm busy tonight."

"Let me guess," Eric said dryly, "a hot date to go with all the others you've had this year?"

The image of Scott's tempting grin and the arousing feel of his hand on her chin formed in her mind. To hell with breaking the rules, and to bigger hell with pissing off her brother. She wasn't really *that* committed to this bar. More importantly, she was way overdue for some fun, before the worst happened and she had to rank her own personality in the same boring, boring and more boring category as Greg's.

Eve looked back at Eric and smiled, while anticipation for the night to come coiled warmth in her belly. "As a matter fact, no. We planned to move straight to the sex part."

\* \* \* \*

"It isn't like you to pick up some chick on the road."

Adrien Eberline cast Randy Scarett, his long-time friend and teammate with Eberline Racing, a disbelieving look, and the man laughed. "All right, it is, but generally you wait awhile. Christ, Aid, you said you were going to the bar to see if they had any newspapers left, I never expected you to come back with a shit-eating grin and plans for a pre-practice lay."

"What can I say? Atlanta's always been a good track for me." And something about the enchanting Eve had been too tempting to tell no.

As a driver on the NASCAR circuit, women routinely came on to him. The bartender's style had been different. Until she'd admitted to being a fan, he wouldn't have guessed she knew who he was, outside of a guy she wanted to sleep with.

Her easy approach is why he'd invited her up to his room. That, and her body.

The woman was stacked with a capital S. Her breasts were all but pushing out of the snug-fitting top the same color of pale green as her eyes, and the matching black and green skirt was so damned short and hip-hugging, his libido had shot through the roof at first sighting. He didn't even like scotch, but he would have drunken anything she'd placed in his hands in an effort to cool his firing testosterone.

Shit, he was still hard half an hour later.

Yeah, there was just something about Eve. Something Adrien planned to uncover in another seven and half hours, right along with her curvaceous body.

Tomorrow he'd do his driving on the track, doing some early testing of both his car and the track conditions. Tonight he planned to drive the enchanting Eve all over his penthouse suite and straight to the finish line.

## Chapter Two

Eve paused outside of Scott's door, and surveyed her attire. She'd considered going back to her own room and changing into something a little more ... black, or maybe red. Then she'd cast the thought aside. They might not have shared a lot of personal information, but in a way she and Scott were friends. At the very least they were past the point of dressing to tempt each other. Besides, if the way he'd looked at her earlier was any sign, he was plenty tempted already.

And God knew she was tempted, practically vibrating with it.

Before her good-girl side could emerge and remember the potential consequences in coming here, Eve knocked on the door. It opened a few seconds later and, with a hello and a sweeping bodily assessment, Scott let her into the room.

The entrance opened up into a large sitting area decorated in greens, blues and burgundies. A gas log fire flamed in a fireplace off to the left of a navy couch and matching recliner, and an entertainment center took up the bulk of the wall to the right. A dining room table and chairs were situated in an alcove off to the direct right of the entrance and doors on the left side opened up into bedrooms and a bathroom.

"I haven't been up in here awhile." Eve turned back to Scott. "It's big."

A grin tugged at his lips, bringing her attention to the stubble that lined his chiseled jaw. She'd never seen him with facial hair; it was a welcome addition. One that had her wondering how the coarse stubble would feel rubbing along her bare skin. One that had her aching to reach out and touch.

He took a step toward her, until they were almost toe-to-toe. "You don't like big?"

She inhaled deeply the rich clean scent of his cologne. Murmuring over the tantalizing aroma, she took her own step forward, situated her feet around his, and gave into her urge. Hands splayed on his torso, she tipped her head back. "That all depends on the big in question. You're a big man, and I like you."

He looked amused. "You don't even know me, Eve."

"That's why I'm here, right?" She slid her hands up over his chest, thrilling in the hard, lean muscle. "To get to know you better?"

Scott's arms came around her. His hands slid down her back and then cupped her ass and pulled her against him. "Intimately."

Heat sizzled through her with the hard press of his cock against her belly. Her pulse sped. "Physically," she returned, shifting her hips, grinding against his length.

His eyes darkened and he lowered his mouth to hers. Slowly. Too slowly.

It had been too long since she'd been intimate and she wanted him far too badly to take things slow. Eve pushed up on tiptoes and slanted her mouth against his. He met her tongue halfway, licking, stroking, consuming. His taste was as she'd imagined it, completely masculine with the power to make her wet on contact. His hands were just as wetness-inducing. His fingers kneaded her buttocks, then pushed beneath her skirt to stroke her though her panties.

He caressed her folds through the damp material, coaxing over her clit with barely-there touches that elicited throaty sighs against his mouth. Shifting against his fingers in an attempt to make him apply more pressure, she moved her hands down his body.

Against her belly, Scott's erection had been solid, thick; against her palm, he was huge and hard. Rubbing him through his jeans made her want to feel him inside her all the more. It made her bad-girl side want to take over completely and push him back against the wall, wrap her legs around his waist, and ride him hard.

As if he could read her mind and shared her thoughts, he broke from her lips to utter a rough and harshly accented, "Naked."

Panting, Eve assented, "Naked's good."

He pulled his hand from her skirt, and an involuntary whimper left her lips. That whimper was forgotten, as in a flash she was no longer standing feet from the door. She was plastered against the wall with her shirt tugged open and Scott's hungry gaze fastened on the plunge of her cleavage over the cups of her black bra.

His hands came over her breasts, cupping the sensitized flesh, rubbing her peaked nipples through the lace, and then finally pushing the cups up and out of the way. His pupils dilated as her breasts sprang free. Eve was aware of her own doing the same, of her racing heartbeat as he splayed his hands at her waist and bent his head to her breast. His tongue laved each tight nipple, his stubble abraded her skin, and then his lips settled around one of the peaks and sucked hard.

Liquid desire pooled between her thighs. Her sex tingled. She grabbed fistfuls of his thick hair, unable to remember when a man's mouth on her breasts had affected her so completely. It took great effort not to squirm. His hands left her waist, one moving up to her free breast, the other moving down and past her skirt. A lone, long finger pushed past her panties and deep into her slick body. Eve didn't possess enough control to stop her gasp or the rush of stunned breath as the heat of ecstasy crashed through her.

There was nothing boring about this man. And there was also nothing untried. He played her as if he knew her body intimately, knew all the right buttons to push.

Scott's finger went still. He freed her nipple and grinned. "You're beautiful, *cheri*."

He must go for the salivating look, because she was sure the drool was back at the corners of her mouth. God, he was sexy as hell and she wanted her mouth on him, her tongue stroking over his chest, her hands everywhere.

Eve opened her mouth to demand those very things, but all that came out was, "My breasts are too big."

His look turned to one of disbelief. "You can't tell me anyone's complained about them."

"Just me." And why had she said that? So they were big and got in her way, so what? She'd never voiced that fact to any of her other lovers. That she had done so to him had to be because they'd been friends first. Friendship or not, she wasn't sharing any more secrets. Not when speaking them meant potentially ruining a perfectly incredible moment.

Scott's gaze stayed trained on her face a few more seconds, his look too serious. Then his grin reappeared. "I like them," he said, returning his mouth to her breasts. His tongue laved over each nipple with fast, darting strokes and then his teeth caught one, grazing over the stimulated crown with pleasure just this side of pain.

Eve's thoughts crashed back to sweet heaven. Heaven that only grew when he said, "No, I love them." His magical mouth moved, nibbled its way to the inner side of her left breast, and he added, "I love this, too."

She knew without looking what he spoke of. The darker flesh centered over her heart was more sensitive than the rest of her body all the time. Right now, with his talented tongue working its wonder, she felt ready to go up in the flames. "Nevus."

