



Tempting Fate

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Atlantic Bridge

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Dedication

Thanks to my fabulous editor Lynne for taking a story I thought was pretty good and making it a million times better!

Prologue

Chloe sat with her sisters in the same ornate palace where she'd spent the last few hundred millennia.

Outside the window, pink clouds floated through the azure sky. The only disruption to the beautiful monotony was the occasional dragon or unicorn.

"I don't get it. Aren't you guys bored?" Chloe asked.

Lacy looked up from her book.

"How can I be bored? I've barely made it through half of these books."

Lachesis, the middle of the three Moirae sisters, had her nose buried in a book as long as Chloe could remember.

"What about you, Atty?"

Atropos was bent over at the Destiny table concentrating intently.

"I'm just making sure that all of these threads are cut correctly."

"Atty, the machine's been working fine, with zero mistakes, for over three thousand years," Chloe reminded her sister.

"Yeah, well, it never hurts to be too careful."

Atty was always working and Lacy was always reading. Which had left Chloe at loose ends for the past few millennia. By the Gods, she could only change her hair color and paint her nails so many times before she got really bored.

And that time had come. She was *really* bored.

"That's it," she said, jumping up and tossing her hair—at the moment back to her natural black—over her shoulder. "I'm taking a vacation."

Her sisters barely glanced her way. They were used to her antics by now.

"Where are you going to go?"

They probably expected her to say something like the Elysian Fields or Atlantis. Well, she was sick of those places. She'd been there millions of times.

"Earth."

That got their attention.

"What?"

Atty jumped up so fast she dropped a handful of threads to the marble floor. Lacy slammed her book closed, causing Chloe to jump.

"You can't go to Earth!"

"Why not?"

She knew she was being disagreeable. Crossing her arms over her chest, she struck a pose that dared her sisters to argue with her.

"You know why," Lacy answered. "You can't do your job if you've actually met the people whose destiny you're controlling."

Chloe turned and strolled to the large picture window and gazed outside. Olympus truly was beautiful, the most breathtaking place anyone could imagine. The perpetually green grass swayed in the always slight breeze. The temperature was always a balmy eighty degrees with zero humidity. Snow-capped peaks rose in the distance while birds and squirrels frolicked under the window.

Still, she had been restless of late, coming to the disconcerting realization that even perfection could get boring after a while.

"We haven't really been working for fifteen hundred years. Not since I built the Destiny Machine."

That truly was her pride and joy. She looked at the sleek metal and plastic contraption. It spun thread, then it used a specially created algorithm to measure the thread, and finally it snipped it at the appropriate length. As the world's population increased, the sisters had realized that there was no way they could be the controllers of the fate of everyone on Earth. Chloe had spent forty years creating and fine-tuning the Destiny Machine, freeing the Fates to act more as managers than actual hands-on deities.

And to her great pleasure, the Destiny Machine had never once made a mistake.

Of course not. She was a Fate.

She'd known exactly what she was doing when she'd built the machine.

"Yes. But we have to be here in case something does go wrong with the machine."

Chloe rolled her eyes.

"It's not going to break. And even if it did break, I could be back here in a matter of seconds."

"But Chloe," Lacy, normally the quietest of the sisters, insisted, "as a Fate, you know better than most what can happen in a matter of seconds."

She sighed. She *did* know.

But she was sick of sitting in the palace, opulent and beautiful though it was.

"I'll do some maintenance on the machine before I go, but I'm going."

"Chloe..."

"You guys could come with me, you know."

Atty let out a little snorting laugh.

"You're not really going to go through with this, are you?"

"Well, why shouldn't I? I ... we've been cooped up here too long. All the other Gods and demi-Gods get to take vacations to Earth. Look at how much time Bacchus spends there. All I want is one lousy little week. Is that really so much to ask?"

Lacy crossed the room and put her hand on Chloe's shoulder.

"I think you're forgetting how much trouble Bacchus gets in while he spends his time on Earth."

Lacy was always able to bring a smile to Chloe's face. She was the calm, even-tempered sister. A perfect balance to her own wildness and Atty's seriousness.

"Please?"

She turned to her sister and silently pleaded her case.

There was no way that her sisters could actually keep her home against her will, but at the same time, all three knew that she wouldn't go anywhere without their approval. Their support.

After all, they had a big responsibility on their shoulders with one of them gone.

The Fates are three. They'd always been three (well, except for that time that Lacy had spent a night in the hospital after trying to care for a not-so-friendly serpent).

"One week?" Lacy asked.

"No." Once again Atty jumped up from the table, inadvertently knocking more threads to the ground. "You can't seriously be thinking of going along with this?"

Though the most even-tempered of the sisters, Lacy stood her ground when those she loved were threatened.

"Look at her, Atty," Lacy crooned in a voice so soft and lilting it could even convince Bacchus to give up wine. "She's unhappy. Would it really be that bad to let her go for a week?"

"I promise I'll be good."

Chloe drew an X over her heart. No need for them to know her fingers were crossed behind her back.

Atty was a goner with her two sisters pleading with her.

"All right, fine." Atty muttered an incantation under her breath and a small device that resembled a cell phone materialized in her hand. "But you keep this with you at all times. And if we need you, you get back here instantly, do you understand me?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She couldn't believe it.

She was actually going to Earth!

Hugging and kissing both of her sisters and promising them both extravagant presents, she disappeared in a puff of smoke.

Chapter 1

Tanner woke to a pounding in his head.

Damn, he didn't think he'd had that much to drink last night. He squinted against the harsh rays of the morning sun. Much to his chagrin, the pounding didn't stop.

"Hello?"

The pounding was joined by the most melodic voice he'd ever heard.

While the rest of him wanted to stay in bed for the rest of the day, *one part* of him was awake now. And if a simple voice could do that, he most definitely wanted to see the rest of the package.

Stumbling out of bed, he cursed loudly when he stubbed his toe on the chair where he'd thrown his clothes the previous evening. He picked up his well-worn jeans and struggled into them as he made his way down the long hall.

The knocking continued.

"God damn it, I'll be right there."

He wrenched open the door, wincing when it came into contact with the soft plaster of the wall behind it.

Damn, his mother was going to have his hide for that one. It only took a second for the pain to register. His mother wouldn't have his hide for that, or any other offense again. How long was it going to take for him to remember that?

"Hello?"

He was drawn from his painful reverie by a slim hand waving in front of his face.

And that hand was connected to the most amazing creature he'd ever seen in his life. She was tall, only a few inches shorter than his six-four frame, though he supposed some of it came from those incredibly high heels she was wearing.

Her hair was a beautiful raven black, though for a moment there, he could have sworn he saw a swirling rainbow of colors.

Desperately, he wanted to know the color of her eyes, but they were shaded by a pair of large black sunglasses perched on her pert nose. Her lips were painted a bright cherry red. He found himself mentally urging her to lose the shades.

"Are you all right?" The vision asked.

As if she'd known what he was thinking, she slid the sunglasses forward on her nose so that she could peer at him from over the black frames. Her eyes were a beautiful crystal green.

"Yeah, I'm sorry." He had to get out of this stupid drunken spell. "How can I help you?"

She held out her hand.

"My name is Chloe. I was told to come here and ask for an Anna Danner."

She pulled out one of his mother's old business cards and held it in his direction. He didn't need to see it.

He'd seen the same thing hundreds of times over the years.

"I'm sorry," he said. He knew he should invite her in, but thinking about his mother just made him want to go back into his room and bury himself in some more vodka. "You must not have heard. My mother, Anna, passed away a few weeks ago."

A strange expression passed over the woman, Chloe's, face, but was quickly replaced by pity.

He didn't need anyone's pity.

"Oh. I'm terribly sorry."

"Yeah, well, a lot of people are, but that's not going to keep this old dump of a bed and breakfast in business, now is it?"

He knew that there was absolutely no reason for him to be this sharp with her. But damned if he could bring himself to care.

He was about to close the door in her face when she stuck one pointy toe in the way. Even as much of a bastard as he was, he wasn't about to go slamming a woman's foot in the door.

"Maybe I could help you then."

"How do you think you're going to do that?"

"Well, I was looking for a place to stay. A friend of mine told me that Anna's was the best place in town."

He laughed, a derisive sound.

"Yeah, well it used to be, but as you can see," he said, waving vaguely behind him to indicate the browned wallpaper, the scarred wood floor and chipped paint, "it's not any more."

Suddenly, before Tanner's eyes, the woman sank back into herself. It was an astonishing sight, and one he was absolutely sure he never wanted to see again.

"Well, do you have any suggestions for somewhere I can stay?"

Her voice no longer held the lilting melody that had captured his attention earlier. Now it was flat.

Flat as he felt.

"Uh, there's some chain place up the street."

"Yeah, all the places I passed on the way here had No Vacancy signs. It *is* spring break, you know."

Of course he knew. Spring break in South Florida. That was the reason he'd drunk himself silly last night like he was twenty-one again.

No, that wasn't true. That wasn't why. It was just an excuse.

"Well, I don't know what to tell you."

"Okay. Thanks. Sorry for bothering you."

She turned to go. While a few minutes ago he'd have said she walked with a spring in her step, now she

seemed to be practically melting into the cracked planks of the wooden porch.

His mother's voice rang in his ears.

You can't turn away a person in need just because it's not convenient for you.

"Well," he said. Where had this unbearable guilt come from? "I guess I could clean up a room for you. That'll give you a bed, but don't count on anything more than a box of donuts for breakfast."

The smile she gifted him with felt like it might brighten not just his day, but also all his tomorrows.

"Really? Oh, thanks. And hey, if you want, when I'm not sightseeing, maybe I can help you start cleaning up this place."

Great, just what he needed, a "helpful" guest.

"That's okay."

He opened the door wider and let her inside. Just her walking into the foyer seemed to brighten up the place.

"Oh," she said, the disappointment clear in her voice. "It's not so bad. A little TLC and this place will be good as new."

Hell. An eternal optimist, too.

"You can have whatever room you want." He indicated the stairs and then dug a door key out of the old desk in the front hallway. "Here. So you can come and go as you please. My room's on this floor."

He started back that way, but she stopped him.

"Wait."

He did but he didn't turn around.

"What's your name?"

"Tanner."

She started to laugh. At first she tried to disguise it as a cough, and then she tried to stifle it, but soon, it erupted out of her.

"What's so funny," he said through clenched teeth, even though he knew the answer.

"Your name is Tanner Danner."

* * * *

In her room, as Chloe was readying herself for a day spent shopping—ah, the glorious wonders in which mortals could engage—she was still chuckling over the fact that her host's name was Tanner Danner.

She supposed she should stop laughing at him. After all, his mother had recently passed away.

And why hadn't she known that?

As a Fate, she should have been in tune with those around her, especially those who were coming close

to their own mortality or had just lost someone significant.

That she hadn't recognized that about Tanner immediately did worry her a bit. She held her cell in her palm and considered calling her sisters, but she didn't want to worry them.

Instead, she tucked it into her purse.

Apparently her powers on Earth weren't what they were on Olympus.

She'd do well to remember that.

And not tell her sisters.

Grabbing her purse, she ran downstairs, called a quick goodbye to her host, and left the small Oceanside Inn.

She made her way directly through the sand dunes to the beach.

It was beautiful. It was still early in the day, but in a few hours, she knew that the beach would be full of people. She should know; she always had to keep an extra special eye out for snags in the threads of Spring Breakers. But she didn't have to worry about that right now.

She was on vacation.

Smiling to herself, she bent down and unlaced her sandals so she could walk unfettered through the warm sand.

Her first vacation in a few thousand years.

"This isn't your first trip to the ocean, is it?"

She was shocked to hear Tanner's voice directly behind her. Apparently her powers were really out of whack down here.

It was her first trip to a real ocean. They had ocean-like things up on Mount Olympus, but they didn't duplicate the salty sea air, or the constant yapping of seagulls. Or that smell. A few hours into her journey and Chloe already knew she was going to miss that smell.

"Actually, it is."

"Really? Well, then, you've got to put your feet in."

He smiled at her, but it was a sad smile. It didn't reach his eyes at all. This man was really suffering and it was killing her that she hadn't known.

"Race ya," she said before taking off down the beach.

She slid to a halt just before the water touched her toes. Turning, she saw Tanner strolling through the sand towards her.

He looked natural as a beach bum.

His blond hair was sun-kissed and several days' growth of beard covered his jaw. He moved naturally through the sand, not almost falling every other step like she had done.

He was still wearing the faded jeans he'd answered the door in, but he'd paired it with a shirt so faded that she could barely make out the words Crab Shack.

"How did your mother die?"

She didn't mean to blurt it out like that. He almost looked peaceful for a second there and she had to go and ruin it. The expression on his face changed as surely as a steel cage had dropped down over him.

He was silent so long that she didn't think he was going to answer. When he finally did, his voice cracked and he looked away.

"I don't want to talk about it."

Millions of questions flittered through her mind, but even with her senses as dull as they were, she knew not to ask them. So she remained silent.

She couldn't say she was sorry. She was a Fate. She was the one that had woven the thread of his mother's life. It was her fault that this man in front of her was in so much pain now.

This was why her sisters warned her that she didn't want to come to Earth.

When she opened her mouth, she wasn't sure what she was going to say, but it certainly wasn't what ended up coming out.

"Eeeek!"

Cold water hit her in the calves and splashed up to the backs of her knees. She took a step forward, but her foot got mired in the saturated sand.

She headed straight down, face first.

But then, instead of getting a mouthful of grainy mud, she remained standing, though she had thumped against something hard.

"Omph."

"Water scare you a little bit?"

