

A man with dark hair and blue eyes is shown in profile, kissing a woman on the cheek. The woman has long, wavy red hair and is wearing a green and gold patterned halter top. They are positioned in front of a Christmas tree decorated with red ornaments and lights. The background is a warm, yellowish glow.

**FAWN  
LOWERY**

**UNDER THE  
MISTLETOE**

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Under the Mistletoe  
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## Dedication:

To all the hard-working Editors and Artists at eXtasy  
Books. Thank you!

## CHAPTER ONE

Sonja Mercer was so angry she could hardly sit still in the airplane seat. She turned her gaze out the window of the plane, staring into the endless blue sky. Two days earlier, her imbecile cousin, Franky Mercer had gone behind her back and sold his half of the family business to Donovan Dix, a man from New York who was infamous for buying small businesses and quickly reselling them to make a profit. Mercer Warehouses consisted of a three-block section of large metal buildings stretching along port New Orleans on the Mississippi River, and provided the overseas shipping traffic with temporary storage for their goods. The business had been formed by Sonja's grandfather, Marcus Mercer, and his brother William, then passed down through the generations until it was bequeathed to Sonja and Franky.

"Up until Franky's birth, there was no stupidity in the Mercer family," she bit out between clenched teeth.

"Did you say something?"

The voice was male, low toned and accompanied by a warm hand lightly touching Sonja's left wrist.

She jerked her head around, suddenly aware that her irate emotions had surfaced verbally and caught the attentions of the man sitting beside her.

A pair of sparkling blue eyes met her inquisitive glare, and halted the nasty retort on her tongue. Swallowing down the urge to tell him to mind his own business, she was shaken to the core by his drop-dead good looks. Dark chiseled facial planes accentuated by coal black hair and eyebrows immediately sent her senses toward the erotic. And then he smiled at her—a slow, sexy grin that displayed his perfect white teeth—and a throb of want grasped her insides.

“Were you speaking to me?” he further inquired.

His hand still lay on her wrist, and the smooth pads of his fingers seemed to be searing her delicate flesh. Even seated, she could tell he was tall. She had to tip her head slightly to look into his face. He was dressed in a cream-colored wool sweater with gray slacks, and as she stared at him, she became aware of his cologne, a slightly tangy aroma that beckoned to her female senses.

She gave a slight shake to her head, sending her tresses cascading across her left shoulder. “No,” she replied, feeling silly admitting she had been talking to herself. “I wasn’t aware that I had spoken out loud.” Her cheeks pinked slightly.

Both of his dark eyebrows rose slightly at her admission, and his smile broadened. “Holiday stress?” he asked, his thumb rubbing the sensitive skin of her wrist.

"No," she said. "*Business stress.*"

Why had she said that?

She let out a long sigh and slid her hand out of his reach. Now if she could just manage to break eye contact with him –

"Want to talk about it?" he inquired. He slid the bulky sweater sleeve up past the gold watch on his wrist. "We'll be in the air quite a while, and I hear talking about a problem releases tension."

Sonja chuckled despite her anger. Why in the world would she divulge anything concerning her business dealings to a stranger?

"And I'm a very good listener," he added, reaching into Sonja's lap and picking up her hand. "Go ahead. Try me."

Such an invitation, she thought, suddenly vividly aware of the stranger's outward show of interest in her. His palm was smooth and warm, and her palm settled invitingly against it while his fingers closed over hers. A heady sensation stirred her senses.

Let it out, she thought. Go ahead and talk to him.

"I can't possibly burden you with my problems," she hedged. A little voice inside her insisted otherwise, but she refused to give in. She wasn't in the habit of talking to anyone about her problems.

"I insist," he remarked, giving her hand a squeeze.

She felt a sudden warmth bubble up inside her. He seemed so kind, she thought, trying to stifle the sensual urges he was causing her to feel.

"Well," she began, feeling a little foolish. "Last week my cousin sold his share of our business to a

man that I fear will try to take over the company.”

His left eyebrow quirked upward.

“If my stupid cousin would have come to me—I would have bought his share.” She pulled in a long breath. “Franky enjoys spending money, and quite honestly, he thinks himself a ladies’ man.”

The handsome stranger chuckled aloud, a deep resonating tone that sent a delightful shiver through Sonja’s body. He tipped his handsome head slightly as he turned inquiring eyes on her.

“And does your cousin put his personal life ahead of business?”

“Franky puts sex ahead of everything.” She blushed the second the words slipped from her lips. She wasn’t usually so free with her assumptions of people. But Franky had it coming, she guessed, reminded of an incident just that past summer. Franky hosted a swimming party at his lavish home and Sonja was foolish enough to attend—that was, until she glimpsed the guests parading around the pool naked.

“Lighten up, Sonja,” Franky insisted, stripping out of his bikini swim trunks. “Have a drink and let loose.”

