



His Valentine

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Chapter One

“I want to have sex with you.”

Oh, jeez. The minute Valentine Harris blurted the words out she wanted to take them back. In the worst possible way. Too late, though. Judging by what could only be the horrified expression on her best friend’s face, saying what she just said wasn’t a smart move.

“Excuse me?” Gavin Kingston shook his head, his startling blue eyes cloudy with confusion. Not desire, not passion, not *oh yeah, baby, let’s do it*, but confusion.

Crap, crap, crap.

Val decided to pretend she’d never said it at all. “Nothing, never mind, I think I have Tourette’s syndrome.”

She quirked her lips, rolled her eyes, and waved her hand in front of her as if to brush it all off, but he grabbed her. Long fingers wrapped around her wrist and his touch made her burn. It had been making her burn for days, weeks, months. *Years.*

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but I’m pretty sure you just said you wanted to have sex with me?” He ducked his head, his gaze searching hers out, and she felt trapped, drowning in the intense blue depths of his eyes. She wanted never to look away.

She could stare forever into his beautiful gaze, look at his handsome face, listen to his deep voice. He was the whole package, a delicious package. Women threw themselves at his feet; he could choose anyone he wanted to date, and he often did.

Yet Val knew when he was with her, he only saw her as his best friend. The one person he could count on when he was feeling down to say the right thing. The one he could count on to hang out with when he broke up with yet another gorgeous, too skinny blonde female. The one he came to for advice on women, on his family, about his job—not that she knew anything about architectural engineering, but that was beside the point.

He just didn’t see her as the one who really cared for him. The right woman who wanted him for her own, who loved him, even.

Heat stole across her cheeks and she shook her head, tearing her gaze away from his to stare down at the countertop. Her wrist was still encased by his fingers and she watched his thumb stroke the sensitive skin at the inside of her arm, causing her to shiver. He noticed but still didn’t release her.

“I didn’t really mean it,” she muttered, lying through her teeth.

“I think you’re lying.” The sound of his sexy voice made her tremble. It slid over her like the finest whiskey and she closed her eyes. Since her last boyfriend broke up with her two months earlier, just before Christmas, her feelings for Gavin had grown even more intense. Scarily intense, almost sending her into stalker mode intense.

It didn’t help that his girlfriend dumped him at a New Year’s Eve party and he’d been hanging out on her couch ever since, drinking the stash of beer she kept on hand just for him and crying the “hard to find a good woman” blues. Was the man blind? Couldn’t he see how much she liked him, wanted him, whatever you wanted to call it? It drove her crazy to have him so close yet so unattainable.

But she wasn’t about to drive him away. Oh, no. If she couldn’t have him *that* way then she’d keep him around any way she could.

Now it was Valentine’s Day, the day she was named for since her parents said she’d been conceived on the lover’s holiday. She and Gavin had decided it was better to go out together rather than sit alone in their apartments. Even better than sitting together at home, eating pizza and drinking yet more beer. No, Gavin had even decided to make reservations at a romantic restaurant where they actually had to dress up to get in.

So she’d dressed up. She bought a new dress that cost more than her car payment, bought a pair of shoes that cost even more than that. Had a manicure and a pedicure, painting her finger and toe nails sparkly, celebratory red. Went to that makeup mega-store Sephora and made the sales girl jump with glee at the extraordinary amount of cosmetics she purchased. All of this planning and careful purchasing just for a date with Gavin—a date he didn’t even consider a *true* date.

Why was she such a fool? Why did she insist on tricking herself? The man didn’t like flat-chested red-haired girls. He preferred voluptuous, overblown blonde floozies who were most likely freaks between the sheets. Women who knew a trick or two to keep their man close by their side.

Val knew no such tricks. She’d had plenty of sex. She wasn’t a failure in *that* department. But none of it was very exciting, none of it made her toes curl or her entire body explode. Hell, she couldn’t even orgasm anymore with a man inside of her, even when she was on top. Unless they were diddling with her or she was diddling herself, her orgasms proved elusive.

She'd watched as Gavin strode across the parking lot earlier, so sure in his movements, so utterly *male*. He looked exceptional, as usual. Dark blue button-up shirt with the finest sheen to it stretched across his broad shoulders and chest. Black trousers that emphasized his long, strong legs. His closely cropped dark hair looking as if it just received a trim, making her long to run her fingers through it. She'd touched it before, of course. She remembered its silky feel and she wanted to experience it again. Preferably while clutching his head to her breasts as he kissed them. Sucked them. Licked her all over.

Val had shivered just as Gavin turned around, and his dark brows had furrowed in concern. "Cold?"

She'd shaken her head, rubbed her bare arms. The black halter dress otherwise known as this month's car payment was beautiful, but wasn't much in the way of warmth. Especially on a cold February night. "I'm fine."

He'd waited for her as she approached the front door, wrapped his arm around her shoulders and pulled her close. His warmth had immediately enveloped her, his spicy scent filling her senses, and she'd closed her eyes against the heady rush of it.

"Better?"

Oh, god, if she felt like fooling herself she'd be half inclined to believe his voice sounded husky, a little sexy. A low intimate murmur just for her. She'd gazed up at him, saw the slight tilt to his beautiful mouth and she wished—no, *willed*—for him to kiss her.

"You should've worn a coat," he'd admonished, making her immediately feel like a child.

She'd shrugged, caused his arm to slip off her shoulders. *Damn it*. "I forgot. Plus, it would ruin the effect."

"The effect that dress is going to have on every man once we walk into the restaurant?"

Val had blinked, shocked by his statement. What did he mean by *that*? "I guess so."

"Trust me, sweetheart, they're all going to notice you in that dress. It's amazing."

Gavin hadn't even given her a chance to respond. He'd opened the door for her, and the second they entered the fine establishment, she'd felt like a phony. Loving couples sat together waiting to be seated, hands resting possessively on various body parts as they whispered in each other's ears. All of the women beautiful, the men handsome, some of the women even wearing sparkling brand new jewelry. No doubt a gift for Valentine's Day from their intended.