Okay, so maybe she acted a little bit foolish. It was just a little bit of water. Things like that were bound to happen when you were standing with your back to the ocean.

"It startled me."

For the first time since she'd met Tanner, he smiled a real smile. A smile that went all the way to his baby blue eyes.

Wow.

She didn't even so much mind the fact that he was laughing at her.

"Yeah, that water, it can jump up and get you."

She felt the rumble begin in his chest; it was hard not to as she was plastered against him. Then it escaped—a deep masculine laugh that had her tingling in places that had lain dormant for a very long

time.

She wasn't a virgin; she'd dare anyone to live for several millennia and remain a virgin, but she could honestly say she'd never felt this way before.

Tanner's arms around her, though she no longer needed his support, made her feel warm and protected. Things she'd never really thought about before. You didn't have to think about being warm and protected on Mount Olympus.

His body was hard. She could feel the muscles under his shirt, though he hardly looked like a gym rat. And something there, below the waist, was getting much harder.

Before she could stop herself, she whimpered.

"Sorry," he said, practically pushing her away. The laughter died and he went back to being that same closed off Tanner.

"It's okay," she said when she desperately wanted to launch herself back into his arms.

"Were you going somewhere?"

He took a few more steps away from her. He stood at the water's edge now. The water flowed over his feet, soaking his jeans, but he didn't seem to notice.

"I, uh, I was going to meet a friend. We were going to go shopping and then to lunch." She took a stab in the dark with her next question. "Would you like to join us?"

Her heart sank when he gave her the answer she'd been expecting.

"No thanks, but have a good time."

He turned and trudged back up the beach. She watched until he disappeared over the sand dunes.

Chloe didn't know how long she'd stood there after Tanner left, staring at the spot where his back had disappeared.

"You're looking the wrong way, honey. The ocean is behind you."

She would have recognized that slightly slurred voice anywhere.

"Bacchus."

She turned and launched herself into his arms.

He graced her with a quick hug before settling her back on her feet.

"Honey, if you're going to party down here in the earthly realm there are some things you've got to learn first." He took her hand and started leading her back up the beach. "First of all, nobody meets anyone before ten o'clock in the morning. I mean that's positively barbaric."

She laughed.

She'd always had fun with Bacchus. Well, of course she did. Everyone had fun with him. He was, after all, the life of the party.

"So, what are we going to do today?"

He checked his watch, an expensive one.

"Well, if we're going to get everything you need to have a fun-filled week on Earth, there's only one way to start the day. Mimosas."

* * * *

Tanner smacked the hammer against his thumb for the third time and cursed a wild streak. Deciding that it was probably best for him not to work with any more tools for a while, he tossed the hammer in his mother's battered old toolbox and headed back into the house.

The loose boards on the porch were just going to have to wait. Hopefully Chloe would just walk down the middle when she came back.

Not for the first time since she'd left, he found himself thinking about what exactly she was doing today.

He hadn't noticed when she'd shown up on his doorstep, but when he went in to check on her bedroom, he saw that she hadn't brought any suitcases with her.

Maybe he should have asked more questions.

Once again, his mother's voice rang in his head.

Just because someone doesn't have as much as you do doesn't mean that they're not good people.

Yeah, but maybe if she hadn't been so damn trusting she'd still be alive today.

Not wanting to head down that road of thought, he walked into the kitchen, reached into the cupboard where his mother kept her emergency stash of brandy and poured himself a healthy swallow.

He downed the glass in one big gulp, enjoying the burn.

Now that that was out of the way, he carried both glass and bottle and took them to the room his mother used to call The Parlor.

Pouring himself another drink, he gulped that down too and waited for sweet oblivion to come take him away.

* * * *

When he awoke, it was dark.

He heard muttering coming from the doorway. It took him several tries to stand up, and when he did, he wobbled quite a bit. Luckily the thief at the door seemed to be having just as much trouble as he was.

Stumbling down the hallway, displacing several of the doilies his mother was so enamored of, he finally reached the door at the same time the thief managed to swing it open.

It caught him square between the eyes.

"Mother fucker," he screamed.

"Shhh," the thief instantly shushed him. "That's not a very nice thing to say."

The thief had a very familiar voice. She might have looked familiar too, but he wouldn't know. His vision was still double from the whack he'd taken, not to mention the only light in the house was the moonlight filtering in from outside.

"There's nothing here for you to steal," he yelled. And he thought he may have actually been facing in the direction of the bad guy, or girl, as the voice led him to believe.

"I'm not trying to steal anything," the voice reminded him. "I'm a guest here, and if this is how you treat guests, then I'm not so surprised I'm the only one you've got."

"Chloe?"

"Have many other people stopped for accommodations while I was out today?"

Her dry wit was completely useless on him. And he would've told her that too, if he didn't have such a major headache.

He plopped down on the nearest thing he could find, which happened to be the stairs. She murmured to herself as she began to load the foyer with bags.

"What the hell did you do today?"

As he watched, he noticed that she wasn't too stable on her feet either. Or maybe it was just that his eyes were still completely out of focus.

"Oh, I did the most wonderful things. I had mimosas for breakfast, I shopped until I almost dropped, I had margaritas for lunch and then shopped some more."

She moved closer to him. Through his haze he noted that she was completely sexy. Her black hair was in disarray and her big green eyes shone with excitement.

The top button of her sleeveless blouse had come undone and when she moved, he could see a teasing hint of the red bra she wore underneath.

She was barely a few inches away from him when she spoke again.

"This evening, I discovered the most wonderful thing."

"What," he said, then had to clear his throat and start again. "What did you discover?"

"Sex on the beach."

Chapter 2

"Excuse me?"

She took a good look at Tanner.

He hadn't shaved, and was wearing the same thing he'd had on this morning, which only emphasized his scruffiness.

But somehow it didn't make him look any less sexy.

"What did you do today?"

"Uh, stuff. What did you say you discovered?"

Chloe didn't remember feeling this good in a really long time. She bobbed her head in time with the music in her head, the song playing when Bacchus had let her out of his sporty red car. She still had to work on getting him to let her drive that baby before the week was out.

"Chloe?"

"What?"

Had he spoken?

"I asked what you said you discovered today."

"Oh, it was the most wonderful thing really." She walked to the stairs, or more like stumbled, and sat down next to him. She leaned close and whispered in his ear. "Sex on the beach."

As she spoke, she got a whiff of Tanner. He smelled salty, like the sea, and of musky man. It was a lethal combination.

"Have you ever had it?" she asked.

"Not since I was seventeen," he said.

He looked like he wanted to get up. Even tried. But he fell backwards again.

"I thought you weren't allowed to drink until you were twenty-one?"

"Drink? What?"

Still preoccupied with the events of the day, she wasn't paying him any attention.

"I mean, even on Mount Olympus they don't let you drink at seventeen."

"Mount Olympus?"

She finally registered what he'd said. Oh Gods, had she really just blurted out that she was from Mount Olympus?

"Uh, I mean Olympia, Washington." She desperately hoped that she got her geography correct. "We're not allowed to drink at seventeen in Olympia. Washington. Where I'm from."

Could she possibly babble any more?

"Wait," he said. "You're confusing me. Did you or did you not have sex on the beach?"

She leaned in close again. Suddenly she was pretty sure that Sex on the Beach would have nothing on Tanner.

"I did. It was the tastiest thing I ever had. It even came with a little umbrella."

"Oh, you had sex on the *beach*."

"That's what I said." She shook her head. "Men," she muttered to herself.

"I need a drink."

Tanner pushed himself up off of the stairs with a groan and shuffled his way back into the parlor. He picked up a bottle and tilted it into a glass, but nothing came out.

"Damn it."

"I have sex on the beach."

He turned on her.

"Will you please stop talking about sex already?"

Chloe was taken aback.

"But I thought you wanted a *drink*," she said quietly.

"Empty," he said, slowly tipping the bottle upside down again.

She repeated herself very deliberately.

"Tanner. I-have-sex-on-the-beach."

She walked to one of the bags she had on the floor and showed him a bottle of vodka, peach schnapps, and several bottles of juice.

"I knew there was a reason I liked you."

He rewarded her with another one of those killer smiles that made her knees weak.

She hoped that he was going to touch her again, maybe hug her—dare she hope for a kiss even? Instead, he helped himself to the vodka she held and headed into the kitchen.

She gathered the remainder of her bottles and followed him. By the time she caught up, Tanner had already opened the vodka and had downed at least one glass.

"Hey," she said narrowly avoiding disaster when she almost dropped one of the bottles. "Save some for me."

Tanner set two glasses in front of her. Figuring that she didn't need to measure, she poured in a little bit from each of the bottles, though she went pretty heavy on the schnapps—she'd discovered quite a fondness for the stuff.

They clinked glasses, only spilling a little bit in the process, and then downed the concoction.

That was when Chloe realized how close she and Tanner were standing.

She stood at the center kitchen island. He was behind her. Close behind her, pressing her hard into the island. He didn't seem to notice, though, as he finished his cocktail.

But oh baby, did Chloe notice.

She leaned back slightly, bringing her back completely in contact with Tanner's front. That's when he stilled, setting his glass down in front of her.

"Chloe, what are you doing?"

What was she doing? She was making herself feel really good. And she had little doubt that Tanner could make her feel even better.

But she said, "Nothing."

He pushed forward, his thick cock pressing into her behind. She pressed back just as hard, enjoying the contact. Wanting more.

Her breasts felt heavy and she was sure that moisture saturated her panties.

"I want more," Tanner said.

At the same time his hands moved to her waist, tickling the exposed skin between her shirt and pants.

"Yes," was all that she could manage.

She thought it was probably much more polite than the "Touch me more" that was threatening to spring out.

As if he heard her unspoken plea, his hands did move. They slid around her waist to her stomach. His hand splayed open on her stomach, practically covering her from her pubic bone to the underside of her breast.

"Please move your hand," she said. "And I don't mean away."

She didn't care which way. Up or down would be fine with her. Either way promised her extreme pleasure.

She held her breath, wondering what he'd do next.

His hand slid upwards.

"Oh yesss."

Rather than cupping her breast, he drew lazy circles around her. Her breasts weren't huge by any stretch of the imagination, but they'd be a nice handful for him. She desperately wanted more contact.

Taking the risk, she broke the contact of her back to his front to lean forward into his caress.

His breath was warm on her neck when he laughed. The smell of the fruit juice obliterated any smell of alcohol on his breath.

"Don't be so greedy," he said, pulling her back towards him again.

But she did get her wish. He cupped her breast fully in his hand. At the same time, he brought his other hand around to cup her other breast.

"Nice," he said.

Nice? This was a lot better than simply nice. This was better than the all you can eat non-fat chocolate bar in the Elysian Fields she went to a few thousand years ago.

* * * *

Tanner was harder than he'd ever been in his life. It was surprising to him considering the amount of alcohol he'd consumed. But he didn't really want to think about that.

No, really all he wanted to think about was the two mounds of flesh he had in his hands.

And damn, did they feel good.

He kneaded Chloe's breasts. They filled his hands and he could feel the hardening of her nipples against his palm.

"Please more."

He was happy to oblige.

Removing his hands from her breasts and spinning her around, he thrust against her once more. He drove hard into her, grinding his pelvis against hers. He was probably hurting her as he pushed her into the counter, but he couldn't bring himself to care.

Instead, he crushed his mouth to hers.

The kiss wasn't tentative or soft like most first kisses were. He pressed his lips against hers with more than firm pressure, forcing his tongue between her lips.

She tasted ... well, she tasted like sex on the beach. Not only the fruity drink but also the act itself. She was salty, like the sea, though the taste of the fruit juice lingered in her mouth.

She struggled against him. He moved back slightly so that he wasn't crushing her any more, but he didn't lighten up any.

He wanted still more.

His hands wandered under her shirt to caress her stomach, back up to her breasts, down to squeeze her ass. And finally, he slid his hand down the front of her body to stroke between her legs.

She eagerly spread her legs for him.

He moved his hands under the waistband of her low-slung pants. The skin of her stomach was soft and smooth and as his hand continued down, he simply came across more smoothness.

She was completely hairless down there.

"So fucking soft," he murmured when he slipped a finger between her wet folds.

"More," she demanded.

Damn it. His hand was caressing her soft pussy and he wanted nothing more than to dig as many fingers as possible deep into her. But he was afraid that if he did so he'd go over the edge himself.

"I ... I can't."

He was going to step away. Going to fill up another glass with the vodka she'd brought home, not believing for a second that she'd mind.

But when he stepped back, she grabbed him. By the cock.

"What in the hell are you doing?"

"I want more," she replied.

Her eyes were wild, the green irises rimmed with fire. Her black hair seemed to almost glow red in the overhead lights of the kitchen.

Quicker than he'd ever seen anyone move in his life, she had his pants around his ankles as she stroked his rock hard cock.

"How'd you do that?"

And why in the hell did he care? She was giving him the most amazing hand job of his life.

She squeezed hard. Really hard. To that very point where pleasure melded with pain.

"I'm going to..."

With one final, really hard squeeze, she let go.

He collapsed backwards, happy that there was a chair there. Otherwise, he would've fallen on his ass.

He sat, breathing heavy, staring at the vision that was before him. And then he saw something that he wouldn't have believed had he not seen it with his own eyes. Hell, he did see it with his own eyes, and he still didn't really believe it.

Must have been all that alcohol.

Because he could have sworn that her clothes just disappeared, leaving her clad in nothing but the red bra he'd been catching glimpses of all day and matching panties.

She turned around to leave the kitchen and he discovered that they were thong panties.

"Wow, that's an amazing ass."

