

# *Candy Man*

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133 Lake Front Dr. #204  
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ISBN-13 978-1-934329-29-0 ISBN-10 1-934329-29-0

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*Candy Man*

*By*

*Sage Burnett*



*To Falling in Love...*

## CHAPTER ONE

"Come on, buddy, you owe me." Dean Hylton loosened his tie before he leaned forward, placing his hands palms down on Scott's desk.

Tapping a red pencil on the stack of papers in front of him, Scott Barnes kept his expression neutral. The dozen red roses arranged in a large crystal vase and gigantic box of valentine candy limited his view of Dean. "I'm not a liar."

Dean straightened up. "It's just a little, white lie. I'll call Annie tomorrow."

"If it's just a little white lie as you put it, why don't you do it yourself?" Now that he had a good view of Dean, he scowled at him.

Dean ignored his scowl, a wolfish grin spreading across his handsome face. "I'm going to be tied up until tomorrow morning. At least I hope I'm tied up." Lust gleamed in his blue eyes.

Scott felt his scowl deepen. Dean wanted him to lie to his girlfriend because he probably had another date for Valentine's night. He'd heard about Annie but never met her. "What's wrong with spending the night with Annie?"

"I've decided she's too straight laced for me." Dean reached over the bouquet of red roses, snatching the pencil out of Scott's hand. After he scribbled an address on a post-it note, he tore it off and stuck it to the back of Scott's hand. "Deliver the flowers and candy and tell Annie an unexpected business meeting came up. Nothing I could do about it."

Peeling the yellow post-it note off his hand, he swore under his breath, not

bothering to look at the address. "Hey, I'm not a damn delivery guy."

"It's on your way home. You probably only live a mile or so from Annie."

"Maybe I got a hot date tonight."

"Yeah, right buddy. You haven't gotten laid since Samantha left you for that pro rodeo wrestler."

"Steer wrestler." A big, beefy guy that wrestled cows to the dirt. Yeah, he remembered Samantha's reasons for leaving him. She had wanted a mega-macho man. His already bad mood souring, he crunched the post-it note inside his palm.

"Don't lose that address. You have to get these to Annie for me."

"Dean, oh Dean, are you there?" A husky female voice purred.

Dean and the flowers again blocked his view. Big surprise, Dean had another woman dangling from a hook. A tall blonde sashayed over to Dean and tucked her arm around his. *Damn*. The blonde had to be a walking advertisement for silicone implants. Under an ankle length shiny red coat and a skintight black mini dress, her breasts drew his attention like twin magnets.

Scott quickly looked away and caught Dean's eye. His friend's eyes were literally swimming with blatant lust.

"Aren't you going to introduce me to your friend?" The blonde asked, batting her eyelashes at Scott.

"Scott Barnes, meet Kitten Malone."

*Kitten*. Now why wasn't he surprised? Scott stood and held out his hand to Kitten Malone. For a moment, he was tempted to jerk his hand back when he noticed the length of her ruby colored fingernails. He shook her hand, hoping he didn't get scratched which was probably exactly what Dean had in mind. "Nice to meet you."

"Oh...what beautiful flowers and look at that box of chocolates." Kitten looked at him. "There's a lucky lady in your life tonight."

Scott cleared his throat, tightening his grip on the post-it note.

"Come on, babe, let's get going." Dean wrapped his arm around Kitten's shoulders, turning her around.

"Nice meeting you," Kitten said before Dean ushered her of Scott's office.

Plopping down in his chair, he tugged his tie loose, fighting back the urge to kick the roses off his desk, clear across the hall into Dean's office. Irritation needling him, he stood back up and rolled his shoulders a couple of times to work out the kinks. It had already been a long day and now he had to play delivery boy to a woman waiting for her date to show up.

He hoped like hell this Annie woman didn't bash the crystal vase holding the roses over his head or throw the obscene box of chocolates at him.

"Dammit anyway."

\* \* \* \*

A half hour later, Scott cruised to a stop in front of a small, quaint looking house painted white with dark green shutters. Turning on the interior light of his car, he read the address again before glancing back at the house. The porch light was on which made it easy for him to read the numbers. Yup, X marked the spot.

After he climbed of his car, he angled around the front to get the vase of flowers and candy from the passenger side. The box felt like it weighed a good twenty pounds as he tucked it under his arm. Barely able to see over the tall roses, he nearly stumbled on the curb.

"Shit." *Get it over with and get the hell out of here.* He wasn't in the mood for a pissed off woman.

Standing at the front door, he fumbled for the bell. After he rang the bell, the door flew open seconds later.

Jaw dropping, the vase threatening to slip from his hands, he stared at the woman across the threshold.

## CHAPTER TWO

The most beguiling violet colored eyes he'd ever seen, widened in shock. Her eyes reminded him of his grandmother's lilac trees blooming in the spring. Add a silky black robe that matched her shoulder length glossy black hair. *Hot damn.* The woman was a knockout. The robe was open showing her lacy black bra with two tiny red hearts covering each of her nipples. Scott managed not to salivate as his gaze lowered to the matching lace black bikini panties with a larger red heart directly over her pubic mound. Tightening his hold on the vase, he knew if he didn't get a grip on his libido he would drop the damn thing.

One eyebrow lifted when she noticed him staring at her lingerie. She quickly grabbed the sash and closed her robe. "Who are you?"

For a split second, he couldn't remember his own name. "Um...um...Scott, Scott Barnes."

Eyes narrowing, she stared at him. "Are those flowers and candy for me?"

"A...yeah." Normally he was an articulate guy but this woman literally left him speechless. Dean had said she was too straight laced for him. Was his friend blind?

"Hold on, I'll get some money for you."

Damn, she thought he was a frigging delivery guy. "Are you Annie Chandler?"

Pausing mid stride, she glanced over her shoulder at him. "Yes."

"I'm not a delivery guy. I mean that's not my job."

When she spun around, the robe billowed around her giving him a quick peek at



the bikini panties again. Feeling his cock swelling, he lowered the vase to hide his reaction from her. The box of candy started to slide from his arm but he caught it just in time.

"I don't think I like this," she said. "You're not a delivery man, but you know my name."

"I work with Dean Hylton."

Crossing her arms over her chest, she said. "Go on."

"He asked me to drop off the flowers and candy for you."

Tiny sparks of annoyance glowed in her eyes. "Why couldn't he do it himself?"

How could he look into those violet eyes and lie to her? He glanced away for a second. When he looked back at her, her eyes were now swimming with annoyance. "He asked me to tell you something came up."

Throwing her arms up in the air, she started pacing. "Just great. Oh, this is just great. Stood up on Valentine's Day."