“No, thank you!” she insisted, gathering her things to leave. “I’ve no intentions of becoming involved in one of your sex orgies!”

Amusement sparkled in the handsome stranger’s blue eyes. “I take it, then, that you are a bit old fashioned.”

Sonja’s arched eyebrows drew together in

contemplation. She liked sex. But it was a private thing. And she had as yet any urge to attend an orgy.

“I don’t think business and sex are to be mixed.”

“Oh...I see.”

“Do you?” She felt her anger returning with lightening haste. “Or is mixing business and sex a man thing?”

He chuckled aloud. “What’s gender got to do with it?”

“Well, I’ve never had the urge to strip off my panties and fuck a customer!”

He caught her gaze. “Maybe the right customer hasn’t arrived yet.”

She sucked in a quick breath, turning her head away. She was talking sex with this handsome stranger. All at once, she realized her crotch was moist. Maybe it was time to change the subject. Or perhaps she should have stayed home. But on the other hand, there was no reason for her to stay at home and spend another Christmas alone, either. The trip was, in part, meant to occupy her time through the holiday season.

“Would either of you like a beverage?”

Sonja turned her head to see the stewardess had suddenly stopped her cart in the aisle near the seats. She quickly requested a gin and tonic, telling herself that the liquor would settle her nervousness.

“Thank you,” she said accepting the drink her seat partner passed to her.

“Where were we? Oh, yes. You’ve never stripped out of your panties and fucked a customer,” he said.



Sonja almost choked on the swallow of liquor. In the next instant she was fully engulfed in a loud fit of coughing.

He took the drink from her hand and patted her back until she could get control of herself. When next she was able to look at him, she saw his handsome features lit with amusement. She at once burst into laughter.

"Who are you?" she asked when she was finally able to catch her breath.

"My friends call me Joe," he answered, offering his hand. "And you are —"

"Sonja Mercer," she replied laying her hand in his. "Nice to meet you, Joe." She raised the mixed drink to her lips and took a sip, suddenly aware that her anger had dissipated and she felt much better.

"And you're headed to Aspen?" he asked.

"Yes."

"So am I. I'm staying at the Alpine Lodge. Are you a good skier?" he inquired. His eyes slid along her legs, clad in black spandex slacks and crossed at the knee. "With those long legs —" His words broke off, as though suddenly thinking of another thing she could do with her long legs.

"I'm a bunny slope beginner," she divulged. "This will only be the second time I've ever gone skiing. How about you?" Surely he's an expert, she thought, her eyes wafting over his powerful physique.

"This is a business trip for me," he replied, signaling the stewardess for another drink.

"Really," Sonja remarked. Did she dare ask about

his business? Or comment on the coincidence that they were both registered at the Alpine lodge?

\* \* \* \*

Sonja was near frozen by the time they arrived at the Alpine Lodge. The snow was coming down so hard that the giant wooden structure was only a shadowy blur situated at the base of the mountain. She clutched the collar of her parka with a gloved fist, tucking her nose down into its warmth.

There was a scrambling of hotel crew to get everybody safely inside the lodge, and the baggage unloaded from the rear of the tracked conveyance that had bought them up the mountain road from the airport. As Sonja made her way along the snow-covered walkways to the main entrance of the lodge, a thought took root in her head.

*What if we're snowed in for the whole week?*

The steadying hand on her left elbow kept her from falling on the slick surface until she made it to the door. Once inside the lobby, the sheer beauty of the place made her jaw drop open.

Christmas was in full swing, including Christmas carols being played over the sound system. The wide lobby with its vaulted ceiling was decked out in red and gold. A multitude of twinkling lights spanned the arched staircase leading to the second floor. A massive evergreen trimmed in holiday elegance towered adjacent to a marble mantled fireplace.

The lobby was crowded with those streaming

through the front entrance and those all ready occupying the couches and over-sized chairs before the roaring fire. Sonja was headed toward the front desk when she spied a bellboy striding across the foyer with her bag.

Finally they had arrived, she thought, getting in line to check in. A quick glance over her shoulder confirmed the fact that the handsome stranger she had chatted with so amiably on the plane had gone his own way. She felt a surge of regret, but then remembered he had said the trip was for business purposes. Perhaps his business contact was already checked in and he had gone to find his room. At any rate, he had been a very pleasant pastime on the plane and thanks to him, she had been able to put aside thoughts of Franky for a moment.

She felt the hand on her waist seconds before the long arm drew her back against a solid male body.

"I'd love to buy you dinner."

Sonja knew it was Joe without turning her head to look at him. A sensual tingle traveled through her insides at the feel of his body pressed against hers.

"Eight o'clock in the restaurant?"

"Okay," she managed to reply, then felt him withdraw. The strangest sense of regret filtered through her insides.