As far as he could tell, Chloe was the perfect woman. Well, perfect looking woman anyway.

She was curvy in all the right places. Her legs were long and shapely leading up to a perfectly round ass. Her waist was narrow—Tanner thought he might be able to easily span it with his hands—and then she had an absolutely killer rack.

He got up to follow her, kicking his jeans off the rest of the way. He grabbed their glasses and the vodka on his way out. He reached the hallway in just enough time to see her disappear into his bedroom.

His bedroom. His bedroom was his sanctuary. He wasn't sure how he felt about having her in there.

But when he walked in and saw her lounging on his unmade bed, that delectable rack offered up on a platter, he didn't care where in the hell she was.

He set the vodka and glasses down on his dresser and then continued his way to the bed. He practically pounced on top of her.

Okay, he actually fell on top of her, but whether falling or pouncing, he didn't care how he got there. He was on top of her and they were both mostly naked. He reached behind her and unclasped her bra before sliding her panties down her long legs. He pulled his shirt over his head and thrust into her.

His slightly foggy brain registered the fact that he hadn't bothered with anything like foreplay, though he did take a second to sheathe himself in a condom. She was so damn wet he slid into her easily.

He fucked her hard, and while he did, he marked her. He continued to squeeze her breasts, and nip at her neck and shoulders.

He fucked her relentlessly and in only a matter of minutes he was coming.

He emptied himself inside of her for what felt like forever. When he was empty, he collapsed on top of her.

* * * *

Oh, Gods.

If that was what having sex was like in the mortal realm, Chloe was mad at herself for waiting a couple thousand years to come to Earth.

Of course, she could have done with a little bit more after. But she really couldn't complain at all. That was amazing.

She wriggled around a little, trying to get out from under the dozing man. When that didn't work, she just shoved him off of her. He didn't wake up.

She arose and flashed herself dressed again, though this time in another new outfit. She took the bottle of vodka from Tanner's room and headed upstairs to her own room. This time, rather than carrying her bags, she flashed them upstairs.

How did all these humans get along without being able to flash things? Her arms were exhausted from lugging bags around all day. Although probably not as tired as Bacchus's.

Once settled in her room, she pulled out her cell and buzzed her sisters.

Atropos answered, her hologram appearing on the wall opposite Chloe's bed. "There you are. We've been worried sick about you. Why didn't you call before now?"

"Relax, Atty."

Chloe experienced a slight pang of homesickness when she heard Lacy's voice calming their worry-wart eldest sister.

"I'm fine. I went shopping with Bacchus today."

"Did you get us presents?" Lacy asked, her hologram appearing next to Atty's.

Leave it to her middle sister to always lighten the mood.

"Of course," she replied.

"Have you had any problems yet?" Atty asked.

"No," She flipped over on her bed and pulled the covers around her body. "Actually down here in the human realm, I don't really have powers. I mean, I have powers but I can't seem to feel anyone's fate."

"Interesting," Atty replied.

"Yeah," she said. "Makes me wish I hadn't waited so long to come visit."

"Be careful, Chloe," Lacy said.

"Yeah, don't get in trouble," Atty responded.

Chloe laughed at the way her sisters cared about her in their own separate ways.

"I'll be fine," she said. "I love you guys."

She hung up the phone, rolled over and went to sleep, the intense sexual experience she'd just shared with Tanner fresh in her mind.

* * * *

Chloe had always been a vivid dreamer. That was normal for a Fate. But none of her dreams had ever been quite so intimate.

Tanner strolled into her bedroom naked. His muscles glistened in the moonlight. Unerringly, he walked directly to her bed, perching next to her.

She tried to speak but his finger came up to rest on her lips, keeping her quiet.

"Shhh. I won't hurt you," he promised. "I'll be gentle."

Chloe never doubted that.

His hand skimmed over her body, over her clothes, though that didn't stop the shivers from coursing through her. He moved from the bed, to kneel next to it so that he'd have better access to her.

His hands continued to roam over her body, but now his mouth followed the same path, kissing, licking, lightly lapping at her skin.

Unbuttoning as he went along, Tanner's hand slid down the center of her torso until her skin was bared. He pushed the pajama top to the side, exposing her breasts. She arched up towards him, whimpering.

But once again he shushed her.

"Shhh. Every time you make a noise I'm going to have to start over again."

Oh Gods.

And he did. He went back to simply touching her. When she thought she might cry out once again he

lowered his mouth to her nipples.

That didn't do anything to help her keep quiet.

Because she desperately didn't want him to stop what he was doing, she bit down on her fist in an effort to keep quiet.

And she knew that with everything he was going to do to her, it was only going to get harder for her.

His tongue swirled around her nipple. First one and then the other. It felt amazing. But she was a good girl and didn't cry out.

He slowly, and ever so gently picked her up so that he could completely remove her pajama top. The air was cool on her skin but she couldn't complain. It just heightened the sensation to her already sensitive skin.

He looked down at her, his blue eyes so clear they seemed almost transparent.

"When I ask you a question, you're allowed to speak, all right?"

She nodded her head, unsure as to whether or not that counted as a question.

Once again, he lowered his head to her breasts. This time he took her aching nipple into his mouth, swirling and sucking, even delivering pleasantly painful little bites that he'd then soothe with his tongue.

"Does that feel good?"

His breathing was heavy and his chest rose and fell. She could feel a light sheen of sweat coating his body where it touched her.

"So good," she murmured.

"I'm going to make you feel even better."

She had no doubts.

From his kneeling position on the floor, he rose and moved to the foot of the bed. He reached over her and slid her pajama pants and panties down over her hips, over her knees, down her legs until he was able to toss them to the side.

When she was as nude as he was, he climbed onto the bed with her, settling himself between her thighs.

"This is so beautiful."

It wasn't a question. She couldn't say thank you.

"How do you keep it this perfect?"

What could she say? She was a Goddess. It wasn't hard to be as completely hairless as she wanted to be.

Luckily, she was saved from answering when he lowered his head to her folds.

He inhaled deeply.

"You smell like ... ambrosia."

Chloe was speechless.

Tanner extended his tongue and flicked at her distended clit.

She could feel the metallic taste of blood in her mouth as she bit her lip to keep from making any noise.

And it only got worse for her.

He licked and sucked, probed his tongue into her molten core. Nothing was off limits. He licked her ass, bit her clit, French kissed her entire pussy.

Chloe was so close to coming, so close to being on that verge where she knew she wasn't going to be able to remain silent anymore.

But when Tanner delivered one long lick from the tight fissure of her rear end, all the way up to her clit, she exploded.

She came wildly, bucking and thrashing, calling out names of Gods, calling out Tanner's name.

Her orgasm seemed to go on forever. After the last spasm coursed through her body, she realized she'd be punished for sure. Tanner had told her to remain quiet.

"I'm sorry," she cried.

But when she opened her eyes, there was no one else in her room. Sunlight was streaming through the curtains.

It was morning.

* * * *

Tanner woke up in a foul mood.

Hell, he was used to the headache. He'd had a morning hangover every day since he'd walked into his childhood home to find his mother lying in a pool of her own blood.

But today the hangover was coupled with the fact that he ached all over.

And damn it, where was the alcohol?

He was shocked to walk into the kitchen and see the counter covered with different multicolored sticky substances. And there were two glasses. Had his guest brought someone home last night?

He sure as hell didn't drink pink stuff, and he most definitely didn't drink with anyone else. Drinking was something to do alone.

Just him and his demons.

Tanner slammed more cupboard doors than was necessary. Especially considering that even the slightest noise exacerbated his headache.

Temporarily giving up on his quest for alcohol, he put some coffee in the coffee maker, and headed into the bathroom.

He studied himself in the mirror.

He looked much older than his thirty years. Hell, he looked a hundred and thirty.

Deciding that maybe today should be the day he finally shaved, he dug through the medicine cabinet for the shaving kit that he knew his mother would have left there.

His mouth kicked up at the corner in a wry smile when he found it.

Lathering up, he found his thoughts drifting to his mysterious guest. He hadn't heard her yet this morning, and he'd been making a lot of noise. So either she was a light sleeper, she didn't come home last night or she was already up and out for the day.

He was hoping that she was already out for the day.

His mother would have liked Chloe. She liked strange and unusual people.

She'd never actually advertised her small bed and breakfast but she got by on referrals. At least he thought she had. He'd been shocked when he came home and saw the disrepair of the house where he'd grown up.

He hadn't known his mother was in trouble.

Hadn't known what sorry shape the place had been in.

Hadn't known that she'd started taking in questionable boarders. Including one who would eventually kill her.

"Ouch. Fuck!"

Tanner caught his reflection in the mirror as a long thin stream of blood flowed down the column of his throat. He was mesmerized by the sight and wondered what it would be like to slice the rest of the way through.

Startled, and yeah, he'd admit it, scared by his train of thought, he finished shaving quickly, careful to keep his mind off serious things. He hopped in the shower quickly, actually put on clean clothes and then headed back to the kitchen for his coffee.

His hands were shaking.

Apparently he was still a little worked up over the blood incident in the bathroom.

Filling a mug with coffee, then tossing the rest of the bitter brew down the drain, he went outside to finish the work on the porch he'd started yesterday. The best way not to think of anything, since he couldn't find the booze, was to keep himself busy.

* * * *

The sound of a sports car revving its engine while turning into his parking lot snapped Tanner back to attention.

He recognized Chloe's black hair instantly. But he didn't like the looks of the guy she was with. She hopped out of the sporty red coupe as Tanner stood, wiped his hands on a handkerchief he pulled from his back pocket and strolled down the stairs towards the car.

"Hey Tanner," Chloe called from the car. She was apparently gathering stuff from the backseat. Who

was this asshole that wasn't even going to help a woman with her packages?

He bent over when he reached the driver's side door. The man inside was obviously one of those damn metrosexuals he'd heard so much about. His hair was perfectly coiffed and Tanner had no doubt everything he was wearing had a designer label.

"I'm Tanner."

He extended his dirty, sweaty hand to the man in the car.

"You can call me B."

There was laughter in the man's voice. Was that asshole laughing at him?

"What kind of name is B?"

He shrugged.

"It's what my friends call me."

Chloe had apparently gotten all of her packages out of the backseat because she slammed the door. "B" called a goodbye to both of them before backing out of the parking lot with a squeal of his tires.

Tanner finally took a good look at Chloe. He couldn't help the smile that spread across his face. She had mouse ears on her head, a balloon in her hand, and more merchandise that you could shake a stick at scattered around her.

"I guess I don't have to ask where you went today?"

Her cheeks were flushed and spirit sparkled in her eyes.

"Did you know there's another kingdom only a few hours from here?" Her voice held a note of awe. "It's amazing. And apparently the whole thing is ruled by a giant mouse."

In spite of himself, he found her excitement contagious.

"You don't say?"

He crossed the parking lot and picked up as many of her bags as he could carry. Even with her carrying some, they were going to have to make a second trip.

"I do say. And there are princesses and princes and everyone there lives happily ever after."

He chuckled.

"Don't laugh," she said, though she too had a smile on her face. "It kind of reminds me of home."

"Olympia?"

"What?"

"It reminds you of Olympia, Washington?"

"Have you ever been there?"

"To Olympia? No."

"Well," she said smugly, "then you shouldn't judge."

Chapter 3

Chloe felt awkward with Tanner. It must have been whatever they'd done last night. She couldn't really remember, but she was pretty sure it was more than she should have done. All that damn sex on the beach. That—combined with her erotic dream this morning—it was no wonder she felt weird.

You weren't supposed to feel that way about the manager of your hotel.

Even if he was the sexiest mortal she'd ever laid eyes on.

But still.

There was an indefinable something about him. Something drawing her close to him. She had both a really bad and a really good feeling about him at the same time.

She was a Fate. She didn't experience this sort of confusion about mortals. And if that wasn't confusing, she didn't know what was.

But luckily for her, he didn't seem to have any memory of what happened last night either. Maybe sex on the beach wasn't so bad after all.

After carrying all of her purchases up to her room, she changed into a tee shirt proclaiming her a Princess. She still wore her mouse ears—she kind of liked them—and, grabbing a small bag off her bed, went in search of Tanner.

She found him on the porch stairs, a skinny brown bottle poised between his fingers, the rest of a six-pack sitting by his side.

"I got you a present."

He looked completely shocked.

"A present? For me?"

"People don't buy you presents very often, do they?"

"No."

She could tell. No one should be that surprised over a simple little present. By the Gods, she and her sisters brought each other goodies every time one of them left the palace.

She promised herself she'd buy him a present everywhere she went this week.

"Well," she said, holding out the bag, "here. Sorry it isn't wrapped or anything."

"No. Thank you. Really."

He studied the package for a long time. Chloe actually started to wonder if he was actually going to open the damn thing or just keep it wrapped forever.

Eventually he peered into the bag.

Instantly he started laughing. His eyes lightened and a rosy glow passed over his newly shaven cheeks. Laughing, he looked at least ten years younger.

He pulled the gift out of the bag and held it up in front of him. Hundreds of little mouse heads stared at him from a pair of red boxer shorts.

But he still didn't speak.

"I thought you could use them. Because I noticed last night that you weren't wearing any underwear."

"Thank you so mu—what?"

Uh oh. She'd just managed to put her foot in her mouth and confirm her suspicions at the same time.

"Nothing. I didn't say anything."

"Yes, you did. You saw me without underwear last night."

She stood, silent, watching the memories from last night flood back into Tanner's brain.

"We drank sex on the beach last night," he said.

"Yes."

"And then ... then we had sex on my bed."

"Yes," she confirmed.

"And then I came to your room this morning."

