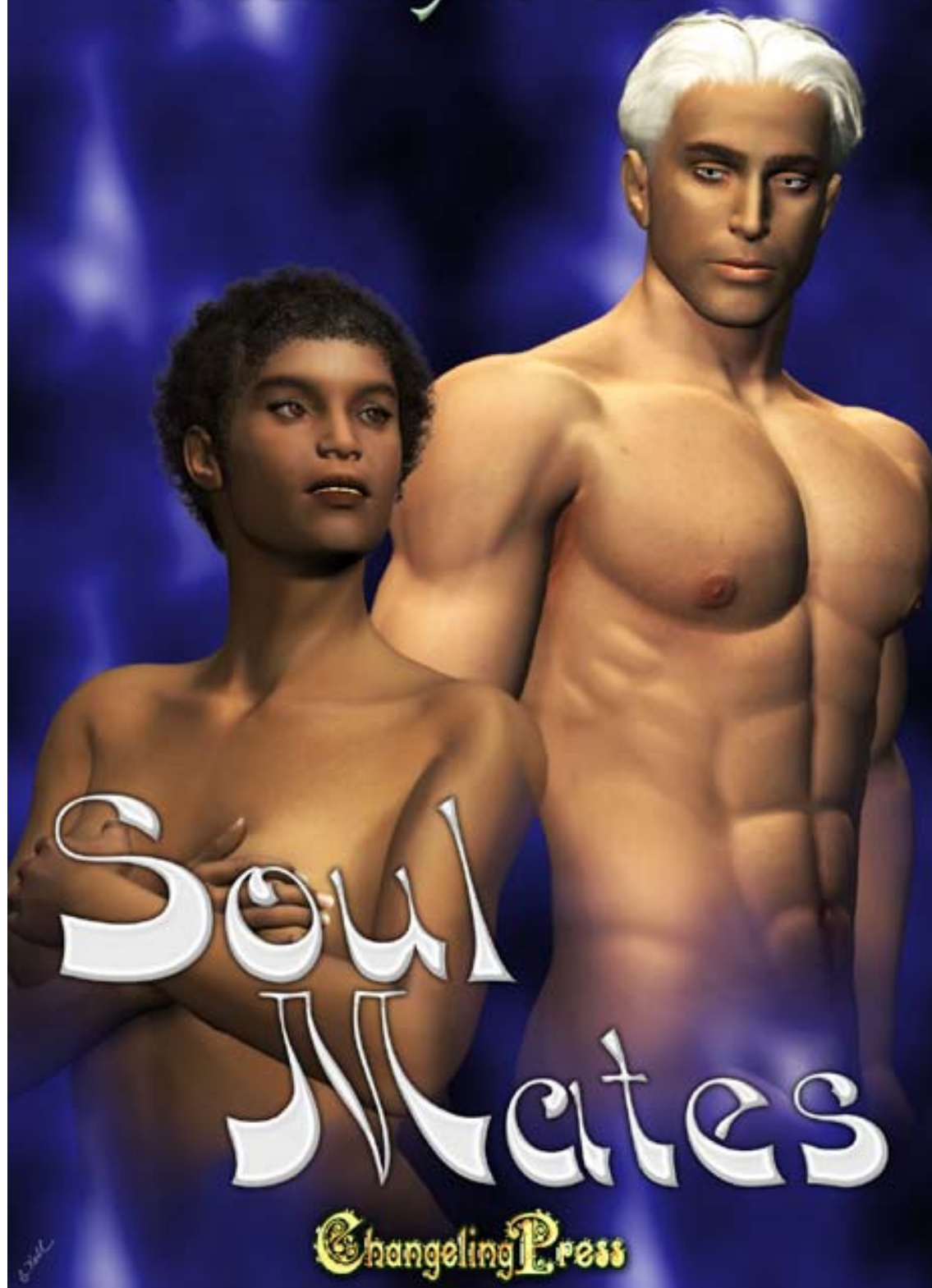


Marilyn Lee



Soul Mates, Part 1

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Soul Mates, Part 1

Marilyn Lee

Two souls torn apart -- and a love stronger than time

Their past...

On a Virginia plantation, Carlee lost her mother, her home, and the young man she loved, Trey Brandauer, when she was sold to keep them apart. Clinging to Trey's promise to find her again, Carlee vowed to wait for him -- forever if necessary.

Their present...

When Carlee meets Trey at a singles' retreat, she believes they are soul mates, destined to be reunited. But Trey doesn't remember their past. Although annoyed that Carlee expects him to atone for a non-existent past, Trey has never wanted any woman more. To claim Carlee, he must first convince her that he won't hurt her again.

Their future...

Despite her doubts, Trey is still the man Carlee once loved, and she quickly falls in love all over again. When Trey abruptly ends their relationship, Carlee fears that barring a miracle, she has lost her one true soul mate -- this time forever.

Prologue

"Trey! Trey, help me! Please!"

Her screams shattered the still of the night and sent him bolting up in bed from a deep sleep. He tossed the bed covers aside, nearly tripping in his haste to get to the window. Looking out the window toward the slave quarters, he saw his father's overseer, Joshua Wilton, astride his big stallion with a small slender figure in front of him. Trey's heart thumped with fear. The figure had beautiful dark skin, warm brown eyes, and a sweet smile he'd never been able to resist.

Trey tossed the window open and leaned out. "Wilton! What are you doing?"

The overseer cast a brief glance in Trey's direction, then brought his riding crop down hard on the horse's flank, sending the animal into a fast trot.

Trey turned from the window and pulled on his trousers. Running down the hall, he leapt down the stairs. Surprised to find it unbolted, Trey yanked open the side door with shaking hands. He rushed onto the side veranda. The stable was behind the house. He prayed that he could get his horse, Danton, saddled and on the road in time to save Carlee.

He could still hear her calling out to him. "Trey! Help me, Trey!"

"I'm coming, Carlee. I'm coming!"

He jumped off the veranda and ran toward the stables, ignoring the pain as his bare feet encountered bits of stone. The big doors were open. He rushed inside and right into a tall, well-built man exiting the stables.

The collision with his father sent him sprawling onto his back. "Father!" He scrambled to his knees and grabbed his father's legs. "Wilton has Carlee! He's taking her away! You must stop him!"

His father didn't respond.

Bounding to his feet, Trey ran for his horse. He had his saddle in his hands when his father turned him around. One look in his father's eyes and he knew why the side door had been unbolted in the middle of the night.

"Father. He's taking her with your permission?"

"Yes."

Trey swallowed a wave of rage. "Well, not with mine!" He jerked away and tossed his saddle aside, deciding to ride bareback. Before he could mount his horse, his father grabbed him and pushed him against the side of the stall. He could no longer hear Carlee's cries. His heart thundered and fear tightened his throat. "Father! Get out of my way!"

"Trey, I sold her."

"Sold her? But you gave her to me! You can't sell her. She's mine!"

His father's hands tightened on his upper arms, holding him still. "I told you that when you were seven. I never expected you to fall for her. In this family, we do not bed our slaves, boy!"

His heart sank. His mother had not kept her word. She had told his father about seeing him kissing Carlee the previous week. "I know that, Father. I have not bedded her! I give you my word!"

"And I believe you, Trey. We Brandauers are not known for being liars."

He tried to pull away. "Then let me go and get her. She's mine. I will not have her sold."

"She is already sold. I believe that you haven't touched her, but I have seen the way you two look at each other. You are no longer children, Trey. I can't allow you to father children with her."

He sucked in a shuddering breath. At seventeen, he longed to discover sex with the fifteen-year-old Carlee. Still, he'd never gone beyond an occasional hug or a rare, brief peck at her sweet lips. He hadn't even dared touch her breasts. The temptation had been difficult to resist since he had inadvertently seen her sleek, nude body as she bathed in the pond deep in the woods early one morning.

He had longed to strip and join her, but the thought of seeing the hurt and confusion in her brown eyes if he betrayed her trust had been enough to cool his passions. He had forced himself to steal quietly away instead.

"Father! Please. I promise... I give you my word. I will not touch her! Just please don't sell her!"