She'd given Gavin a box of conversation hearts as a joke when he picked her up, the kind you received from friends back in elementary school. He'd promised to pay for her dinner, though she'd balked at that, wanting to pay her own way. Then she'd grown weak in the knees when he insisted, using the commanding tone that crept into his voice sometimes. The one that made her panties wet and filled her mind with images of him using that same tone on her when he made her strip naked for him.

Oh, god she wanted to strip naked for him so bad. Wanted to see him naked, too. His conquests were numerous, his skill in the bedroom legendary among their circle of friends. She'd certainly heard enough about it through the years from her brother. For once, she wanted to know what it was like to tussle in the sheets with him, to feel his hands all over her. To have him possess her, completely and totally.

Chapter Two

“Blame the cocktail,” Val finally said, pulling herself out of her thoughts and bringing herself back to the present. She nodded at the empty glass that sat on the bar in front of her. They’d been waiting for their table for almost an hour, more than enough time to down the strong drink and let it do its magic in her empty stomach. Perfect idea to blame her words on booze.

Gavin released his grip on her, his eyes never leaving her face. “So is it true? Do you really want to have sex with me?”

“No, no, no.” She shook her head and smiled, though it felt more like an open mouthed grimace. “We’re such good friends we could never ruin what we have. Lonely sex on Valentine’s Day would surely do that, don’t you think?”

Maybe, but it would feel *so* good to have him naked, pressed up against her, inside her, just for once in her life. She shivered yet again.

“Right. We don’t want to ruin what we have.” He nodded, his forehead crinkling in that way it did when he was confused. “What *do* we have, anyway?”

“Well, a friendship that has lasted for years.” They did. It started because he’d been such good friends with her older-by-one-year brother and was always at her house when they were teenagers. When her brother Jim (how had he scored such a normal name?) had gone off to college Gavin had stayed home, opting for community college instead. Gavin had been lonely since everyone he hung out with was gone. So he’d started spending time with Val instead. Soon they became close—so close, he even took her to her senior prom when her date came down with the chicken pox.

He’d been so handsome in that tux, so big and manly and gorgeous. All of the other girls had been jealous, and for one night, she forgot they were just friends. Forgot about the girlfriend he had just started seeing seriously. For that one night, he’d been *hers*. Gavin had even kissed her at the end of that wonderful night. A delicious kiss that involved nothing but soft gentle lips and long fingers pressed against her cheek. No tongue, no passion, just the sweetest kiss imaginable.

She’d been waiting patiently for more ever since.

“Yeah, we’ve known each other for what? Fifteen years?”

He was exactly right. She'd been thirteen when they first met; his family had just moved in down the street. Jim and Gavin had quickly grown inseparable.

"Been very close friends for at least ten years," he continued.

Right again. They'd drifted apart when he'd left to get his Bachelor's degree at a university, but they'd resumed their friendship when he returned home and started working for his family's firm.

"So why haven't we ever...you know..."

Her mouth dropped open. "What are you talking about?" She just wanted to make sure before she answered *that* question.

Gavin shrugged, looking uncomfortable for once in his life. "I have to admit I've thought about it before, especially the last couple of months. You and me...together."

Oh my god, oh my god. Hysteria bubbled up inside her. Hysteria and a nice healthy dose of hope combined with lust. He actually thought about them having sex? She guessed she shouldn't be surprised. All men thought about having sex with a female friend, right? It was part of their nature, something they couldn't help but think about when they became platonically close with another woman. It didn't mean she was anything special to him in *that* way.

Did it?

"Haven't you ever been curious what it would be like between us? I've never known a woman for as long as I've known you." He looked away from her, shaking his head. "No, you probably haven't thought of me in that way, I'm sure. Presumptuous of me to even ask."

Val cleared her throat. "Well, I am the one who said I wanted to have sex with you." Oh good lord she'd just said it *again*.

He shifted, watching her, his blue-gray eyes growing darker. His firm lips parted and softened, as if he was about to speak. Val held her breath in anticipation. Her entire body stiffened, aching to know what he was about to say.

"Kingston, party of two! Kingston party of two, your table is ready!"

Even the most expensive, romantic restaurants still managed to have those tacky loudspeakers to summon their patrons. The almost-magic moment ruined, Gavin slid off his barstool and offered his hand to her.

"Ready to eat?"

She took his hand and it wrapped around hers as he pulled her off the stool. His fingers were warm and firm against her skin, making her tingle. Her stomach clenched with nerves, her entire body aware of him. No way could she eat after what they'd just discussed. The *last* thing she wanted to do was eat.

"Oh, yes, I'm starving," she answered with a smile.

Val didn't know if she'd make it through the evening without throwing herself at him.

Gavin had been thinking about Valentine Harris for a while. It started last Thanksgiving, when he and his girlfriend hit a rocky patch. Val had always been so in-his-life, always there for him when he needed her. If he was honest with himself, he never had stepped back and taken a good long look at her. He'd never even tried to evaluate what he had in her—*with* her—until the holiday of thanks came around and he'd shown up at her parents' house for dessert.

They'd invited him over as usual and he'd decided to make an appearance. He really wanted to show off his knock-out girlfriend to Jim, make him a little envious, even though he knew they were on the downward spiral into broken relationship land.

He'd been the one who'd been filled with envy instead, watching Val talk intimately with her boyfriend, her hand resting on the inside of the guy's thigh. They sat so close together on the couch a piece of paper couldn't be wedged between the two of them. Jealousy had filled him, along with an unwanted anger at the jerk who had his hands all over *his* Val. Anger at himself for not making her *his* Val. He'd realized then why no woman could satisfy him, why he was on a constant quest to find the perfect woman. She'd been right there with him the entire time, and he'd just been too blind to see her.

He was an idiot.

But how could he approach Val, tell her that he wanted her? He didn't want to scare her, but he believed they had something special that went beyond just friendship. Something he had never experienced before with another woman. *Trust. Real love.*

Yes, he could admit it. He was in love with Valentine. Despite her quirks and her occasional dramatic fits, despite her sloppiness and her borderline obsessive collection of designer handbags—he loved her.