She stomped over to him and snatched the vase out of his hands. He didn't know whether he should duck for cover or run. Glaring at him, Annie circled around and stomped out of the small living room toward the kitchen.

Several moments later, he heard a loud thud.

The candy box still stuffed under his arm, Scott waited. For what, he wasn't sure. She stormed back over to him, this time grabbing the box from under his arm.

Fascinated, he watched her rip off the big red, gaudy bow, and toss it over her shoulder. The clear plastic wrap came off in seconds, which she also threw down to the floor at her feet, followed by the box lid sailing off toward the kitchen.

Annie plucked a dark chocolate candy out of the box and stuffed it in her mouth. Those kissable lips of hers moved at an extremely rapid, sexy pace.

After she swallowed, she grabbed another piece of candy out of the box and pointed the light colored chocolate at him. "Do you know how much trouble I went to tonight?"

Scott shook his head, hoping she'd eat the candy so he could savor those lips in

action again.

"I ordered dinner from a fancy caterer," she paused while she took a bite. "Well...because...I'm not that good of a cook. I bought that rat's favorite brandy, which, by the way, wasn't cheap."

"I like brandy."

Annie waved her hand in the direction of the kitchen. "Knock yourself out."

Scott figured that was as close to an invitation as he would get, so he stepped inside closing the door behind him. "Would you like a glass?"

Annie didn't seem to hear him because she was pawing through the candy box in search of another treasure.

She pulled out what looked like a dark covered crème, held it in front of her and studied it. "I don't drink."

"You're sure you don't mind if I have some?"

"Like I said, knock yourself out."

When he brushed past her, he caught the subtle hint of lilac. The scent matched her eyes. He fought back the urge to adjust his trousers because now he was as hard as a rock. Hopefully, a little brandy would tamp down his hormones.

He walked into the kitchen, smelling dinner warming in the oven. Two red candles in gold plated holders sat in the middle of the kitchen table. A bottle of expensive brandy and two brandy snifters were placed near the candles.

As he opened the liquor bottle, he noticed the red roses stuffed into a plastic trashcan near the fridge. At least she hadn't bonked him over the head with the vase.

"Did you meet his date for the night?"

Holding the brandy bottle, he wheeled around. Annie leaned against the doorframe, another piece of candy hovering near her lips. Damn, now her eyes shot sparks of anger right at him. Scott lifted a shoulder at the same time as he poured a few shots into one of the glasses.

"You did, didn't you?" She took a bite of the candy.

"Maybe you shouldn't eat so much candy." As much as he enjoyed watching those

lips of her, it might not be such a great idea to stuff so much candy into her. "You might get sick."

"A woman can never eat too much chocolate. It's a hell of a lot more reliable than a man. Of course, it is fattening, but tonight I don't care if I put on five pounds. So take that to the bank and deposit it."

Annie was already padded in all the right places with shapely hips and high breasts. Her breasts didn't come close to the blonde's silicone implanted ones in size. They were just right. Clearing his throat, he took a drink of brandy.

"What was his excuse?"

Scott drank more brandy. Why he had ever let himself get talked into delivering the candy and flowers?

Before he could answer, she waved a half-eaten candy in front of her. "Never mind. I'm sure his excuse is as transparent as Saran Wrap." She paused a moment, studying him. "You're not much of a talker, are you?"

Again, before Scott could answer, she hurried on. "Dean liked to talk about himself." She rolled her eyes. "All the time."

Annie sashayed over to the table, dropping the box of candy on it. "I don't know what I ever saw in that no good scumbag." She shook her head, her black hair caressing her cheeks. "Was she blonde? I just bet she was blonde." She planted a hand on her hip. "Well, was she blonde?"

"Yeah."

"Natural or artificial?"

Scott pondered her question. The blonde's breasts had pretty much taken center stage. "Not natural. No, I don't think so."

"That helps. A little..."

Why couldn't she cry instead of cramming candy past those luscious lips? At least then, he could offer her a shoulder to cry on. Scott scratched the back of his neck, wondering how to get that box of candy away from her. At the rate she was eating them, she might damn well O.D. "Your dinner smells good. Why don't you eat that

instead of the candy?"

Ready to reach for another piece, she gave him a look of suspicion. "What have you got against chocolate?"

"Nothing. I love chocolate as much the next person, but you know the old saying...too much of a good thing."

She picked another piece of candy from the box, glaring at it, before tossing it back. "Comfort food. It's comfort food. I knew this relationship was doomed from the beginning."

"Why did you go out with Dean in the first place?"

With a dramatic sigh, Annie sank down onto the nearest chair, exposing a bare thigh when her robe fell open. "Who knows? I guess because he made me feel sexy."

Scott wondered why she needed reinforcement about her sex appeal because he found her to be the sexiest woman he'd met in a hell of a long time. "Forget him. He's not worth it."

"Is he your friend?"

"Yeah, we're friends, but I know how he operates."

"Sorry for carrying on." Her eyes traveled to the box of chocolates again.

Scott set the brandy glass down, picked up the candy box, noticing the brief flash of panic in Annie's eyes before he carried it over to the counter. He walked back to the table, sat down in a chair across from her and watched her stare at the counter.

"There's no need to apologize for carrying on," he said. "You have every right to be pissed off at Dean."

"Hmmmph."

Just as Scott took a swallow of brandy, Annie leaned forward, a hint of cleavage showing which in turn caused him to almost choke on the expensive liquor.

"I want to know his excuse."

Struggling not to cough, he shook his head. "Does it matter at this point?"

"Why, yes, it does, Mr. Barnes."

Fire now blazed in her eyes while her cheeks flushed a delicate shade of pink.

"Something came up and he had to work late."

"Yeah, right. He's working on that blonde."

Scott figured it would be the other way around. Something told him Kitten would be working Dean over. Lifting a shoulder, he drank more of his friend's brandy.

"I have a good mind to go down to the bank," She tapped her forefinger against her lips. "And surprise him, like he surprised me. Wow, some surprise."

He wished like hell she would stop tapping her lip with her slender finger. Damn good thing he was sitting down so she couldn't see his hard-on bulging inside his pants. "He's not there."

"Isn't that the icing on the cake?" Annie's gaze drifted to the counter again and lingered before finally looking back at him. "He took her out to some fancy restaurant for dinner. And here I slaved away working out the menu with the caterer."

Her lower lip formed into a pout, a very sexy pout.

"I'd hate to see all your hard work go to waste. Whatever is in the oven sure smells good."

Falling back against the chair, she threw up her hands. "I can't even pronounce it."

"It doesn't matter if we can pronounce it or not, it still smells good."

Ignoring his plea to be fed, Annie tilted her head. "How did he con you into playing delivery boy?"

"I owed him. Dean rescued me a couple of weeks ago when my car broke down late one night. Now he probably figures I have to give him my first born."