"It wasn't an easy decision, Trey, but it was necessary. I've made sure she's going to a good home where she'll be treated properly." His father reached in his pocket and produced a stack of bills. "This is yours... for her sale."

The wall of rage consumed him. He jerked away from his father, slapped the money away, placed his hands against his father's chest, and pushed as hard as he could. Taken by surprise, his father stumbled backwards and fell. Trey turned and jumped onto Danton's back, wheeled him around, sent him jumping over his father's body and galloping out into the night.

He rode Danton hard and fast, ignoring his father's outraged shouts. He knew he was in more trouble than he'd ever been before, but he couldn't stop. He had to save Carlee. After what seemed like an eternity, he heard her soft wails.

"Carlee! I'm coming!" he called.

"Trey! Oh, Trey!" He heard the relief in her voice. "I knew you would come, Trey."

He rode low over Danton's back, taking a curve in the road quickly. He spotted Wilton, at least thirty or forty yards in front of him.

He dug his heels into Danton's flanks and urged him on. Danton was a better horse than the one ridden by Wilton. Elation filled Trey. He wasn't sure what he was going to do after he rescued her, but he was only moments away from getting her back. He would worry about the consequences later.

Danton steadily closed the distance between him and Wilton. Soon, he would be close enough to reach out and snatch Carlee off Wilton's horse. He heard the sound of a galloping horse behind him and cast a quick glance over his shoulder. His father, riding

Lightning, bore down on him. Lightning was the one horse in the county who could beat Danton in a race.

He leaned low over Danton's back. "You can do it," he whispered to Danton. "You can outrun Lightning. Just this once, Danton. You can do it for Carlee. Run like the wind, Danton. You can do it."

Within a few lengths of Wilton, Lightning drew even with Danton. His father snatched him off Danton's back. Danton continued running as his father pulled on Lightning's reins, urging him to an abrupt stop.

Trey struggled to be free. "Let me go! Please!" Although he was strong, his father was stronger. His father's arms tightened around him, immobilizing him.

Trey watched Wilton's horse disappear around a bend in the road. "Carlee! Carlee! Carlee, I'll find you. I promise... I swear. No matter how long it takes, I'll find you! And when I do I will never leave you again!"

"Trey! I'll wait... I'll wait for you, Trey!"

Then his father wheeled Lightning around and sent him galloping back toward home. He slumped back against his father, bitter tears streaming down his cheeks. "Let me go, Father, or I swear I will never forgive you."

"I know this hurts now, Trey, but this is for the best. I know you have good intentions, boy, but you would be sneaking into her bed eventually. Do you understand?"

"I won't ever forgive you for this, Father."

His father pulled up his horse and turned his face up to his. He saw something he'd never seen before -- tears in his father's eyes. "I didn't do this easily, Trey. I know this hurts you and it hurts me, but I had to do it. I had to. You'll forgive me because it was done out of love."

He shook his head. "No. I won't ever forgive you. You don't know what you've done. I'll never be happy again if I don't find her. You have to tell me where she's going."

"In time you'll forget her and move on. You'll marry and have children and be happy."

"I'll never be happy without her. Never."

"Time has a way of healing all wounds, Trey."

"Time will never heal this wound. Nor will I ever forgive you or Mother."

* * *

Several nights later, as Trey lay in bed, wallowing in misery and pain, a hand touched his shoulder. He bolted up to see a figure standing beside the bed. He jumped out of the bed on the other side. The moonlight streaming in through the windows revealed a tall female form. She had short, dark hair, smooth brown skin, and startling gray eyes. He stared at her and then at the door his father had bolted on the outside. His bedroom was on the second floor. The windows had been nailed shut from the outside to keep him in his room. "How did you get in here?"

Her warm, sultry voice held a comforting quality that was strangely compelling. "I have my ways, Trey Brandauer."

"What do you want?"

"I was drawn here."

"By what?"

"Your pain. It calls out for relief." She extended her hand. "Throw your pain and grief on me and I will bear it for you."

"Who are you?"

"I am Margolis Cheyenne of the Shadow Mountain Cheyennes."

"Shadow Mountain? I've never --"

"Shadow Mountain is far from here."

"What are you doing here?"

"I've come to ease your burden."

"How?"

Walking around the bed, she took his hand in hers. "I will make you forget."

He shook his head, yanking his hand away. "I don't want to forget her! I want to find her and save her."

She reclaimed his hand, placing her other hand at his left temple. "Until then, I offer you release from your pain. Throw your burden on me, Trey. Forget... forget."

"No! I promised her I'd rescue her!"

"That might take more time than either of you know."

"Do you know where she's been taken? Can you help me find her? Please. Please."

"All I know is that your present pain is too great a burden for such young shoulders. The emotional cord between you two is strong, but flexible. Stretched taut, it will yield, but not snap. It will survive until you find her again -- no matter how long that might take. For now, you need to forget. Throw your burden on me. I will bear it for you until you're ready to remember. For now, let the healing begin. Forget... forget..."

"I don't want..." His lids drooped and he felt incredibly tired. She placed an arm around his waist, urging him toward the bed. He fell across it. For the first time in weeks, he slept, his dreams free of nightmares.

In the morning, he was surprised to find his bedroom door appeared to be bolted from the outside. When his father entered and asked him if he was prepared to be reasonable and at least try to forget Carlee, Trey stared at him.

"Who's Carlee?"

Chapter One

"Sugar, what you need is a man... preferably one who's wicked and skillful in bed. One who will take some of that chill off."

The woman seated on the opposite side of Carlee Vanleer's desk had long dark hair and a beautiful, mocha complexion. Carlee sighed. Sometimes Erinae managed to get on her last frayed nerve. If anyone should understand that she wasn't interested in jumping into bed with every Tom, Dick, and Harry who winked at her, it should be her best friend.

"What chill?" she asked coolly. She knew the staff of the design firm she and Erinae had recently founded thought of her as the Ice Queen. While she could shrug off their employees' jokes, Erinae's remarks stung.

"Come on, Carlee. It's not normal for a single, beautiful, talented woman not to have a man in her life."

"Erinae --"

"It's not normal -- especially when men are practically begging for a little of your time and attention."

Carlee sighed again and ran a hand through her hair, which she wore short and natural. All her life she had known she was different from most women. She supposed the people who thought her cold had valid grounds for thinking that way. She'd never been able to form a lasting, intimate relationship with a man.

More than one spurned lover had accused her of being a lesbian. Even Erinae, a friend since grade school, sometimes questioned her closely about her sexual preference.

"I don't have time for guys whose only interest is getting me in bed and then dumping me, once the thrill is gone."

Erinae pointed an accusing finger at her. "Okay. I have you now. What about Sam Creekland? Look me in the eye and tell me he was only interested in getting you into bed."

An ache sliced through her. She shook her head, quickly dismissing thoughts of Sam. Sam... sweet, sexy Sam.

"That brother had everything. He was handsome, successful, intelligent, articulate, and he wined and dined you for nearly two years. So what do you do? Give him the bum's rush when he wanted to get serious."

A picture of a man with an attractive, ebony face, smiling brown eyes, and a deep, warm voice danced along her memory. Sam had been wonderful. She had tried her best not to fall in love with him. Even when she had, there had been an endless ache in her heart for another love she couldn't forget. Although her dream lover had remained faceless, he had a grip on her heart from which she couldn't shake loose.

Sam had been ideal in every way and yet she had been unable to surrender the last, most intimate piece of her heart to him. But she had loved him. Maybe she always would, just as she feared she'd always care for her faceless lover. "Sam was -- is -- a wonderful guy. Any woman would be blessed to have him fall for her," she admitted.

"You're darn right he was. So why'd you let him get away?"

She shook her head. "I don't really know."

"And neither do I. So don't give me any flack."

She grimaced. "Okay. What's it going to cost me to get you off my back this time?"

Erinae widened her eyes. "Why, Lee, whatever do you mean?"

Carlee cast her gaze ceiling-ward. "Can the innocent act and spit it out. What are you about to drag me into now?"

Erinae grinned. "Okay, but hear me out before you say no."

She slumped back in her chair. Since Erinae's divorce from her college sweetheart two years earlier, she had dragged Carlee to every singles' event she could find. Erinae had enjoyed being married and was determined to remarry. And she was

determined to pull Carlee kicking and screaming down the aisle with her when she went.