Her boyfriend had dumped her around Christmas, his girlfriend dumped him on New Year's Eve (rotten time to get dumped), and still he hadn't made a move. Didn't even know how he was

going to go about it, how he could approach Val. When they came up with the idea of hanging out together on Valentine's Day, he thought he finally had his chance. The perfect romantic day to declare his love—the day she'd been named for. Now he just needed to make sure he didn't blow it.

"How's your salad?"

Gavin glanced up from the plate he'd been staring at for the last few minutes, suddenly aware he'd barely touched the vegetables that lay there. He picked up his fork, stuffed some lettuce in his mouth and chewed. "Delicious," he said after he swallowed.

She smiled at him, the glow of the lit candle on their table casting shadows on her pretty face. He felt like he'd been socked in the gut at the sight of her. She was gorgeous, she was sweet and he'd almost let her slip through his fingers. Hell, if he didn't handle this right he *was* going to let her slip through his fingers.

"You seem distant," she said, her voice so soft he had to lean across the table to hear her. "Bothered by what we discussed earlier?"

If she only knew how hot and bothered he was at the thought of having his wicked way with her. The naughty thoughts involving the two of them that had run through his head on a continual loop the last few months would shock her silent. Or make her think he was a sexual deviant.

"We never finished discussing what we discussed earlier," he said, wanting to get back to the point.

She tucked a stray lock of strawberry blonde hair behind her ear, then rubbed her index finger across the side of her freckled nose, something she often did when she was nervous. "I regret even bringing it up."

"Why?" *Shit*. Now was the moment when she'd tell him she wasn't interested, she didn't mean what she said earlier. Did she know how thrilled he'd been when she told him she wanted to have sex with him? Did she even understand how excited he'd been? It was as if she'd given him permission to do what he'd been dying to do since late November.

"Now the night is ruined. Everything is so awkward between us. You can barely speak to me, you're not even eating." She sighed, her golden hazel eyes looking sad. "You *always* eat. You have the biggest appetite of anyone I know."

Yeah, his night was definitely not going as planned.

The waiter appeared and presented their dinners to them with a flourish, steam rising from the delicious food that awaited them. Gavin glanced down at his plate, saw the usually appealing slab of steak, lobster tail, baked potato and grilled vegetables before him. His stomach protested. He was way too nervous.

“You’re staring at your plate like you want to shoot it,” she whispered.

“I guess I’m not hungry.” Well, he was hungry for her.

Val sighed, looking so discouraged he felt sorry for her. “I take it all back, Gavin, I’m sorry I even said it. Now come on, let’s pretend the beginning of this night never happened and resume normal programming.”

He shook his head slowly, his eyes dipping to the shadow of cleavage her black dress revealed. She’d often complained how small her breasts were, even to him, but he had a feeling they were just fine. Besides, small breasts meant she didn’t need to wear a bra in dresses like the one she happened to be wearing now. That just made easier access for him.

He could just see himself reaching inside the front of her dress, his fingers closing around her curves, his thumb brushing her nipples to attention. He’d seen a flash of color years before, in a white tank top she’d been wearing without a bra. He remembered small, pale pink nipples. Nipples he wanted to lick and suck and make her beg for more.

“I want you to say it again.” He didn’t mean to sound like a bossy asshole but he *did* want to hear her say it again, so he wouldn’t think it had all been a figment of his imagination.

And the minute she did say it again he was going to grab her hand and hightail it out of there. Thank god he’d actually brought cash to pay for their meal tonight. If he had to wait for a credit card to process, he might throw her on the table and ravish her right in the middle of the restaurant.

Ravish. He liked that word. A word Val had used time and again to describe various sexual exploits. A word that brought a blush to her cheeks and a surge to his cock every time she said it. Yeah, he definitely wanted to ravish Valentine. He wanted her to be *his* Valentine’s Day present. In more ways than one.

“You want me to say what again?” Her fork dropped against her plate with a clatter but he didn’t even flinch. He didn’t even move. He waited for her to say it again.

Val pressed a hand to her chest and took a deep breath. The movement made her dress fall forward a little and he craned his head, desperate for a glimpse of forbidden flesh. He felt like a young teenager trying to catch a look, hoping later to cop a feel.

“I can’t say it again, Gavin. It’s—not true.”

The way she stumbled over the last part of the sentence made him believe that it really was true. He could only hope. “What if I promise that when you say it I’ll give you an answer you’ll want to hear?”

“An answer I’ll want to hear?” She scrunched her nose and rubbed alongside of it again.

He smiled, enjoying her confusion, and the fear seeped out of him. “You tell me what you said earlier and I’ll agree with you.”

“Oh.” She sat up straighter and took a deep breath. Her lips pursed, her eyes narrowed and he’d never seen a sexier sight. “I said I wanted to have sex with you.”

Her voice sounded husky, aroused. She pressed her lips between her teeth, looking anxious.

“I want to have sex with you too, Valentine.” His throat grew dry and he gulped from his water glass before speaking again. “I want to make love to you all night long.”

Her breathing grew rapid, the rise and fall of her chest turning him on. Teasing him. “I’m not hungry anymore.”

“I’m hungry.” Gavin paused, grabbing his napkin from his lap and throwing it on the table. “For you.”

She smiled, a little giggle escaping her lips, and she threw her napkin on the table, too. “Forget dinner. Let’s go, Gavin.”

“My place or yours?”

“Yours.”

Chapter Three

Val followed Gavin inside his apartment and threw her purse down on the couch. She was so nervous she couldn't even speak, could barely walk from his car to the front door. She didn't know how he could look so calm, so cool. She was a jumble of nerves inside, her heart beating so hard she was afraid he could hear it. Yet he stood before her, an amused look on his sinfully handsome face, as if he found the entire situation funny.

It wasn't funny. It was more like her dream come true. And if it was only going to be for tonight, then she would take it.