## CHAPTER TWO

**S**onja's room was on the second floor of the lodge, a spacious area with a large window that overlooked the front façade. She immediately drew the heavy drapery so she could look outside. It was near blizzard conditions, she noted, her eyes unable to see much past the frosted glass.

A wave of sadness suddenly washed over her.. Christmastime had turned into a lonely time for her since the passing of her parents two years ago.. Since then she had dreaded the holiday with its aura of gaiety and home comforts. Her thoughts took an abrupt turn toward Franky. He was all the family she had left – if she dared refer to him as family.

She turned from the window and raised the lid of her suitcase, deciding to unpack. As she removed the heavy woolen sweaters and stylish ski pants, she wondered if she'd even manage to get on the slopes once during her time at the lodge, since the storm seemed so intense.

Then she remembered the handsome man she was going to have dinner with. Joe. Funny, she didn't even know his last name. Nor cared, she tacked on.

He was interested in her sexually—judging from their time on the airplane and the ride to the lodge.

The thought made her drag in a deep breath. Joe could be the diversion she needed to get her through the Christmas holiday. And God knew she needed a diversion. Franky had dealt her a personal blow when he sold his share of the family business. A rush of hot tears sprang to her eyes. Of all the stupid people to have for a relative—

“Don’t think about it,” she said aloud. She had left town to forget for a while—not to spend the time reliving the incident.

She poked her clothes into one of the empty bureau drawers and took her cosmetic case into the bathroom. If she didn’t take control of her thinking—who would?

Joe.

The thought lodged in her brain. He seemed more than willing to monopolize her time.

And so, she should let him.

A short burst of laughter jumped from her throat. She hadn’t allowed herself any leisure time in almost a year. Holy cow! Had she gone that long without sex? She paused and gazed at her reflection in the wide mirror spanning the bathroom wall. Her life was pretty much all work.

She didn’t usually wear her hair loose on her shoulders. It was almost mandatory that she present a stern appearance to the employees of Mercer Warehouses, therefore she had adapted the severe look of a French twist pressed tightly against the back

of her head. She had been in business long enough to know that men resented a woman for a boss, making it necessary for her to take a no-nonsense approach to running the warehouses.

She combed her fingers through her auburn tresses, savoring their silky feel. At twenty-eight, she had neither plans to marry nor a steady boyfriend. Maybe she was destined to be single all her life. She grimaced as her green gaze deliberately swept her lush figure. Well, deciding not to marry didn't mean she couldn't enjoy a man...or sex.

She glanced at her watch and saw that it was almost dinnertime—time to meet Joe in the lodge restaurant. She smoothed her palms along her waist, then lowered them to skim across her hips. She'd change clothes, she decided. She had brought a vivid red cashmere sweater to wear with black leggings—she'd dazzle handsome Joe.

“Right,” she muttered, yanking her wool sweater over her head.

She didn't exactly see herself as a beautiful woman—but men noticed her often enough. Perhaps it was her large globelike breasts and the regal way she carried herself. Or maybe she really was sexy, and just oblivious to the fact.

“Shut up,” she said to herself.

\* \* \* \*

She spied him at a small table near the window in the restaurant and a wanton throb pulsed through her

insides. He was, perhaps, the most handsome man she had ever met. She bit her bottom lip. Handsome men are notorious for womanizing, she reminded. Her mother had always warned her about such things and Sonja guessed it was true, given her remembrance of her father's escapades with women.

She shook her head, dislodging the memories. She'd only be at the lodge through the holidays, and then she'd never see Joe again.

"So have a good time," she mumbled beneath her breath as she aimed her feet across the restaurant toward Joe.

He saw her approaching, watching her with interest in his blue eyes as she wove her way amid the tables, glimpsed the male heads turning to stare at her as she passed through the room. He stood to welcome her—or to lay claim to her--as she drew near.

Sonja allowed the welcoming kiss, a quick peck on her left cheek, and slid into the padded chair he held for her. He was even more handsome than she remembered—now dressed in black slacks and a navy blue dress shirt. His attire was hardly that of someone at the lodge to ski, but then she remembered he had said he was there on business.

"You look beautiful," he complimented, his eyes drinking her in. "Red is your color."

"Thank you," Sonja said and felt heat rise to her cheeks.

She'd no sooner sat down than a waitress arrived to take their drink orders. Feeling as though she had earned the few days away and any bit of pleasure she

could garner, she was delighted when Joe ordered a bottle of champagne.

“Let’s celebrate our new acquaintance,” he said and gave her a wink.

A wonderful idea, she thought as a shiver of longing coursed through her insides. Perhaps the following days would prove very interesting. She glanced toward the window near their table. A bevy of colored lights illuminated the front façade of the lodge and gave the falling snow a mesmerizing aura. Behind them, in the hustle and bustle of the restaurant crowd, a small combo played Christmas carols. The room was large and tastefully decorated with ropes of greenery and sparkling lights.

If only she could feel the spirit of the season.