"No!" she insisted.

He hadn't come to her room that morning. That was just a dream.

Wasn't it?

"No, you didn't come to my room this morning. That was a dream."

"Did it involve you being naked and shutting up while I licked and sucked your pussy?"

She stumbled backwards a few steps. No, that couldn't have really happened. It was a dream. She'd have known if it was real or not.

"Yes," she confirmed quietly. "But it was just a dream."

"Yeah, well we shared one hell of a dream apparently."

Tanner picked up the remnants of his six-pack and stalked off towards the beach. He didn't spare her a backwards glance, though she supposed she couldn't blame him.

She needed to talk to her sisters. Now.

* * * *

"What's wrong?" Atty said almost instantly.

"Will you give the girl a break, Atty?" Lacy broke in. "How's it going? Are you having fun?"

"Yeah," Chloe replied. "I'm having a great time."

"Okay, back to Atty's question, then. What's wrong?"

Her sisters knew her so well.

But how much did she really want to tell them?

"Well, I met a guy."

"Chloe, you know you can't have a relationship with a mortal," Atty hollered.

"What's he like?" Lacy said at the same time.

She didn't know which sister to respond to first.

"His name is Tanner. His mother died recently."

"What?"

"But that's just it. I didn't recognize that he'd lost someone recently."

"Was it ... did we do it?"

"I assume so, but he won't talk about how she died."

"What's her name?"

"Anna, Anna Danner. She was apparently a good friend to Gods and Goddesses in South Florida."

"What did Bacchus have to say about her?"

Bacchus?

Chloe did a mental eye roll. She'd never even thought to ask him.

That was the problem with Bacchus. As soon as you got in his company, you tended to forget about anything more than having fun.

"I haven't asked him."

"Yeah. He's probably not the best one to ask about things that tend to be miserable," Lacy agreed.

"Why don't you let us check on it and we'll get back to you tomorrow?"

"All right," Chloe agreed. She didn't want to wait, but she didn't seem to have any other choice.

"For the sake of the Gods, be careful, Chloe."

"I will. Thanks, guys."

She flipped the phone shut and sat back on her bed. She wanted to close her eyes but was afraid of what might happen. Instead, she settled in to stare at the ceiling.

* * * *

A six-pack was not enough.

Tanner downed the last beer and tossed the bottle into the metal barrel, enjoying the way it splintered

into a million tiny pieces. He'd lost track of how long he'd been at the beach; all he knew was that it was dark and deserted now.

He'd fucked Chloe last night.

And apparently again this morning.

There was no doubt that he was attracted to her. He'd figured that out the very first time he saw her. But at the same time, he never thought he'd actually act on that attraction.

Showed how much he knew.

"Tanner?"

She wouldn't really have come in search of him after everything that'd transpired this evening, would she?

He turned around to see her womanly shape moving in his direction.

Yes, she actually would come after him, it seemed.

"What do you want?"

She was still wearing the shorts and Princess tee shirt that she had on earlier, but she'd lost the mouse ears. In deference to the chill she'd pulled on a sweater.

"I ... are you all right?"

"Do I fucking look all right?"

He had to give her credit for being a smart woman when she didn't actually answer the question.

Ignoring her, hoping that she'd get the point and go away, he got up and started walking down the beach. Much to his disappointment she continued along behind him.

At least she wasn't trying to talk to him or anything.

"Tanner, do you want to talk or anything?"

Just when he thought he might be able to get away from her, she had to ask the most dreaded question known to man.

"No."

He knew he was terse, but he didn't give a damn. Why wouldn't she just leave him alone already?

"It was your mom's time to go."

She said it so softly that at first he thought he might have imagined it. He wished desperately that he had imagined it.

She obviously didn't know that she was treading on *very* thin ice with that topic.

Ignoring her, he kept walking. But she wasn't so easily dissuaded.

"Tanner," she started.

But he turned on her.

"God damn it, Chloe. I don't want to talk, all right? I got what I wanted from you and that was a good fuck. Now there doesn't have to be anything else between us, got it?"

If he had a heart any more, it might have broken at the look on her face.

Her eyes went blank. The usual bright green faded to a shadowy gray. It was if she was shrinking again right before him, just like yesterday when he'd told her she couldn't stay at the inn.

"Well, then," she said as tears began to swim in her eyes. "I'll just head back."

"That's probably for the best."

He couldn't meet her gaze. He simply stared out at the vast ocean.

"Will you please leave me a bill or something on Saturday so that I can make sure you get paid?"

"Whatever."

He knew he was being childish but, right now, he didn't care.

She turned and took two steps before turning to face him again. Somehow, he wasn't surprised. He even might have laughed if he wasn't so busy feeling sorry for himself.

"Why won't you let me help you?"

He did laugh, mirthlessly, at that.

"*Help* me? What in the hell do you think you could do to help me?"

Underneath his question, and far more important to him, was *why* did she want to help him? That wasn't something he could ever bring himself to ask, though.

"Anything you want."

It was so honest it sickened him.

"All right," he said. He was going to prove her "anything" wrong. "How about some sex on the beach?"

She was obviously taken by surprise.

"Okay. Let's go back and I'll make it."

She turned and took a few steps before Tanner reached out and grabbed her.

"That's not what I meant."

* * * *

Chloe's skin tingled where he grabbed her.

He wanted *sex* on the beach. Not the drink.

She knew that he expected her to refuse. What would he do then? Force her? Laugh at her?

Was this the only way she was going to be able to get through to him? By the Gods, why was she so determined to get through to this thickheaded mortal at all?

Well, if this was the only way she could reach him—so be it.

"All right."

She didn't miss his shock. But she had to admit that he hid it very well.

Turning to her, he ran his hands through his hair. He looked around like he was looking for something. Anything.

Finally he looked at her and said, "Let's go."

It wasn't as if this was going to be easy.

She couldn't deny the intense attraction she felt towards Tanner, but it wasn't like she thought for a second that anything could become of the two of them.

But still, this encounter was going to be momentous. It was going to be volatile.

She looked around and realized that they were very close to the same place on the beach where the wave had almost knocked her over yesterday. It was hard for her to believe that she'd only been on Earth less than two days. She'd already done so much.

And there was already so much that she knew that she would miss desperately. As she walked towards Tanner, deliberately putting an extra swing in her step, she realized that he'd be one of the things she would miss the most.

She reached him and slid her hands up his chest. She was already used to the hard planes of his chest.

"Why?" Tanner asked.

"Why what?"

Her hands moved from his chest, around his neck. Her fingers tangled with his slightly too long hair.

"Why are you doing this?"

She moved in still closer, so that their bodies were completely aligned. She delivered several nips to his chin and neck before she answered.

"Because you need it."

With that, she slanted her mouth over his, crushing him to her. She probed with her tongue between his lips. His response was fierce; their tongues swirled together in an almost violent dance.

As much as Chloe wanted to keep control, and liked being the one in control, she could sense that Tanner needed to take the lead.

Her senses had nothing to do with being a Fate; it was simply woman's intuition.

She relinquished control.

Tanner eagerly accepted it.

He ripped her shirt off, tossing it down on the sand. With little care, he removed her bra. No words were spoken when he bent down and took her breasts in his mouth.

There was no gentleness in his caress.

He bit and sucked at her, marking her with his teeth and bruising her with his hands.

It didn't matter to her. Tanner was alive this way. She knew he felt something, even if it was nothing more than lust.

"More," she insisted.

He wasn't one to disappoint.

Tanner pushed Chloe's shorts and panties off, leaving her completely naked. The breeze was cool on her skin, a delicious contrast to the burning sand when the wind kicked up.

But that didn't matter to her, especially when Tanner's hand found its way between her legs.

She was already practically dripping with want. Despite his urgency, she had no fear about whatever he was going to do with her.

His thick fingers demanded entrance but, standing the way they were, it was difficult for both of them. Tanner put his own leg between hers, and pushed outward, spreading her legs until she almost lost her balance.

He plunged two fingers inside of her.

She cried out exultantly.

It wasn't pain at all. It was extreme pleasure. His fingers were insistent, filling her. He was an expert at giving pleasure, and she could tell he took his satisfaction from pleasuring her.

As his fingers continued to pump in and out of her, she leaned into his arms, struggling to stay upright.

"I want..." she breathed, "This is supposed to be for you."

His thumb flicked her clit and he inserted yet another thick finger inside her body. Three of them now.

"Don't worry," he assured her. "I'll get my pleasure before we're finished here."

Both of them were breathing heavily. Chloe was ever so close to coming.

"I ... I want to suck your cock," she managed to bite out between yelps of extreme pleasure.

"You will," he insisted at the exact moment that his fingers twitched inside of her and put unbearable pressure on her g-spot.

She exploded with bliss. Her vision went blurry and her knees gave out. The only thing keeping her semi-upright was Tanner.

But then he pushed her down.

The scratchy sand bit at her knees, but she barely felt it.

He unbuttoned his jeans and pushed them down. Once again he wasn't wearing underwear.

His cock rose from the nest of thick curls. She knew he was big, she'd felt it against her last night, but she wasn't prepared for how beautiful it was.

And beautiful, even with its mostly female connotation, was the only way she could think to describe it.

He was long and thick. The purple head already glistened with pre-cum. She eagerly leaned down and lapped it up.

"Fuck, your mouth is hot."

She leaned in and took him into her mouth as far as he could go. Unfortunately, it wasn't far enough for either of them.

"More," Tanner called over the pounding roar of the surf.

She sucked him harder, twining her hands around his shaft. She squeezed as hard as she dared. It was only a matter of seconds before Tanner started fucking her mouth.

He held her head tight as he thrust his cock deep into her throat. She glanced up at him as he continued his thrusts. His head was thrown back in ecstasy.

"Do you want me to come in your mouth?"

Yes!

She desperately wanted to taste him.

But all that came out was "mmmmm."

His breathing was ragged and a sheen of sweat coated his body. He had apparently taken his shirt off at some point because when she looked up again she was treated to a perfect view of his sculpted chest.

"Yeah," he yelled.

His breathing became shallow. Harsh.

Before she knew it, his hot seed was shooting down her throat. And kept shooting.

He came for what seemed like forever.

Chloe eagerly sucked up each and every drop.

He stumbled backwards and she released his cock from her mouth. But it didn't go limp. No, it was still monstrously hard. She wanted it inside her.

After a few seconds of breathing heavily, he came back towards her, still kneeling. He bent down and picked up his tee shirt, spreading it out on the sand.

"All fours. On the shirt."

She didn't know whether she should be happy that he thought to give her a little bit of padding from the harsh sand or if she should hate him for the way he was treating her.

But she didn't hate him.

He needed this and she was the only one who could give it to him.

She was walking into this with her eyes open. Knowing that, she positioned herself on her hands and knees atop his shirt, throwing a coquettish glance back over her shoulder.

Or maybe she was *crawling* into this with her eyes open.

"Face forward. Close your eyes."

She did as he commanded. Whatever he wanted, she'd do it for him.

His hands roamed up and down her back. The feel of his fingernails scraping down her spine sent chills coursing through her body. He leaned over her, his cock nestled between the cheeks of her ass. As he expertly palmed her breasts, she felt the fire between her legs being stoked again.

"More," she begged.

But perhaps she should have stayed quiet because Tanner moved away.

Doing as she was told, she kept facing forward, her eyes closed. Though the next feeling nearly sent her skyrocketing straight back to Mount Olympus.

Tanner's warm breath hovered over her most private of places.

"What ... what are you doing?"

She couldn't tell him to stop. It felt absolutely divine.

"Are you a virgin here?"

She jumped slightly as his tongue caressed the tight fissure of flesh surrounding her rear passage. She tried to convince herself that if she pushed back into him it was only because he was so warm.

"Yes."

"May I have it?"

Why, after everything they'd already done, was he asking her this now? Like she'd be able to deny him anything.

"Yesss," she hissed as his tongue probed deeper into her nether hole.

"Good."

She felt him shift. He didn't mean right this second, did he? Though it felt indescribable, she didn't know if she was quite ready.

"I'm scared," she blurted, in spite of herself. She hadn't wanted to admit it because she was also afraid he'd take it personally.

His warm hands, still sticky from being inside of her, ran up and down the length of her spine again.

"Don't worry," he said. "I promise I'll be gentle."

* * * *

Tanner didn't think he'd promised quite so much in his life as he'd promised Chloe in the past two days. But he honestly had no intentions of blowing this one. He was going to make her feel good. Damn good. She was fucking incredible.

He didn't really think she'd get down on all fours when he commanded it, and when she did, even after spilling what felt like a gallon of cum down her throat, he was instantly hard again.

And now he was going to get to be the first to fuck her delectable little ass.

Well, what in the hell had he done to deserve this?

Absolutely nothing, that's what.

He felt bad about it for about a half a second. Until he thought about how tight he'd be buried up to his balls inside of Chloe.

Then he didn't feel anything at all but overwhelming lust.

His hand returned to her pussy.

She was still wet, even wetter than before. She must have really enjoyed sucking his cock. The thought made him painfully hard.

Slowly, he plunged his fingers inside her slit, drawing out her moisture to mix with the saliva he'd left there.

The moon was waxing but it was close to full and the juices on her ass glistened in the moonlight. It took everything in him not to plunge into her right then and there.

"Your ass is amazing in the moonlight."

"Please, may I open my eyes?"

Shit. She still had her eyes closed?

Rather than saying yes immediately, he hurriedly rose, picked her up and turned her around, making sure her hands and knees were still protected by his tee shirt.

"Go ahead and open."

She was greeted by a beautiful sight when she opened her eyes. The almost full moon sent rays of light glistening down on the ocean. A sailboat, its sails aloft, glided by in the distance.