She started to shrug out of the coat she'd put on when they got back to the car earlier but he rushed behind her, resting his large hands on her shoulders. "Let me help you," he murmured close to her ear. So close his warm breath fanned across her cheek, the side of his face almost brushing against hers.

Val stood very still, afraid to move as he slipped the coat off her shoulders, then down her arms. He shook it off, laid it across the back of the couch and then placed his hands on her shoulders again. His warm fingers caressed her. He slipped them underneath the fabric straps of her dress and she drew in a sharp breath. The heat from his touch seared her, made her entire body burn and she waited, breathless for his next move.

"Did I tell you how beautiful you look tonight?"

She shook her head, her hair brushing against her shoulders, across his hands, and he smoothed it to the side, revealing the back of her neck to him.

"Well, you are. You're so beautiful, Valentine. The most beautiful woman I know."

She was about to snort at his remark, remembering all of the gorgeous women he'd gone out with in the past—but then his mouth brushed against the sensitive flesh of her neck and she closed her eyes. His hands smoothed down her bare arms then came back up, his fingers light and slow, making her entire body tingle. His lips teased her skin, teeth nibbling, and then his fingers were *there*, playing with the tie of her halter dress.

"I've imagined doing this." His fingers fumbled with the knot and then it was undone, the fabric barely clinging to her skin, ready to fall forward and reveal her naked chest at any moment.

“You have?” She finally found her voice, surprised at his words.

“Yes.” His fingers flicked at one scrap of fabric, then the other, making the front of her dress fall to her waist. She’d worn no bra tonight, and she suddenly felt shy. She didn’t want to reveal her measly breasts to him; she felt inadequate compared to the babes he usually went out with.

His hands came around to cup her breasts, testing their weight in the palm of his hands. Val glanced down and bit her lip at the sight of his large, capable hands curved around her flesh, his thumbs sneaking up to brush against her nipples. Wetness surged between her legs, making her slick with need for him. “I don’t know what to do first. Kiss your mouth or suck your nipples.”

She didn’t know what she wanted him to do either. Both sounded wonderfully, sinfully good. She decided to go with his first offer. “I want you to kiss me, Gavin.”

He spun her around and his mouth met hers, his lips so soft, just like she remembered from long ago, but much more passionate tonight. More urgent and seeking, a little rougher, even. All of it delicious and wonderful and she wanted to savor the moment, savor him. She opened her mouth and his tongue thrust in, mating with hers. She groaned inside his mouth, unable to contain herself, thrilled that this was finally happening—happening with Gavin, the man she’d loved for so long.

He yanked her flush against him and rubbed his lower body against hers so she could feel his growing erection. Val had dreamed about this moment, fantasized about it for so long, but nothing was as good as the reality of it all, his hands roaming all over her body, fingers plucking at her nipples, his mouth plundering hers as his tongue danced with her tongue. All of it so decadent, so amazing she didn’t ever, *ever* want it to end.

“Ah, Val, you taste so good.” Gavin’s mouth left hers to trail kisses across her cheek, down her neck, across her collarbone. His gaze lifted. Eyes now dark with passion met hers and then he bent his head, drew her nipple into his mouth, and sucked hard.

Her knees buckled and his arm tightened around her waist, holding her flush against him as he lavished his attention on her breast, her nipple. She pushed her hands into his dark hair, threading her fingers through the silky strands, holding him to her. He moved to her other breast with a trail of wet kisses, his tongue laving her sensitive nipple, teeth nibbling, making her gasp from the pleasure/pain of it.

“I want to be inside you now,” he murmured against her damp skin. “I don’t know if I can wait.”

“Ssh.” She tugged on his hair, making him lift his head to look at her, and she smiled. She couldn’t really wait either but she wanted to enjoy this. She wanted them to take their time, to make love all night. “Take me to your bed, Gavin.”

Without hesitation he scooped her into his arms, holding her tight. She slipped her arms around his neck and pressed her cheek against his chest. She could feel the incessant pounding of his heart beneath her ear, feel the determination of his steps as he strode towards his room. He carried her with ease and she marveled at his strength, letting one hand slip down the side of his arm to curl around his bulging bicep. He was so strong. She knew how hard he worked out to maintain his gorgeous solid six-foot body—a body she couldn’t wait to touch and indulge in.

Gavin carried her into his bedroom and stopped at the foot of the bed, dropping her to her feet. She slithered down the front of him and a wicked gleam shone in his eyes. She suddenly wanted to burst with happiness, wanted to shout to the rooftops that she finally had Gavin Kingston where she wanted—in her arms. She never thought this moment would happen.

“We need to get rid of this dress,” he murmured, playing with the loose belt that looped around her waist.

“Maybe you could be just the man to help me with that.” She was surprised by her bold words; usually she wasn’t so forward in the bedroom, but this was Gavin. One of her oldest and dearest friends. A man she could say anything to.

He smiled, the sexy curve of his lips making her melt inside. “I’d be more than happy to oblige.”

The belt was barely knotted and he tugged at it, causing it to unfurl. He slipped it off, then reached for the zipper at her side. His fingers slid it down, even managing to slip inside the fabric and brush against the flesh it exposed. She jumped, surprised at his touch, and he pressed a kiss to her shoulder.

“I want to eat you up, all night long,” he whispered, forcing the dress over her hips so that it fell to a heap at her feet.

She stepped out of it, standing in only her panties and high heeled sandals. He moved away from her and let his gaze drink her in from head to toe. Her cheeks heated and she suddenly felt very naked. Very self-conscious. This was Gavin, after all, the man who chased after and landed perfect woman after perfect woman. She was far from perfect.

Her arms moved to wrap around her waist and he stopped her, placing his hands on her forearms, holding them aloft. "Don't hide from me, baby."

She shook her head, her heart skipping a beat at his endearment. "I'm embarrassed."

"There's nothing to be embarrassed about. We've known each other for years."