She knew better than to allow her thoughts to get the better of her and she quickly made up her mind to live for the moment – throw caution to the wind.

“You’re not married or anything, are you, Joe?” she asked suddenly, then wondered why she’d bothered. She didn’t really care if he had ten wives and three-dozen kids—he belonged to her for the duration of their stay at the lodge.

He chuckled and shook his head. “No. I’m not married—or anything. How about you?” He paused and looked at her.

The waitress returned just then with the champagne Joe had ordered and they placed their dinner order. The short interruption gave Sonja time to remind herself not to be too forward—if that was possible.



"Well?" he coaxed.

Sonja shook her head, sending her long hair bouncing across her shoulders. "I'm free as a bird."

His left eyebrow quirked upward. "A beautiful woman, unattached?"

Sonja picked up her glass of champagne and took a sip. "I'm a workaholic," she answered. "I haven't time to devote to a relationship."

"So there's no long term commitment in your future?" he pressed.

She smiled slowly, amused at his interest in her. It was nice...and very arousing.

"Long term?" She pretended to ponder her answer for a moment, watching him over the rim of her glass. How does he look naked? she thought, her mind flooded with sensual musings.

"Is that a no?" he prompted.

"The future is too far away," she responded, downing the remainder of liquor in her glass.

Joe quickly refilled her glass, smiling slightly. "That's an interesting answer," he remarked.

"Well, I'm an interesting person," she said, then giggled softly.

His blue gaze washed over her face, pausing on her mouth before rising to lock gazes with her. "I've no doubt that you are," he said in a low tone.

A flush of heat traveled up her neck, flushing her cheeks. Good grief, she reprimanded herself. He'll think I'm a total fool.

"You're on a business trip?" she asked, quickly calling attention to him and taking the focus off

herself.

He nodded his head at her.

“Rather a strange time for business – what with it being Christmas,” she commented, slightly shrugging one shoulder.

“Christmas is just another day.”

“Really. That’s an interesting outlook.”

He looked across the table at her, a glimmer of seriousness in his eyes. “I lost both my parents when I was fifteen. Since then there hasn’t been anything to celebrate at Christmas time. So I usually work.”

“I’m sorry,” Sonja muttered.

He gave her a quick smile. “So what’s your story – aside from your back-stabbing cousin dealing you a lousy blow?”

It seemed right that she should tell him about her personal life – her parents’ fate and how she had come to shun family gatherings because of her grief.

He raised his wine glass suddenly. “Here’s to our spending Christmas together, Sonja,” he offered.

Quickly she picked up her glass and clinked it against his, taking quick note of the sensual gleam in his eyes.

Their meals arrived and they turned their attentions to eating. Sonja could feel the effects of the champagne on her empty stomach and knew she needed food to combat the woozy feeling creeping up on her. Momentarily she found herself enjoying the succulent steak, giving her senses over to the gay atmosphere inside the room. The lovely strains of ‘Silent Night’ wafted about the area, entwined with a

mingling of voices from the diners.

Once they finished their entrée, a waitress appeared with coffee and dessert. Sonja gazed down at the large slice of chocolate cake she had ordered and grimaced. Her stomach was full; she had no room for dessert, despite its delectable appearance.

"I should have passed on dessert," she confessed, laying one hand on her full stomach.

"Nonsense," Joe declared. He reached across the table to Sonja's dessert plate and forked up a large bite of cake. "Aren't the holidays a time when everyone indulges?" he asked, smiling. "Open wide."

A little surprised but delighted by his brash approach, Sonja opened her mouth for the bite of cake. Carefully, he poked his fork into her mouth, eyeing her lips as she closed them around the tines of the fork and took the bite of cake.

"Let's indulge our senses," he said, smiling at her.

## CHAPTER THREE

**T**hey lingered after dinner, talking, laughing, then moved into the lounge for a nightcap. Sonja was vividly aware of the warm hand riding low on her back as they crossed the wide foyer to the lounge. It was in danger of burning her skin, despite the fact that she still had her clothes on.

A sensual throb pulsed through her insides. She was wanting Joe in bed—wanted to press her naked body against his, feel him inside her. For an instant she cautioned herself. But only for an instant.

They chose a small table near the rear of the lounge and Joe ordered more champagne. Sonja leaned forward in her chair, eyeing him with an inspecting gaze. Her vision was slightly blurred, but she wasn't seeing double yet. A short giggle jumped from her mouth.

Joe cocked one eyebrow at her and smiled. "Perhaps you've had enough to drink," he commented, reaching for the glass of wine the waitress set on the table.

"I'm a big girl," Sonja remarked, grabbing at the glass. "I can handle my liquor."

“Can you?” he baited, then allowed her to take the drink from his hand.

She leaned closer to him. “I can handle anything.”