"What?" he asked, moving his finger within her once again.

"It's a birthmark." She closed her eyes and whimpered as he added a second finger and thrust them together inside her wet sheath.

He pulled nearly free and applied pressure to her clit, circled the pad of his thumb over the swollen pearl. "It looks like a race car."

Eve struggled to concentrate on the conversation as the pressure building between her thighs sizzled to dizzying proportions. She grabbed hold of his shoulders to keep from falling when her legs gave out, and the way they were beginning to shake, the heat coiling in her belly and darting out to her fingers and toes, that wouldn't be long now.

"Is that your way of saying you're ready to go for a ride?" she asked casually, while silently she begged, *please, let it be.*

As much as she was ready to come, she wanted to feel him inside of her when she did. Wanted to remember the rush of sensations that stole through her at that moment when a man entered her, wanted to feel the play of his muscles tightening and releasing when he succumbed to his own climax. Wanted to hear her name on his lips.

He had such a wonderful accent—he'd been born in France, he'd told her in one of their passing conversations—and she knew now it grew all the thicker, richer, when he was aroused.

Aroused ... what she was beyond measure. So close to coming undone...

Scott pulled his hands from her panties, and Eve's eyes snapped open. Flashing that sexy grin on her, he lifted her until her legs were wrapped around his waist. Want burned in his eyes. Want reflected in the thickness of his voice, as he rocked his shaft against her. "Am I ready to go for a ride? What do you think?"

She thought that ten minutes ago this was exactly what she'd wanted, to be up against the wall and straddling him. Now with the sweet friction their positions and each rock of his body caused, Eve wasn't so sure she wanted to be here, because she feared she would be coming without him inside her whether she liked it or not.

\* \* \* \*

When Adrien had opened the door to her, Eve's short, sable hair had been perfect. Her creamy complexion flawless. Her eyes clear. Now her hair was in wild disarray. Her classical features were flushed, and her eyes clouded with lust. Lust that clearly churned through every part of her, as though he'd quit rocking, she was rocking in a way that if he was inside of her, would have him over the edge in a heartbeat.

Her fingers tugged at his T-shirt, while her hot mouth moved to his neck. She bit down on the flesh, licking, lapping, and only pulling away when the shirt finally came free of his jeans. Sighing, she jerked it up and over his head, and hastily returned her hands to his skin. "Gotta get you naked," she breathed. "Fast."

Adrien laughed. For a second there, when she'd seemed insecure about the size of her breasts, he'd wondered if coming up to a stranger's room for sex might be something out of the ordinary. Her actions now said otherwise, as did her appearance.

Her eyes were so dark, so vivid and green, more brilliant than any starting flag he'd ever seen. "Take me," she sang out, and crashed her lips against his.

He'd thought to tease her for how fast she was moving, for how obviously hot she was for him. As her hips shifted, sliding her pubic bone against his cock, and her tongue slipped into his mouth to dance fast and furiously with his own, all thoughts of teasing were forgotten. He was just as hot for her, hotter than he could remember being for a woman—maybe because with Eve there was no pretense, no games, or maybe something else completely. He only knew he ached to get his hands all over her supple body, to push inside her.

His balls tightening with the idea of driving into her hot, wet body, Adrien pulled from her mouth, growled, "Hang on."

Eve clung to his neck as he unzipped his pants and sighed over the relief of pressure on his groin. He yanked the condom out he'd placed in his pocket in anticipation of her arrival, and then pushed his jeans down and kicked them away. He rolled the condom on and aligned the head of his shaft with her opening. She was so damp that he slid into her a short ways without even trying.

He tried then. Gripping her ass, he trained his gaze on hers, then reared back and thrust hard. Eve's eyes flared wide and a cry of ecstasy rang from her lips, followed by Adrien's groan. She was dripping with her wetness, but tighter than he'd expected, and he wondered again if coming to a stranger's room for sex was typical.

"Oooohh ... yes," she cried as she gripped his shoulders and rode him. Her wide-eyed look was gone, replaced by a hedonistic smile and squeals of delight.

Those squeals were too good to ignore. They pitched through his body and pumped his heart into overdrive. The carnal sound of flesh slapping flesh and the smell of sex filtered through his senses and had him picking up the pace despite the beginning ache in his thighs. That heightened pacing was rewarded by the contracting of her sex around his, and sexy little mewls from her throat. Tension barreled through him as her easy contracting turned to jerking spasms.

Eve convulsed in his arms, her mewls turning to shouts and her head banging against the wall behind him with each pump. He thought to step back from the wall so that she didn't knock herself out, but climax was nearly upon him, too, each grip of her shuddering muscles bringing him that much closer to the edge, and then finally taking him over.

"Oh, God, Scott!"

The frenzied scream shot through Adrien's head as orgasm shot through his body. The build-up suggested the orgasm would have been a remarkable one. The name she called destroyed every bit of his enjoyment. The cum spilled from his body with a narrow edge of physical satisfaction while rage gripped him from head to toe.

Keeping her pinned to the wall, he glared at her. "What the fuck did you call me?"

Eve's rapture died away with a blink. "You're name. Scott."

"My name's Adrien or Nicolas, not goddamn Scott."

He was shaking he realized, trembling with his fury. He pulled from her body and set her back. Grabbing his jeans and boxers from the floor, he strode away, far enough his temper wouldn't be an issue. At least, not in causing her harm.

Eve jerked her skirt down and pulled her bra back in place with shaking hands. "Since when? I've been calling you Scott since we first met. You told me to."

*Merde*, he was scaring her. He didn't mean to scare her, but she'd pissed him off. "I've never met you before today, Eve. I only knew your name from your nametag."

“You’ve never...” She blinked again, then smiled that easy smile she’d given him at the bar. “Of course, you have. We met almost two years ago. It was the day after *Eve’s Interlude* opened. You were in town for the Annual Apparel Conference. I commented on how in need of a drink you looked. Is this ringing any bells?”

Adrien wanted to focus on that smile, on how sincere and completely unlike any other woman he’d met on the road Eve seemed. But her words wouldn’t allow it. Because they did ring some bells. Some damned big ones he never wanted to think about again. “Do I strike you as a man who gives a shit about apparel?”

Her smile wobbled, fell. She jerked her shirt together, fumbled with the buttons and then gave up. “I don’t understand why you’re saying this.” Her tone grew cooler with each word. “Are you trying to throw me out? We had sex, and that’s that? You want me gone. Fine. I’m going.” Her voice shook, and tears kindled in her eyes. She sniffed them back and spun around, hurried to the door. With a last furious look, she bit out, “Goodbye, whoever the hell you are. *Thanks* for the *screw*.”

Adrien winced with the slamming of the door, feeling like an asshole. He couldn’t help his temper. Not from the moment he’d realized she thought he was Scott. It was the reason she’d acted so easygoing with him at the bar. It was the reason she’d come up to his room—because she didn’t think he was a stranger at all, but possibly someone she cared about. It was also the last thing he wanted to deal with today. Or ever.

Christ, he hadn’t spoken with his twin since they’d been in their early twenties, damned near eleven years ago. Back then Adrien has been struggling to make it on the small-time tracks, ready to do anything to find a sponsor. Anything had come in the form of asking Scott’s company to be his sponsor.

Scott had refused, saying he couldn’t invest his money and name in Adrien because he knew he didn’t have the follow-through it took to make it; then he’d offered him a job with his company. A job working for his brother doing something he’d never wanted to do in his life. A job that accepting would mean giving up his dream.