"What is it this time?"

"Okay. It's a Fantasy Week at a lodge in the Pocono Mountains."

"A Fantasy Week?" She frowned, shaking her head. "I don't think so. I mean no."

"You promised to hear me out, Lee."

"Yes, but I didn't say I'd go."

"You'll go all right, if you know what's good for you," Erinae threatened, her eyes narrowing.

Carlee frowned. "I don't have time to take a week off." She flipped several pages of the open appointment book on her desk. "Do you know how many appointments I'd have to break to go?"

"Yes, but you don't, since I haven't said when we're going. And trust me, Lee, we are going."

"We can't both be off at the same time. If we don't get this business up and running soon, we are going to have to think about going back to work for other people. And you know how we both hated that."

Erinae nodded. "Yes. That's why we've both been working our tails off. We are not going back to grinding it out for anyone else, Lee. All we need is one big account to get us the name recognition we deserve. But we both need a break."

"And we'll get one, after we land a big account."

"We need to do this now, Lee."

"Why now?"

Erinae frowned. "I... I don't know. I just know we need to do this now. I knew that the moment the travel agent told me about this week."

"What travel agent?"

Erinae shrugged. "It's strange. I met her while waiting for the train and she struck up a conversation and the next thing I knew, I'd decided we had to go on this fantasy vacation."

"It's not like you to allow anyone to influence you."

Erinae nodded. "I know, but this is something I really want to do and I can't go by myself."

"Why not?"

"Because I can't... all right? I just know we need to go. Are you going to come with me or not?"

"No, I'm not, Erinae."

"And why not?"

"What am I supposed to do with Danny? You know how he hates it when I go away."

"You spoil him entirely too much and you've allowed him to scare away too many eligible prospects. He'll learn to cope."

She shook her head. "Nae, I can't --"

"I really need you to do this with me, Lee. And if anyone could use a Fantasy Week, it's you. It'll take the --"

"I know. The chill off," she said coolly.

Erinae leaned forward and touched her hand. "I didn't mean it in an unkind way."

She nodded, squeezing Erinae's hand. "Do you expect to meet someone special?"

Erinae grinned. "No, but I do expect to get laid early and often."

"And what am I supposed to do while you're getting laid early and often?"

"Get laid too. What else? It's time, Lee."

She shook her head. "I'll go, but I am not getting laid."

"We'll see."

"When are we going on this Fantasy Week?"

Erinae smiled and rose. She turned at the door to look at Carlee. "We leave next Friday and come back the following Sunday afternoon."

"But that's more than a week. That's --"

She held up a hand. "The reservations are already made so there's no use trying to throw roadblocks in the way. Everyone has fantasies... even you. We're going, and what's more, you're going to have fun... even if it kills you."

Carlee closed her eyes briefly. Oh, she had a fantasy all right. Unfortunately, she didn't have a hope of ever realizing it. "Okay, here's the deal. If I go on this Fantasy Week thingy --"

"Not if, when. *When* you go on this Fantasy Week thingy."

"If I go on this fantasy whatever, you have to promise to leave me alone for at least a month."

"An entire month?"

"Yes. A month. No parties, no blind dates. Nothing. I'll be free to do as I please for an entire month. Deal?"

"You drive a hard bargain," Erinae complained.

"Is it a deal or not?"

"Okay. It's a deal... but only if you promise to at least try and have a good time."

"I promise. Now do you mind? I have work to do."

Erinae blew her a kiss from the doorway and danced out of her office singing. "I'm gonna have myself a good time. I'm gonna meet my fantasy man. There's gonna be all kinds of kissin' and a huggin' and a lovin' going on..."

* * *

Trey Brandauer surveyed the main lounge of the Hideaway Mountain Lodge and wondered what had possessed him and his friend Mick Reilly to come. Neither of them had been fond of the idea when their friend, Hal Williams, had first suggested it. It had taken Hal and his wife Marge two weeks to talk Trey and Mick into agreeing to go.

"Come on. Both of you need to get away from work," Marge had pleaded over dinner one night. "You're both entirely too handsome to still be single." She had smiled at Mick. "And it's time you thought about remarriage."

Mick, always a sucker for Marge, had given in first. Before long, Trey had found three pair of eyes trained on him. Since he had been working hard lately, he had reluctantly agreed to go as well.

Now that he was here, he was annoyed and amazed at how easily he'd allowed himself to be suckered into the unwanted vacation. Why in the hell had he agreed to come spend ten days in this godforsaken mountain resort?

He glanced around the room. Mick, tall, tanned, and with what Marge called delicious blue eyes, stood talking to a pretty blonde with heels so high, Trey wondered how she managed to walk without falling on her face. The plunging neckline and low cut back of her expensive black sheath of a dress exposed glimpses of her small breasts and rather flat behind.

Trey preferred a woman with a little more substance, weight wise. What was the point of a woman with a flat ass and skinny legs? When he made love, he wanted something to hold onto. He liked women with lush curves capable of welcoming hard, passionate thrusts with pleasure rather than pain.

Although Mick appeared to be enthralled, his head bent as if eager to savor the blonde's every word, Trey suspected Mick would have been happier if the blonde had dark hair and dark skin. He was fairly certain Mick preferred black women, but wasn't ready to admit it.

He looked away from Mick and his blonde and glanced around the room. He was there for ten days so he might as well at least attempt to have a good time.

He had all but decided he'd leave the "Let's Get to Know Each Other" opening night of the Fantasy Week for a walk along the trails surrounding the lodge when a woman descending the main staircase caught his attention.

She was stunning -- tall and statuesque with beautiful, smooth, dark chocolate skin, short natural hair worn close to her head, and full lips. She wore a black, sleeveless

dress that highlighted her ample breasts before falling in soft, loving folds around her hips and deliciously rounded butt. Her legs were long and shapely.

As she neared the bottom of the stairs, she looked across the room. Their gazes met and locked. She paused on the steps, a hand going to her breasts, a stunned look on her lovely face. She had warm brown eyes that pierced his chest and captured him -- heart and soul. As he stood staring at her, he knew why he had come -- to meet her.

Feeling as if an invisible cord pulled him forward, he hurried across the room. He paused at the bottom of the steps and stood staring up at her. A vague memory tugged at the edges of his subconscious. Before he could grasp it, it danced away.

After what seemed an eternity, she took a deep breath. She then rushed down the remaining steps and into his arms. "Trey! Oh, Trey, it's been so long, but I knew you would eventually come."

He briefly held her against him, overcome by a rush of joy and delight he'd never experienced. Then he realized she had mistaken him for someone else. They'd certainly never met. There was no way he would have forgotten her.

He drew her away from the steps and along the adjacent wall. "Ah... I wish I was this Trey you..." He paused and stared at her. "Did you say Trey?"

She blinked up at him, a frown marring her pretty face. "Yes, but I... I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else."

That figured. He finally met a woman able to stir his underactive libido and she had mistaken him for someone else. "Who did you think I was?"

She shook her head. "I... someone I used to know a long time ago."

"What was his name?"

She shrugged. "It was a very long time ago."

He nodded. "So I gathered. His name?"

"Trey."

"Trey?" He swallowed hard. "Trey what?"

"Trey Brandauer." She shook her head again and smiled at him, making his heart thump painfully in his chest. She extended her hand. "Since I've made a fool of myself the least I can do is tell you my name. Carlee Vanleer. And you are?"

He took her hand in his and held it against his chest. "Me? I... I'm... Trey Brandauer."

She blinked and clutched his arm. "Trey! Oh, Trey. It is you! It's you. At last! She was right."

"Who was right?"

"She said if I was patient, you would find me one day. And I've waited a very long time, but now you're here," she whispered. "You're finally here. I..." Her voice trailed off and she passed out.

* * *

When Carlee woke up, she found herself staring up into a pair of ice-blue eyes that belonged to one of the most striking men she'd ever seen. He had a handsome, rugged face and sensual lips. Although his hair was short and silver, she knew he was only a few years older than she. And she knew he was the man who had haunted her thoughts and dreams. He was her Trey, the man for whom she'd spent several lifetimes waiting.