"It's beautiful."

"So are you," he said. "Especially from where I'm sitting right now."

She laughed slightly, but quieted when he went back to the job at hand—lubricating her asshole enough so he could take her there with no pain.

As he began drawing circles with his thumb, he retrieved a condom from his pants pocket, then slid his

cock effortlessly into her pussy.

"Yes," they both moaned.

He eased one digit into her tight passage. She let out a little cry of pain, but he was impressed by the way she tried to hold it in.

"I'll go slow. I promise, it'll feel really good."

There it was. Another promise. And he didn't know if he was lying about this one or not. How in the hell was he supposed to know what it felt like to have a cock in his ass?

As he thrust in and out of her wet pussy, he inserted his finger further, stretching as he went.

"Feels ... interesting."

"Tell me if it hurts you."

He didn't think he had to worry about that. Chloe didn't seem to be the shrinking violet type. She spoke exactly what was on her mind.

"I want more."

Making sure a second finger was well lubricated, he eased it inside of her with the first one. He moved his fingers in a drilling motion. She pushed herself back against him, moaning as she did so.

She was ready.

Oh, was she ready.

He was plenty lubricated when he pulled out of her pussy. Positioning his glistening cock at her entrance, he didn't even have the opportunity of making the first move. She pushed back against him so that the head slipped in ever so slightly.

"Oh Gods, you're huge."

He laughed at his little minx.

"It'll fit. It'll fit just perfectly."

It was going to be so perfect that he'd have trouble not coming the second he buried himself inside of her.

He reached around her body to find the places he now knew she liked to be touched the most. He ran his fingers up and down the outside of her labia. Caressing. Massaging.

At the same time that he flicked his thumb lightly over her distended clit, he pushed himself the rest of the way inside her.

She screamed out. In pleasure.

"So good."

She bucked against him, but he held her still. If he started fucking her the way he wanted to, the way she seemed to want him to, they were both likely to end up hurt.

"Hold still," he insisted. He had to bite the inside of his lip not to cry out himself.

"I ... I can't."

"Chloe, honey, you have to."

The endearment slipped out. He hadn't meant it.

Hell, he hadn't meant half of the stuff that he'd said and done since the second he met her.

They both relaxed slightly. He worked his way down from the precipice on which he'd been teetering. Hopefully she'd acclimated herself to his size.

Ever so slowly, he started moving.

In and out. The tempo beat in his brain like a bass drum.

In and out. The sound of his balls slapping against her ass meshed with the pounding of the surf on the sand.

In and out.

"Touch yourself," he commanded. "Touch yourself and come for me."

She did. Almost as soon as her hands found her clit, he could tell that it would be mere seconds before her orgasm raced through her. Her innermost muscles squeezed his cock almost to the point of pain.

He couldn't hold back any more, and with one last thrust, one last yelp, he came in spurts inside of her.

Chapter 4

Once again Chloe awoke to a beautiful crystal blue day. Again, she was nude. Unlike yesterday morning, she didn't wake up with an unbearable sexual ache, but she had no recollection of going to bed last night.

She sat up in bed and stretched, the sheet falling to her waist in the process. Muscles that she didn't even know she had protested. And she had a rather pleasant pang in her bottom.

She moaned in happiness and stretched again.

"Good morning, sleepyhead. Or should I say afternoon."

She gasped and pulled the sheet up, re-covering her breasts. She was shocked to see Tanner standing in her doorway. He was clad only in the mouse boxers she'd bought him yesterday.

"You know very well that you don't have anything that I haven't seen before."

He walked over to the end of the bed, grasped the sheet and pulled, baring her from the waist down.

"Nice underwear," she said.

"Thanks."

Tanner was just about to climb into bed and probably bring them both to heights of unbearable pleasure, but they were interrupted by a pounding on the door downstairs.

"Expecting any other guests?" she asked.

"No, damn it."

The pounding continued.

"You should probably go get that."

Tanner let out a long string of curses.

"Chloe. Hey Chloe. Where are you?"

"Sounds like it's for you." Tanner's demeanor instantly changed. His face closed, showing no emotion. He got up from her bed. "You should probably go get it."

Chloe stood up and grabbed a silk robe that she'd bought the other day.

"That's just B. We were going to hang out again today. Do you want to come?"

She could practically see him shut down in front of her, almost as if there was a brick wall between them. Once again, Tanner was emotionally untouchable.

"No. That's okay. I wouldn't want to get in your way."

So that was it.

Tanner was *jealous*.

She couldn't help her broad smile, and had to struggle to hold in her laughter.

"He's just a friend. I promise. An old friend of the family."

"Clotho! Get down here and open the damn door!"

"Clotho?" Tanner repeated.

Damn Bacchus!

"It's my real name, but don't even think of calling me that. I prefer Chloe."

"That sounds familiar. Were you named after someone famous or something?"

She was older than recorded time. She most certainly *wasn't* named after anyone.

"No. I better go let B in." She got up, pulling on a silk robe, then dashed downstairs to avoid the rest of the conversation.

She flung the front door open to confront the suave man on the porch.

"What in Hades do you think you're doing using my real name?"

B slipped off his sunglasses and stuck them in the front pocket of his Polo shirt.

"Good afternoon to you, too, sweetheart."

He strolled past her, looking around the house.

"The place has gone downhill since I stayed here last."

The distaste in his voice was crystal clear.

Unfortunately Tanner came downstairs at that exact moment. And he was still wearing nothing more than the mouse underwear.

"Yeah, well, I'm managing as best as I can," Tanner said defensively.

"B, I hope you don't mind, but I invited Tanner to come with us today."

She knew very well that Bacchus wouldn't mind. To him, everybody was a friend and every day was a party.

"Sure, the more the merrier. Why don't you two just go and get dressed?"

Tanner turned on his heel, that cute tush with all of those mice disappearing down the hallway.

"You're really enjoying that view, aren't you?"

She was taken aback at being caught staring.

"Shut up, B," Chloe replied. She stuck her tongue out at him, then ran upstairs to prepare for whatever the day was going to bring.

* * * *

Tanner was surprised when he'd awakened in Chloe's bed this morning. And it was even more shocking to him that he woke up without a hangover.

Feeling good, and wanting to let Chloe sleep as long as possible, he got up, went downstairs to make some coffee and hopped into the shower.

A smile spread across his face when he came out of the bathroom and saw the mouse boxers. He didn't think he'd ever gotten a nicer present in his life.

How sad was *that*.

Not wanting to think about the negative aspects of his boxers, he slipped them on, determined to enjoy them. He wandered around the house for a little while before he decided that he didn't really want to be away from Chloe any longer.

Was it a stupid thing to do?

Maybe, but he found himself standing in her doorway when she woke up.

And now he was set to spend the day with Chloe and her friend B.

Tanner threw on a pair of cargo shorts and a tee shirt, then slipped on a pair of flip-flops. It was going to be an interesting day.

Aware that Chloe was probably going to take a while longer to get ready, he strolled back out into the parlor to learn a little bit more about this B character. First on his list was to make sure that he really was nothing more than a family friend.

Tanner entered the parlor to find B sitting back on the couch, his feet extended in front of him resting on the coffee table.

"So, what's the plan for today?"

Tanner plopped down on the couch across from B, perching his feet on the coffee table too, mirroring B's pose.

"Whatever Chloe wants."

And he didn't really know Chloe well enough to know what she'd want to do. Did this B guy?

"So, how is it that you know Chloe anyway?"

B smiled. It was a secret smile, which seemed to drive home the fact that he really didn't know that much about Chloe.

"It seems like we've known each other forever."

"Really?" With some effort, Tanner kept his temper in check. Why did it bother him so much that this guy knew so much about Chloe?

"Yeah. She and her sisters are practically like family."

She has sisters?

The fact that he didn't know anything about her family practically smacked him upside the head. Really, the only thing he knew about her was that she was an incredible fuck.

And when was the last time he cared to know anything else about a woman than that? Especially since

his mother had been killed.

B seemed oblivious to Tanner's internal struggles. He simply continued chattering on casually, though with every word, Tanner was increasingly compelled to know more about Chloe.

"The girls and my brothers and sisters and I used to get in a lot of trouble together."

B had a wistful smile on his face like he missed those times a great deal.

Before Tanner had a chance to reply—not that he had any idea what he was going to say—Chloe bounded down the stairs, ready to start the day.

"Hi guys."

Both men jumped up.

Tanner had to work hard to keep his tongue from hanging to the floor. Chloe was absolutely stunning.

Her long black hair hung loose down her back. She wore a pink strapless top, baring shoulders that he just wanted to lean down and bite, and a flowing white skirt that caressed her knees.

How easy would it be to pull the top down to bare her breasts and flip that skirt up so he could pound into her?

"Are you okay? You don't look so good."

She rushed to Tanner's side, feeling his head. He knew he was flushed, but that was only because he couldn't get his mind out of the gutter.

"I'm fine."

He was just in danger of dying from an extreme case of lust.

"Oh, okay. Well, what do you guys want to do today?"

She sent a smile Tanner's way that almost sent him to his knees.

"Whatever you want to do, sweetheart," B answered.

Tanner bristled at the familiarity in which he called her sweetheart.

"Oh. Well, I want to see a manatee. And maybe some alligators. And do you think there's any chance that we could see some real dolphins?"

Real dolphins? As opposed to fake ones?

"Sure," B promised her. "How about a trip to the zoo?"

"The zoo?"

Chloe looked like B had promised her the moon.

As for Tanner, he couldn't remember the last time he'd been to a zoo. Wasn't that something that families usually did?

"All right," he said, putting on a happy face for Chloe's benefit. "Let's go."

As soon as they got outside, B smacked his hand on his hip, at the same time sending Tanner a look that clearly said "you owe me."

"Oh, darn. I just remembered that I have something to do today. I guess you guys are going to have to go on without me."

Without giving Chloe any time to ask questions B hopped in his car and took off. Chloe stared after him, puzzled.

"That was weird. When I saw him yesterday he said he didn't have anything to do all week."

"Well," Tanner said, knowing full well that he owed B big time, "there's no reason that we can't go by ourselves."

"Yeah," she said distractedly, still staring off in the distance where B's car had turned a corner. "I guess."

"Hey?" He didn't speak again until she looked his way. "If you don't want to go with me, we don't have to go."

Hell, he knew he wasn't much fun to spend time with.

She turned to him and hugged him. He felt an unidentifiable tingling in his chest. It had been a really long time since he'd been confronted with such an unquestionable display of friendliness.

"Oh, Tanner. That's not it. It sounds like fun. I'm so excited."

She dashed across the parking lot to stand by the passenger side door of his old pickup. Suddenly he wished he had a flashy red sports car like B to take her to the zoo. But his beat up old truck would have to do.

He walked to her side and opened the door. Sure, he was being polite, but that door also stuck a little bit and he knew how to work it just right.

Yeah. Right.

"Aren't you excited?" she asked, hopping up into the cab.

He grinned at her and nodded his assent. Surprisingly, he was. If Chloe was this thrilled with the *prospect* of going to the zoo, then he couldn't wait to see her once she actually got there. He shut her door and walked around the front of the truck to get in, a new spring in his step.

* * * *

Tanner was really happy about spending the day at the zoo. She could tell.

It was pretty darn obvious that B had left her and Tanner alone on purpose. But she couldn't figure out why.

Sure, she liked Tanner. She liked him a lot. But on Saturday morning she was heading back to her palace on Mount Olympus. The next time she came to Earth it was possible that she might run into one of his great-great-great-grandchildren, but after Saturday she knew she would never see Tanner again.

It felt like a knife slicing through her heart when she thought about that.

"Are you all right?"

She hadn't realized that she'd made a sound.

Her hand rubbed the area over her heart. It was time to think about something else. Now.

"Yeah. I'm okay."

Tanner started the truck—it only took two tries—and within seconds they were on their way. She rolled down her window to enjoy the wind blowing through her hair.

Driving down the highway with both of their windows open meant that it was much too loud for them to carry on a conversation. Chloe was happy about that.

She didn't think she was quite ready to talk yet. She had to worry about getting her emotions under control.

This is what her sisters had warned her about.

This was why it wasn't good for a Fate to come to Earth. How had Bacchus been able to stand it for so long? Even Aphrodite and Cupid spent a fair amount of time here. How did they handle meeting people who would soon die?

People whose deaths *she* was responsible for, at that.

"We're there."

Chloe jumped.

"Are you sure you're all right?" Tanner asked, concern in his eyes.

"Yeah. I'm fine." She really had to get herself under control.

"Then let's go," he said.

He hopped out of the pickup and opened her door for her once again. Putting her hand in his, they strolled towards the zoo entrance.

Chloe could barely suppress her enthusiasm as they stood in line for tickets. While she wished she could jump up and down like the kids in line in front of her, she settled for shuffling from one foot to the other.

"You're really excited, aren't you? Don't they have zoos in Olympia?"

How in the heck was she supposed to know?

"Uh, no," she said.

On Mount Olympus they'd never put animals in cages. Sure, there were places that the animals had to stay, but it was more of an understanding the Gods and the animals had come to than a cage thing.

"What do you want to see first?" Tanner asked.

"How about the aquarium?"

He consulted the map and, grasping her hand once again, pulled her along.

The aquarium was a huge blue building set up on a hill. Directly outside the door was a large pool of water filled with large rocks and the most amazing creatures she'd ever seen. Some of them glided through the water while others lounged like large sausages on the rocks.

"What are they?" she asked, dashing over to stand next to the railing.

"You've never seen a seal before?"