As obviously as Scott hadn’t given sponsoring him a second thought, Adrien hadn’t given the job offer one. They’d shared several more words, mostly shouts that escalated into cutting accusations on both of their parts, and Adrien had left. And soon after found a sponsor who did believe in him and stood behind him the two additional years it took before he made it to racing full-time in The Busch Series. The last several years he’d been racing The Winston Cup, now The Nextel Cup, and had finished among the top five in points. For a man with no follow-through, he’d done damned well for himself.

Adrien had also thought that he’d moved on. That he was past the falling-out with his brother. He’d believed he’d accepted that while he was respected by fans around the world, he wasn’t by his twin. But now, facing the reality that Eve had slept with him because she mistook him for his brother and hadn’t know who he, Adrien, was at all, he knew he hadn’t moved on. The anger was still there, as was the old wound, open and oozing, and burning from the fresh salt she had unknowingly rubbed in it.



### Chapter Three

*Aries, today you will be an asshole the same way you were yesterday.*

*Taurus, today you will...*

Growling, Eve swiped her hand across the chalkboard. There would be no personalized horoscopes again today, since she didn't know Scott-slash-Adrien-slash-Nicolas's sign and refused to call the entire population assholes. Though, after the way Eric was acting and now Adrien, the male half of the population might fall into that range.

To think she'd believed that Scott was a nice guy. Hah!

And she had *so* not cried over him. She'd caught the way his attitude had cooled down for a moment when her tears had surfaced. But she hadn't been crying over him. She'd been crying over her sorry lack of judgment.

She'd actually risked losing the bar over a night of pleasure with that jerk.

Not that she thought Eric would actually take it from her over something so trivial, but considering how intent on seeing her shackled to Greg he was, anything was possible.

Heck, maybe Eric wasn't so far off. Maybe hooking up with the uber-bore was a good idea. At least when they were finished having what was bound to be yawn-inducing sex, Greg wouldn't turn into a deranged amnesiac.

A knock sounded on the bar's glass front door. Eve glanced at the door and immediately regretted it. The devil was out there, acting like he thought she wanted to talk with him. She only stormed to the door and yanked it open in the hopes Scott, or whoever the hell he was, would get a clue and leave her alone. "What, you can't read any better than you can remember your own name? I'm closed."

Before she could shut the door, he stuck his foot in its path. "I need to say something to you. Can I come in?"

*No. He could go to hell.*

She would have said that, too, if she hadn't caught the hint of regret in his eyes. Her good-girl side insisted she give him the chance to be heard.

Eve stepped back from the door and crossed her arms, for the first time feeling underdressed in her uniform. "I don't care."

He moved into the bar, closing the door behind him. His gaze slid over her, lingering on her breasts and making her realize the way she crossed her arms only accentuated her overly exposed cleavage. Accentuated it and made her remember he'd had his mouth on every inch of her breasts last night. And, oh, what a mouth it was.

He returned his attention to her face. "I'm not who you think I am."

"No kidding?" She wasn't who she thought she was, either, that after last night he could look at her that way and still make her hot, worse, make her want.

"I'm not Scott."

"You made that clear. You're Adrian or Nicolas, Scott's evil other half." She nodded toward the door. "Now unless you came to say something worth..."

"I *am* his other half, in a manner of speaking, but I don't normally act so crude."

Oh, now this sounded like it was going to be a whopper of an excuse. She should kick him out right this second. Curiosity made her ask, "What are you trying to say?"

“Scott’s my twin. I haven’t seen him in over a decade, but you clearly have.”

So much for the whopper. He must think she fell out of the stupid tree to believe something so ridiculous. “Let me guess, your attempts at picking up another woman failed, so you decided to crawl back to the one stupid enough to sleep with you and try to make yourself look good.”

Scott’s eyebrows winged together. “*Merde*, I’m serious, Eve. If you don’t believe me, pick up a copy of today’s paper.”

“You don’t want me to do that, because if I do, I’m going to hit you with it.”

He shook his head and glanced at his watch, which was not a Rolex. He was wearing jeans and a T-shirt again, along with a black ball cap with the words *Eberline Racing* stitched in red on the front. He was obviously hard up for sex to carry this not-Scott thing so far.

“I have to run. I just know I hurt you last night, and don’t want you to think it was on purpose.”

The gasp was out before Eve could stop it. What a self-important idiot to think he could hurt her. They weren’t even passing friends; he’d made that much clear. “You didn’t hurt me. Like you said, we don’t even know each other. Apparently, not even a little bit.” Okay, so saying that had hurt the tiniest bit, but again it wasn’t over him, but her own foolishness.

*He shot her a doubtful look that said he wanted to say more, but then started for the door. He looked back when he reached it and nodded toward the chalkboard. “Leo.”*

“What?”

“I’d hate to think you were taking your vengeance for me out on everyone. This way it’s only the Leos who have to worry about being assholes.” He grinned. “With the confidence us lions have, I’m sure we can handle the stigma.”

“More like cockiness,” Eve breathed hotly as the door closed behind him, and his too damned appealing grin.

The door reopened a minute later, as she was struggling to come up with horoscopes that didn’t sound like death sentences, particularly for the feline sign. Temper flaring, she jerked around, ready to tell Scott he’d been entitled to one visit and had already had it. Only it wasn’t he who approached her with a wide smile on his face. It was Eric.

“Morning, sis.” Eric’s voice was positively polite. “Do you have a few minutes?”

She eyed him skeptically. “Why are you being so nice?”

“I’ve been being unfair about trying to push you together with Greg. I’m sorry. I just worry about you, knowing how hard it is for you to connect with things long-term, particularly men. And, well, you know as well as I do that Dad would have loved to have seen you and Greg together.” His smile grew into that pleading one she used to fall for every time. “I spoke to him awhile ago and he mentioned he’s free tonight. Will you try to go out with him? For me?”

The smile no longer worked on Eve. What did work was the thought she would be away from the hotel, and in case the jerk she’d been with last night was still about, out of his range. So her company would be the uber-boring Greg...

Really, how bad could he be?

\* \* \* \*

How bad could he be? Appallingly so would sum it up nicely.

Eve wanted to scream when Greg's hand once again found its way under the table and onto her thigh. Had she really thought him a bore? His conversation might make her want to snooze, but his manhandling had her wide awake and ready to clobber him.

Since he'd brought her to one of the nicest restaurants in Atlanta, she didn't want to make a scene, particularly when they'd finished dinner and were waiting for the check. But subtle wasn't cutting it. She'd playfully pushed his hand away a couple times, then with a bit more force and a glare that last time. This time ... this time he was moving his hand even higher.

Eve grabbed her steak knife and waved it across the table, spoke through gritted teeth. "Move your hand off my thigh, or lose it."

Greg smiled. "Come on, Eve. You can't tell me you're scared of a little exhibition. I know how badly you want me. I'd planned to make you wait until after the movie, but you're clearly too anxious for that." His hand slid higher. "Relax, and let me give you what you want."

*What she wanted was to hurl, or scream bloody murder. Or maybe use the knife in her hand to commit murder. His fingers moved inward, brushed the crotch of her slacks, and that last idea took on appeal too strong to ignore. Pushing to her feet, Eve flailed the knife forward, not really intending to hurt him, just scare him a little.*

Before her arm could move more than a few inches, a hand clamped around it, and a lightly accented male voice said, "I believe the lady would like you to keep your hands to yourself."

Her body reacted to that sexy voice, every nerve ending screamed to life with awareness, even as she turned to curse him for intruding on her date. "Scott. Adrien. Whoever the hell..."

"Adrien?" Greg cut her off, shooting to his feet. "You *know* him?"

The look on his face spoke of bafflement. As Eve looked around, she realized others wore the same expression. Were they all amazed to think she could know someone as gorgeously lickable as him, or was there something here she was missing out on? "Sort of."