He brushed her cheek. "Are you all right? Can I get you anything?"

She turned her head and realized she was lying on a bed that was not hers with a strange man seated beside her, holding her hand and caressing her face. She sat up slowly. He slipped an arm around her shoulders and it seemed the most natural thing in the world to lean against him. "I'm a little groggy, but otherwise all right."

He stroked her cheek again before tipping up her chin. "You're sure? You seemed to think we knew each other."

She stared into his eyes, amazed. "It was a very long time ago, but we knew each other well." She closed both hands around his. "We... meant something to each other -- something wonderful and special, something timeless and eternal. How can you have forgotten me?"

He shook his head. "I would never have forgotten you. Unfortunately, we have never met."

She balled her hand into a fist and hit it against his shoulder. "Damn you! It was a very long time ago, but we have met."

"How long ago?"

"Very long."

"Where are we supposed to have met?"

"At a plantation in Virginia."

"I've never been to Virginia."

She gulped back a lump of pain. Her eyes filled with tears. "I was a... slave... Your father sold me away from you. Don't you remember?"

He shook his head.

So while she had waited for him he had forgotten her. "You came after me, but he stopped you... you promised you'd find me. You have to remember, Trey."

He shook his head again. "I don't."

Disappointed, she pushed away from him and rose. She found her shoes near the bed, shoved her feet into them, and headed for the door.

"Where are you going?"

"I need to get away from you."

"Why?"

She glanced over her shoulder at him. "So I can think. Something is wrong. You're supposed to remember."

"Wait a minute. Please." He followed her and they arrived at the door at the same time. He placed a hand against the panel. "I don't know what you're talking about, but I do know you're the reason I came here. I didn't want to come and I couldn't imagine why I had -- until I saw you on the staircase. Then I knew I'd been drawn here to meet you."

She shook her head. "I'm tired. I'm going to my room and going to bed. Please remove your hand from the door."

"Please don't tell me you're afraid of me." He stroked a finger down her cheek. "Because there's absolutely no need." He clutched her hand in his and held it against his chest. "None at all."

She shook her head. "I could never be afraid of you."

"Good." He bent his head and kissed her cheek.

Good? She stroked his chest, recalling their first kiss... so long ago, but so cherished in her heart and memory. How could he have forgotten it and her?

"I'll walk you to your room."

She tingled with pleasure when he slipped his fingers through hers. She had always loved walking hand in hand with him. "Thank you."

They didn't speak as they walked through the halls to her room, which was on the other side of the main building. At her door, she tried to pull away. "Here we are."

He tightened his grip and stared silently down at her.

"Well, I..." She moistened her lips. "Good-bye."

He bent his head and kissed her cheek, close to her lips. She swallowed quickly and turned her head so that their lips brushed lightly. She felt a tingle and drew back, her heart racing. He lifted her fingers to his mouth and touched his lips to her knuckles. He then turned her hand over and pressed a soft kiss into her palm. "Good-bye? Are you sure you want to go, Carlee?"

She longed to linger with him so she could help him remember their past, but staying would lead to almost certain heartache. "Good-bye," she said again and slipped inside her room. She went to the vanity set along one wall. She sat staring at her reflection. Her eyes were wide, her face uncomfortably hot. Her heart pounded. Confusion, fear, and frustration warred with each other. How could he not remember after all the long, lonely years and all the heartbreak she had endured while waiting for him?

All she had were questions. Getting the answers she needed would require a plan. She dismissed the fleeting desire to go see Dr. Cheyenne. All she would get from

the doctor was sympathy and yet more assurances that she would eventually meet Trey again.

Dr. Cheyenne had never once hinted that Trey might not recall having met and loved her in the past. Through all the long, lonely years of separation, Carlee had remembered him -- at least on a primitive level.

Perhaps a good night's sleep would help. She removed her make-up, showered, and got in bed. Her thoughts in turmoil, sleep eluded her.

As she'd entered her teens, she'd become aware of an unbearable emptiness eating away at her. She'd compared every man she met to Trey. None had measured up to him... except Sam. Sam couldn't be unfavorably compared to any man. Nevertheless, she hadn't been able to fall completely in love with him.

After several lifetimes spent in misery waiting for Trey to ride to her rescue, he finally showed up -- minus his damned memory.

She finally fell asleep in the early morning, angry tears streaming down her cheeks.

* * *

Trey stood on his hotel bedroom balcony, staring into the thick foliage surrounding the lodge. After tossing and turning for over an hour, he had given up trying to sleep. He had given up smoking several years earlier and had never really missed it... until now.

Every time he closed his eyes, he saw the devastated look in Carlee's eyes when he told her they had never met. Why did she think they had? Although he knew his ancestors had owned slaves, he had certainly never lived before. Nor had he ever lived in Virginia. So why did he feel so drawn to her? Why did the thought of her evoke vague memories of old nightmares?

During the last few years, he'd been distressingly disinterested in women. Oh, he wasn't above the usual one-night stand, but the passion most men had for women and sex had eluded him with increasing frequency. Lately, no matter how attractive or sexy, women left him emotionally cold and barely physically satisfied. Finally, he knew why

-- he had been waiting for Carlee Vanleer to walk into his life and capture his heart. Although he didn't believe in reincarnation, he knew she was the one woman he would forever long for and need.

Recalling the finality of her good-bye rather than good night, he suspected he would have to fight to win her trust. After he'd won that, he'd work on her passions and her heart.

He hadn't made a very good impression last night. He didn't know how long she was staying, but at the very least, she would probably be there for the weekend. A lot could happen during a weekend. Resisting the urge to go buy a pack of cigarettes, he returned to bed.

* * *

"What's wrong?"

Carlee shook her head and sipped her coffee. There was no point in trying to discuss reincarnation with someone who didn't believe in it. On some level, she wasn't sure she fully believed. Yet she knew she'd lived several different lifetimes. In each previous life, she had loved Trey Brandauer with a timeless and consuming passion that had left no room for meaningful relationships with other men. Other than Sam, no other man had even come close to touching her deepest emotions.

"I didn't sleep well last night." If Erinae told her she needed a man in her bed, she'd scream....

Erinae sighed. "Neither did I. What are your plans for the day? I think I'd like to head back to bed for an hour or two and then maybe sashay over to the Swinging Singles Brunch and Pool Party. You coming with?"

She needed to be alone to think. "Thanks, but I'm going to spend the day walking the trails. Interested?"

Erinae shook her head. "You know I never walk anywhere I can ride." She tilted her head, a concerned look on her face. "You all right, Lee? You look... so... sad this morning."

"I... ah... yeah... I am. But I'll be all right."

"Something happened last night. What?"

"I met him, Nae."

"Who?"

"Trey."

"Trey?" Erinae compressed her lips. "Oh, Lord, Lee, you don't mean the guy you said used to own you... when you were a slave?" Although Erinae tried to keep the disbelief off her face, Carlee heard it in her voice.

She sighed. "I know you don't believe, but remember I told you about him when we were just kids."

Erinae nodded. "Trey Brandauer. And does he have the same name and look the same?"

She knew Erinae was humoring her, but she answered anyway. "His name is still the same, but he looks different. He was just a boy when we knew each other before. He's a man now. His hair is silver instead of that wonderful honey-golden blond I used to dream of running my fingers through and he's well-built instead of being so lanky, but his eyes are the same."

"You only think it's him because he has blue eyes and told you his name."

She took another sip of her cooling coffee. "No. I knew his name before he told me. When I looked in his eyes, I knew it was him."

"How?"

"I don't know how I knew. I just did."

Erinae frowned. "What about him? Did he recognize you?"

Carlee tightened her fingers around her cup, fighting back tears. "No!" She sucked in an angry, hurt breath. "He doesn't remember me, Nae! I don't know how, but he's completely forgotten me!"

Erinae sighed. "What are you going to do? Make him remember?"

"There's nothing I can do except forget him for good this time."

Erinae nodded. "That's sounds like a plan. How are you going to do it?"

"I'm leaving."

"Lee!"

"I'll stay until Monday, then I have to leave. I know you were looking forward to these ten days, Nae, but I can't stay knowing he's here but doesn't remember me." She sucked in a deep, painful breath. "I can't bear it, Nae."