The corners of her lips threatened to curl up at the corners. Holy shit, did he ever want to lay a lipper on her. Unfortunately, that went against his principles because she'd just been stood up and no doubt was feeling vulnerable. Scott glanced away from those scrumptious lips.

Annie heaved out a big, dramatic sigh again. "I'm sure you have better things to do than listen to me rant and rave. You must have a date."

He shook his head. "No date."

She studied him for a moment. "You're kidding? If you're anything like Dean, you

have women dropping at your feet like flies.”

“Let’s get something straight right now. Dean and I are friends. We work together, but I’m not like him. I would never pull a low down stunt like he pulled on you tonight.” Scott held up his glass. “Take that to the bank and deposit it.”

Annie stared at him so long and hard he wondered if he had brandy dripping down his chin.

## CHAPTER THREE

The man sitting across the table from her watched her with definite interest in his deep brown eyes. His hair, a shade or two darker than his eyes, looked windblown, like he'd just stepped off a sailboat after an exhilarating ride. His sharp looking navy blue suit fit him well, while his yellow and blue striped tie hung loose around his neck. He had a lean face and his eyes were...were just plain sexy, she suddenly realized. Out of nowhere, sexual heat raced through her body.

She'd been a fool to get involved with Dean in the first place. Lord, when would she ever learn?

Suddenly self-conscious of what she was wearing, she crossed her arms over her chest, shifting on the chair. Did it matter? He'd already seen her sexy new lingerie. He'd also seen her pigging out on chocolate candy. Her eyes drifted to the candy box on the counter. She'd kill for a dark chocolate butter cream.

The way Scott Barnes looked at her made her want to squirm on her chair. "Ah...thanks for," she paused. What could she thank him for? Being the grim reaper?

"I don't think you need to thank me for anything. I didn't buy the candy and flowers."

"The flowers are history."

A grin kicked up the corners of his lips. "So I noticed."

That made her smile. "Pity. Red roses are so expensive on Valentine's day."

He held up his glass again. "Touché."

He didn't have a date and neither did she. There was definitely something about the man sitting across the table from her..."Would you like to stay for dinner? Like I said, I spent hours on the phone with the caterer."

"It would be a shame for all that gourmet food to go to waste."

When she jumped up, the sash loosened on her robe. Before she could retie it, she caught Scott staring at her body. Feeling her face warm, she pulled her robe together. "Let me change."

His brows furrowed together into a frown, clearly not liking the idea of her putting on clothes. "I'll just be a sec."

Annie spun around, hurrying out of the room, feeling Scott's eyes on her as she made her hasty exit.

Inside her bedroom, she tossed her robe on the bed. When she reached behind her to unhook the bra, she paused. This lingerie had cost her a pretty penny; she might as well enjoy it. It did make her feel sexy.

She returned to the kitchen a few minutes later wearing blue jeans and a purple snug fitting top. Surprised when she saw that Scott had set the table with plates and silverware, her pulse quickened. An attractive guy that was also thoughtful. Now wasn't that a novel concept?

He glanced over his shoulder at her as he took two glasses down from the cupboard. When his eyes raked over her body, a fiery ball of heat rolled through her. Her anger at being stood up appeared to be evaporating. Fast.

"I couldn't find your oven mitts." After he filled the glasses with water from the tap, he turned, carrying them to the table.

Their eyes caught and held each other's. This time delicate tendrils of heat floated through her. "I'll get them." As she walked to the counter, she saw him take off his suit jacket and hang it on the back of a chair. From the corner of her eye, she watched him roll up his light blue shirtsleeves. Fumbling in the drawer, she dug out the oven mitts.

Scott took them from her, his fingers brushing against the back of her knuckles. Feeling her pulse beat faster, she snatched another piece of candy from the box. Her



hormones thrown off balance, she needed an equalizer.

"No more candy, Annie, at least until after dinner."

Instead of shoving it into her mouth, she nibbled at it. "You sound like my mother when I was ten."

Instead of answering her, he opened the oven door and took out the covered trays the caterer had delivered an hour ago. With masculine ease, he sat the trays on the counter, removing the lids.

He glanced at her, holding her eye. "It looks like chicken and rice to me."

"It's a French dish." She stuffed the candy into her mouth.

"Most women would be opening a wine bottle to drown their sorrows." He rummaged around in a drawer until he found some serving spoons. "But I can see you're not like most women."

Again, he looked deep into her eyes. Oh dear, this man was more delicious than the most decadent chocolate. For a moment, she felt herself floundering under his smoldering gaze. Making a valiant effort to get her act together, she lifted her chin. "What can I say? I'm a chocoholic."

"I'll remember that." His voice held the same richness as decadent chocolate.

In silence, they dished up the food. She kept stealing glances at him and each time, she found him doing the same.

Scott carried their plates to the table. "Do you have any matches?"

Brows knitting together, she asked. "Matches?"

"For the candles," he paused. "Maybe you would rather skip the candles."

This entire evening had been planned for a cozy, romantic dinner with the low down scum, Dean. Since he'd stood her up and didn't even have the decency to call her and cancel himself, she decided why the hell not. "I want the candles."

She found a book of matches in her all-purpose drawer in the kitchen. At the table, Scott took the matches from her, this time his rough fingers lingering on hers.

Heat gathered between her legs, making her crave another piece of candy. To distract herself she walked over to the light switch while Scott lit the candles. Once he

had both candles lit, she turned off the light, bathing her small kitchen in soft, romantic darkness.

She rubbed her clammy palms over her thighs as she returned to the table. When Scott pulled out a chair for her, she figured she'd died and gone to heaven.

"This is nice," he said as he sat down. "I was going to grab some fast food on the way home."

She still had a hard time wrapping her mind around the concept that this guy was running around unattached. "There's not a lady in your life?" Normally she didn't stick her nose in other people's business, but suddenly she was dying to know all about this man.

"My mother, grandmother, and sister."

After he said that, he dug into his meal. Oh...there was something about a man with a hearty appetite.

Scott paused, his fork held in front of him. "You need to eat. This is damned good food even if I don't know the name of it."

The glow of the flickering candles cast mysterious shadows across his face. Annie picked up her fork but drank some water first to wash down the dryness that had unexpectedly crept up the back of her throat.

"What do you do, Annie?"

"I teach sixth grade."

Scott raised his water glass in a toast. "Teaching? A noble profession."

"Are you a financial advisor, like, I mean, too?" Interesting how Dean seemed to be fading into the background faster than a speeding car.

"Yeah. My job is to help the rich get richer."

She immediately noticed the lack of enthusiasm in his tone. "You don't like your job?"

"I like it because it's challenging. But it's not like I'm helping save the rain forests or something important. Now you, on the other hand, are shaping young minds for the future."