His eyes devoured her face, the lowered lashes as she raised the glass to her mouth and took a sip. Then his gaze settled on her lips, the lower slightly fuller than the top, glossed in bright red lipstick.

“You have a lovely mouth,” he said in a low voice. He reached his right hand out to lightly trace the tip of his index finger along her lower lip.

Sonja drew in a quick breath and momentarily closed her eyes. The feel of his finger grazing her sensitive lip sent erotic tingles coursing through her.

In the next instant, Joe lowered his fingers to capture her chin and urged her to meet him halfway across the table. He brushed his lips across hers, lightly, yet offering the sex she wanted in a whisper-soft kiss.

Sonja raised her hand and clasped his wrist. Her eyes flickered open. There were any number of people in the lounge, numerous couples engaged in quiet conversations at the small tables, but were any of them verbally copulating as she and Joe were?

She almost giggled out loud. She spent so much time running Mercer Warehouses that she wasn't really aware of how couples acted in public—or how open they were when it came to sex.

He chuckled at her show of embarrassment. “I'd like to—”

“What?” she encouraged as his finger found its way back to her lips. Her gaze held his. If he had any

inkling how aroused she was –

“I’d like to feel those lovely lips closing around my cock,” he whispered. Then he shook his head as though dislodging the notion. “I’m sorry. That was a bit forward –”

Sonja gave no sign of surprise at his words. It had been a long time since she’d had a man’s cock in her mouth, but she recalled it to be quite an arousing thing. She gazed up at him through lowered lashes, a teasing smile on her lips.

“Are you big?”

He chuckled audibly and pulled his hand free of her grasp. “Is that a trick question?”

Sonja laughed slightly and finished the wine in her glass. “Any other man would have told me his shoe size,” she commented. She liked the fact that he hadn’t boasted.

“You’ve had too much to drink and I’m taking you up to your room,” he said pushing out of his chair and taking her hand. “You need to be in bed.”

“That’s what I was thinking,” Sonja remarked. “But I’m not the least bit sleepy.”

He paused and pulled her against his side, curling his arm around her waist. She felt the shuddering breath he pulled in as they started toward the door of the lounge.

“Let’s go to your room,” she suggested, her arm snaking around her waist. She leaned her breasts into his chest. “And I’ll show you how expert I am at sucking cock.”

\* \* \* \*

She felt so emboldened she could hardly believe it. Her body was on fire—her crotch was moist and her nipples were hard little nubs beneath her cashmere sweater. She couldn't remember when she'd wanted a man as badly as she wanted Joe.

She pressed her body against his as they climbed the stairs to the second floor. When Joe steered her along the hallway toward his room, she felt as though she was about to celebrate Christmas in a special way. It was long overdue.

The second they were inside the room, Sonja began removing her clothes, ripping the sweater over her head, only to have Joe's hands catch hers before she could completely shed the garment.

"Let me," he whispered, completing the removal.

His hands were warm and lightly skimmed her shoulders as he pulled the sweater from her body. The low light in the room gave soft illumination to her alluring curves and velvet skin. He slid his palms along her waist, pausing to hook his thumbs in the waistband of her ski pants. Slowly he peeled the tight slacks along her legs until she stepped out of them.

She pulled in a deep breath. Warmth in the room engulfed her naked contours, making her nipples pucker.

He led her to the wide bed in the room and Sonja sat on the edge of the mattress. Her hands rose to his waist, to the closure on his slacks. She wanted to curl her fingers around his hot manhood—to feel his flesh

against her palm.

“You don’t have to—”

“I want to,” she insisted.

She hurried to release the closure and unzip his slacks so she could push them down. Her palm grazed his hardness beneath the expensive fabric seconds before she bared him to her eyes.

A ragged breath caught in his throat as her hands took possession of his flesh. In the next instant, his hands were melding with hers as she guided his cock to her mouth.

“Oh, baby!” he exclaimed. A shudder of delight shook his big body as Sonja closed her hot lips around his cock.

He was big and hot, and hammer hard. A titillating thrill coursed through Sonja as she felt his cock slide along her tongue. His hands rose to twine in her hair, then lowered to pluck at her firm nipples.

Her inspecting fingers slid along the hard length and delved into the bush surrounding his cock, then inched lower to circle inquisitively around his hairy balls, extracting a low moan from his throat.

He began to move towards her mouth, hunching his hips in a slow rhythm as Sonja’s sucking enticed him to play.

“Damn, baby!” he suddenly exclaimed and pushed Sonja backward onto the bed. “I didn’t bring you up here for a blowjob!”

Sonja stretched out on the soft mattress while Joe shed his shirt and stepped out of his slacks and underwear. Fire shot through her veins as she gazed



up at him, his powerful naked body illuminated by the nighttime glow from the single window in the room. He was magnificent, and she wanted him so badly!

“Take me first...then we can play,” she instructed, opening her long legs for him.