Erinae gave an impatient shake of her head. "It's all right. We'll both leave and we won't wait until Monday either. We'll leave today."

She smiled, her eyes misting with tears. "You always come through when I need you to, Nae."

"That's what friends are for. So we'd better think about packing."

"No. We can stay until Monday."

"I have no problem leaving right now, Lee."

"I know, but I'll take a long, solitary walk and come back good as new. We'll stay for the weekend."

"You've been talking about this guy for a long time. I think it's going to take more than a walk to get him out of your head for good."

She lifted her chin. "I'll be fine. I don't intend to spend another second talking or thinking about him."

Erinae sighed. "I'd better get my sneaks on and go with you."

She shook her head. "No. I need to be alone to think. Okay?"

Erinae gave her an uncertain look. "I have your word you'll be all right?"

"Of course I'll be okay. Remember, Nae, this isn't the first time I've lost him."

"I don't know, Lee. Maybe I'd better go with you."

"I need to be alone, Nae, but I'll be fine. I promise."

"Okay, but --" Erinae paused and looked over Carlee's shoulder. "Blue eyes and silver hair and mouth-wateringly gorgeous? Lee, I think he's coming this way!"

Carlee glanced over her shoulder. Trey strolled purposefully across the dining room, in the direction of their table. She turned back in her seat, her mouth dry. "That's him," she said flatly.

"Lee, he's gorgeous!"

She swallowed slowly, then tensed when he paused at her side.

"Good morning, ladies."

She cast a brief glance up at him. "Good morning."

"So you're Trey. I'm Erinae."

"Nice to meet you, Erinae. May I join you?"

"Yes. I'm just leaving, but you can keep Lee company." Erinae rose, kissed Carlee's cheek, and quickly left.

Carlee waited until Trey sat opposite her before she spoke. "I didn't expect to see you again."

"Didn't you? Why not?"

"We said good-bye last night."

He shook his head. "You said good-bye. I said good night."

"Why are you here?"

He looked directly into her eyes. "I wanted to see you again."

"Why? I'm sure you must think I'm nuts."

"Just because I don't believe I've lived before doesn't mean I think you're nuts."

"I have lived before and so have you. When we did, we were in love."

A brief smile touched his lips. "If I had lived before I can well believe I might have been in love with you," he said quietly.

His admission was cold comfort. She sighed. "It doesn't matter now."

He glanced at her unused plate and then cast a quick look at the buffet tables along the back wall of the room. "I haven't eaten. Have you?"

"No."

"Have breakfast with me?"

She stared at her cooling coffee. "I don't eat breakfast, but I could use another cup of coffee."

He rose. "How do you take it?"

She gave him a pointed look. "One sugar, no cream. I like it strong and dark... black in fact."

His gaze narrowed slightly. "Sending me a message, Carlee?"

She lifted her chin. "What if I am?"

"If you are, you should know we have something in common."

"Such as?"

"I like my coffee strong, sweet, and dark... black in fact."

Their gazes locked briefly. She shrugged. "This conversation is pointless."

"Pointless? You can say that after telling me we used to be in love with each other?"

"That was several lifetimes past and you don't remember. So, yes, this conversation serves no useful purpose."

"I'll get your coffee. Black, one sugar?"

"Yes."

"I'll be right back."

She nodded and concentrated her gaze on her hands to avoid watching him walk away. Minutes later, he returned with a tray. He handed her a cup of coffee. He inclined his head toward a plate he'd filled with eggs and potatoes. "Want to change your mind?"

"No, thanks." She sipped her coffee as he ate. She waited until he had nearly finished before she spoke. "I have plans for the day so I'll say good-bye."

He laid his utensils down and looked at her. "No need. I'm coming with you."

"You haven't been invited."

"I'm sure my invite got lost in the mail." He smiled suddenly. "Right?"

Her heart raced and she wet her lips. He was so incredibly handsome and sexy. How could she deny him anything when she'd waited so long to be with him again?

He took a sip of his coffee. "So how are we spending the day?"

"I don't know about you, but I need to be alone."

"And I need to be with you." His gaze locked with hers. "I think you should know I usually get what I want."

How many women could resist his charm and sex appeal? Of course he usually got what he wanted.

"So where are we going, Carlee?"

"Walking along the back trails."

"Great. I love walking."

"I know." She smiled, leaning forward as a favorite memory surfaced. "We used to walk for hours. Do you remember the time we snuck off and..." She broke off abruptly, her face burning.

He leaned forward and covered her right hand with his. "There's no need to stop. You can feel free to be yourself with me, Carlee. You can say and do anything you like without worrying about how it sounds. If you want to talk about our shared past, please do."

She stared at him. "You mean that," she said, surprised.

"Yes, I do." He grinned, giving her hand a gentle squeeze. "Aren't I the sweet, sensitive one?"

She laughed, feeling warm and happy because she was finally with him again. "You used to be."

"I still am." He released her and rose. "I'm going to my room to change and get my backpack. I'll come pick you up at your room in half an hour?"

There was no point in playing games. He apparently wanted to spend the day with her as much as she wanted to spend it with him. "Okay."

He brushed her cheek. A rush of heat danced up her neck at his touch. She lowered her eyelashes, uncertain what her gaze might reveal of her feelings.

She waited until he left before she rose and went to the nearest phone to ask for more sandwiches from the kitchen. After all these years, nothing had changed for her. The thought of spending the entire day with Trey sent a tingle of anticipation through her... just as it always had. Only this time, she'd know better than to surrender her heart to him.

Chapter Two

Carlee sighed contentedly and turned her face against Trey's shoulder. After spending two hours walking single file along the Pocono Mountains foot trails, she and Trey had spread out the thick blankets they'd both brought and stretched out on their backs. They had started out close together, but not quite touching. Somehow, without either of them saying a word, they had inched closer. When he stretched out an arm and drew her against him, she hadn't protested.

She had spent what felt like an eternity longing to be close to him again. Once she had known all his secrets and hopes for the future. Now, they were strangers. Still, her need to be close to him ate at her like an endless hunger. "Have you ever been married, Trey?"

He stroked a hand along her arm. Although she wore long sleeves, his touch sent a flash of heat and desire through her.

"No."

"Why not? You must be at least... thirty... what?"

"Eight and I've never met a woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. I'd never marry without that strong desire."

All right, Carlee. Don't expect anything but what feels good at the moment. Take whatever pleasure the next day or so brings and then leave. Don't look back. "What have you got against marriage?"

"Nothing. I just happen to think it should be a very permanent thing, so it's not something I'd jump into without a lot of due deliberation."

"Due deliberation?" *What about love?*

"Yes. Marriage, so I'm told, is a serious business."

So he viewed marriage as a business? No wonder he wasn't married.

He caressed her cheek. "What about you?"

"I was waiting for you, remember?"

"Well, here I am. I'm all yours."

She sighed. Lying against him left her feeling clingy and needy. Clingy, needy women ended up hurt and alone. She was not going that route again. She drew away and sat up.

He sat up too. Resting his chin on her shoulder, he reached around her to clasp her hands in his. "What's wrong, sweet?"

The muscles in her stomach tightened at the ease with which he used the endearment. It probably meant nothing to him. She turned to face him. "Do you have a special woman in your life, Trey?"

He shook his head. "No."

"No?"

He hesitated, then shrugged. "That's not to say that I don't date. I date regularly, but lately I've begun to think..."

"You've begun to think what?"

"I don't particularly enjoy sexual intimacy anymore."

She bit her lip. "You mean you can't perform?"

His face flushed under his tan and his eyes narrowed. "No! That's not what I mean. I can and do perform! I meant that I don't particularly enjoy sex anymore."

She blinked. "Why not? What's wrong?"

He sighed. "This isn't something I want to talk about, Carlee."

She squeezed his hand. "We never used to have secrets, Trey."

"Carlee! This is not something a man is comfortable talking about. Besides, I don't think it's going to be a problem much longer."

"Why not?"

He lifted her hand to his lips and gently sucked at her fingertips. "Because I've met you, sweet."