She jumped when one of the larger creatures began barking like a dog.

"A seal," she sighed. "They're fun."

They frolicked around their enclosure, some swimming, some just resting. She particularly liked when they pulled themselves out of the water and waddled along the rocks.

"Here you go," Tanner said, handing her a white paper cone filled with dead fish.

"What is that?"

"Fish," he said. "For the seals."

As she looked around she noticed several children around the enclosure with similar paper cones, tossing their fish to the seals. Chloe picked one up by the tail and held it aloft.

"Look, they like me!"

Seals swam towards her, hovering around the tank under where she was standing.

"I hate to burst your bubble, sweetheart, but I think they're just hungry."

She stuck her tongue out at Tanner and tossed the fish. One of the seals leapt out of the water to catch it. The rest of the seals turned to her, barking.

"Do you want to feed one?" she asked Tanner.

He stood with his back to the seals, his hands crossed in front of him as he leaned against the wall.

"No. I'm enjoying watching you."

That was sweet. *Really* sweet.

And there went another one of those pangs in her heart again.

But she didn't have to worry about it because at that exact moment one of the seals below got impatient, slamming a flipper against the water, sending a wave directly towards Chloe.

"Hey," she said, water dripping from her nose.

"I told you," Tanner said using his tee shirt to wipe some of the water off her face. "They're hungry."

* * * *

The rest of the day went just as beautifully. She caught Tanner giving her one or two funny looks when she'd apparently made an odd remark about some of the animals, but he didn't rush her along, nor did he laugh at her.

He just continued to look at her with that same sweet, almost wistful, smile.

"What do you want to do now?" she asked as they approached Tanner's truck. She still felt as giddy as a schoolgirl.

"How about some dinner?"

After looking around to make sure there weren't any impressionable young children in the vicinity, she turned and launched herself into Tanner's arms. He stumbled backwards, bumping into his old pickup, but his arms came around her instantly.

She had no idea who moved first, but their mouths were suddenly fused together.

This was hardly the first kiss they'd shared, but this was by far the most potent. Their tongues tangled and their hands roamed, touching, feeling, possessing.

It was as if each was trying to memorize everything about the other.

After a long moment, Chloe pulled back. Tanner still looked slightly dazed.

"How about dinner back at the inn?" she asked.

A smile blossomed across Tanner's face.

"How about dinner *in bed* back at the inn," he suggested.

She ran her hand down his body, over his tee shirt, then over his cargo pants to cup the hardness in his pants.

"Do you think you can make it that far?"

"Honey," he pushed her away slightly and opened the car door, then leaned in and kissed her. "I've been thinking about what's under that sexy outfit of yours all day, so I'm going to drive really fast."

He ran around to the other side of the car and hopped in. Chloe instantly slid over next to him.

Much to her dismay, he pushed her back.

"Sorry, honey. My rules are you've gotta wear your seatbelt. He reached around her and buckled her in before moving back behind the steering wheel. "I don't like to tempt fate."

If only he knew just how tempting he was to Fate.

* * * *

God, he wanted her.

He wanted her even more than he wanted another drink. And considering he hadn't had any alcohol since yesterday evening, he figured that was saying a whole hell of a lot.

Chloe, in her simple exuberance, was able to make him forget things.

Forget about the fact that his mother had been brutally murdered. Forget about the fact that he'd inherited a bed and breakfast that he didn't like. She made him forget that his life was in the toilet.

For her, Tanner wanted to be a better man.

But it didn't matter, because she was going back to Washington in a matter of days.

Kind of ironic that the one woman who maybe made him think about changing his ways lived just about as far away as she could get while still being in the lower forty-eight.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked, startling him out of his reverie.

"What?"

"Well, you're frowning again. I thought I'd broken you of that habit today."

She had. But he didn't need her to know that.

"I was just thinking about what we should have for dinner. We're going to have to stop at the store."

"Oh." She didn't sound like she believed him, but she let the subject drop. Well, except for the food part. "Yesterday B took me to a place where they served the wings of chickens. I'd like some more of those."

"Chicken wings?"

He'd been thinking of trying to romance her. With lobster or steak and a nice wine.

But, for her, he could totally do chicken wings.

"With ice cream for dessert. The kind with both chocolate and caramel swirls."

Tanner needed no more persuasion. He pulled off the highway and drove towards the best place he could think of for chicken wings in south Florida. He maneuvered the truck into a stall in the parking lot, pleased to see an ice cream store right across the street.

"Do you want to eat here?" he asked, cutting the ignition.

Her face fell.

"I thought we were going to take it home to eat in bed."

God, he liked this girl. A lot.

"Say no more," he said. "Give me fifteen minutes and I'll be back with a feast."

"If I go to the ice cream store, can you make it ten?"

He leaned across the cab of the truck and kissed her hard.

"Absolutely," he said. "See you back here in ten."

Ten minutes later he was strolling out of the Chicken Shack with the promised feast.

He'd forgotten to ask what kind of sauce she liked, spicy or mild. He was guessing spicy, like him, but to be on the safe side he got a sampler. He also picked up a rack of baby back ribs, jalapeño poppers and enough onion rings to feed a small army.

Approaching the truck, he stopped short. "What is that?" he asked .

Chloe stood by the truck with no less than three large bags. She blushed.

"I thought I knew what kind of ice cream I wanted, but once I was confronted with all those choices, well, I just couldn't decide."

He opened her door, peering in the bags. "How many pints did you get?"

She nibbled on her lower lip and he had no idea how he managed to keep from jumping her right now in the middle of the parking lot.

"Twelve."

"Twelve?"

"Yes. And I got some kind of beer that the woman said made a very good drink. Root beer, I think? She said it was even better paired with ice cream."

Knowing he had a goofy smile on his face, but not minding, Tanner got in the truck and drove them home.

He'd been thinking wine and lobster. He was going to get chicken wings and root beer.

But at the same time, he couldn't find very much to complain about.

* * * *

When they got back to the Inn, rather than a naked bed picnic, good though that sounded, they decided on a picnic at the beach.

Tanner ran inside to put the ice cream in the freezer and grab a big blanket while Chloe got a head start toward the beach.

It would be another beautiful sunset.

It was still fairly early, so the sun still glowed above the horizon. The pink clouds against blue sky unexpectedly brought to mind a quilt that his mother used to have hanging in her bedroom.

A few die-hard sunbathers lingered here and there, and the cheers from a beach volleyball game a few hundred yards down the sand wafted over. This was his favorite time of day at the beach.

Chloe had picked a spot about halfway to the water. It was relatively flat and there weren't many people around.

"How about here?" she called.

"Perfect."

Together, they set out the food, divvied up plates and silverware and dug into their dinner. With Chloe sitting across from him, Tanner didn't think he'd ever tasted anything so good in his life.

As he'd thought, she did prefer the spicy wings, but she ate just as many of the mild ones too. She downed half of the rack of ribs and several onions' worth of onion rings. She was still munching away long after Tanner ate his fill.

"You're like a bottomless pit," he finally said, though there was no censure in his voice.

"Sorry," she said. "I know I'm making a pig of myself, but I don't really care. This is delicious."

"Well, just remember to save room for later," he warned.

"You mean for ice cream?"

He winked at her.

"Yeah. And other stuff."

Chapter 5

The promise of other stuff was enough to make Chloe stop eating. Even when the food was as good as it was.

"I'm finished," she said, tossing down her last chicken bone.

"Then let's go," Tanner said.

In silence they gathered up the remains of their picnic and headed back to the Inn. Luckily there wasn't much to put away since she'd eaten so much.

They could get on to bigger and better things.

And Tanner was nothing if not big and great.

"Do you want some ice cream now?" he asked.

Tanner walked over to her, crushing her between his hard body and the counter, thrusting his hips against hers suggestively.

He honestly thought she might want ice cream instead of that hard cock that was pressing into her?

She thought not.

She leaned back against him, wriggling her bottom against that amazing cock. The cock that continued to send her temperature skyrocketing.

"I'm going to take that as a no," he said.

At the same time she spun around in his arms, stood on her tiptoes and pressed her mouth to his.

His hands came around her instantly. Tight. Pulling her close.

His cock throbbed against her, pulsing. She shouldn't want him again as much as she did. They'd already had sex, made love, *done it* so many times. But she needed more.

Her panties moistened at the thought of what he might do to her tonight. And she knew that whatever her imagination could conjure would be nothing as magnificent as what Tanner would actually do with her.

"Why don't we go into your bedroom?"

Chloe clasped his hand in hers and led him from the kitchen, Tanner eagerly following.

She had to stifle a gasp when she opened his door. She may have been in there the first night, but she honestly hadn't noticed her surroundings.

"You live like this?"

Her heart practically broke for him when she looked around. Clothes were scattered over every surface, and empty alcohol bottles littered the floor. His bed was just covered by a green sheet. There were a few pillows on the floor and a balled up blanket near the foot of the bed.

"Maybe we should go to your room." Tanner tried to pull her back into the hall. "Or there are a lot of other rooms in the house that we could try. This *is* an inn, you know."

But she remained rooted to the spot.

She wanted to be close to Tanner and this was his room. *This* was where she wanted to be.

Working her hand out of his grasp, she grabbed the pillows from the floor, walked to the bed and crawled atop, making sure she was giving Tanner a show. When she reached the middle of the bed, she slowly pulled the pink top up and over her head.

"So sexy." Tanner's whisper was soft, but it carried on the air toward her.

Since he liked that so much, she sat up on her knees and wriggled her body out of her skirt. She pushed it down her long legs so she was able to kick it in his direction.

He caught it and held it against his chest.

Chloe was left clad in nothing more than a barely there baby pink thong.

She leaned back on the bed, propping herself up on the pillows she'd pulled from the floor.

"How about a bit of a strip show?"

She didn't think Tanner would really do as she asked. He didn't seem like the stripping type.

But much to her surprise, he lifted his eyebrow and tossed the skirt back her way. Now she was the one hugging it to her chest as Tanner moved to the center of the room, kicking stuff out of his way as he went.

Finally, he started swinging his hips ever so slightly. At the same time, he reached up and slowly removed his shirt. He tossed it her way.

She cast her skirt aside and held his shirt tight. She wanted to put it on, but figured that would defeat the purpose of getting naked. Instead, she buried her nose in it, inhaling the musky, salty smell that was so inherently Tanner.

She could almost hear the music in her head as Tanner stripped for her.

He turned his back to her, his hips continuing to slide back and forth to some unheard music. Ever so slowly, he lowered his pants.

Chloe laughed when she realized he was still wearing the underwear she'd given him.

He kicked his pants off and glared at her.

"Are you laughing at me?"

His voice was menacing but he couldn't completely hide the smile on his face.

"Nice underwear," she said.

He laughed.

But they both stopped laughing when Tanner climbed onto the bed, perched over her and crushed his mouth to hers. Her body was like a live wire and she didn't think it would take much at all to make her explode.

She was completely in lust.

Her arms eagerly came around Tanner, pulling him close so that their mostly naked bodies could slide against one another.

"You're so soft. I'm afraid I'm going to hurt you," he said, pulling away so he could look her in the eyes.

Tanner's words made her feel so good.

"I'm tougher than I look," she said as she pulled him down on top of her once again.

Reaching between them, she grasped at his engorged cock. She squeezed and he moaned.

"You keep that up and this is going to be finished a lot quicker than either of us want."

She wanted to tell him to speak for himself.

She desperately wanted him. And she wanted him now.

Instead, he slowly kissed his way down her body. He didn't stop when he reached the thin scrap of fabric covering her pussy.

His breath was warm, even through the fabric of her panties. His tongue licked along the path where her panties met her skin. He was so warm, she was practically on fire.

"I want you so much it's almost scary," Tanner said.

And his trembling proved it. Was he trembling in an attempt to hold back? To give her what he thought she wanted?

But really, what she wanted was whatever would make him happy.

Taking him by surprise, she pushed him backwards while simultaneously flipping herself around on top of him. They ended up in a perfect sixty-nine position.

Tanner's entire body rumbled with his laughter, but he quieted instantly when she lowered her head to devour his cock through his boxers.

She should have expected retaliation.

* * * *

Good Lord, the woman was in danger of making him come before she even touched him.

Well, two could play at that game.

Tanner snaked his fingers under the elastic of her tiny panties. Instantly, his fingers were wet and the scent of her arousal filled his nose.

He stuck out his tongue and delivered one long swipe to her slit. She jumped above him.

But then she got him back. She reached into the opening of his boxers, pulled out his erection and sucked him into the back of her throat as far as he could go.

She went to town on him, sucking and licking.

He helped her wriggle out of her panties and then returned the favor.

She was so responsive. Every time he did something she really liked, she responded by doing something absolutely amazing to his cock.

She had no problems deep throating him this time, much to his surprise.

The act became an erotic give and take.

She'd get him ever so close to coming before she backed off. Several times he licked her clit until she was writhing on his face. But right before she came, he'd slow down.

His face dripped with her juices and he reveled in it. He continued to lick. Continued to probe at her pussy, and drink her juices.

Both of their bodies were drenched with sweat. They could have been at it for hours and it wouldn't have surprised Tanner.

Wanting to put an end to the most delicious torment, Tanner wrapped his arms around Chloe, holding her pussy tight to his face.

He ate her like he was a starving man who'd never get to eat again, licking and sucking with wild abandon.

She shuddered on top of him, but he didn't give an inch.

When he walked his fingers around to play with her puckered hole, he knew it was only a matter of moments before she'd erupt.

But he was surprised that in all of the sexual torment he was inflicting on her, she never once stopped sucking him. In fact, she continued to suck even harder.