He groaned and levered his body atop hers. “I’ve wanted to fuck you since I first laid eyes on you,” he confessed, ramming his hard cock between her legs.

Sonja arched her back, opening herself up for his entry. His hot cock lunged inside her hot, wet sheath and began to move as he wrapped his strong arms around her body.

“I like it hard and fast,” she exclaimed, digging her nails into his muscled buttocks.

He set a quick rhythm, lunging in and pulling out almost to extraction before shoving back inside her. She felt pummeled by his hardness. Her globular breasts shook with each assaulting move. She held his buttocks in her hands, meeting his thrusts with a welcoming lunge.

“I’m coming!” she exclaimed. “I’m coming!”

His movements increased, bringing her ever closer to climax. Her belly tightened as the crescendo of sensations began, quickly spiraling along her limbs. She bit her bottom lip, squeezing her eyes tightly shut as the orgasm rippled through her.

\* \* \* \*

His fingers closed around her left breast, stroking,

teasing. His lips pulled her taut nipple inside his hot wet mouth. His tongue toyed with the sensitive nub, making her gasp.

His fingers slid through the auburn bush at her crotch, mingling with her wet, slick folds as he sought out her sensitive clitoris and gently stroked her.

Sonja arched her back and pushed her crotch upward, pressing her clit against his moving fingers.

“Your body is beautiful,” he murmured.

“You’re a good fucker,” she replied, shivering as he nearly brought her to orgasm. Her hand searched out his hardness, twining her fingers around its hot base. She hadn’t been so open with a man in such a long time; she’d almost forgotten how aroused she could become. She closed her eyes suddenly as he brought her to orgasm.

“Oh, my God! It feels wonderful!”

She withered under his hand, gasping to catch her breath as he climbed atop her body. He entered her quickly, making her climax with even more intensity.

“Oh, my God!” she yelped again, wrapping her legs around his waist.

He shoved into her with such intensity as he drove his mouth onto hers for a passionate kiss that served to remind Sonja of the reality of what they were doing. They weren’t just having sex—they were making love!

Everything about his touch implied there was more than merely the physical pleasure they were bringing to each other—there was intimacy along with the heated passion.

Passion?

Was she capable of passion?

The thought jarred through her brain. She had never considered feelings of passion where sex was concerned, mainly because she had never given a relationship with a man a chance. She was too busy – too busy running the family business – too busy being a female force-to-be-reckoned with in the financial world.

A long, shuddering breath escaped her throat, the tingles of orgasm coursing throughout her body. Perhaps her vulnerable state was to blame for her sudden revelation. After all, Christmas was an unsettling time in her personal life. Yes. That was it. This man's hands were no different on her body than any other.

The hot tips of his fingers gently skimmed the delicate flesh of her left cheek, arched along her jaw and came to rest in the hollow of her collarbone. A warmth unfelt previously zinged along her nerve endings. Her eyes flickered open to find his gaze pinned to her face.

"Sonja," he said in a barely audible whisper. He lowered his head slowly and covered her lips with his in a long searching kiss.

And Sonja realized more was happening to her than she had control over.

## CHAPTER FOUR

She must have dozed off once the sex was over – or at a pause. She lay there, feeling the warm, firm body pressed against her back and thinking about last night.

How many times had they had sex?

Or made love?

Her eyes flickered open. Something had happened in that bed last night, and she wasn't quite certain what it was.

Or was she refusing to admit the truth to herself?

The telephone suddenly began to ring on the nightstand, and Sonja jumped in surprise before reaching a hand out to lift the receiver.

"Hello," she said in a sleepy tone, then suddenly remembered she wasn't in her own room – but Joe's. Perhaps she shouldn't have answered his call.

"Good morning," a female voice said. "This is Angela. I have Mr. Dix's conference call on the line. May I speak to him, please?"

The woman's words barely lodged in Sonja's sleep-addled brain. She ran her free hand across her eyes, trying to wake up.

“Excuse me. What did you say?” she inquired rising up on one elbow.

“Is this room 211? I’m calling for Donovan Dix. Is he there?” the voice inquired.

“Donovan Dix?” Sonja repeated. She levered herself up in bed, swinging her feet to the floor as the name slammed in to her consciousness. “Donovan Dix?” she repeated, turning her gaze on the naked man rousing on the bed beside her. For all intent and purposes she should bash him in the head with the telephone...

She didn’t give him time to speak – even though he looked as if he wanted to. She threw the receiver on the bed and left the room so quickly she almost threw a hip out of its socket.

She slammed the bathroom door so hard that the sample bottles of shampoo and conditioner clattered off the sink. She gritted her teeth and began pacing the floor of the room, her bare feet cold on the tiled floor.

Momentarily there was a soft knock on the door.

“Sonja, I can explain.”

“You son-of-a-bitch!” she spat, jerking the door back on its hinges.