The breath caught in her throat. She swallowed several times, unable to look away from him. "Ah... we should probably think about eating and then heading back."

He laughed, sucked at her fingers again, and gave her back her hand. "Or we could stay here and get reacquainted."

Her face burned. "By reacquainted... if you mean what I think you do --"

"Oh, I do. You know I do."

"We were separated when we were just teenagers."

"So?"

"So we never made love, Trey."

He leaned forward and kissed her cheek. "That's an oversight we can easily remedy."

A wave of heat engulfed her. She pushed against his shoulder, shaking her head. "Only people in love can make love, Trey. For everyone else it's just sex."

He cupped a palm over her cheek. "Do you have something against sex?"

"As a matter of fact, no, but I don't do casual sex, Trey."

"When we do it, it won't be casual, sweet. It will be very special and worth waiting for."

She wet her lips and stared into his eyes, aware that she was damp between her legs. "You're very handsome. I'll bet you're used to women throwing themselves at you."

He shrugged. "I have my share of opportunities, but that's all in the past. You have my complete and undivided attention."

But for how long? She inched forward and pressed her face against his shoulder. He put his arms around her and kissed her cheek. "I won't hurt you, Carlee," he promised.

She pressed closer and closed her eyes. "I don't want to talk, Trey. Just hold me."

"Hold you how?"

"No strings. Please."

"No strings, sweetheart. I promise." Still holding her, he eased onto his back.

She settled against him. This was how she had dreamed things would be for them once they were together again. "I was so in love with you, Trey."

He stroked a hand over her shoulders. His touch brought comfort and excitement.

"I used to think I would die if you didn't come for me."

His arm tightened around her waist. "Sweetheart --"

She sucked in a breath. "I'm sorry. I know this must make you uncomfortable."

"Listening to you talk about your memories doesn't make me uncomfortable. It just makes me sad."

"I don't want you to be sad. So let's not talk."

He kissed her forehead.

She drifted to sleep in his arms, half-afraid she would have one of her frequent nightmares, but even in her sleep, she was aware that he held her. That made all the difference. She had never been afraid with him.

Later they ate lunch before retracing their steps along the trail. They didn't talk much, but it was a comfortable silence. Walking ahead, he glanced frequently over his shoulder to smile at her. She smiled back. Everything with him felt natural, yet strange and exciting.

"So?" he asked when they stood outside her hotel room door.

"So what?"

"So what time shall I pick you up for dinner?"

"You're assuming we're having dinner."

He nodded. "Yes, I am. So what time?"

She wanted to lie in a hot bath reliving every moment of their day together. She also needed to decide just how far she was prepared to go with him. "Ninety minutes."

He took her right hand in his and kissed her fingers.

She loved when he did that. She laid a hand on his arm and kissed his cheek.

"I'll see you soon, sweet."

"Yes." She nodded and went inside. Erinae turned from the window to face her.
"There you are, Lee. I was beginning to worry. Is everything all right?"

Leaning against the door, she smiled. "Yes. I think it is."

"Had a good time with him?"

"Yes. Oh, yes. We walked for miles, ate, had a nap, and then walked for a few more miles. I had a great time."

Erinae studied her face. "Just walking and napping, huh? No good stuff?"

"Nae! You know I don't sleep around."

"Yes, I do know that, but you've been talking about this guy since we were eleven or twelve. And he's one of the hottest hunks I've ever seen in person. I'd sleep around with him at the drop of a hat."

"Yeah, well, just don't you go dropping any hats around him!"

Erinae's eyes gleamed with satisfaction. "Feeling a little territorial, are we?"

"Yes," she admitted. "But just until Monday. In any case, we're having dinner tonight. You want to come with?"

"Not on your life." Erinae crossed the room and kissed her cheek. "Just this once, let your hair down and go for it, Lee."

"How can I when he doesn't remember me?"

"You remember him. That's enough for now, hon."

But she had several lifetimes of misery weighing her down. Now wasn't nearly enough. Nothing less than eternity with him would suffice to atone for all the heartache she'd endured.

* * *

"After last night, I'll bet you're glad you decided to come, aren't you?"

Trey finished knotting his tie and turned to look at Mick who lounged on the bed behind him. "What do you mean?"

"You spent the night with her, didn't you?"

"Her name is Carlee, and no, we didn't spend the night together."

"Ah. Got your nookie and slept in your own bed, huh?" He nodded approvingly. "It's about time you got back in the saddle."

Mick's assumption annoyed the hell out of him. "I didn't sleep with her!"

Mick arched a brow. "She played hard to get after running down the stairs and throwing herself in your arms in front of the whole damned place?"

He frowned. "Look. You want to keep your nose out of my business?"

"What's up, Trey?"

"Nothing's up! Just mind your own business and stop assuming every woman is like the floozies you sleep with."

"I don't sleep around any more than you do!"

Mick's marriage had quickly fallen apart after his young daughter's death in a car accident. Since then Trey suspected Mick had been celibate. Trey sighed, nodding. "I know. Forget I said that. I'm just a little on edge."

"She really got under your skin, huh? If memory serves, you have more than a few floozies of your own waiting back home."

"There's no one special."

Mick whistled softly. "She has got under your skin. What would you call Paulette?"

"Paulette and I are in no way committed to each other."

"Yeah? Does Paulette know that?"

"Yes, she does. She understands that I have no particular interest in her."

"Does she really? I hope so for your sake and the sake of your dark beauty."

Trey tightened his lips. "You know, Mick, your life would run a lot smoother if you admitted you find black women fascinating and go date a woman you could really go for."

Mick's eyes narrowed. "I can handle my own love life, Trey."

"So can I. So let's just both drop it, okay?"

Mick nodded slowly. "Fine, but you know I didn't mean anything racial or negative by that remark."

"Of course I do, Mick." He shrugged. "Besides, it's accurate. She's black and she is beautiful."

"Are you spending the evening with her?"

He nodded, turning back to frown at his reflection. Maybe it was time he did something with his hair. He was too damn young to walk around with a head full of gray hair. "How do I look?"

"How do you... Trey, man, you've fallen for her like a ton of bricks."

"She's very special."

Mick placed a hand on his shoulder. "You know that already?"

He met Mick's gaze in the mirror. "Yes. So I don't want to hear any crude remarks about her."

Mick held up his hands, palms out. "You won't."

"Okay."

"Maybe I'll see you sometime tomorrow."

Trey nodded. "Maybe."

* * *

Carlee and Trey had dinner that night at one of the many secluded romantic enclaves. He held her hand and listened attentively to everything she said. She admonished herself not to fall for him, but when he looked at her as if she were the only woman in the world, common sense fled.

While they danced after dinner, he held her close, both hands resting against her bare back. "You're so sweet, so beautiful, so totally seductive," he whispered. "And mine."

His. She'd waited so long to have him reclaim her. He spoke all the right words. He inflamed her deepest passions. Yet he didn't remember. She wasn't special to him, as he was to her.

"You belong to me," he murmured, tipped up her chin, and pressed a warm kiss against her mouth. Longing to wrap her arms around his neck and shamelessly rub her

breasts against his chest, she trembled. She contented herself with parting her lips and returning the pressure of his mouth.

Although she ached for him, she wasn't going to be an easy lay. If he wanted meaningless sex, he'd have to look elsewhere. "It's been a long day. I'm going to bed."

"Good idea. I'll come with you."

She pressed her hands against his shoulders. "No. You won't."

He released her, and they walked to her room in silence. She expected him to ask her to spend the night. Instead, at her door, he cupped her face between his palms and kissed her lips. His kiss this time was deep and lingering. It stirred her passions and made her long for the ultimate embrace with him. By the time he lifted his head, her panties were damp and her pounding heart made breathing difficult.

"What time are we having breakfast tomorrow?"

She brushed the back of her hand across her mouth. "I don't eat breakfast," she reminded him, not quite meeting his gaze.

He turned her head until he could look directly into her eyes. "Fine. What time are you watching me eat breakfast?"

"I think I'll sleep late..."

He pressed a thumb against her lips. "What time?"

She sighed. "Nine-ish?"

He shook his head. "That's too long to wait to see you again. How about eight?"

She smiled. "Okay."

He kissed her lips lightly. "Good night, sweetheart."