He too was about to erupt.

So he did the only thing he could think of. He pushed his finger hard into her.

They both exploded.

* * * *

Tanner had no idea how long he lay there, with Chloe collapsed, upside down, on top of him. Her pussy continued to weep in the aftereffects of her orgasm. His now deflated cock was still in Chloe's warm mouth.

But he needed more.

Not more sex. That could come later, after they'd showered, after they'd eaten ice cream.

He just wanted more. More time ... more of everything that had to do with Chloe

How in the hell could he possibly need more when he had the perfect woman's pussy, a pussy to which he'd just brought immense pleasure, staring him in the face?

He gently maneuvered Chloe off of him and spun himself around on the bed so they were both lying the same direction. He blindly reached for the blanket and wiped his face dry before pulling her into his

arms.

"Thank you," she mumbled.

"Thank *you*," he said in return.

He wanted to say so much more. *Thank you for bringing me out of this funk that I didn't know I was living in. Thank you for brightening my life. Thank you for being you.*

A slight snore interrupted his tumult.

Chloe was sound asleep.

* * * *

"What are you doing?"

Chloe had awakened to the sound of bottles softly clanking together. Before she opened her eyes she could smell the tang of cleaning chemicals. She opened her eyes, but the light was low. She could see the moon shining through a break in the curtains.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I woke you?"

She rubbed the sleep out of her eyes and then sat up. This wasn't the same room that she'd fallen asleep in.

The bottles all sat in a trashcan over by the door. All of the clothes were either hanging in the open closet or folded neatly on the chair.

Tanner bustled around the room, rearranging and throwing stuff away. He was completely naked.

"You just had the urge to do a little bit of naked midnight cleaning?"

He paused and looked at her.

She felt a little bit self-conscious when she remembered that she was naked, but so was he. And she figured he had a harder explanation than she did.

"Well, I did have something else in mind, but the beautiful woman I was with fell asleep on me."

Oh. She had, hadn't she?

But what was he complaining about? She knew for a fact that he'd had a pretty good time. She'd swallowed the proof of the fact.

Nevertheless, she could feel her temperature rising again. She still wanted Tanner.

"Then let's get started again."

"Are you sure you're ready?" he asked.

Oh boy, was she ready.

"Yes," she said, waiting for him to rush across the room and take her.

Instead, he turned and went out the door.

"What are you doing?" she called after him.

"What I wanted to do before. I'm getting some ice cream."

He sent a sly wink her way before he disappeared down the hallway.

"Tease," she called after him.

His masculine chuckle was the only reply she got.

She dug around through his stuff and found the tee shirt he'd been wearing earlier. Pulling it over her head, she went in search of Tanner and the ice cream.

If there was anything that even came halfway close to sex, it was ice cream.

She found him in the kitchen with all twelve pints of ice cream spread out around him. He was busy scooping from each of them into a giant bowl.

"Don't you think that's enough ice cream?"

"Nice shirt," was his only reply.

"This is enough ice cream to feed a small army, you know."

She walked over and stuck her finger in the chocolate fudge ripple before bringing it to his mouth to lick off.

He sucked much longer than necessary.

"Well, I've seen the way you eat," he said, "so maybe I should scoop some more."

She mock punched him in the stomach for that one. Even if it was true, you didn't go around making fun of the eating habits of a Fate.

Chloe worked behind Tanner, putting the ice cream away once he was finished scooping. In only a matter of moments he declared his masterpiece complete.

"Let's head up to your room this time," he said. "Mine smells a little ... bleachy."

"That's what you get for cleaning your room in the middle of the night," she said.

He leaned down and kissed her before picking up the huge ice cream bowl and two spoons.

"That's what you get when you fall asleep before dessert."

Well, if he was going to be dessert this time, there was no way she'd be falling asleep any time soon.

* * * *

Very little ice cream actually made it into their mouths. Tanner made quite sure of that.

Who needed a spoon when he could lick the ice cream off of Chloe's body? In fact, he found himself wondering who needed ice cream at all if he could just lick Chloe's body.

Once again, he wandered south, licking and biting every inch that he was able to get his mouth on. But

she stopped him before he reached his ultimate destination.

"No," she said, forcing him back up so that he was laid out on top of her, his cock poised at the juncture of her legs. "I don't want to risk not getting to do this again."

She arched her back and he easily slid inside of her.

"Good Lord," he moaned.

"Gods, this is amazing."

He moved in and out of her ever so slowly. God, he could do this forever. She was warm and tight and being inside of her made him feel better than he'd ever felt in his life. As if he could conquer anything that came his way as long as he got to make love with Chloe at the end of the day.

Much too soon, he felt that he was going to come inside of her.

"Yes, Tanner. Please," she murmured, as if reading his mind.

At the same time, he felt the little pulses of her orgasm begin to ripple through her. She tightened around him like a vise, in turn squeezing his orgasm from him.

"Oh, Chloe," he yelled as he spilled himself inside of her.

He pulled out ever so slowly, not wanting to be apart from her. It felt like he was leaving a piece of his soul behind when he moved off of her.

But that was silly. He didn't have a soul.

He curled up next to her spoon fashion, holding her tighter than he knew he should.

"I think my mom would have liked you."

He knew his words surprised her. Hell, they surprised him. She stilled, barely breathing until he spoke again.

"No," he amended. "I *know* my Mom would have liked you."

"Why?" she asked.

He shrugged.

"She liked..." he searched for a word that she wouldn't take offense at, "...eccentric people."

She didn't say anything. He guessed it was a good thing. At least she wasn't yelling at him for calling her eccentric.

She turned in his arms so that she was facing him. She brushed her long black hair out of her face.

"Tell me about yourself, Tanner."

Why would she want to hear anything about him? He certainly wasn't worth knowing. But looking down at the earnestness in her eyes, he really wanted to tell her something. He just couldn't find the words.

"Was it just you and your mother? Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

She'd thrown him a lifeline. Part of him was happy that he didn't have to come up with anything on his own. But he was also dismayed. He *should* have been able to tell her something about himself. He felt like he failed some kind of test.

"No brothers or sisters," he said. "Just my Mom and me. She'd come down to Florida for the summer when she was about twenty. She met some guy at a party. They apparently spent a wild few weeks together and then bam, nine months later I was born."

Tanner's mind filtered back to all of the stories his mother had told him over the years about his father, and the brief time she'd spent with him.

Your father was the most magical man I'd ever met, Tanner. He loved the ocean and that's why, even after he left, I could never leave the sea.

Her breasts brushed against his chest. It felt good, and he felt himself hardening, but he wasn't overwhelmed by lust. As a matter of fact, he was overwhelmed by another emotion and he was absolutely terrified that it just might be love.

He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close again. She snuggled into his embrace and he had to bite his lip to keep from blurting out something that couldn't be taken back.

"How did your mother die?"

That wasn't what he was expecting.

Although he supposed it shouldn't have surprised him that much. After all, it wasn't the first time she'd asked.

"She was murdered."

She gasped and while she buried her head in his chest once again, he was pretty sure he might have seen a tear.

"It must have been so horrible for you."

Her voice wasn't entirely steady, but judging from the way she wouldn't look at him, he thought it best not to question her.

"Yeah," was all he could manage.

He didn't entirely trust his voice either.

"Will you ... how did it happen?"

He didn't want to think about it, let alone speak the words out loud. But the fact was, he had to. He couldn't bear to tell Chloe that he didn't want to talk to her. And for some reason, if he was ever going to talk about his mother's death with anyone, it was Chloe.

"She was here alone one night. A man came looking for a room, a drifter. Even though he didn't have enough money to pay for a room, she let him stay. She was always nice to people that way."

Chloe didn't speak, but she wrapped her arms around him and held him close. He'd never be able to put into words just how much that meant to him.

"I don't know if he was crazy or if he thought Mom was hiding something from him, but he killed her. Slashed her throat from ear to ear."

"Who ... who found her?"

"I did."

She snuggled even closer to him like she knew what answer was coming.

He didn't realize it, but his tears had started falling, dripping and glistening in her hair.

"She'd been calling me and leaving me messages for the past few weeks. I'd been ignoring her calls, but I needed money so I happened to come home that weekend."

Now that the words were pouring out of him, he couldn't make them stop.

"I walked in and couldn't find her. I searched the place. The last place I looked was her bedroom. God, it was a bloodbath in there."

He shivered at the memory of the gruesome scene. He was going to speak again, but Chloe silenced him with a kiss.

"It wasn't your fault," she said, pulling back.

He chuckled though there was no humor in the sound.

"Do you know how many times I've heard that? How many times people have said that to me?"

He was on a roll now, getting angry at the memory, at the people who showed him nothing but pity after his mother's death.

"It was fate, people say. Well, you know what I say? Fuck fate. If fate kills a gentle, kind woman and lets her killer go free, well then, I have no use for it."

It was as if Chloe went boneless in his arms. He hoped he didn't scare her with his outburst, but then, once again she touched her mouth to his.

Their tears intermingled for a moment until both of them forgot everything but the way they felt when their bodies were joined.

* * * *

The next thing she knew a loud blaring noise was shocking her awake.

"What the hell kind of alarm clock is that?" Tanner mumbled.

No. It couldn't be.

She jumped up from the bed trying desperately to locate her cell phone before her sisters got through.

But it was too late. The second that she got her hands on the phone, the image of her sisters appeared on the wall.

This couldn't be happening.

"Well, well," Atty's voice echoed through the room. "What are we interrupting here?"

Perfectly aware that she was sprawled on the floor naked, she grabbed for a covering, yanking the blanket off the bed. Only after she did so did she realize that she'd pulled the blanket off a still drowsy Tanner.

This just kept getting worse. Unfortunately, having all of his bits hanging out served to wake him up.

He jumped up, yelling, "What the..." but he was speechless when he saw the image of her two sisters on the wall.

"What kind of party did we interrupt?"

There was laughter in Lacy's voice when she spoke.

Tanner reached down and grabbed for the blanket once again. But Chloe wasn't about to let go. A scuffle ensued and Tanner landed on the floor next to Chloe.

Scrunched as it was, the blanket didn't really cover either of them.

"We're sorry to bother you, Clotho."

Damn it. It was always bad when Atty used her real name.

"Clotho? Who the hell are they?" Tanner glared at Chloe before turning on her sisters. "Who the hell are you? And damn it, give me a blanket."

Apparently Tanner wasn't much of a morning person. At least not this morning he wasn't.

Oh, this was going to be so bad.

Chloe released her end of the blanket and jumped up to gather her robe. She slid into it and tied the sash at the same time Tanner wrapped the blanket low around his hips.

"Now what the hell is going on here?" he demanded.

Chloe spoke up before her sisters could say anything.

"Tanner, these are my sisters, Lacy and Atty."

Lacy waved, obviously keen on checking out her sister's new boyfriend, but Atty, not to be deterred, criticized like always.

"What in Hades did you do, Clotho? You didn't actually sleep with a mortal, did you? Of all the hare-brained things you've done in your life..."

Tanner finally lurched out of his stupor.

"Mortals"? Chloe, what in the hell is she talking about? And how in the hell is she appearing on the wall? Just what kind of cell phone do you have, anyway?"

"Uh, well. It's not exactly a cell phone," she started, but Atty took over.

"His stupid mortal brain will never be able to wrap around it, Chloe. Don't waste your time."

"Now damn it, Atropos, I've been listening to you criticize me for ten thousand millennia. I've learned to take it, but you can leave Tanner out of it!"

"Millennia?" Tanner repeated.

He scratched his head and ran his hands up and down over his face, obviously trying to make sense of what was going on.

"Clotho?"

She looked his way. Her heart sank as she saw the dawning in his eyes. "Atropos?"

"Tanner," she started, but he silenced her simply by holding his hand up.

"As in the Fates?"

"Well—yeah."

This was *really* bad. Her mind flashed back to last night when she was lying safe in his arms.

Fuck fate.

Yeah, well, little did he know, he had. Several times.

If Chloe had been watching this on television, or in a movie, she probably would have laughed. But it wasn't so funny when it was happening to her.

Tanner's face turned red. Really red. In fact, it was quickly proceeding to purple.

"So you're not Chloe from Olympia, Washington." His voice was painfully calm.

"No," she said quietly. "Not exactly."

"You're Clotho, the murderer who lives up in the clouds somewhere."

Ouch. That hurt.

That hurt a lot.

She couldn't help the tears that started falling.

"Tanner, it wasn't like that..."

"How could you?"

His words were like venom piercing her heart.

"It wasn't like I knew your mother..."

"So you're no better than the sick fuck that used the knife."

She desperately wanted to make him see. Desperately wanted him to know that if she could go back in time and help his mother survive she would do it in a heartbeat.

But she couldn't.

Even if she could have saved Anna Danner from the knife-wielding lunatic that killed her, the woman wouldn't have lived much longer.

Fate was Fate.

Chloe knew that better than anyone.

"Tanner, I'm so sorry."

"Get the fuck out!"

It was the first time he'd raised his voice. Chloe jumped.

"Tanner, I love you."

He was already out of the room. She collapsed on the bed in tears.

What had she done?

Chapter 6

His girlfriend murdered his mother.

There was no escaping that fact.

Tanner dashed down to his room. He heard what Chloe had said, but he wasn't about to believe it for a second.

Hell, he wanted to rip his own heart out now for thinking the same thing last night.

Once downstairs, he went straight for the kitchen. He'd seen something in the back of the freezer last night while scooping ice cream.

Damn ice cream.

He flung the ice cream out of the freezer. He didn't give a damn if it melted and made a sticky, sodden mess. The only thing he cared about at the moment was the solace he was going to find in the bottom of a three quarter full bottle of vodka.