Under the praise of his words, pride swelled inside of her. Dean hadn't really been that impressed about her choice of professions. Mainly, he'd just wanted in her pants. "Yes, I do love teaching and I love kids."

"You don't give them too much candy, do you?"

Laughter bubbled from her. "No, I don't. They have no idea their teacher is a closet chocoholic. I keep my secret well hidden."

"Good."

They finished their dinner in silence, but Annie couldn't ignore the sparks zinging around the room, or the long sultry looks Scott kept giving her.

"I didn't plan dessert." Only because Dean wasn't much into sweets.

"I don't need dessert. I'm stuffed and satisfied as it is."

The image of Scott satisfying her made her hand tremble as she put down her fork. She imagined all sinewy muscles under his clothes. "Okay, good."

"I'm sorry about tonight, Annie. I know this whole evening probably sucks for you."

He was not only sexy, but considerate as well. "I bet you hated having to be the grim reaper." She had a feeling Scott hadn't enjoyed the position Dean placed him in.

"Not really. Since I didn't know you, I was afraid you might bash the crystal vase over my head."

Annie giggled. "The thought never occurred to me. I was in a panic to get at the candy."

Scott laughed. The sound of his rich, masculine laughter sent delightful shivers through her body.

"I'll help you clean up and get out of your hair," he said.

No way was she letting this man get out of her hair. At thirty-three, the man pickings seemed to get slimmer and slimmer every day, at least in her world anyway. "Have some more brandy." Grabbing the bottle off the table, she stood and filled his glass.

She was close enough to him to see the glimmer of surprise in his dark eyes,

followed by a gleam that she interpreted as desire. Annie hoped it was desire because this man did things to her senses and emotions, unlike Dean who had never piqued her womanly longings this much.

"Thanks." Scott picked up his glass. "Are you trying to take advantage of me?" He asked in a dry tone.

"Me, take advantage of you?" She sat back down still clutching the bottle. "I was kind of hoping you would take advantage of me." Oh Lordy, had she really said that? Gorging herself on too much chocolate and rich food must have plugged her brain circuits.

He paused, the glass halfway to his mouth and stared over at her. "You're pretty vulnerable right now after what Dean did to you."

Funny, she didn't feel vulnerable. Instead, she felt ready, willing, and able. Did she have to rip off her clothes and remind him of her sexy black lingerie? She might have been momentarily shocked when she'd answered the door to find a stranger standing there, but she remembered all too well the look in his eyes when he saw her bra and panties. "I'm really not feeling that vulnerable. The candy, the delicious dinner, and your company have definitely calmed me down."

He sipped his brandy for a while in silence. Uh...oh...she had just blatantly propositioned him and now it looked like he was searching for a polite way to get the hell out of her house. Two in one night. That was an all time record for her.

Jumping up, she started gathering the dishes. "Forget what I said. Um...too much chocolate makes me do things I wouldn't normally do."

Scott stood up too, and gently pulled the dishes out of her hands, setting them on the table. He placed his hands on her shoulders, turning her to face him. "I think Dean is a first class bastard for standing you up. I would never stand up a woman like you."

"You wouldn't?"

"There's not a reason on God's green earth to stand you up."

Annie laid her hands on his chest, feeling the hard strength of him.

"I don't want to take advantage of you."

Leaning toward him, she whispered. "Let me take advantage of you. That way you won't be riddled with guilt."

Her words made him grin. "You're tempting me."

"I hope it's working."

"Oh yeah, it's working."

He slid his lips across hers, gently at first. She willingly opened her lips, inviting him in for more of her. When his tongue pushed inside of her, she sighed. Scott's hand moved to her back, dragging her body flush against his. If his hard-on was any indication of his feelings, then her mission had been accomplished.

Their kiss deepened as they explored and tasted each other. Her arms twined around his neck, loving the feel of his lean body pressed against hers. When his hand cupped her breast, her breathing stilled, and when his thumb rubbed her nipple, making it ache, she nipped his tongue.

Suddenly Scott broke the kiss, his breathing labored. "Annie, you gotta be sure about this."

The warmth of his words and concern spread to secret corners of her heart. One hot night or maybe more? She had no way of knowing at this time. What she did know was she wanted him beyond sane reasoning. Scott had brought her body from dormant to a slow, languid burn. Normally she was a practical woman, except for her chocolate addiction, and most recently her foolish decision to date that scoundrel playboy. "Dean and I never slept together."

His expression showed his surprise. "You didn't?"

A tight ball of irritation bowled through her. "If that no good rat told you otherwise, he was lying through his teeth."

"Hey, take it easy." Scott laid his hand on her cheek. "I assumed. Dean is such a player."

"He didn't get into my pants. Oh, not that he didn't give it a colossal effort. But no way."

"But tonight he would have."

His statement stopped her dead in her tracks. How could she deny that, considering the way she'd been dressed, or not so dressed, when she'd opened the door?

"Annie?"

"Okay, maybe."

He dropped his hand from her cheek to her shoulder. "I already got suckered into playing delivery guy. I'm not about to be rebound guy."

She'd practically offered herself to him on a silver platter, and he was still willing to walk away. Okay, she been stood up and strung along, but she still had some dignity left. Annie stepped away from him, not liking it one bit when his arms dropped to his sides. "You're right, I would have. Now I'm glad he stood me up because then I would have been an even bigger fool if I had gone to bed with him."

"Ah...Annie." He reached out and tucked a lock of hair behind her ear, letting his fingers softly caress her cheek.

When she started to turn away, he grabbed her and brought her up against his chest again.

"I want to make love with you. You're so damn hot that I've had a hard-on since you opened the door."

Spicy, sultry thrills rippled through her. "It was probably my lingerie."

"That and your gorgeous eyes. Those eyes of yours do something to me." Skimming a finger over her brow, he looked deep into them. "They remind me of my grandmother's lilacs blooming in the spring."

She knotted her fingers into his shirtfront. "Your eyes hold a lot of integrity."

"You think so?"

"Oh yeah. You're willing to leave even though I'm practically throwing myself at you."

Scott's fingers lowered until he rubbed the pad of his thumb over her bottom lip. "Your lips make me hot, too."

"Prove it," she whispered.

He did that by tracing her lips again, this time with the tip of his tongue. Little sighs

fell from her lips, until he nudged them open. She felt the hunger building inside of her body as their tongues thoroughly explored each other. He tasted of brandy and true masculinity. As he gathered her closer, he groaned and Annie realized she loved the sound of his husky groan. She took his hand and placed it on her breast. Scott groaned again as he fondled her.

The heat between her legs turned to wetness. The times her and Dean had kissed, her body had never responded with such elemental desire.