Greg didn't acknowledge her response, but extended his hand and smiled. "It's an honor to meet you, Mr. Eberline."

The smile was nearly slick enough to make her sick. The name Greg used was more than enough. "Mr. Eberline?" Eve questioned, with a sinking feeling in the pit of her belly.

"Adrien's fine," the man she thought to be Scott said as he released her arm to shake Greg's hand. Only his gaze wasn't on Greg. His gaze was on hers; his "I told you so" grin huge.

"Adrien," she repeated as disbelief pushed through her. She glanced at the floors and nearly cried to see there was no rug to crawl under, just polished hardwood floors.

"Now do you believe me?"

"Now I..." Now she wasn't going to make any bigger fool of herself than what she already had. So he wasn't Scott. It didn't change the way he'd turned into a bastard on her the second they'd finished having sex. It didn't make her like him.

Eve had promised Eric she would have one date with Greg, and manhandler or not, she would see that promise through. She turned to Greg, forced a smile. "We really need to get the check and get going. We're going to be late for the start of the movie."

“Movie?” Adrien butted in. “On a date?”

“Yeah.” Greg looked back at Adrien, his eyes full of adoration so thick Eve had to stop herself from groaning. “With the race in town this week, the IMAX is featuring NASCAR 3D.”

“So you really are a fan?” Adrien asked her.

A fan of what? Something to do with racing obviously, but what about racing she had no idea. “Greg planned the evening. I had no idea what we’re seeing until right now, and I still have no idea what it’s about, other than race cars apparently.”

Adrien snorted while Greg cast her a confused look. “How can you sort of know him and not know what he does, let alone what a movie he’s in is about?”

Adrien was in the movie? So much for seeing this date through. Sitting in the dark with hands-on Greg would have been bad enough. Sitting in the dark with hands-on Greg while watching Adrien on the big screen, and in 3-D no less, was not going to be happening.

Realizing she still held the knife, Eve laid it on the table and placed a hand on her belly. “Actually, I’m not feeling the best, Greg. Can I take a raincheck?”

Greg looked uncertain, then Adrien piped in, “You do look pale. I can take you home. I was about to head out, and I’m sure Greg doesn’t want to miss the movie. Trust me, man, the opening’s the best part.”

“That’s okay, I...”

“Thanks for the offer,” Greg cut her off. “If you don’t mind, I’d appreciate it. I already bought the tickets, and like you said, the opening’s the best part.”

“Not a problem,” Adrien said, but the wink he sent Eve when Greg turned to signal for the waiter told her it was a problem. A big problem that had her wishing with a vengeance for that rug to crawl under.

\* \* \* \*

“The hotel’s the other direction,” Eve said coolly.

Adrien had been surprised to learn she lived at *The Orion*—they obviously set their bartending staff up with an affordable live-in package. He wasn’t surprised, however, to see her turn chilly on him the moment they stepped out of the restaurant.

She was clearly still angry about the way he’d gone off on her last night. And for that he planned to apologize. He could have let it go. Initially he hadn’t planned to because he thought there might be something between her and Scott—he might not care about his brother, but he didn’t like the idea of causing Eve trouble by coming between them. That she was on a date with another man suggested there wasn’t anything between her and Scott. The reason he still planned to apologize was because ... hell, he wasn’t sure. Maybe just to get back in her pants. Something about her, possibly the fact she almost knew who he was and still didn’t want anything to do with him, made her intriguing.

Adrien braked at a red light and glanced over at her. Eve’s short sable hair was in perfect form, sleek and sexy. The urge to reach over and mess it up was almost too much to let pass. “I have an errand to run on the way back.”

“You didn’t have to give me a ride,” she said stiffly. “I could’ve taken a taxi.”

“This won’t take long.” Unless he handled this apologizing thing right, in which case it could take the rest of the night.

Eve remained silent, her arms hugging her body as he drove out of the city, and after a short while, pulled onto a narrow dirt road. Trees canvassed either side of the road, blocking out the moonlight, and making the interior of the car pitch black. He could tell by the subtle sounds of fidgeting that she was growing nervous.

Then the trees opened up into a clearing and an old ticket booth with another small building next to it and a giant screen a short distance from that appeared.

Eve unwrapped her arms and sat forward. "What is this?"

Adrien smiled at the delight in her voice. He'd come here to smooth things over, knowing it would be deserted and that she couldn't walk away from him. He hadn't expected the old screen to have a cooling affect on her temper, or for her to sound pleased about it.

He killed the engine. "Exactly what it looks like, an old drive-in."

The moonlight showed the interest in her eyes. "How'd you know it was here?"

Last night she'd been open and relaxed with him because she thought he was someone else. Now she knew he wasn't an old friend and was still acting differently from any other woman he'd met on the road, as if conversation with him was as good as sex. That had to be the reason he found himself eager to respond. "A buddy of mine owns the property we're on. He's kept this place up and running through the years, just opens it to friends nowadays. Don't worry, he won't be coming around tonight."

"I wasn't worried." She looked out the passenger's side window. "Why would I be? It's not like we're going to be doing anything."

Yeah, Eve was definitely different, because she sounded like the idea of sex with him was appalling. Of course she couldn't really believe that, because he'd been in that room last night, and while things had ended on a sour note, prior to that they'd been damned fine.

Adrien reclined his seat and let his arm drift behind her headrest. Since her temper had gone, he didn't bother to apologize. "What were you doing with Ritchie Rich? Hardly seems your type."

Her gaze shot back to him, narrowed. "Last night you said we didn't know each other and now you know my type?"

"Hey, maybe I'm wrong." And maybe she still wanted that apology, or maybe it was the mention of the other man that had her riled. The thought of the jerk with his hands on Eve despite her many obvious attempts to get them off knotted his stomach. "Would you like me to drive you back to Greg and let him paw you some more? I bet you two could have a great time in that theater in the dark."

Eve's expression said it all. Back to Greg was the last place she wanted to go. Seconds ticked passed, then nearly a full minute, before she spoke. "You said you haven't spoken to Scott in over a decade. Why? He's a nice guy, and aren't twins supposed to be close?"

The knot in Adrien's stomach grew. He expected anger to follow it. It did to some extent, but nowhere near to the biting rage he'd felt last night. While he hadn't answered that question to many through the years, he found himself doing so to Eve. "He tried to get me to do something I didn't want to do."

"Like?"

He could have taken her continued questioning as pressure, could have bottled up, but the sincerity in her voice and on her face made him close his eyes and respond. "He

wanted me to work for his company, because he didn't believe I had what it took to get anywhere on my own."

"Oh. I can relate."

Hearing the tightness in her voice and having seen the way her brother treated her yesterday, Adrien believed she could. He considered asking why she would stay working at a bar her brother owned, when she clearly wasn't being treated well and there were plenty of others in town, but it seemed pointless. Sitting here, talking as casually as if they really were old friends, felt good in a way he hadn't experienced in ages, but it wasn't lasting. Come Monday he'd be gone on to another town, one filled with the usual women who were after him for his money and notoriety, and she'd be nothing more than a memory.

"So, do you come here often?"

The unexpected gloom that had come with his thoughts evaporated at Eve's double entendre. He bit back the quip that came to his tongue. Monday wasn't here yet and he wanted to enjoy the casual talk a bit longer. "Twice a year, when I'm in town for the race."

"I'm not usually big on quiet for long, since it tends to be followed by boredom, but this is nice. Sleeping with you was nice, too. Do you think that's why I want to again?"

Adrien hardened in an instant while his eyes snapped open and he looked over at Eve. The thought she admitted to wanting him again because she figured out who he was crossed his mind. Then her uncertain smile came into focus, and he knew better. "You tell me."

"Maybe it's because that first time I didn't know who you were."