"That's exactly what I'm embarrassed about." His hands rested at her waist and she closed her eyes, reveling in the sensation of his touch. Hot fingers skimmed over her stomach then roamed up to circle around her breasts, and she sighed at the exquisite feeling of it all.

"Val, please don't be embarrassed." His pleading tone caused her to open her eyes, to watch him watch her. His expression was reverent, his hands were gentle as they came up to cup her cheeks. "I think this was meant to happen."

"Gavin, you haven't even noticed me for the past fifteen years. What made you change your mind tonight?"

"Thanksgiving."

She frowned. "What do you mean, Thanksgiving?"

"When I came over to your parents' house for Thanksgiving and you were sitting there all cozy with your boyfriend, practically in his lap. I realized I wanted to be that guy. *I* wanted you practically in *my* lap with your hand possessive on *my* thigh." His thumbs brushed her cheeks and he stepped even closer to her.

Val reached up to clutch at his wrists, holding on to him as if he were an anchor. "You felt all of those things, even though you had your girlfriend with you?"

"I'm a stupid man, Valentine. I can't believe the woman for me has been right under my nose all of these years. I've been plotting how to get in your good graces ever since that day in November."

He kissed her then, rendering her speechless, unable to even think about what she wanted to say. She could only savor the gentleness of his mouth, the taste of him. His hands cradled her face, making her feel precious, and she released her hold on his wrists. She slid her arms around his waist, pulled him even closer, and tugged the shirt out of his pants.

"I want to touch you," she whispered against his lips. "I want to feel your skin against mine."

Her hands went to the front of his shirt and she slipped each button out of its hole, slowly revealing his bare chest. He shrugged out of the shirt and she rested her hands on him, her fingers

tangling in the light dusting of dark hair between his pecs. She pressed her lips to the center of his chest and heard his sharply indrawn breath, which only seemed to urge her on. She blazed a trail across his muscled skin with her lips, her tongue sneaking out to lick, causing him to groan. She smiled, pleased that she could make him react so. She swirled her tongue around his nipple before drawing it into her mouth.

“Val, you’re killing me,” he said in a groan, his hands cupping the back of her head.

She sucked first one male nipple, then the other, copying what he had done to her earlier. Her teeth nipped, her lips sucked and he groaned again. His entire body stiffened, his hands clutching her hair almost painfully.

“I want to suck other things,” she murmured as she dropped to her knees before him, her face level with his crotch.

“Oh, shit.” He brushed the hair away from her face, watching her intently. She reached up to undo his belt buckle, pulled it out of the loops of his pants, undid the snap, and slid the zipper down over the bulge beneath his fly. She’d heard about his large cock, straight from the mouth of one of his former girlfriends from long ago, after Val had graduated from high school. He’d been younger then, and probably he’d learned a thing or two since, but the girl had practically foamed at the mouth when she described how he knew just how to use it. And how incredibly big it was.

Val had been full of jealousy, wishing *she* could be the one who knew just how big it was. That had been one of the worst conversations she’d ever endured in her life.

Shoving the old memory aside, she pushed his pants down his legs and he kicked them off impatiently. She untied his shoes and he shucked them off too. She pulled off his socks and then bent down and kissed the top of each foot. She could hear him chuckle above her.

“Foot fetish?” he asked.

“Gavin fetish,” she said with a saucy grin, adjusting herself so that she was on eye level with his groin.

His cock strained against the soft gray cotton of his boxer briefs and she licked her lips in anticipation. She’d waited for this for so long it felt like a birthday or Christmas. All of the anticipation and excitement had built to this one final moment and now that it was happening, she didn’t want to rush it. She wanted to make it last.

“What are you waiting for?” Gavin thrust his hips towards her, his cock coming dangerously close to her mouth, and she shook her head, her gaze meeting his.

“Haven’t you ever just wanted to enjoy the moment? I’m a little in shock here, considering I’m just about to go down on my very best friend.” It was true. Yes, she’d lusted for Gavin Kingston for pretty much as long as she’d known him, but she’d never thought anything was going to *happen*. She’d always thought it was wishful thinking.

Tonight, her wish was about to come true. A Valentine’s Day present for Valentine. How apt.

“Come on Val, I can’t wait for you to go down on your best friend.”

He sounded like he was in pain. As if he was begging. She liked it—it made her feel powerful, something she’d never felt regarding Gavin before. He’d always been the one to call the shots, or to hold the power, so to speak.

“Oh, all right,” she said with a sigh, her hands coming to rest at the waistband of his briefs.

She pulled them down slowly; his cock caught on the fabric and she stretched them out, then down again. Slowly she slid the underwear down his strong legs, not looking up, wanting to save the best for last. She normally didn’t find the male anatomy that fascinating or even beautiful, but this was Gavin. When it came down to it, the answer always was *because of Gavin*. The male species, relationships, sex, all of it was special because now it involved Gavin.

He kicked off the underwear and stood splendidly naked before her, completely on display. For her pleasure, for her perusal. She sat back on her haunches and drank him in, her mouth parting, a little sigh escaping her lips.

His cock stood straight out from his body, his balls nestled snug beneath it—a solid eight inches at least, maybe even more. It was definitely the biggest she’d ever seen in person and up close. Dark curling hair surrounded the base of it and a glistening drop of pre cum rested in the slit of its plum-shaped head. She leaned forward and licked it away, the tangy salt taste of him dissolving on her tongue.

He drew her name out in a groan and she smiled, gripping the base of his cock with her hand. She hadn’t given very many blow jobs in her past, had never been that confident in her skills. Especially after one boyfriend berated her for something she did in the middle of one...

Val shook her head. The last thing she needed to think about was a shitty ex-boyfriend. Not when she had Gavin’s delectable cock in her hand and he was so anxious for her to do something, anything to it. Well, probably not just anything...

Chapter Four

The woman was going to kill him, Gavin was sure of it. She looked like some sort of sex goddess, naked with the exception of her sheer red lace panties and sexy black heels, her hand on his cock and her lush lips poised at its head, looking ready to swallow him in one smooth move. Yet she didn't move and he swore he saw a smile flit across her mouth. What the hell was she waiting for?