His gaze wafted along her naked length and Sonja’s temper flared again at his brashness. She whisked past him into the bedroom in search of her clothes.

“Let me explain,” he pleaded following her into the room.

“What’s there to explain? You deceived me!”

“Only slightly.”

She whirled around, glaring at him as her hands rose to prop atop her hips. “There isn’t any middle ground. You let me believe you were a businessman named Joe.”

“And I am!” he asserted.

She walked around the room, picking up her clothes and he followed her, trying to pull each item from her hands.

“The hell you are! You’re the bastard who plans on taking over my business!” She pulled up short and blinked her eyes at him as the truth hit home. “You’re my new business partner.”

The words seemed to take a bit of the steam out of her tirade. She crossed the room and plopped down on the bed, her naked state momentarily pushed aside. Suddenly she felt like crying.

*I will not cry.*

*I will not cry.*

When Sonja remained seated on the bed for a sufficient time, Joe pulled in a deep breath and prepared his speech, but the second he started in her direction, she sprang to her feet and shot past him toward the door of the room.

“Last night never happened!” she said in a stern voice.

She opened the door of the room and stepped into the hallway – then the realization that she was naked shot through her. Quickly, she began running down the corridor, clutching her clothes to her chest while trying to retrieve her room key from her purse.

“Of all the dumb-ass things to do—”

\* \* \* \*

For almost an hour, Sonja paced the floor trying to make sense out of last night's escapades. She had slept with her new business partner—the notorious Donovan Dix.

She raised both hands, raking her fingers through her hair. Was she completely insane? Had she lost all ability to reason? Why hadn't she insisted he tell her his name—instead of shrugging her shoulders at his anonymity?

“I would never have slept with him if I'd known who he is!”

In retrospect, the sex had been absolutely fantastic...and she had even looked forward to playing some more while they were snowed in—but that was out of the question now. She felt foolish for what she had allowed to happen. A rush of embarrassment flamed through her insides when she remembered how she had deliberately instigated the whole seduction.

“I seduced *him!*” she murmured. It might not have been half as bad had *he* seduced *her*, but damn the luck, she had thrown caution to the wind...

“Well, it won't happen again,” she muttered.

Her empty stomach growled, letting her know it was past time for a meal. She bit on her bottom lip. She could order room service and stay shut up in the room for the rest of the vacation...

“I’ve got to face him sooner or later,” she decided, grabbing up her purse and heading for the door.

As she made her way toward the main lobby of the hotel in search of breakfast, she admitted to herself that she would never be the partner in charge—not since giving herself so willingly to Donovan Dix.

“Joe, my ass!” she spat, a new surge of anger fueling her words.

The noise from the lobby reached her ears before she started down the staircase. The usual holiday music blared from the sound system and once Sonja reached the stairs, she saw something new had been added to the decorations—a giant ball of mistletoe suspended just above the front doors. A number of jovial couples were taking turns kissing each other beneath it.

She paused her feet. She’d never been kissed under the mistletoe, and now that she’d screwed up royally, she guessed she never would be, either. Remorse surged forward to couple with her anger at being such a fool and letting Donovan Dix put one over on her. Then she straightened her spine, squared her shoulders and proceeded down the stairs.

She inched around the gathering of laughing couples and headed toward the restaurant when suddenly she was grasped around the waist and hauled against a solid chest. At first she let out a yelp of protest, then thought perhaps one of the young men in the gathering had grabbed her merely as a joke. But when she regained her footing and glanced upward, she saw Donovan Dix was her captor. She



immediately pushed at his chest, demanding he release her.

"We're going to kiss and make up under the mistletoe," he insisted, a firmness in his voice.

His arms were like a steel vise, holding her body against the long, hard length of his. Her hips pressed against his and her breasts flattened against his chest. His heat immediately penetrated her clothing and seeped into her flesh.

"Kiss me," he ordered in a hot whisper.

"No. I will not," she refused.

The gathering of couples surrounded them, quietly waiting.

"I'm sorry I wasn't completely honest with you. Now, kiss me."

"No. And I refuse to accept your apology."

"Like hell you do," he asserted.

His arms tightened around her body, making her breath catch in her throat. "Let me go," she ordered. Her palms were flattened against his chest, and she was exerting all her strength to keep her face from coming too close to his.

"Never."

His refusal shocked her to the extent that she looked up into his face, making eye contact with him. A surge of something totally foreign filtered into her mind.

"I won't let you go, babe. I won't."

"Listen," she began, glancing round at the couples eyeing them curiously. "This is no place to air our differences."

“Kiss me,” he demanded.

She expelled an agitated breath of air. “I have no desire to...to kiss you, Donovan Dix.” But as the words left her mouth, she knew she wasn’t altogether truthful. Last night she had experienced such sexual bliss, as never before with a man.

“It’s true that my friends call me Joe. And since I’ve never really had a woman that I gave a damn about, I thought you could call me Joe as well.”