She caressed his cheek. "Good night, Trey."

* * *

In her room Carlee lay sleepless for an hour, then got back up. Maybe a long soak in the heart-shaped Jacuzzi tub would get her drowsy enough to sleep. As she crossed the bedroom to the bath, the phone rang. Startled, she glanced at the bedside clock. Twelve-thirty. It must be Erinae. She hurried across the room to snatch up the phone. "Nae, what is it? What's wrong?"

"It's Trey, honey."

The breath caught in her throat and she sank onto the side of the bed. "Trey! What's wrong?"

"We need to talk."

"Okay. Tomorrow --"

"We need to talk now."

"Now? What's wrong?"

"This separate bed thing isn't working. I've had enough."

"But according to you we've only known each other one day!"

"I feel like I've been aching to make love to you all my life."

She shared the feeling. "Trey..."

"Put on your sexiest teddy or strip naked. Your choice. I need you, honey, and I'm on my way."

"Trey, I'm not going to --"

"I'll be there in fifteen minutes. I expect you to let me in."

She put the receiver on its cradle, her legs trembling. What about what she expected, wanted, or needed? She rose and walked over to the full-length mirror on the back of the closet doors. The sheer, black negligee she wore ended mid-thigh and cupped the undersides of her breasts, showcasing her rather wide areoles. There would be no part of her body that would not be on full display when he arrived if she didn't cover the revealing negligee.

She studied her reflection. Bare of make-up, her face looked plain, her eyes huge and filled with a mixture of fear and excitement. She resembled a frightened teenager about to surrender her virginity to prove her love. Telling herself she had nothing to prove didn't help. She could almost see her heart thumping at the thought of spending the night with Trey.

On the plantation she had spent many nights longing for him. After she'd been sold, she had bitterly regretted that she hadn't given herself to him. She tensed when a quiet tap sounded on her room door. "Yes?"

"Sweetheart, it's Trey."

Oh, God! Her courage deserting her, she snatched up the sweats she'd worn earlier and pulled them over her negligee. She wet her lips and crossed the room to the door. Taking several deep breaths, she slowly opened it.

He handed her a dozen purple roses and a small lavender teddy bear. "Hi, sweetheart."

He hadn't changed. In the old days, he'd rarely come to her without some small trinket or present. "Oh, Trey! They're purple! I love purple."

He smiled. "Yes, I know. You didn't think I'd forget, did you? Do you remember the time we --" He broke off and they stared at each other in silence for several moments.

Her heart raced. He remembered. "Trey..."

He shrugged. "I don't know what I was going to say."

But she suspected she did. He was beginning to remember. She smiled at the flowers and the bear. "Thank you!" She placed them on the table near the door. "Where did you get them in the middle of the night?"

"This is a lovers' resort. The gift shop's manned twenty-four hours. Do you like them?"

"Of course I do, but then you knew I would."

"Then come give me some love, honey."

She walked into his arms.

He embraced her. "Why are you trembling? You're not afraid of me, are you?"

She pressed her hands against his shoulders. "No, but I don't sleep around."

He rubbed his cheek against hers. "I'm sure you don't." He tipped up her chin and kissed her lips. "But we are going to spend the night together."

She generally had little patience or time for so-called Alpha males who expected to always have their way with women. Trey's Alpha behavior should have dampened her desire. Instead, everything about him excited her sexual passions, while deepening

her emotional hunger for him. Her need made thought difficult, but she struggled to retain some semblance of common sense. "Not so fast, Trey."

"I want you and I want you now, Carlee."

"You think the issues between us can be so easily resolved?"

"Yes, actually I do."

"Well, they can't! Do you know what I've been through? What I endured waiting for you? There was a time when I really wanted and needed you. I didn't just want you physically. I needed to be rescued."

"Let's talk about now." He took her hand in his, kissed it, and held it against his chest. "I'm here now, sweetheart."

She lifted her chin. "Now is too late, Trey. I don't need you to come to my rescue now. I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself without depending on a man who doesn't keep his promise to protect and rescue me."

"Carlee, please. Not now."

She yanked at her hand, but he only tightened his grip. "I know you say you don't believe in reincarnation, but I do. We've both lived before. And you let me down when I needed you most. I don't need you now, Trey."

His lips tightened and his eyes narrowed. "Maybe not, but you still want me and I want you. What are you going to do about that here and now?"

She stared up into his ice-blue eyes and saw her own unfulfilled desire reflected in his gaze. She had waited several lifetimes for this man. Although she no longer needed his physical protection, her need for physical intimacy with him had not abated one iota.

She would never give her heart and soul to him again. But her body cried out for the satisfaction it had been denied for so long. With every breath she took, she wanted him. Standing gazing into his eyes, she knew she had to surrender to him. She would retain full control of her heart, but for the next two nights, her body would be his.

When she tried to draw away from him this time, he made no move to stop her. She moistened her lips, took a deep breath, and locking her gaze with his, she slowly removed the sweats.

She allowed him to gaze in appreciation at her body in the sheer negligee for several long moments before she slowly danced around him, one hand under the negligee on her pussy. It ached and throbbed for him. She rubbed her fingers over her clit as she swayed from side to side. Although she had never danced erotically, doing so for him felt natural.

She kept her eyes locked with his, watching his reaction. Tiny lights seemed to burn in the depths of his blue gaze. When she glanced down at his sweats, she saw the swelling along one side of his leg. Feeling heat and passion consume her, she surrendered to a wanton urge she had always resisted.

Shivers of pleasure danced along her spine as she considered what was about to happen between them. Soon the cock slowly hardening against his leg would be between hers and deep in her quivering, aching body. Oh, Lord, but she wanted him!

Smiling, she turned her back to him. Looking over her left shoulder, she lifted the negligee, revealing her bare behind. Feeling sexy and uninhibited, she bent forward and rotated her hips suggestively. "Do you like what you see?"

"Yes." His breathing quickening, he slipped a hand into his sweatpants to cup a hand over his cock.

She generally found men who touched their genitals in her presence annoying, but watching him palming his cock turned her on. She wet her lips and rubbed her clit as she continued rotating and moving her hips from side to side.

But it didn't suit her to have him too hard too fast. She walked over to him and tugged at the hand in his sweats. After a moment of resistance, he allowed her to pull his hand free of his pants. Looking into his eyes, she brought his hand to her lips and kissed it.

Smiling seductively at him, she sucked at each of his fingers while undulating her body.

He sucked in his breath and cupped his free hand over her breasts. "Oh, sweet. I need you."

And she needed and wanted him. Stepping away from him she slowly removed the negligee. She worked out regularly and knew she had no reason to be ashamed of her body. Her breasts were large and firm, her legs long and shapely, her behind nicely padded without being too large, her stomach flat, and her pussy wet and ready to welcome his cock.

"Holy hell, sweet! You are so beautiful, you take my breath away."

Her heart thumped wildly, her legs trembled. She'd reached the end of her endurance. She needed him inside her. She took his hand from her breasts and placed it between her legs. "Trey," she said softly. She slid her other hand over his groin. She felt his cock, hard and thick under her fingers, and trembled with need. "Please."

"Oh, I'm going to please you, sweetheart, but first I need a taste of paradise." He dropped to his knees, cupped his hands over her butt, and buried his face against her pussy.

She wanted to close her eyes and savor the joy building in her. But if she closed her eyes, she'd miss seeing the delicious contrast of his sleek, silver hair seemingly buried against her much darker skin. She kept her eyes open and enjoyed the best of both worlds.

He ate her slowly, alternating between licking and sucking her and kissing and thrusting his tongue inside her. Although she enjoyed a man's mouth on her sensitive folds and his tongue inside her, she had only ever climaxed that way with Sam. Like Sam, Trey had perfected his oral sex technique. Every movement of his skillful tongue and probing fingers brought immeasurable pleasure. It radiated out from her pussy, quickly spreading all through her body until she thought she would overdose on it. Nothing in her sexual experience had ever felt so good. It was too much to bear. Too good. She clutched his head to her and exploded. He tightened his fingers on her butt and eagerly lapped up her moisture. Then he wrapped his arms around her body,

pressed his face against her pubic hair, and breathed deeply, as if savoring her fragrance.