"Valentine?"

She shook her head, her hair spilling over her shoulders, and gazed up at him. Her hazel eyes were fiery with passion, her cheeks flushed, her mouth extra plump from his kisses. How he wanted to thrust himself between those plump lips, to see and feel her suck him with all her might. If he didn't watch it he'd come right there before she even got the chance.

"Sorry," she whispered, her delicate pink tongue snaking out to dab at the tip of his penis yet again. "Do you want me to do more?"

He nodded vigorously, afraid his head might bobble off. "Oh, yeah, baby. I definitely want you to do more."

She nudged closer, her lips wrapping around the head of his cock, and he groaned at the feel of the warm wet cavern of her mouth surrounding him. She hummed in response. The vibration of her mouth made his cock pulse and he closed his eyes, lost in the sensation, gasping when she slid him further inside.

Her slim fingers gripped the base of him as she slid him in and out of her mouth, her other hand coming up to cup his balls, and he knew right then if she continued he'd come in her mouth. Spurt himself dry straight down her throat. And he didn't want to do that. *No*. He wanted to be buried balls-deep inside her pussy the first time they came together, wanted to feel her wrapped around him and clutching him like she would never let go.

But the sensations she was conjuring up with her skilled lips and tongue, her fingers tickling his balls—he couldn't help but fuck her mouth for just a little bit, his hips moving in a rhythm he planned to duplicate deep in her pussy. Just the thought of being plunged deep in her welcoming body was going to set him off. He withdrew from her mouth, full of regret.

Val leaned back on her haunches, a pouty frown turning down the corners of her mouth. Her lips glistened from the combination of her saliva and his juices and her chest was flushed, her nipples like hard little pink points. He'd never seen a more beautiful sight.

"Gavin," she said, her voice petulant, "why'd you stop?"

"When I come, I want to be inside you," he said through gritted teeth, grabbing her hands and hauling her up to her feet.

"Oh." She smiled coyly, her arms wrapping around his neck. Her breasts pressed against his naked chest and he had the sudden urge to suck on those sweet little nipples until she shattered with ecstasy. "I can't argue with that."

"Good, 'cause I won't let you." He pulled her down onto the king-sized bed, the fluffy comforter puffing up around them, and she giggled when he rolled over and pressed her into the mattress.

"I've imagined being here with you. In your bed." Her eyes had darkened to a deep golden brown, reminding him of a cat. A very satisfied cat.

"I've wanted you here in my bed, too." He reached up and smoothed the fine strands of hair away from her forehead. "This is real, Valentine. Do you feel it?"

She nodded and bit down hard on her lower lip. "Yes."

"Now that I have you, I'm never going to let you go," he whispered, suddenly overcome with emotion, unable to look at her.

He buried his face in her neck instead, pressed wet kisses on the slender column of her throat. She arched beneath him, her nipples brushing against the hair of his chest. His hand trailed down to curve around one, cupping her, fingers tugging at her nipple and he felt the moan start in her chest, the sound of it vibrating against his lips.

"I'm going to kiss you everywhere," he whispered, shifting so that he was facing her breasts and drawing one nipple into his mouth.

She held him to her and when he glanced up, he found her watching him, her lips parted, her eyes blazing. He sucked her breast deep into his mouth as far as it would go and then released her. His tongue darted out to circle around first one peak and then the other.

Gavin had never been one for eye contact during sex, not even with Carla, a woman he had said he loved and had been with for two years in his mid-twenties. He'd thought he'd marry her,

but they had grown apart, wanting different things. No, even when he'd made love to Carla, he'd rarely made eye contact. He'd found it too personal, too intense, just too much.

With Valentine, he wanted to stare into her eyes all night. He wanted to watch her reactions to him, wanted to show his reactions towards her. He wanted to connect with her in every way possible.

God, he was so in love with her. Now if he could only gather up the courage to say it out loud.

"Oh, yes, Gavin. That feels so good," she whispered, her beautiful gaze never leaving him.

He smiled and moved down, paying careful attention to her stomach. She wasn't too skinny, like some of the other women he'd been with, but she had a flat, slightly rounded stomach. A pretty belly button that made him want to dip his tongue inside to explore. So he did, making her gasp.

The scent of her arousal surrounded him and he slipped down even further, staring at her red lace panties. He could feel her entire body tremble and he knew that she waited for his next move with anticipation, but he was giving her a taste of her own medicine, remembering how she'd made him wait in agony before she wrapped her lips around his cock. He could just make out the shadow of her reddish blonde curls beneath the lace fabric and he buried his face in her crotch.

Gavin breathed in deeply and blew his hot breath on her center, making her quiver. Her legs wrapped around his head and rested on his shoulders. He slid his hands beneath her, gripped her ass and darted his tongue out, teasing her, making her moan.

Hearing her desperate cry he couldn't contain himself any longer. He shoved her panties to the side and looked his fill, his eyes drinking in the fair curling hair and the pink glistening depths of her pussy. He swallowed hard and looked up at her. Her head was thrown back, her long hair spilling all over his pillow; she was a sight he wanted burned into his brain forever. He never wanted to forget this, their first night of making love. Their first of many nights together. Of that, he was sure.

Since when had he become such a romantic? *When it started to involve Valentine. She brought this out in him. She was the one meant for him, the one he knew he wanted to spend the rest of his life with.*

"Oh, god, Gavin, what are you waiting for?"

Her voice was whisper thin, full of need, and he smiled. Her words mirrored what he'd said to her earlier. Too overwhelmed to reply, not wanting to admit what he was thinking just yet, he dipped his head and kissed her *there*, right at the top of her slit. She spread her legs wider, revealing herself to him, her wet glistening folds beckoning him. He didn't hold back but buried his face between her legs and licked her from top to bottom, making her cry out.