Tearing her mouth from his, she leaned back peeling off her top. Her body heat increased when his gaze dropped to her black satiny bra.

"Annie, you're not making this easy for me." He covered both of her breasts with his large hands, gently massaging them.

Drawing in a calming breath, if that was possible, because she was so worked up with desire and need, she said. "Forget about Dean. Forget about what brought you to my place," she paused searching for the right words to express her feelings. "Let's just seize the moment, the night."

His hands stilled as he look at her. "We might regret this in the morning."

Scott was right and she knew it, but one night of passion with him would be worth it, if her instincts were correct. "You're free to walk away in the morning." God, she hoped liked hell he didn't want to walk away but if he did...she couldn't bring herself to think about that possibility now.

She could tell by his serious expression that he was struggling with an answer. After several moments passed, he suddenly swept her off the floor and into his arms, which made her squeal in surprise.

## CHAPTER FOUR

"Where's your bedroom?" Scott's voice was laced with a husky undertone.

Loving the feel of being held by him, she whispered. "Second door down the hallway." Twining her arms around his neck, she laid her head on his shoulder. This was a first for her, being carried to her bed. Savoring the moment, her eyes fluttered closed.

The next thing she knew Scott gently laid her down on her bed. He straightened up, unbuttoning his shirt with steady, yet quick hands. His shirt dropped to the floor followed by his white tee shirt.

His lean, muscled chest was covered with dark brown hair. He was all tight muscles and bone, just as she had imagined. His eyes locked on hers as he unbuckled his belt. Watching him strip, she felt the moisture saturating her panties. Down to his black boxer shorts, her breath hitched in her chest, watching with a growing hunger as he skimmed them over his long legs.

If she had ever seen a more beautiful hard cock in her life, she didn't remember when. The few men she'd been intimately involved with in her life drifted away like a ship at sea disappearing into a heavy fog.

Looking down at her, he wrapped his hand around himself. "This is what I've had to deal with since the moment I set eyes on you."

Delicious shivers of anticipation raked her senses. Scott knelt beside her, unzipping her jeans. In short order, he stripped them off her. Lowering his head, he kissed the red



heart over her pussy. She pushed against his mouth, desperate for more of him.

He shifted position, kneeling at her feet. His hands reached for her black panties. Slowly he skimmed them down her legs, his eyes following the movement of his hands. Trying not to squirm, Annie watched as her panties came off. Scott tossed them over his shoulder before lowering his head.

The first glide of his tongue over her clit, made her hips jerk.

A low groan rumbled from him before his tongue moved across her again. With sure and confident strokes he teased, tantalized, and seduced her intimate spot. Clutching the comforter in her hands, her hips gyrated in perfect rhythm with the movement of his tongue, feeling the painful need for release mounting inside of her.

Fighting back the urge to scream, she pushed her sex hard against his face. Scott responded by sinking his fingers into the soft flesh of her hips and burying his head deep between her legs. Lifting her legs, he wrapped them around his neck, his tongue still licking, building the fever inside of her to an unbearable level.

Her sighs, short panting breaths, intermingled with his rough sounding groans, filled her senses, blocking out every single thing except the two of them coming together.

Completely caught off guard by her hard, shuddering orgasm, Annie gasped for breath, feeling her body liquefy to the consistency of warm, melted chocolate.

Then Scott was covering her body with his own, searching out her lips so she could taste herself. Groaning and pressing his cock between her legs, his tongue thrust into her mouth. When he ended the kiss, a whimper tore from her throat.

"Your bra," His hands slid behind her back fumbling with the clasp, "has to go."

Holding her arms up in front of her, he ripped it off and again tossed it over his shoulder.

"Beautiful," he murmured before lowering his head to one nipple.

As his tongue raked over her nipple, her back arched of its own accord while his hand fondled her other breast.

The air between them was scented with her sex, with anticipation of more luscious

acts to follow.

She felt the tip of his cock nudging close to her opening so she spread her legs for him. The first thrust was gentle and easy, but the next thrust drove deep inside to her very center.

Panting, wanting more, she wrapped her legs around his thighs.

"Damn, Annie." He lifted his head from her breast and watched her. "Everything about you turns me on. Everything."

She smiled at him, the need to mate with this man simply overwhelming her. "Show me," she whispered.

Immediately he pulled out of her, then plunged his cock hard and fast into her heat. "Oh...yes..."

He nipped her neck below her ear. "You like it hard and fast?"

With Scott, she would love it anyway, anywhere, she realized with a stunning clarity. "Do me hard and fast."

With a groan, his lips covered hers, his cock pumping hard and fast in and out of her, stealing her breath away. She ran her hands over his sweat slicked back before moving them to his firm butt. Urging him on with her hands, he thrust into her over and over until she wanted to scream out her pleasure. Maybe she did scream, her world suddenly tilting on its axis.

His arms tightening around her, he whispered in a hard voice. "You gotta come first, Annie. I want to feel you coming."

His words suddenly shot her tumbling over the edge of reason, her orgasm ripping through her causing her body and mind to dissolve into mindless bliss. As swiftly as she had came, Scott drove his cock so deep into her and she cried out, hearing his gruff groans of pleasure.

\* \* \* \*

Buried under the absolute satisfaction that Scott felt, was a layer of guilt that weighed heavily on his conscience. Lifting his head, he looked down at Annie. Her eyes slowly fluttered open reflecting a glimmer of vulnerability.

Cursing under his breath, he kissed her cheek, then lips. Sighing in appreciation, she wrapped her arms around his neck inviting him in for more than a sweet kiss. Unable to stop himself, he slid his tongue inside of her, loving the faint taste of chocolate and of their coming together.

Their kiss, slow and languid, brought a stirring to his cock again. He'd just had the most unbelievable sex with her and now he wanted her all over again. The guilt kept hammering at his conscience so he ended the kiss, framing her face with his hands.

"Annie?"

She tried to kiss him again. "Hmmm..."

"I want to apologize."

Her eyes widened as her satiated expression quickly turned to one of disappointment. "What are you talking about?"

The look on her face knotted his guts tight together. "I feel like I took advantage of you."

Her arms slipped from his neck. "Now wait just one minute here. I thought we had this all worked out before we made...made love."

"I thought we did too, but I feel guilty as hell."

Frowning, she pushed at his chest. "Are you going to tell me it wasn't absolutely fantastic?"

Scott shook his head. "I would be lying if I said that. It was," he paused, not sure how to describe their incredible lovemaking. "It was beyond fantastic. I can't even think of the right words."

She tried to sit up, so he rolled off her. Plowing his hands through his hair, he watched as she pulled her knees up to her chest.

Tucking a loose strand of hair behind her ear, he said. "Don't take this wrong, okay? I mean look what happened tonight. Dean stood you up, sent me here to do his dirty work and then we ended up in bed together."