And maybe her smile wasn't uncertain after all, but meant to trick him into thinking she wasn't like all the others. "Now that you know who I am you want to sleep with me, so you can tell all your girlfriends about your two-night stand with Adrien Eberline?"

Eve frowned. "I didn't mean who you are like that," she said testily. "I still don't know who you are, though if you're in a movie you obviously have money. I was going to turn down Scott—you, but who I thought to be Scott—because of his money. If I wanted money, I could have a bundle by saying two words. I don't want money and I have no intention of saying those two words."

And what exactly were those two words?

Adrien pushed the question aside. The only thing he need to know about her, or at least cared to know, was that she sounded sincere. "I drive race cars professionally, which is what that movie I'm in is about. And if you're so anti-money, what made you say yes to me last night?"

"Partially to irritate my brother."

"You slept with me to piss off your brother. Nice." As much as the thought of being used didn't excite him, her behavior was something he could understand.

"Mostly it was for me." Eve unbuckled her seat belt and turned to face him. She took hold of the arm he'd placed behind her headrest and brought his hand to her knee.

Adrien recalled the way she'd looked when it had been Greg's hand on her leg, highly pissed off. The way she looked with his hand there was an extreme contrast. Sensual invitation filled her eyes and the lines of her body, and had his blood heating up and heading south.

“Part of me knew you weren’t your brother. I never got hot looking in Scott’s eyes. I never wanted to lean across the bar and suck on Scott’s tongue. I never had Scott glance at my breasts when I was fully clothed and make me so wet I felt like I might come instantly.”

She guided his hand upward, along her thigh, until his fingers brushed her crotch, and she shifted against him. His cock throbbed and then gave an anxious twitch when she rubbed his fingers up against her a second time and her husky whimper filled the car.

“So that’s why I want to sleep with you again. I want to because you rev my engine, Adrien.”

And she had him ready to blow.

As much she had him aching for her, Adrien had to give her an out, just in case she thought this was about more than the short-term. “I’m only in town until Sunday.”

“Good, because I have a serious problem with commitment.”

## Chapter Four

Staying angry with Adrien would have been doable, even after he'd opened up about himself and his feud with Scott, but giving into him and remembering how incredible his mouth felt on her breasts was much easier. His hands weren't too shabby, either. The hand she'd placed between her legs kneaded against her sex through her pants, his knuckles pressing against her slit and pooling wetness in her core.

Eve wanted to handle him in the same way, feel his hard length, silky and fluid in her grip. She shifted on the seat, attempting to move across the car.

He pushed her back gently. "Not so fast. I have plans for you."

"Plans?"

He grinned. "Don't worry, they aren't long-term."

*"I wasn't worried." Half an hour ago, she'd been ready to hate him. Now, she definitely didn't hate him, as evidenced by the way her nipples peaked with the idea of his plans. The sensual tilt of his mouth and the devilish gleam in his eyes suggested they would be both wicked and carnal.*

"Good." Adrien leaned across her seat and pulled the lever to recline it. When she was horizontal, he unzipped her slacks. Eve's breath caught as he began to work the pants and her panties down her legs. She wrenched forward automatically.

He tsked. "You aren't worried, remember? Sit back and close your eyes. I promise you won't regret it."

She wasn't worried. She just felt extremely exposed, and as much as she wanted to trust him, couldn't forget she didn't know him well. True, she knew him better now than she had last time they had sex. And in a way she knew more personal information about him than she did Scott after two years. Then there was the fact he'd saved her from Greg. Possibly from filleting Greg, which gave him points...

Eve reclined back, closed her eyes and drew in shallow breaths, waiting for whatever was to come. She'd guessed his fingers, maybe his tongue—okay, that part had been more about hope—but it wasn't either that brushed along her inner thighs and then her slit. This was thin, soft, cool. She considered peeking. Then the object brushing her sex moved deeper, dipping into her damp folds and against her clit, and lust gripped her belly hard.

The object moved with a subtle rasp, back and forth, pulling tight against her vulva, then tighter still. Heat rushed into her cheeks, her body tensed. She thought she might climax. Still the friction grew, the play of the foreign object growing harder, tenser, faster, deeper.

"Ohhh ...God. What is that?"

"You like it, *cheri*," Adrien said roughly, in the cocky way her bad-girl side adored. "It's making you so wet, so hot. I can smell you. I can taste you."

The object pulled away and his tongue replaced it. He lapped at her body, licking the length of her folds, and then sinking deep.

Eve's eyes snapped open with the speed of his entry, with the erotic sensations that rocketed through her, with the release unfurling in her belly and spreading to her limbs.



Her face felt on fire as she focused on Adrien leaning across the car, his blond head in her lap.

As if he sensed her watching him, he angled his head back and looked at her face. The intensity of his gaze, of his tongue thrusting in and out of her wet body was all powerful, had every inch of her quivering, ready to explode. Her hips pushed upward, meeting his lips, attempting to bring his tongue farther inside her yet.

The movement of his hand drew her attention, and she watched in stunned silence as he brought the seat belt below his lapping tongue and brushed it over her clit.

That she suddenly knew what it was he'd used to pleasure her with was all the final push she needed. Eve fell over the edge in a blinding rush. "Ahhh ... yes! I'm coming!"

As his tongue continued to lap at her, his hand to brush the edge of the seatbelt across her clit, she couldn't seem to stop coming. Spasms gripped her body, had her entire body on fire, sweat dripping down her spine, between her breasts.

Oh, God. She had been right last night. He knew how to play her. Just where to touch her, how to touch her to drive her wild.

\* \* \* \*

"You ready to go?"

At Randy's question, Adrien stood from the chair he'd been sitting in, thinking about the last thing he should be. The rapture on Eve's face as she climaxed, and then the intimate way she'd held onto his hands when he'd pulled her to his side of the car and onto his lap. That time they'd climaxed together, and when she did it was with his name on her lips. His name being chanted as she looked into his eyes so intensely he thought the heat of her gaze might leave him branded.

Yeah, that was the last thing he should be thinking about. Not to mention sentimental as hell. He stood and headed for the bedroom. "Let me grab my wallet."

Randy followed. "Where's your head, Aid? You've been acting off all morning. This about that chick you took off with at the restaurant last night?"

Adrien grabbed his wallet and turned around. "Her name's Eve."

Randy's black eyebrows shot up. "No way, you named her."

"Believe it or not, she came with one of her own."

"Yeah, but you never share their names," Randy said, referring to the women Adrien hooked up with while on the road. "Rarely remember them longer than a day or two. You serious about her?"

Yes. Seriously not going to see her again. The way Eve not only had him talking about his relationship with Scott, but thoughts of her had stayed with him, seeing her again was not a good idea. "We've only known each other a few days."

"That's what I'm saying. Don't get me wrong, it's great if more than your dick likes her, but don't let it affect your driving. This is your track to win."

"It won't." Just as it wouldn't affect anything else about him. From this point on, Eve was out of the picture, physically, emotionally. Completely.

\* \* \* \*

*Gemini, the week is looking up! Go short, tight and black tonight and others things will be up, too.*

*Cancer, your forecast is clear, no more pushing Greg on your sister.  
Leo, bless you for those magical hands and that tongue ... oh, that tongue—*  
“You left Greg to spend the night with another man?”

Eve’s hand flew across the chalkboard at the unexpected sound of Eric’s voice. She quickly swiped away the inappropriate horoscopes, then turned back to her brother. Temper over the way Greg had acted pushed through her. “Greg is a jerk. Somehow he got it in his head that I wanted him, and wouldn’t stop touching me all through dinner. We were in a public place!”