She tasted amazing and she was so wet for him. He sucked her hooded clit into his mouth, teased his tongue over it and she tensed against him, shoving her hands into his hair. He licked and sucked, then shifted so he could thrust first one, then two fingers into her passage, making her groan long and loud. He finger fucked her and sucked her clit between his lips until she shattered against him, her body convulsing, his name sounding from her lips over and over and over again.

He'd thought her beautiful before but he'd never seen a more gorgeous sight than his Valentine coming for him. Falling apart all around him, because of him. He felt strong, like he wanted to beat his chest and shout to the rooftops and then take her into his arms and hold her close, whisper sweet words in her ear.

Tell her that he loved her.

"Gavin," she whispered, her fingers tugging on the ends of his hair so that he had no choice but to look up at her.

She smiled, her lips trembling, her forehead shiny with sweat. "That was amazing."

"It'll be even more amazing when I'm deep inside you," he said, removing her legs from him, then casting off her panties. He slid back up so he could wrap his arms around her.

"Then what are you waiting for?" Her arms came around his neck and she held him close, kissing his jaw, nipping at it.

He had no idea, but he wasn't about to waste any more time.

Chapter Five

No man had ever made Val come like that before, never. His skilled lips and tongue, so delicious, so intent in their purpose. And when he'd thrust his fingers deep inside her, increasing his pace, even a little roughly—*oh, my*. She'd fallen apart, come like a wild woman, her orgasm taking her over so that she thought it would never end.

Could someone die from having too intense an orgasm? If not, then she just had the closest thing to a near-death experience. She'd literally felt like her soul had drifted out of her body and she'd watched the entire thing happen like a voyeur: His dark head buried between her legs, his tanned skin contrasting with her pale legs wrapped across his back. Her hands buried in his hair, holding him against her shamelessly as she thrashed about. Her breasts bouncing, her head tossing and turning, her entire body growing stiff right before she came apart.

It had been beautiful, breathtaking, amazing. She wanted to experience it again and again and again.

"Do you have condoms?" she asked, always wanting to be safe, knowing that he would take the utmost care of her.

"Of course, thank god." Gavin reached across her and opened the bedside table, pulling out a string of foil packets. "Luckily enough I come well supplied. We can go for it well into the night."

Her eyes widened. He wanted to make love to her that many times in one night? She wondered if she'd be able to even walk the next morning. "*Gavin*."

"*Gavin*," he sing-songed right back at her, tearing one foil packet off, then handing it to her. "Now that I have you in my bed I'm not going to stop making love to you until we pass out from exhaustion."

"I doubt if I'll be able to even get out of bed tomorrow," she said, opening the packet.

"Guess you'll have to call in sick, huh?" His voice teased, but his cock rubbing against her belly said other things. More urgent, serious things. Like how much he wanted to be buried inside of her. *Now*.

She grasped him, stroked him like a little tease and then rolled the condom over his thick penis. Her gaze lifted and she found him watching her so tenderly, his expression so sweet that

she leaned up and kissed him. No passion, no mating of tongues, no opened-mouth hurriedness, just the sweetest kiss. She wanted to express her love for him, wanted to show him how much he meant to her. All in this one kiss.

“Valentine,” he whispered when she broke away, his lips trying to follow her.

She smiled and reached up to touch the corner of his sensual mouth with her fingertips. “Gavin.”

“I want to be inside you,” he whispered.

She rolled over onto her back, taking him with her. “Please.”

He poised at her entry, his cock nudging at her, and she spread her legs wide and held her arms out to him. “You’re so beautiful, my sweet Valentine.”

She giggled but the sound died on her lips when she saw the serious light in his eyes. “Oh, Gavin.”

He slid inside, and it felt like he belonged there. As if he’d just come home. Her arms wrapped around his middle and they stayed like that, locked in each other’s embrace, his cock filling her, throbbing inside of her. Two people coming together as one.

And then he slowly started to move, to push in and out, and she moved with him, meeting him thrust for thrust. He buried himself deep, so deep, and his cock felt so good inside her. She wrapped her legs around his hips, taking him deeper, and he groaned and propped himself above her.

“Open your eyes, sweetheart. I want you to look at me.”

Val did so, captivated by the intensity of his cloudy blue gaze, awed by all of the emotions she saw crossing his handsome face. She loved him—she loved him so much—but did he love her? Did he feel for her the same way she felt about him? She knew he had feelings for her, had to have feelings for her considering how long they’d known each other, but did they match the intensity of hers? Could he really imagine them together forever?

She forgot all about her worries, though, when the delicious friction of his cock thrusting inside of her made her belly tingle, made her entire body tighten in anticipation of another orgasm. He thrust harder, burying himself so deep the head of his cock hit her womb and then he came with a shout, calling her name as his orgasm shook him. She came too, her body tightening around him, her inner walls milking his thick cock as wave after wave of pleasure washed over her.

Only Gavin could make her feel this way, she thought as she clutched at his wide shoulders, her ankles digging into his back. Only Gavin could make her come like this, feel like this, love like this.

But would he be able to return the feelings? She didn't know. She wanted to know, but was almost too afraid to ask.

He withdrew from her, pulled the used condom off of him, and threw it to the floor.

"Eww," she couldn't help but say.

Gavin smiled and rolled her over so she sat astride him. She could feel his erection already growing; it amazed her that he was ready to go again so quickly.

"I don't have time to throw it away properly, sweetheart. I want to be inside you again. Now."

Val could only oblige him.

Chapter Six

Val stretched languidly, threw her arms above her head, and put her whole self into it. She'd spent the past seven incredible nights with Gavin, long sexy nights that went well into the morning, when they'd both collapse wrapped around each other, spent from wild lovemaking.

The man was insatiable, she thought with a smile, not ready to open her eyes yet. He knew just how to touch her, just what to say to make her burn, make her go up in flames. And he'd been so sweet to her, too. Sending flowers to her work, taking her out to dinner, giving her a back massage that led to a steamy night of *mmm-mmm-good sex*.

She could get quite used to this kind of treatment.