"If you remember, Mr. Barnes, you didn't have to drag me kicking and screaming to my bedroom. I went willingly. Or, I should say, I was carried willingly."

Just remembering her lush body in his arms and his hot-blooded desire to be inside of her made his cock swell again. Tamping down his lust, he glanced around her bedroom. Truth be told, he hadn't noticed anything about it except her bed sitting in the middle of the room. The comforter, a hot pink with splashes of white covering it, was now all rumpled and had slipped partially off the bed.

A large framed painting of pink flowers arranged in a white vase hung across the room. A chest of drawers and an antique vanity set with an oval mirror gave the room a feel of old fashioned femininity. It was Annie's room to the max.

He finally brought his eyes back to her. "I know you were willing but I don't know how you really feel about Dean."

"He's a rat."

"So we've established he's rat. But that doesn't tell me how you feel about him."

Tugging at the comforter, she draped it over her bare body. "I was flattered that he showed an interest in me." She tilted her head giving him a look of annoyance. "I could have gone to bed with him a long time ago but I didn't."

That must be the reason Dean had mentioned she was too straight laced for him. Shit, the man didn't have a clue about the real Annie. The woman turned out to be an eager and passionate lover. He still had a hard time believing Annie was unsure of her sex appeal. Before he could say anything more, she scrambled off the bed. When she bent over, giving him a view of her shapely ass, he swallowed a groan.

Picking up her robe, she shrugged it on. "Are you thirsty? I need some water."

Scott nodded. He watched the sway of her hips under the silky robe as she hurried out of the bedroom. Lacing his hands behind his head, he laid on his back staring up at the ceiling. She didn't seem too broken up over Dean, but he couldn't forget her reaction when he'd first arrived here. On the other hand, nobody liked getting stood up.

When he heard the front doorbell ring, he frowned. Turning his head, he looked at the digital clock on the nightstand. It was ten after nine. If Annie had been entertaining Dean tonight, he wondered who would be dropping by.

As soon as he heard a man's voice, a fist of unexpected jealousy punched him hard

in the belly. Leaping off the bed like Superman off a tall building, he snatched his boxer shorts and trousers off the floor. Scrambling into his clothes, he fought to think rationally like the savvy financial advisor that he was. High finance and safety with money had nothing to do with Annie or how he felt about her. Zipping up his trousers, he paused. How did he feel about her? If his growing jealousy was a sign, then his feelings ran deeper than he realized.

Stomping out of her bedroom and down the hallway, he saw Dean standing by the door. Just as Scott walked into the room, Dean laid his hand on Annie's shoulder. Anger shot through him like a power surge through electrical lines.

Dean glanced over her shoulder. "What the hell? So that's your car out front?"

Annie backed away from him and spun around, her robe billowing to show her bare legs while her violet eyes overflowed with confusion.

Since Dean hadn't had the pleasure of seeing her bare legs, Scott wanted to jog back to her room and find her some suitable clothes, like a baggy pair of sweats and a sweatshirt. Scowling, he strode over to Dean and Annie, planting himself between the two of them.

"What the hell are you doing here, Dean?"

"I could ask you the same thing, old buddy."

He might be in his thirties now, but the old familiar schoolyard testosterone raced through him. Balling his hands into fists at his sides, he moved closer to Dean. "You stood her up, remember old buddy?"

"And it looks like you took advantage of her."

His guilt rushed back so fast and hard, it left him speechless for a couple of seconds.

"He did not take advantage of me," Annie said behind him.

"Take that to the bank and deposit it." His scowl deepened as he stared at Dean.

Dean rolled his eyes. "Come on, give me a break."

"Didn't work out with blonde?" Scott said through clenched teeth.

A quick flush spread across Dean's face. "That's none of your damn business."

Annie elbowed him aside. "For you information, it's my business."

"Come on Annie," Dean coaxed. "It was a mistake. She came on to me the other day at a...a business lunch." He shrugged. "You know how guys are."

While she crossed her arms over her chest, Scott fought back the urge to drag her away from Dean. He didn't want her within inches of him.

Annie tapped her bare foot on the carpet. "You snooze, you lose."

"So you're easy after all. Why the hell did you string —"

Before Dean could finish his sentence, Scott's fist shot out, clipping him in the jaw. His friend stumbled back, slamming against the door.

Annie screamed, while Dean regained his balance and tackled him around the stomach. Tumbling to the floor, the breath knocked out of him, Scott didn't have time to react before Dean landed a good punch to his right eye.

Besides the pain from the hit, anger exploded inside of him. A loud grunt rumbling from him, he jabbed Dean hard in the ribs with his elbow.

"Damn you, Barnes."

"Damn you, too." Another jab to Dean's stomach and Scott was ready to scramble out from under him when suddenly a cascade of red roses and water doused the two of them.

"What the hell?" Scott muttered, spitting out a rose petal.

Dean fell away from him and shook his head sending water droplets flying.

"If you two don't stop right this minute, I'm going to bust this expensive crystal vase against both your heads."

Scott glanced up, noticing Annie's robe had slipped open, just barely exposing her dark curly pubic hair. He reached for the hem of the robe but she stepped back, glaring down at him. "I was only defending your honor, Annie."

Her eyes turned stormy with anger.

"I really didn't mean what I said," Dean said. "I was just jealous."

"Jealous? How could you be jealous? You stood me up for a big-breasted blonde."

"How do you know she had big breasts? Did you tell her Barnes?"

Scott turned his head and saw two rose petals sticking to the top of Dean's blonde

head.

"I'll tell you how I know," Annie stepped over Scott and stood between the two of them. "Because you're nothing but a playboy. Playboys always go after busty blondes."

Scott didn't quite understand her logic, but he didn't argue with her because she still held the heavy vase.

"Dammit, Annie," Dean said. "I made a mistake tonight by standing you up. I didn't expect to find *him* here when I came to apologize."

"What did you expect? To find me all weepy and gorging myself on chocolate," she paused. "Okay, I did gorge for awhile but Scott made me stop. If it hadn't been for him, I would have gotten sick on chocolate candy."

At least he'd accomplished something tonight. He started to stand up but Annie stopped him with her barefoot on his shin.

"Neither of you is getting up until you promise to behave yourselves." She shifted the vase under one arm, then pointed a finger first at Scott, then Dean. "And I want you two to shake hands like men. Because you are grown men, although you seemed to have forgotten that fact for a few minutes."

Scott cursed under his breath while Dean swore out loud.

Annie shook her finger at him. "No swearing."

"Jes—I mean, geez Annie," Dean grumbled.