The crowd quietly laughed at his words, though they had no way of understanding why he was having such difficulty convincing the pretty lady to kiss him. Sonja felt her cheeks flame with embarrassment.

“This is silly,” she whispered, a bit amused at it all.

“Yes, it is. Now kiss me and I’ll buy you breakfast.”

“I have no intention of having breakfast with you—”

He gave her a little squeeze.

“We can’t stand here for the rest of the day. And besides, I’m getting the urge to take you to bed again.”

She wrenched her body to one side trying to break his hold on her. “I screwed you and you screwed me—we’re even! Now turn me loose before I start screaming and demand someone call the police.”

He threw back his handsome head and laughed loudly. “I love a woman with spirit—especially at Christmastime!”

“Shut up!”

“Kiss me.”

"No."

"Yes."

"No!"

"I'll make you a deal," he whispered. "I'm beginning to feel a little foolish standing here begging you to part with one little kiss. Kiss me, and you'll never have to see me again."

"What's the catch?"

"No catch."

She didn't believe him for a minute. And besides, suddenly the thought of never seeing him again made her a little sad. How can that be? she questioned, her arched brows drawing together.

"Sonja?"

She raised her eyes and met his gaze. "Why weren't you honest with me from the beginning? Why did you lead me to believe you were someone else?"

Pulling in a deep breath, he leaned his forehead against hers. "I had gone to New Orleans to meet you when I learned you were leaving town for the holidays. I thought it would be a good time for us to meet on neutral ground, so I called the lodge and made a reservation and then bought a plane ticket." He grinned slightly. "By the way, your secretary really was reluctant to tell me where you were going."

"Answer my question."

"I had no idea you felt so strongly about me until you began talking on the plane. Until that time, I planned to introduce myself."

"Franky had no right to sell his share of the

business without telling me.”

“And you’ve no right forming an opinion of me without getting to know me.”

“Your reputation precedes you.”

“And your reputation as an ice queen is bogus. You’re the hottest woman I’ve ever had in my bed.”

Her cheeks flamed at his words.

“I’ve no intention of taking over your business, honey. In fact, I think we’re pretty good together.”

“I don’t mix business and sex.”

“You did last night.”

“I didn’t know what I was doing,” she defended.

“I could argue against that statement.”

“Get a room!” a voice yelled and the crowd erupted in laughter.

“Kiss him already!” another chimed in.

“Let’s go back upstairs and work things out,” he coaxed. “I know I can make you listen to reason.”

“No.”

He let out a pent-up breath. “Would you accept a Christmas present from me?”

Her body was on the verge of deceiving her—of wanting him again. She narrowed her gaze on him.

“What kind of a Christmas present?”

“My share of your business.”

Her eyes widened. “Don’t tease me,” she warned.

“Kiss me, and I’ll give you my share of your business.”

She felt her throat all but close up. She was certain then about the feelings she had felt when he touched her last night. How and why it was happening was a

mystery. But it was happening—and she was allowing it—wanting it.

She relaxed in his arms, stopped objecting to his holding her and tipped her head back to receive his kiss.

His head bent and his lips sealed atop hers.

And a new realization shot through Sonja's insides. Donovan Dix was a man she could fall head over heels in love with.

"Merry Christmas," he whispered, pulling his lips from hers.

The crowd burst into a loud round of applause, filling the wide foyer with a noisy echo that momentarily drowned out the Christmas music.

Sonja's eyes jerked open when his lips left hers and the roar of the onlookers burst forth. Puzzlement arose inside her as the pair of male arms slid from around her body.

"Joe—or Donovan—or what ever your name is," she muttered, clutching at his hand. She had to get him alone so she could be certain of what had just happened.

He was looking down at her, his blue gaze caressing her face with total abandon.

"Come with me," she insisted, pulling him toward the stairs.

She didn't stop until he was confined inside her room, then she threw herself into his arms.

"I'm not really certain what just happened down there—under the mistletoe—but I am sure of one thing."

"I'm listening," he said, squeezing her warmly.

"I want you in my life."

He smiled down into her upturned face. "Honey, that kiss you just gave me spoke volumes to me." He caught her chin in his fingers. "I think I'm falling in love with you, Sonja. Do you feel it?"

"Yes, Joe. I feel it."

"Is it Christmas magic – because I've forgotten how wonderful Christmas is."

"We could say that it's magic. Or we could say that something happened to us under the mistletoe."

His mouth silenced her as his arms pinned her body against his length, and a happiness like no other in her entire life filtered through Sonja's body.

**THE END**



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

I've been living my dream of writing for pay for fifteen years, but when I'm not at my desk, I enjoy riding motorcycles with my husband Dave. We've toured the lower forty-eight states and had many wonderful adventures. When I'm not traveling or writing, I enjoy reading and taking long walks with my sweetheart.