Finally opening her eyes, she glanced at the clock, surprised that it was already past six. Gavin had sent her up to his bedroom earlier in the afternoon, telling her to take a nap while he prepared a special dinner, and she'd gladly obliged. Who knew he could cook? Who knew that he would even want to make her a romantic dinner? She'd never seen this side of him before, so tender and sweet. He was full of surprises: romantic gestures and passionate kisses, loving glances and playful touches. She liked it—no. She *loved* it. She loved him, was dying to tell him that, actually, but he never said it, never even implied it.

So she waited. And waited. And waited. Of course, a week of waiting was pretty short in the grand scheme of things but—*damn it*—she wanted to tell him so badly how she felt. She couldn't help but be too shy, too insecure to do so. Too afraid he might not love her in return. She told herself she could be happy with this, with taking their relationship slowly, allowing it to progress to the point where he'd be ready to declare his love.

How she wished he would just hurry up and do it.

With a sigh Val crawled out of bed and smoothed her hair back from her face. She'd slept for almost three hours. She must have needed it after the many nights with hardly any sleep and exhausting sex.

Funny how she hadn't told anyone she was with Gavin. Not her parents, and certainly not her brother. Not even her best friends at work, and she always confided her boyfriend frustrations to them. No, she kept this little tidbit to herself, still afraid she might wake up in the morning and discover all of it had been a dream.

Foolish, she told herself as she shuffled to the door. This was *real*. She needed to get over her worry and insecurities and enjoy her time with him.

“Gavin,” she called from the cracked open door, wondering if dinner was ready yet.

“Are you awake, sweetheart?” he yelled from what sounded like the kitchen.

She smiled. “No, my voice is a figment of your imagination. I’m still really asleep.”

“Smart ass.”

Val laughed. “Is dinner ready yet?”

“Uh, almost.” She heard something clank, sounding like a pot, and then the water came on. “Why don’t you take a quick shower and come down when you’re finished? It should be ready by then.”

“All right.”

Once she’d finished her shower, she came out into the bedroom to see an exquisite dress laid out on top of the bed, midnight blue in color and strapless. She dipped down and touched it, smoothing the tips of her fingers over its silky fabric.

“Oh, my,” she whispered, picking it up. She went to the mirrored closet door and held the beautiful dress in front of her.

She turned left, then right, making the skirt swirl around her, and she knew she’d never seen a prettier dress. It was a color she would’ve never chosen for herself, but once she slipped it on she realized it was the perfect color for her. It complimented her coloring, made her skin seem to almost glow.

Well, it might have been the color that made her glow, or the man who gave her the dress, she thought with a smile.

After applying some makeup and spritzing on Gavin’s favorite perfume, she went out into the living room to greet him. And stopped short in her tracks.

The entire room had been transformed into a Valentine’s paradise. Red and pink balloons floated to the ceiling. Cut out pink paper hearts hanging from strings dangled from the ceiling fan. A giant bouquet of red roses sat in the middle of the coffee table. She turned and noticed the small fire roaring in the fireplace, and then Gavin appeared. He looked so handsome in a dark blue suit that matched the color of her dress, a white dress shirt offsetting the darkness of his skin. His dark brown hair gleamed in the soft light of the room and his sensuous lips curved into a smile.

“Happy Valentine’s Day,” he murmured.

Val brought her hand to her heart, surprised by everything he had done, all of the preparation. “We already celebrated Valentine’s Day.”

Gavin shook his head and started walking towards her. “Not properly. Not the way the woman I love deserves.”

Her eyes widened, her ears rang. Did he just say he *loved* her? “Gavin, I—I don’t know what to say.”

He stood before her, wrapping his arm around her middle, and pulled her close to his hot, hard body. “How about saying, ‘I love you, too, Gavin.’”

She rested her hands on his chest, felt his rapidly beating heart beneath her touch. *He must be nervous. How sweet.* “I need to hear you say it first.”

He sighed and then kissed her forehead, his lips tender against her skin. “I love you, Valentine. I’ve loved you for a long time. I guess I just didn’t realize it. You’re so important to me, the most important person in my life, and I don’t know what I would do if I ever lost you.”

“Oh, Gavin.” She closed her eyes and tilted her head back for his brief kiss. “I love you too.”

“Dinner’s waiting for you in the dining room. Do you want to open your present before we eat, or after?”

“There’s a present?” She couldn’t help the eager tone in her voice.

He nodded, smiling nervously. “I hope you like it.”

“I want to see it now. Please.”

Gavin reached inside his jacket pocket and brought out a small black velvet box. Val’s entire body shook at the sight of it, her breath coming in short spurts as he got down on one knee and took her hand in his.

“I wanted this night to be a night to remember. That’s why I bought you the dress I knew you would look beautiful in, why I decorated the house to look like my favorite holiday, prepared a meal for the woman I love more than anything in the entire world.” He paused, his blue gaze boring into her, and her heart lifted. “Will you marry me, Valentine? Will you be *my* Valentine, forever?”

Oh, it should've been corny. She should've burst out laughing at the silliness of it all, but nothing about it was silly or corny. No, the man she loved was asking for her hand in marriage, asking her to be his Valentine and she wanted to scream with joy.

He opened the small box to reveal a large, stunning round solitaire diamond nestled in black velvet, twinkling up at her. She couldn't help it, she began to cry.

"Is that a yes?" he asked, his voice cracking.

Val nodded, hysteria bubbling up inside of her, and she couldn't even speak. Her mouth opened and out came a sob. Of happiness.

"Val." He stood and crushed her to him and she cried into his shirt front, so overcome with emotions she felt like a fool.

"Yes," she whispered against him. "Yes, I'll be your Valentine."

He leaned away from her, grasped her left hand, and slipped the ring on her finger. She held it aloft, gazing at it as it sparkled in the light, and she felt giddy. She was going to be Gavin's wife. *Gavin's wife!*

"I love you so much, Valentine. This is the happiest day of my life." He kissed her then, a kiss so full of passion and love she felt as if she just might burst.

"I love you too, Gavin. Happy Valentine's Day."

"Happy Valentine's Day, sweetheart."