Anger still boiled inside of him. Anger at Dean for standing Annie up, then dropping by her house expecting to get some at the last minute. Not to mention insulting her. He hated to admit a good part of the anger was directed at himself for taking advantage of her when she was vulnerable and carrying on like a brainless sixteen year old by punching Dean in the face.

Without looking at Dean, he swung his arm over his chest holding out his hand. A couple of seconds passed before Dean returned the token handshake. Scott scrambled to his feet, as did Dean who still had rose petals stuck to his head along with a wet suit jacket and shirt.

While Scott swiped water off his bare chest, Dean rubbed his jaw.

"Sorry, buddy. You're gonna have a shiner." His friend adjusted his jacket.

Scowling at him, Scott refused to reach up and touch his throbbing eye.

Annie stood there tapping one foot on the floor. "Is this settled?"

Scott nodded, wondering if she was about to boot him out the door.

"I'm really sorry, Annie." Dean shot Scott a pissed off look before he headed for the door.

Scott watched as his friend left, closing the door quietly behind him. Annie's violet eyes awash with emotions bore down on him, making him feel like a dumb teenager. "I'll get the hell out too."

She pointed toward the kitchen. "You need doctoring."

"Don't worry about it; I'll take care of my eye when I get home."

"In the kitchen. Now."

At least she was willing to offer him an ice pack for his eye. He figured he should be thankful for small favors. She would probably kick his ass out after the ice pack. Scott walked into the kitchen, his bare chest still wet and his eye throbbing like hell.

"Sit."

Scott obeyed by pulling out the nearest chair at the table and plopping his butt down on it.

Annie walked to the counter, slid the vase on it, then circled around holding the box of candy. What the hell? She angled back to the table and picked around in it until she took out a dark chocolate.

"I'm pretty sure this is orange cream. One of my favorites by the way, but you need it more than I do."

Scott started to protest but before he could say anything, she stuffed the candy into his mouth.

When he bit into it, he realized Annie was right. It had an orange center. The lady knew her candy.

She held a light colored chocolate in front of him. "I just bet this is coconut filled."

"Ann—" She shoved the second piece of candy into his mouth before he could



finish his thought. This one wasn't coconut. Instead, it was some kind of mocha filled but he didn't have the heart to tell her she had called it wrong. Seeing the third chocolate headed straight for his mouth, he caught her wrist. "I really need an ice pack, not candy."

Giving him an indignant look, she said. "The chocolate will calm you down."

"My eye hurts like hell."

"Hmmm..." She took a small bite of the chocolate before she dropped it back into the box.

Bending over him to study his eye brought her naked breasts under her robe, almost level with his gaze. In spite of the fact that his eye felt like he'd been clobbered with a hammer, his cock twitched.

She straightened up. "Okay, you're right." Carrying the candy, she went to the fridge and grabbed an ice pack out of the freezer compartment.

She dumped the box on the counter before she came back to the table and handed the ice pack to him.

Scott carefully pressed the pack against his eye, fighting back the urge to curse in a loud voice. Wincing, he adjusted the pack and stared across the room, hoping for his anger to cool down. He figured he'd blown it royally with Annie. Glancing up at her, he caught her watching him through narrowed eyes.

"I'm sorry, Annie."

"Sorry? For what? For getting roped into coming over here in the first place? For making love to me?" She paused after that question, opening her eyes wider, watching him. "Or for punching Dean's lights out?"

"I'm not sorry that we made love. I hope you're not. No, I didn't relish the idea of being the bearer of bad tidings." Shit, now his eye really throbbed. "I'm sorry for hitting Dean inside your house. Sorry that you had to witness the two of us carrying on like some rowdy teenagers."

Annie tightened the sash on her robe, emphasizing the outline of her breasts and her nipples straining against the silky fabric, which in turn made him want to be naked

with her again.

"You did defend my honor," she said.

"Pardon me?"

"My honor. You defended my honor."

Scott tore his eyes from her chest and looked at her. "Yeah, I did, didn't I?"

A smile curved up the corners of her lips. "You're the first."

Again, he was distracted by Annie's delectable lips. "I'm the first what?"

Planting her hands on her hips, she frowned. "Are you even listening to me? Maybe you have a concussion."

Yeah, his head reeled with the senses of Annie. Her scent, her taste, the feel of her hot, curvy body under his. The color of her eyes. "No concussion. Just a shiner."

Their eyes locked. Damn, her eyes had snagged him like an animal in a trap with his first look into them. Crazy thing was, he wasn't sure he wanted out of the trap, but he had no idea what Annie felt. She'd loved their coming together. That he knew for a fact. She also, seemed to like the idea of him defending her honor. "Do you think I could clean up?"

She lowered her eyes for a moment before she looked at him. "Sure, you can take a shower. I'll get fresh towels out for you." Spinning around, she disappeared from the room.

Scott lowered the ice pack, stood up and returned it to the freezer. He wandered through the house, having no idea where the bathroom was.

After a shower, he'd get the hell out of here so Annie could have some peace and quiet. Turned out the bathroom was right next to her bedroom. While carrying Annie to her bedroom, he'd been focused on one thing, stripping off her clothes and getting himself inside of her.

She glanced over her shoulder when he walked into the room. "It's all ready. Shampoo, soap, and here's a couple of towels." She pointed to the counter. Two folded towels sat next to the sink.

"Thanks."

She scooted around him, avoiding eye contact. As he took off his pants, a feeling of uneasiness snaked through him. What part had he blown? Doing Dean's dirty work? Taking her to bed when she was vulnerable? Punching out Dean's lights as Annie had put it? If he had to venture a guess, he would guess the second one, taking her to bed. Bad move on his part, but his judgment had been clouded.

Guilt pummeling him, he stepped into the shower and turned on the water. The warm water didn't soothe him like he had expected it to. Cursing himself, he scrubbed his body, struggling to ignore the crazy little ache inside his heart.

When he finished washing, he spotted Annie standing on the other side of the clear glass shower door holding the box of candy. Uh oh. She was stuffing candy into her mouth again.

He pushed his wet hair back from his face before he opened the door. "Why are you eating candy?"

She finished chewing before she answered. "'Cause I feel like it."

Scott turned off the water. "Okay, tell me why you feel like stuffing candy into your mouth."

He grabbed her hand when she reached for another piece. "No more candy. Tell me what's on your mind. Please, Annie."

"You're probably going to get dressed and leave."

"I figured that's what you wanted."

"I'm all mixed up." She pulled her hand from his and tossed the candy box onto the counter. A couple of pieces bounced out and landed in the sink.

Pursing her lips together, her eyes traveled down his body. She paused at his cock. He could feel it growing under her violet gaze. "Talk to me," he said through gritted teeth.

Snatching a towel off the counter, she handed it to him without looking at him. Scott quickly dried himself before wrapping the towel around his waist.