His eyes narrowed. “So you did spend the night with some other guy. Was it that one from the other day, because if it was you’d best think about what you’re doing. That type of guy’s only after one thing, and believe it or not, it isn’t sex. It’s money.”

“Oh, please. Adrien has more money than he probably knows what to do with.” And he was too after sex. Or at least he didn’t turn it down when she’d offered it to him. Nope, he’d risen to the occasion nicely indeed.

“He looked like it, dressed the way he was.”

The warmth that had filled her with the memory of last night evaporated at Eric’s sarcasm. She pushed a hand to her hip. “Do you even know who he is?”

“Not someone Dad would have approved of. Also not someone who’s going to be around more than a week or two.”

The first accusation Eve had heard too often to allow it to concern her. The second one, however, was too accurate for its own good, and had her belly tightening. Not that she wanted Adrien to be around longer, but she’d ended up having a great time with him, conversing and copulating. The thought of him leaving so soon brought unexpected sadness.

Eric’s dark look softened. “Greg’s not upset about the other night. He said he had a good time before you got sick, and to give him a call.”

Frustration replaced her sorrow. “What is it with you two? When did you get so chummy?”

“We’ve been friends for a while. And Greg is a nice guy, stable, someone who would make an ideal husband and father. If he came off like he was trying to get something from you, it was because you were acting like that’s what you wanted.”

“Oh. My. God.” Eric had said some stupid things, but never this stupid, or hurtful. “You actually believe that?” Eve snapped. “You believe I’m like that? Don’t answer that. Don’t say anything. Just go, so I can open up, or I’ll go and you can take care of the bar.”

“I’ll go.” He smiled thinly. “You need to spend as much time as possible with your precious bar, because the day’s going to come soon when it won’t be here.”

\* \* \* \*

Adrien opened the hotel room door and groaned at the sight of Eve. Part of him groaned anyway, the rest of him shot to life with awareness over her extra-short shorts that showed off miles of curvy bare leg and a tight white tank top that only made her lush breasts seem that much more voluptuous.

God bless warm, sunny Georgian days in late March.

She turned beseeching eyes on him. “Can I come in?”

No, the rational parts of him argued, because he wasn’t seeing her anymore. Only her pleading look made it impossible for even the rational parts to turn her away.

He stepped back from the door. "Of course." When she was inside, Adrien glanced at Randy, who'd stood from the couch. "Eve, this is Randy Scarett, my teammate."

She frowned. "You both ride in the car?"

Randy chuckled, then shot Adrien a look that said to keep his mind on what mattered most as he made his way to the door. "Nice to meet you, Eve. I'll see you later, Aid."

"He has his own car," Adrien explained after Randy was gone. He noticed Eve's expression had turned from pleading to upset then. Only upset wasn't quite strong enough, she looked ready to cry. He fought off the urge to hold her. "What's the matter?"

"I've spent the last ten years of my life moving from one job to the next, in one city to the next. *Eve's Interlude* is the first place I've been able to keep my interest in enough to stay at it more than a few months."

"And that's bad?"

"Yesss ... because Eric pissed me off and I picked up the phone to call a friend to whine, and I realized I don't have any. Every relationship I've had has been short-term."

"So you came to whine to me?"

The question had come out automatically, and clearly lacked any trace of sympathy, as Eve's frown returned and she spun back toward the door. "I should go."

"Stay."

Again, the response was automatic, but this time it seemed what she wanted to hear, as she turned and smiled. It was a weak smile, and still one that felt like a sucker punch direct to Adrien's gut for the way it warmed him.

*The warmth was the reason he should have turned her away—he was close with Randy and most of the people on his racing team, but none of them made him feel the sense of connection, of understanding that Eve did. He hadn't felt it with anyone since Scott. Of course the connection with his brother was long gone, as would the one with Eve be come Monday.*

Since it wasn't Monday yet and Adrien hadn't turned her away, he pointed at the couch and indicated she sit down while he did the same. "Now whine."

"My brother is an ass!" Color tinged Eve's cheeks and her eyes narrowed, erasing all trace of tears with the heated accusation. "He said if Greg had his hands on me last night, it's because I made it seem like I wanted them there. And then, after saying a bunch of other crap I'm not even going to bother repeating, he threatened to shut down the bar again."

"I don't want to think he would really do it," she added more calmly, "but he wants me shackled to Greg. He said he's stable. Stable hah! The only things Greg is are boring to talk to and just plain awful otherwise."

She might sound somewhat calmer, but Adrien didn't feel calm for the way her brother treated her. He'd only seen the man once, heard her talk about him twice, in all cases the guy had come across as a controlling jerk. The impulse to put him in his place rallied through Adrien. He pushed it back with the reminder Eve's life wasn't his to worry about. He could listen to her, offer suggestions, but that was it.

His gut tightening, he forced himself to remain distant. "I agree, your brother's being an ass. Why don't you quit before he can close down the bar? There have to be plenty of other bartending positions in Atlanta, right?"

"*Eve's Interlude* is mine."

"Because your brother agreed to name it after you?"

“No.” Eve shook her head, so that her short hair bounced righteously and drew him in like a paper scrap to a restrictor plate. “Eric gave me the loan to start it up and I still owe him most of that money, but the bar is mine. I own it.”

Thoughts of dragging his fingers through her silky hair and pulling her warm, sweet mouth to his faded as confusion set in. “You said your brother’s the boss, that he has the power to shut it down.”

“I said more or less he’s the boss. And he can shut it down because he’s the CEO of *The Orion*, and has the final say in what establishments are allowed to operate inside of it.”

“Your brother’s the CEO of this hotel?” Hell, he hadn’t seen that one coming.

“Of the chain, yeah.” Her frown was back. “And Daddy also left him in charge of my inheritance, which I don’t get to have until I say those two horrid words. I wouldn’t even care, I don’t want the money, but I hate feeling like Eric has the power to push me around.”

Adrien tried to concentrate on her words, but he couldn’t quite move past her admission. “So your family’s rich?”

“Daddy’s gone, but my brother’s rich. My mother is, too, but my parents divorced years ago and she took a settlement, so she’s not really a factor. I’m not rich. I don’t want to be.”

“But you could be, if you said those two horrid words to your brother?” Which meant she really had wanted him for who he was ... as a man and nothing more. As much as he’d told himself so, realizing it fully brought sweet relief, and then pressing concern.

He shouldn’t care why she wanted him, damn it.

Eve’s eyes shot wide. “Oh, God, no! I would never say ‘I do’ to my brother, even if he weren’t related to me and was the last man on the face of the earth.”

In a blink, the mood of the room changed, as did the look on her face. She was no longer upset or wide-eyed, but, as she cast her gaze the length of him, dark-eyed and ravenous. “I could *never* want him,” she said low, sultry, “not the way I want you.”

*Eve covered the short space on the couch between them in a flash, had her arms wrapped around Adrien’s neck just as quickly. Eying him hungrily, she lifted her mouth to his. Her lips were soft and inviting as they brushed against his.*

Her tongue played along his lips, tracing, teasing and then finally sinking between. Warmth cruised through his body with each of her slow, gentle laps. She was kissing him tenderly, in a way she hadn’t kissed him before, in a way he couldn’t recall any woman kissing him. Her subtle scent wrapped around him. Sensations rocked him from head to toe as she curved her tongue to his and rubbed. Her fingers kneaded through his hair, her pelvis shifted slowly against his, stirring his arousal higher, his heart into overheating terrain.

Adrien knew he was a goner. He knew he wouldn’t be turning Eve down.

Something about her had called to him that first night, had made him return to her even after he’d learned she’d only slept with him because she’d thought he was someone else. That same something made him talk to her about his relationship with Scott and for once not feel hatred over the old feud. And now, now that something had him kissing her back, loving her mouth with slow yet wild urgency.