"There it is."

There was more in the bottle than he thought.

He wrenched it open and took a hearty swig. The burn sliding down his throat was a welcome accompaniment to the emotional pain coursing through his body and psyche.

Taking the bottle with him, he ran into his room.

He was momentarily shocked at how clean it was. But that didn't last long. He walked to the pile of neatly folded laundry.

With a yell, he flung it all to the floor. Once it was down, he kicked it. Then he picked up the trash can and tossed it across the room. Broken bottles rained down on the floor. Shattered. Just like he felt.

Then, grabbing the first pair of pants and shirt he found, he threw them on and stomped out of the house. The slamming door nearly brought him to his knees.

But it didn't.

He'd be all right. Just him and his bottle of vodka.

Stalking to his truck, he got in and raced away from the inn.

* * * *

Upstairs, Chloe was aware of everything that was happening.

"Please watch over him for me," she asked her sisters. "Make sure he doesn't hurt anyone."

Including himself, she mentally added.

"Chloe, you..."

She didn't let her sister finish. She picked up the phone and clicked it off.

She could imagine how mad Atty was at the moment, but she counted on Lacy to calm her down. She'd be home soon, after all.

While all she wanted to do was sit down on the bed, curl into a little ball and cry for the next few hundred years, she made herself walk into the bathroom and take a shower. She got dressed and packed up her clothes and all her things so that they were ready to go back to Mount Olympus.

Funny, it no longer felt like home.

What was that saying? Home is where your heart is. She supposed she didn't have a home any more, then.

Making a quick call to Bacchus, she had one more thing to do. She went downstairs and down the hallway towards Tanner's room. As she passed she saw that once again it was messy, only this time broken bottles lined the floor.

She closed her eyes, waved her hand, and within seconds it was clean again. She knew he wouldn't appreciate it, but she couldn't leave all the glass on the floor.

One room down...

She walked to the door of Anna's room. Her hand hesitated on the doorknob. Tanner was going to be furious for what she was about to do, but she knew she couldn't leave it for him.

It was time for him to get on with his life.

The stench of death wafted towards her as soon as she opened the door. It would have been undetectable to a human, but she could sense it. It made her dizzy.

There were still bloodstains around the room. Other surfaces were still coated with the dust the police used to look for fingerprints.

A wave of her hand and everything changed.

The white curtains billowed into the room even there was no breeze. The soft blue walls looked freshly painted. White pillows were mounded on the bed. It was the picture of femininity. It was the picture of Anna Danner.

One more wave of her hand and a vase of lilies appeared on the bureau. Her senses had been dulled since she'd come to Earth, but she knew for certain that lilies were Anna's favorite flower.

As she was leaving the room, there was a knock on the outside door.

"Come in," she called.

Bacchus's perfectly dyed, perfectly coiffed head peeked around the door. She knew it was going to be B, but her heart sank when Tanner's messy sandy hair didn't appear.

She broke down sobbing.

Bacchus rushed to her side. He held her close and rubbed her back for what felt like hours. Finally, she managed to pull herself together.

"Are you all right?"

He pulled out his handkerchief and blotted her eyes.

She didn't even bother with an answer.

She wasn't all right, and she didn't think she ever would be again.

* * * *

Tanner had lost all track of time.

He'd driven until his truck ran out of gas. Then he got out and started walking. Luckily, he'd found a liquor store and replenished his alcohol supply.

With every movement, he cursed Chloe. How could she have done that to him? She knew that she was responsible for his mother's death.

How could she look him in the eye?

How could she make love with him?

How could she make him fall in love with her?

He walked, or stumbled, along the beach for an eternity before passing out on the sand. Then he didn't have to feel anything else.

* * * *

The next thing he knew he was on a hard metal slab.

"What the..."

"Well," said a masculine voice he was sure he'd never heard before. "Waking up now, are we?"

Funny, Tanner didn't think "we" were doing anything. But he sure as hell knew his head was pounding.

He squinted open his eyes. Harsh fluorescent lights glared down at him. He was in a small grey room. He sat up and noticed the bars on one wall.

Tanner was in jail.

"Oh God," he said. "What did I do?"

The policeman stood by the bars, a steaming mug of coffee in his hand.

"Nothing, but not for lack of trying. We found you passed out on the beach."

The entirety of everything that had happened that morning came rushing back to him. Chloe was a Fate. She was the one responsible for killing his mother.

She was probably back wherever it was that Fates lived.

"We can send you home when you're feeling a bit better."

Feeling better?

Hell, he didn't think he'd ever feel better again in his life.

He didn't know what upset him more.

The policeman went away and came back a few moments later. He unlocked the cell and let Tanner out.

"I called you a cab. I highly suggest you watch your alcohol level from now on."

Sure. He'd watch it. He'd just drink at home from now on.

* * * *

Only a half hour later the taxi pulled up at the inn.

He got out of the taxi and stood in front of the house. God, he was growing to hate this place.

The door slowly opened and he felt his heart in his throat. He almost threw up when B came out the door.

"What in the hell are you doing here?"

Tanner climbed the stairs and went inside. But once there, he felt too cooped up to stay. He turned and went back outside.

B followed him.

"Chloe asked me to stay and make sure you got home all right."

"Well, I'm here. You can go now."

Tanner walked to the edge of the beach, toed off his shoes and took off towards the water.

Much to his dismay, B continued to follow him.

"What the fuck do you want?" he railed at B.

B just stood there, staring at the water, not speaking.

"Wait a minute. What does B stand for?"

He waited for the answer that he really didn't want.

"Bacchus."

Tanner's knees gave out and he stumbled to the ground.

"No."

"Sorry, buddy, but it's true."

"Then make yourself useful. I need more vodka."

* * * *

Chloe stood at the window of the palace looking out over the beautiful fields, the majestic clouds, and dragons flying in the distance. It'd always been so beautiful to her, but now, she had trouble finding the beauty in anything.

"I brought you some tea."

Lacy put the cup down on the table and approached her sister. The aroma from the herbs in the tea filled the room. It was Lacy's own special comfort blend. Too bad Chloe didn't think anything could ever comfort her again.

"Thanks."

"You're not going to drink it, are you?"

Chloe shook her head.

"I don't have much of an appetite."

"Is there anything I can do?"

No. There was nothing anyone could do. She was an idiot. She did the exact thing that Atty had told her not to do. She'd gotten attached to a human.

More than that, she'd fallen in love with him.

"Could you ... could you check in with Bacchus? You know, just to make sure Tanner is okay?"

"Are you sure that's a good idea? I mean, I'll do it for you, Chloe, but are you sure a clean break isn't better?"

Lacy was right.

She knew she was.

But at the same time, Chloe couldn't go on without knowing that Tanner was all right.

"Please," she begged her sister. "Just make sure that Bacchus keeps an eye on him for me."

Lacy came close and hugged Chloe tight.

She didn't say anything, which Chloe appreciated more than anything. She had to work hard to keep the tears at bay.

With a last squeeze, Lacy released her and turned to leave, but stopped when she reached the door.

"I almost forgot. Zeus wants to see you."

Zeus? Oh crap. What had she done now?

"Thanks, Lacy."

* * * *

Thirty minutes later she was standing in the enormous foyer of the biggest palace on Mount Olympus. The walls were bejeweled with gems of every color of the rainbow. Until today, the palace had never failed to bring a smile to her face.

"Clotho, come into the library please."

Her father's booming voice did manage to make her smile. Even though he did use her given name,

which she hated.

"Hey," she said by way of a greeting. "How's it going?"

"I'm not amused, Clotho."

He never was.

He came out from behind his desk. It was always a shock to see how large he was. He must have been at least seven feet tall, and broad as two average men. He had thick white hair with a matching beard and mustache. He came over and enveloped her in a big bear hug.

"How are you doing, Chloe?"

It was only when they were behind closed doors together that he turned fatherly.

"I'm okay."

He stepped back and sat down behind his large desk once again.

"Do you want to tell me what happened on Earth?"

"Not really."

"Clotho," he warned.

"Dad, Zeus, I just ... I don't want to talk about it."

"Is there anything you need me to do? You know, do you need me to take care of anything?"

Zeus's "taking care" of matters was a lot like the Mafia "taking care" of people. It was better when he just stayed out of things.

"No. Please don't do any *taking care* of things."

"Okay." He smiled slightly, though it didn't reach his eyes. "I have some news about your friend, Tanner."

"Oh, Gods. Is he hurt?"

She collapsed into the nearest chair.

Her father shrugged.

"Not exactly. He ... he's dead."

Chloe felt dizzy. She sat backwards, otherwise she was sure she would have collapsed.

"What?"

He couldn't be dead. She'd been aware of all the deaths since she'd been back. Bacchus was supposed to be looking out for him. He couldn't be dead. He just couldn't.

"But ... but I didn't have anything to do with it."

If she didn't have anything to do with it, if he bested Fate, well then, he was probably doomed to spend

eternity in Hades. No, she couldn't bear that.

People tried, but nobody could best Fate. And those that tried were punished. Severely.

"Actually, it seems that you did."

Oh my God. Tanner was dead. Was he going to have to spend the rest of eternity in Hades?

No!

"What? No, I couldn't have done it! How did he die?"

"I died of a broken heart."

Chloe whirled around so fast she really did fall out of her chair.

Tanner couldn't help but laugh. Hell, his mood was so light he wondered how his feet were staying on the ground.

"Tanner?" She looked disbelievingly from him to her father.

* * * *

Zeus. His girlfriend's father was Zeus. How incredible was that?

She picked herself up off the floor and walked towards him like he might disappear at any moment. He did the same thing, barely able to believe that this was real.

A couple of days ago he was drunk and in jail. Now he had just been told that he was immortal and he would get to spend eternity with the woman he loved.

"What are you doing here?"

She touched his face. Her fingers were the softest things he'd ever felt in his life, or death, or whatever. She was softness itself.

Unable to answer, he crushed his mouth to hers. She was so warm in his arms.

"Excuse me, kids." The booming voice startled Tanner, but he wasn't about to let go of Chloe now that he had her again.

Zeus ushered the two out the door. Chloe kept close to Tanner as they left the palace. Once outside, Chloe waved her hands and in a matter of moments they were standing before another palace.

"How'd you do that?"

"Secret of the Fates," she replied.

He laughed.

When they walked inside, two beautiful women rushed towards them.

"Chloe, what did you do?" the brunette asked. Her tone was stern, but at the same time she was wringing her hands in worry.

"I didn't do anything," she said. "Zeus had a little surprise for me."

He liked to think of himself as a bit more than a “little surprise.” After all, technically, he had died for her.

The sweet-looking blonde rushed towards him, hugging him.

"You must be Tanner. It's nice to meet you," she said. "I'm Lacy."

These were Chloe's sisters.

The three Fates.

"I don't mean to question or anything, but I thought the Fates were supposed to be old and haggard."

Chloe punched him in the stomach.

"Well, we're not."

"I can see that," he said.

God, she was beautiful.

"Is there someone we can be alone?" he asked.

They hadn't been apart that long, but already he wanted her. Needed to be inside of her.

Apparently she felt the same way because she eagerly led him upstairs to her bedroom.

Once there, she did that hand waving thing again and instantly they were naked. Well, he still had his mouse underwear on.

But he made quick work of those.

Then, they were on the bed, kissing, licking, nipping. He easily slipped inside of her.

"Oh Gods," she moaned.

"I'm home now," he said.

The kissing never stopped as they moved against one another. Within moments they were both panting.

"Come for me, Chloe."

"Yes, Tanner," she cried as the first pulses of her orgasm crashed over her.

He thrust into her, but soon, he couldn't last any longer. He followed her over the peak.

"I love you, Chloe," he said as he collapsed on top of her.

* * * *

Tanner loved her!

She desperately loved him, too. But she couldn't say anything. Not until she knew what he was doing here. Did he belong here or was she going to have to break both of their hearts and send him back to Earth?

"What are you doing here?"

"Yeah," he said. "Well, that's an interesting story."

He flipped her over and pulled her close to spoon her, his warm breath feathering her ear as he spoke.

"After you left, I spent some time with Bacchus. We, uh, did some drinking together and it turns out that we discovered that we had some mutual family."

"Mutual family?"

"Well, you know I never knew my father."

"And..."

"Well, believe it or not, it seems as if my father was Poseidon."

"What?"

Chloe was beyond surprised.

"I can tell you that I was more than a bit shocked. Your father, Zeus, said he'd introduce me."

Tanner was immortal? Just like her? So, he didn't actually die! He'd just moved up to his rightful place on Mount Olympus.

"You mean ... you mean we can be together?"

"If you want me," he said, as a smile spread across his beautiful face.

"Well, I guess I could deal," she said the moment before she launched herself back at him.

"You know, there's something to be said for tempting fate," Tanner said just before lowering his mouth to hers in a kiss that spoke volumes about the love they shared, and would continue to share for all eternity.

The End

About the Author:

While she'd like to confess to settling before her computer to write every day in silk and lace while half-naked boy-toys bring her champagne and truffles, the truth is she writes in her jammies and has to get her own Diet Coke.

Like many writers, Emma was bitten by the writing bug early in life. To date, her most memorable work has been *The Blue Bowl Bunch* which she both wrote and illustrated in sixth grade. It was a story about a bunch of grapes (yes, the fruit) that formed a club. It was mostly a series of puns and one-liners that unfortunately started a life-long love of puns.

Emma lives in Maryland with her physicist husband, though they haven't quite yet managed to work the travel bugs out of their systems.

You can keep up with Emma and all of her books at www.emmasinclair.com.

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