He stepped out of the shower settling his hands on her shoulders. "Tell me what's on your mind."

Watching her chew on her bottom lip, which distracted the hell out of him, Scott fought for patience.

"I thought I liked Dean but I wasn't surprised when he stood me up. It just pissed me off that I was such a fool."

"You weren't a fool for being involved with Dean."

"Oh yes, I was. I had his number the second time I went out with him. I knew I wasn't his type. And the truth is he's not my type."

His heart beat a little faster at Annie's words. "What is your type?"

She splayed a hand across his chest. "Well...let's see now. There's a good possibility you might be my type. Tall, lean, sensitive, courteous, and..."

Scott traced her lips with his thumb. "And what?"

"And dynamite in bed."

His ego swelled right along with his cock. Trying to think straight, he was quiet for a time. "We kind of went at this all backwards."

Annie nodded.

"Maybe we should start over. I could take you to dinner tomorrow night."

Annie reached up and gently touched his eye. "I'm not sure I want to be seen in public with you. Your eye is swollen and already turning color. You kind of look like a Mafia hit man." She smiled and kissed his lips.

His arms slid around her, tugging her closer so she could feel what she did to him.

"Hmmm. You've already proved your prowess in bed and I can see you're ready again."

Scott nipped her earlobe. "You do that to me, Annie. You make me all hot and hard."

Moving away from him, she untied the sash of her robe, letting it slip off her shoulders, down to the floor.

His greedy eyes feasted on her lush body like it was the first time he had ever seen it. Her eyes locked with his, Annie yanked off the towel, dropping that to the floor, too. When Scott gazed into her eyes, he saw her desire floating at the surface. He backed her

against the counter, lifting her onto it.

Anne slipped her arms around his neck, dragging him close for a deep French kiss. He slipped his middle finger into her pussy marveling at how she was so wet and eager for him. Slanting his head, he let his tongue mate with hers while he slid his finger in and out of her. Feeling her squirm against his hand and swallowing her moans of pleasure, Scott fought to control himself.

Tearing her lips from his, she said in a breathy voice. "I want you inside of me. Now. Please."

If he didn't get into her and fast, he was going to explode. Her fingernails dug into his shoulders as he grabbed her hips, positioning her against him. When the tip of his cock touched her wet opening, he gritted his teeth and drove into her with one quick, hard thrust.

Her sharp, abrupt moan and musky scent filled his senses. She kissed him as she wrapped her soft legs around his hips. Pumping himself deep into her pussy, Scott lost himself in her. With a feral growl, he increased the rhythm of his thrusts while Annie clutched his shoulders with her hands, her head lolling back.

Wild animal sounding groans tore from his throat in his desperation to satisfy Annie and himself. To complete himself. Because in his heart, he felt Annie was the one. He'd waited a lot of years for the right woman to come along. Like a slash of lightning, Anne had entered his life. Looking back, he knew he and Samantha had been completely wrong for each other.

Leaning forward, he sought out her lips so he could taste her sweetness. Between her sighs and moans, she sucked his tongue into her mouth.

Their rhythm matched each other's as Scott pumped himself in and out of her. Feeling her body tighten then convulse with orgasm, he let himself go losing himself in the sheer pleasure of being with Annie.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Annie fluffed hair and spritzed her favorite lilac scent on her wrists and behind her ears. Turning sideways, she studied herself in the mirror. Liking how she looked in her new red, form fitting dress, she smiled at her reflection.

Scott should be here any minute. Dinner was warming in the oven, compliments of her favorite caterer. Their first official date was tonight. She'd chased him out after breakfast this morning because she had wanted to savor the anticipation of seeing him tonight.

When the doorbell rang, she hurried out of the bathroom, her heart hammering against her chest.

She swung open the door, her breath catching inside her throat. Scott wore faded jeans and button down flannel shirt. Oh...he looked so manly and slightly dangerous because of the yellow and black bruising around his eye.

Frowning, his gaze trailed down her body. "I didn't know I was supposed to dress up since we're eating in."

"You look just fine to me. Besides, I wanted to dress up for our first official date."

"Believe me; I appreciate the effort because you look good enough to eat."

Annie giggled. He brought his hand from behind his back, which she hadn't noticed because she'd been too busy ogling him.

He handed her a bouquet of pink carnations with delicate baby's breath woven through the bouquet. "Oh..." So touched by the simple but beautiful bouquet, she was

at a loss for words.

"Do you like them?"

She snatched the bouquet out of his hand, then threw her arms around him.

"They're lovely."

Scott kissed the top of her head before backing her inside while she was still clinging to him for dear life. Unexpected tears gathered at the corners of her eyes.

After he closed the door, he cupped her face with his hands. "What is it?"

She shook her head, struggling to sort out her emotions. "I feel all emotional. I'm so glad to see you – and the flowers..."

Scott kissed her gently on the lips. "I'm glad to see you, too. I didn't expect the flowers would make you cry."

She swiped at her eyes. Technically, she was on the rebound but somehow it didn't matter. She'd never been in love with Dean, mostly flattered because a playboy like him had paid attention to her. Before Dean, she suffered through a long dry spell without a man.

"I'm just touched by the flowers," she said. Scott possessed some admirable qualities and in her heart, she felt that this man's character ran deep and strong. Besides the buzz of anticipation throughout the day, she'd thought long and hard about him. A quirky twist of fate had brought them together. "Guess what?"

He kissed her gently on the lips. "What?" he asked in a husky voice.

She liked the effect she had on him because he definitely had the same effect on her. "I ordered something we can pronounce."

A grin tugged at the corners of his lips. "And that would be?"

"Lasagna."

His grin widened. "No kidding. I love lasagna."

"You wouldn't just be saying that, now would you?"

"No, I mean it. In fact, I make a mean lasagna if I do say so myself."

Her eyes widened. "You can cook?"

Scott nodded. "You don't have to keep ordering in because I can handle the

cooking.”

She recognized the definite promise of a future in his words. Skimming her fingers down his chest, she said. “Let’s get something straight. I can cook a few basic things.”

Scott picked up her free hand and brought it to his lips, feathering kisses across her knuckles. “It doesn’t matter, Annie, if you can cook or not. You had me when you started stuffing chocolate candy in your mouth.”

“You mean I got dressed up for nothing? All I need to do is eat chocolate candy to get you turned on.”

He dropped her hand and dug inside his shirt pocket. He held up a Hershey’s candy bar. “Sorry, I didn’t have time to pick up a box of chocolates.”

This time her heart lodged in her throat. “Oh...you’re my candy man, a man after my heart.”

Scott gathered her closer and whispered in her ear. “I’ll give you all the candy you want for as long as you want.”

The End