Eve let out a mewl that had his balls hugging his body and his cock throbbing to be buried within her moist folds. Wrapping her legs around his waist, he stood and walked

them into the bedroom to make love to her with a passion he couldn't explain and yet, at this moment, mattered more than winning any race.

## Chapter Five

She never wanted to move again.

Eve sank down in the bed and hugged Adrien's warm, naked body closer. So long as she didn't acknowledge it was Sunday morning, then tomorrow wouldn't be Monday and he wouldn't be telling her goodbye.

She shouldn't care if he left. She never got hung up on any one man any more than she did on any one job. The only reason she liked working at *Eve's Interlude* was the steady flux of new faces and the ability to entertain herself by setting the sultry theme for matchmaking and watching that theme take its effect on the bar's patrons.

She wasn't the type to settle down. So why did she care that he would be gone tomorrow? Was it just because Adrien had listened to her whine about her brother twice more since the Thursday afternoon complaints, and both times agreed that she was in the right? Or because he was able to make her smile and forget entirely about Eric and his ceaseless goading about going back out with Greg, because the man was stable and perfect husband-slash-father material. Gag.

Or maybe ... maybe it was that he knew how to drive her wild, Eve thought on a sigh as Adrien's hand moved between their bodies and palmed a breast. The pad of his thumb brushed over her nipple and the crown tightened as moistness gathered between her thighs.

Oh, God, had she really thought that her breasts were too big? No, when it was *his* hands on them ... make that his tongue, she corrected as he moved beneath the covers and lapped at her nipple ... it seemed they were too small. She wanted them so big he had to go on licking forever.

The licking stopped and his head popped out from under the covers. With a grin, he came over her and, bracketing his arms on either side of her shoulders, kissed her.

"*Bon matin, ma belle,*" he said in the sleepy, sexy accent she loved. He nibbled at her mouth, while his hard shaft nudged at her opening. She felt the cool latex of a condom and realized he'd been awake longer than he'd pretended. "That means 'good morning, beautiful'. Is it a good morning, Eve?"

Teasing glinted in Adrien's blue eyes as he reached down between them to finger her clit.

He stroked the swollen pearl, and stars of ecstasy danced behind her eyes. "Oh, yeah. It's go-ood," the words came out on a gasp as he slipped inside her.

"Mmm..." He returned his lips to hers, brushed slowly. "Very good."

He had to be at the track soon, Eve knew, but it seemed the track was the farthest thing on his mind as he took his time making love to her, kissing her mouth for long minutes before moving on and kissing the rest of her.

She reveled in each unhurried brush of his lips, each sensual slide of his tongue, each intimate thrust of his body into hers, and prayed that the ache that built in her chest with the thought this might be their last time together wasn't anything more than a sign of overexertion.

\* \* \* \*

Adrien had figured out what it was about Eve that spoke to him. It was her shifting moods, her beautiful body and occasionally quirky personality, of course, but something more. It was that they could relate to each other.

Neither liked to stay in one place for long due to eventual boredom setting in. Neither had any experience with lasting relationships. And, perhaps most importantly, neither had ideal familial ties. What she was going through with her brother was the same as what he had gone through with Scott. His brother had tried to make him do something Adrien knew would never make him happy for the sake of stability. And that was exactly what Eve's brother was trying to do to her.

Despite his self-vow to stay away from Eve, it hadn't worked. Each moment the both of them had free had been spent together the last few days, much of it making love, but nearly as often talking, in a way he hadn't talked to anyone in a long time. And, from what she had said about not having any long-term friends, he could guess the same was true of Eve.

The warmth her presence evoked was constant now and the thought of seeing it end in the morning tightened his chest as he pulled a T-shirt on and walked out of the bedroom. Eve was curled up on the couch, eating a piece of bacon from the plates room service had brought up.

Her smile faltered as she noted his dressed state. "Time to go?"

The tightening sensation grew. If the thought of him leaving affected them both so badly, what would tomorrow bring? Randy had said last night that Eve had gotten under his skin and into his heart, and Adrien had denied it. He couldn't deny it now. He wasn't ready to leave her. Maybe never would be. *Merde*.

"Yeah, but I was thinking you should come along." The idea had just hit, but it was a good one. "You've never been to a race, even a small one, right?"

"I never thought to go."

He moved in front of the couch and bent down for a kiss. One he hoped didn't feel as desperate as he suddenly was to hear a yes. "Come today. I'll get you a pit pass. Introduce you to some of the people I work with."

Eve pulled back and eyed him warily. "Why?"

Because he wanted her there, cheering him on in a way his brother never had. True, Scott probably didn't know he was still racing since he'd changed his name to get away from his old life, but still... "Because you need to get away from this hotel and I thought you might have fun. And maybe I want you there."

Her eyes widened. "Uh, no, I can't. The bar's busy on Sunday afternoons."

She was scared. The truth was in her eyes. Did that mean she felt something for him, too? His heart sped and he inwardly laughed. When the hell had he gotten so sentimental? "Are you the only one who works there?"

Eve stood and walked into the bedroom. "No. But I like to know the place is opened right."

Adrien followed, and took great pleasure in watching her ass sway as she wiggled into her jeans. "C'mon, Eve. Live a little."

She spun back on a gasp. "Oh, my God, after everything I've told you this week, you think I don't live? I fear boredom. My middle name is live."

He knew that, which is why he'd said it. "Then come to the race with me."

Emotions flashed over her face. Too many to count or decipher. “Don’t they have cameras at races, so people could take our picture and say things like we’re together?”

He shrugged. Yeah, they did, and maybe a week ago it would have bothered him. Now the thought of being caught on film with Eve made him grin. “Does that kind of thing bother you, people seeing us together, speculating we’re an item?”

More emotions tumbled through Eve’s eyes. She looked toward the bedroom door, like she might make a break for it. “Doesn’t it you?”

Adrien moved in front of her and trapped her in place with his arms and a kiss. “I’m a Leo, remember? I like being the center of attention. Now say yes, *cheri*.”

“Okay. But I’m driving separately.”

\* \* \* \*

“It’s so loud.” And so incredible.

Eve had never imagined the race would be so invigorating. Her heartbeat had been fast since walking through the speedway gates. Then when she’d seen Adrien, suited up in his race gear and looking too yummy for his own good, it had galloped.

She’d known before he’d walked over and kissed her so openly, she shouldn’t have come. After that kiss, she’d wanted to flee.

God, he’d gotten to her—good side, bad side, completely. By the way he’d practically begged her to come to the race today, she believed she’d gotten to him, too.

“You get used to it,” the woman seated next to Eve in the pits seating area confirmed with a wide smile. She’d been introduced as a sister of one of the drivers and clearly liked Adrien, as ever since he’d kissed Eve, the woman had been beaming at her.

“No, I like it.” Eve pulled her attention from the track. Silently, she mulled over the woman’s word choice. She was wrong, because Eve wouldn’t get used to it. She couldn’t. As much as she’d become fond of Adrien, tomorrow he’d be leaving without her.

Sadness blossomed in her chest and brought tears cruising to the back of her eyes. She sniffed them away. So he’d turned out to be an okay guy. He was still just a passing friend, one she’d happened to have sex with. Nothing more.

*The crunch of plastic and metal connecting with more of the same exploded between Eve’s ears. She jerked her attention back to the racetrack, and her breath screeched to a painful halt.*

She leapt to her feet, feeling the blood rush from her face. “Oh, God. No.”

Cars. There were cars everywhere. Not moving. Bent. Broken. The red and black of Adrien’s car in the mix of all the others had her heart stuttering to a stop. This time the tears leaked out. “Are they...?”

A hand grabbed hers, squeezed. Eve looked over to find her new friend smiling. “Adrien’s fine, honey. Probably furious about his car and he’s definitely out of the race, but he’s not hurt.” She nodded back at the track. “No one is, at least badly. They’re all moving, climbing out. The ambulance is for just precaution’s sake.”

\* \* \* \*

Shit. Shit. *Shit*. The best car he’d had this year gone.



Adrien waved away newscaster cameras as he made his way to the *Eberline Racing* trailer. A hand on his arm had him swiveling around seconds before he reached it. He barked, "What?"

Eve smiled. "I'm nuts."

"I'm pissed," he retorted, then pushed his way into the trailer and slammed the door.

Adrenaline spiked through him as he stood, pulling in deep breaths. Slowly, the frustration died and he could relax his bunched fists. Seconds later, a knock sounded on the trailer door.

He spun back, and opened it. Eve was standing there, her smile cemented in place. The urge to smile back was automatic and inane.

Why the hell should he want to smile?

He did so anyway, stepping out of the trailer. "Sorry. But you don't want to talk to me right after I've lost a great car and expect to get a friendly answer. Now why are you nuts?"

"I want to quit my job," Eve pronounced, her eyes alive with excitement.

Something about that excitement reached inside Adrien and erased all vestiges of frustration. "That's not so nuts. You said you get bored easily."

"I want to work for you."

Warmth filled him through. He resisted the urge to pull her into his arms. It was entirely possible he was reading her wrong. "You aren't racing my cars, unless you have a history of racing I don't know about."

"No. I want to do something for your company. I have a lot of skills." She laughed, then added, "But that's not why I'm nuts."

"Then what is?"

"I think I love you."

Adrien's heart took off. He struggled to maintain his stance. "You think?"

Eve's smile dimmed. "This is new to me. Just a few minutes ago, when I saw your life flash before my eyes, I realized I don't hate commitment, I just hadn't found the right guy yet. You aren't boring, Adrien. Your job isn't boring. You travel a lot. I love all that."

"You love the image," he argued, praying he wasn't right.

She shook her head. Emotions poured from her eyes, from her worried tone. "No. I love *you*. I would even if your job was boring and we never traveled. I know we haven't known each other long, which is why I said I'm nuts, but there something's about us, something *right*."

*A connection. A relationship that was destined, as corny as it sounded. "You're not saying that so I'll marry you and get you access to your inheritance?" Adrien teased.*

"Oh, God, no," Eve gasped. "Someday we can marry, but not now. I just want to be together. If you want to be engaged, I'm okay with that, but I need at least two years before the wedding. I need..."

"Weddings usually involve two people in love."

"Ohhh..."

The way she quietly drew out the word tore at Adrien. But not nearly so much as the hurt in her eyes. He moved to pull her into his arms and tell her how he felt, but she took a step back.

“So, you’re not,” Eve said tightly. “I thought you were. But I was wrong. That’s okay. It isn’t a big deal. I haven’t even quit my job yet. And Eric would miss me. I planned to write him from the road and visit him. I mean, yeah, we have our differences, but he is my brother and I still love him and I know this whole thing with Greg is just about him worrying over my welfare. Anyway, sorry about your car. See you.”

She would be good for him, of that Adrien had no doubts. She’d already tried to convince him Scott and he could reunite. That what had happened between them was probably a product of misunderstanding or stubbornness. And, damn it, the more that he thought about it, the more he wanted to believe her. The more he wanted to hold her. Love her.

He took two steps forward. Catching her hand in his chin, he tipped her face back. Tears shimmered in her beautiful green eyes and tugged at his heart. “I love you, *mon coeur*.”

“Thank God,” she whispered, the tears leaking out, “because ever since I got it in my head to change careers I’ve been really excited about it. And, well, because I love you, too.”

“Just so you know, this will be on camera.”

“This...?”

Confusion swam through her eyes and then only happiness as he slanted his mouth against hers and kissed her with all the warmth in his heart. Eve kissed him back with relief, passion, hunger. Love.

That last had him lifting his head to smile into her eyes, feeling complete in a way he hadn’t known he’d lacked until he’d met her.

She smiled back mischievously. “In case the cameras missed that, I think you’d better do it again.”

With a laugh, Adrien did just that.

## Epilogue

“Just do it!”

Adrien laughed at the impatience in Eve’s eyes as she stood in front of the couch, holding out the telephone and looking ready to clobber him. She’d been traveling with him on the race circuit for three months now and each day was better than the last.

Eric had turned out to be a decent guy. He’d stopped pushing Greg at Eve and, while she no longer worked at *Eve’s Interlude*, had helped her hire staffing to see the bar remained open and in good hands. It seemed that sibling peace sparked the need for Eve to bring the same to Adrien and Scott, which is why she was wagging the phone at him.

Tsking, he took it. “Engaged a week and already you think you can order me around.”

She glared at him, then sank down on the couch with a laugh, straddling his lap, and rubbed her breasts against his chest. “Call for me, please. I’ll make you glad you did.”

His body hardened with the taunting rubs, the promise in her voice. He knew how good that promise was, and stabbed the phone number in fast.

“You know his number?”

He shrugged. She’d been dropping hints for some time, and deep down Adrien had wanted to call, enough to memorize Scott’s number. “I have a good memory.”

Eve nipped a kiss at the cleft in his chin. “You’re full of crap, but I love you anyway.”

“I love you, *mon coeur*.”

“I think you have the wrong number,” a lightly accented male voice so close to Adrien’s own came through the phone line.

No animosity filled Adrien, as he knew once would have been true, only relief. “I was talking to your future sister-in-law,” he explained, and then, “How are you, Frederick?”

“Nicolas?” Scott returned, calling him by his given name, too.

“Yeah.”

“*Merde*, it’s been ... years.”

“Too many.” Eve flicked him a “get on with it” look, and he smiled. “It’s time we talked.”

“Past time.”

“Eve and I will be in town in a couple weeks. We’d like to see you.”

“Eve? And did you say you were getting married?”

“Yes, and actually you know Eve. You’re the reason we met...”

Adrien proceeded to tell his brother how Eve had mistaken him for Scott, leaving out the best parts, of course—there were some things his twin didn’t need to know. Scott laughed and in the background a woman’s soft laughter joined in. His brother told him about his new bride, Chandra, and how he had *Eve’s Interlude* to thank for them being together.

When Adrien hung up the phone with plans for him and Eve to visit Scott and his wife soon, the past was undiscussed, but it no longer mattered. Whether things back then

had been a misunderstanding, or about stubbornness on one or both of their parts, it was done with and the future couldn't look any brighter.

All right, maybe a little brighter ... if Eve were undressed, for example.

He set the phone aside and caught her waist in his hands, eyed her chest with open appreciation. "About your making me glad I called. Will that be happening soon?"

Eve's husky laughter filled him heart and soul. "I'd say the outlook's favorable. I'd say the outlook's favorable for both of us well into the future."

## **The End**

### **About the Author:**

Jodi Lynn Copeland discovered her love for writing at an early age and soon after that came an even greater love for the hot, steamy romance—some riddled with humor and fun, others shock full of enough dark and emotional baggage to sink a ship. Jodi is married to her real life hero and has more than a dozen children, though only one of them is human and two-legged.

Jodi is an all around tomboy at heart, which you can often see shades of in her writing. When she isn't writing, or spending time at the day job she likes to pretend she really doesn't have, Jodi can be found in the great outdoors, scrapbooking, watching the discovery channel, CSI or 24, or on any given Sunday, sacked out on the couch with her husband and stepson, taking in the latest NASCAR race.

You can visit Jodi online and learn more about her and her novels at:  
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