"That was so good."

He lifted his head and looked at her, his blue eyes alight with passion. "You are so sweet, Carlee, and that was beyond good. Let's do it again."

Her stomach muscles clenched and she shivered. "Don't you want me to suck you?"

"Hell yeah, but first, I want to taste more of your sweet, hot pussy." Still on his knees, he drew her down to the carpet. She lay on her back and got a sexual thrill out of parting her legs and reaching down to spread herself for him.

"Oh, honey, I've never seen such a beautiful sight."

He crawled between her legs and began eating her with such an obvious enjoyment that she totally lost herself in the feelings he invoked in her. She felt as if they were becoming one spiritually and emotionally. He ate her pussy with a tender hunger and greed that destroyed all her inhibitions. Gasping and sobbing with pleasure, she came again and again. Finally, she lay still, feeling weak and fulfilled.

It wasn't until he rose and removed his clothes, and pressed his body against hers, that she realized the oral sex that had so completely conquered her had aroused him to the point of orgasm. His cock, resting against her thigh, was creamy with his seed.

She stroked her fingers through his hair. "You came too," she whispered.

"Yes," he sounded surprised. "That's never happened before."

She licked her lips, smiling. "That's because we've never made love before."

"No, but we have an entire week to explore all the ways we can make love."

"I'm leaving on Monday."

"The hell you are!"

"Trey..."

"You're not leaving Monday, Carlee, so don't waste your breath telling me you are." He cupped her breasts in his hands and kissed them both until she felt a fresh flood of heat and need between her legs. "You're staying until I leave."

They stared at each other for several long moments before she averted her gaze, silently bowing to his will.

He rolled her onto her side and gently kissed her lips. "You won't regret staying with me, sweet. I promise."

She wasn't sure of that, but she couldn't summon the will or desire to disagree with him.

He pressed a warm, sweet, reassuring kiss against her lips before lifting her to her feet. Then he swept her off her feet and carried her to bed. "I'll treat your heart tenderly, sweetheart."

She frowned. She supposed she should assert some independence. "I never said you had my heart, Trey."

He laid her gently on the bed and slid in beside her. His warm, caressing hands sent tingles of desire through her. "Yeah? Well, if I don't have it now, I soon will. You can either surrender it willingly or..." He nibbled at her lips. "I'll take it forcefully. Either way, it and you are going to be mine, Carlee."

She prided herself on her ability not to *need* a man in her life to be happy. She certainly didn't need or want one dictating to her. So why didn't she challenge his assertion?

What she did was snuggle in his arms, exchange soft kisses with him, and drift into a contented sleep.

Chapter Three

Carlee woke later to the sound of running water. She sat up in bed. The light in the adjoining bathroom shone into the bedroom. She glanced at the heart-shaped clock on the nightstand. Three a.m. She slipped out of bed, and ignoring a momentary impulse to cover her nudity, she walked into the bathroom.

He looked up from the washbasin where he'd been washing his face. She drank in the beauty of his naked body. He was tall with wide shoulders, long legs, tight buns, and a cock that stirred her passions, even flaccid.

He smiled. "Did I wake you, sweet?"

She shook her head and walked quickly across the room to him. When he embraced her, she pressed her cheek against his chest. In his arms, she felt safe, protected, and cherished. She lifted her face to his. "Trey?"

He bent his head and pressed a series of warm kisses against her lips. His hands spread out along her body, cupping her behind.

She shivered, he shuddered, and she felt his cock come alive. She went damp and suddenly had to have him. "Trey..." Her voice was a plea.

"You want to make love?"

Face flushing, she nodded. She had always secretly suspected that those who whispered she was frigid just might have a point. Although she'd occasionally enjoyed cuddling and kissing, she had never felt a pressing need to surrender so completely to a man, holding nothing back -- until now. The ache she felt to have him inside her stunned her.

He kissed her lightly. "I do too, but first..." He allowed his voice to trail off as he reached between their bodies to finger her vagina. "I want to eat your pussy again."

The remembrance of his face between her legs and his fingers and tongue inside her made her damp. No other lover had ever eaten her with as much gusto and genuine pleasure as he had. Oral sex with Sam had been good, but not blissful. Now she longed for the ultimate delight -- Trey's cock inside her.

She slipped her fingers around his hardening flesh, and gazed up at him. "I want this, Trey."

He arched a brow. "This? You mean my cock?"

"Yes."

He gave her a quizzical look. "Are you shy, sweet?"

"Not especially, but I don't go around talking about cocks and pussies either."

He grinned. "I'd love to hear you talking about my cock and your pussy."

As he spoke, she felt him lengthening and tightening against her fingers. Moistening her lips, she surrendered to her impulse. She pushed against his shoulders. When he reluctantly released her, she dropped down to her knees, uncaring that the bathroom floor was cool and hard. Up close, his cock nearly robbed her of the ability to breathe. Although an inch or so shorter than Sam's ten-inch shaft, it was deliciously thicker.

She cupped him in her hands. He felt wonderfully heavy. The head of his shaft was hard, warm, and shaped like an erotic love helmet. His cock looked... mouthwatering. She sucked in a breath, parted her lips, and rained a series of hungry eager kisses along his flesh.

He trembled at the touch of her lips and caught his breath.

Still on her knees, she looked up at him. His blue eyes blazed with passion, yet she sensed tenderness in him. He radiated a real concern for her welfare and pleasure. She loved that he wanted to please her again, but it was her turn to please him. She leaned forward, hefting his length in one hand. Lord, how he would stretch and fill her when he slid inside her.

She placed her free hand on his hip and drew the tip of his bare cock between her eager lips.

“God, sweet! What are you doing?”

A big hand on the back of her head prevented her from removing him from her mouth long enough to state the obvious. She ran the tip of her tongue along the head of his cock and felt him begin to secrete pre-cum.

Encouraged and excited by the idea of his increasing arousal, she drew several more inches of his shaft into her mouth before she paused. She wanted to savor the taste and texture of the first bare cock she'd ever had in her mouth. He felt silky hot and thick against her tongue. Delectable. Moaning softly, she began to suck him. She alternated between short, quick sucks and long, leisurely ones. Both movements elicited groans of delight and pleasure from him. His fingers curled in her hair and he unexpectedly thrust his hips forward.

His shaft fill her mouth and part of her throat. Instead of the usual panic she felt at the thought of deep throating a lover, she eagerly resumed her sucking. She loved the smell, taste, and feel of him. Placing both hands over his tight, hard buns, she moved forward until his pubic hair tickled her nose.

“Dear God! You're driving me nuts! This feels so good. Oh, baby! Slow down or you're going to make me come!”

Which was exactly what she wanted. She sucked harder and deeper. She felt him tense as he tried to remain in control. Determined to make him come, she moved her right hand around to cup his balls. She fondled them, then slid a finger behind him to press against his anus. He exploded in her mouth.

She swallowed the warm seed jetting from his cock without actually tasting it. Tasting him was part of the experience she wanted to enjoy. She reluctantly drew back until only the head of his cock remained in her mouth. That was much nicer because the jets of semen shooting from his cock landed on her tongue.

She closed her eyes and swallowed slowly, feeling her own passion rising. She thrust several fingers inside her pussy. Nice. Fingering herself while swallowing his seed was enough to make her come.

Only when she was sure she had savored and swallowed every drop of his seed did she remove her lips from his shaft and smile up at him. "Did you enjoy coming in my mouth, Trey?"

"Damn, sweet! Enjoy is a gross understatement. That was the most incredible blowjob I've ever had." He dropped to his knees in front of her, slipping his fingers inside her.

She shivered and parted her legs, moving against his hand. "I want you," she told him in a small, shameless voice. "And I want you now."

"What a coincidence. I want you now too." He kissed her lips. "Wanna get physical with me?"

She drew away from him and lay on her back, enjoying the cool tiles against her heated flesh. She spread her legs, exposing herself fully to him. "I need you, now. Stop teasing and take me."

He took her hands and lifted her to her feet. "I haven't had a woman in a while. This is going to get messy. We'd better go to bed where I can spend the rest of the night buried to the hilt inside you."

She licked her lips and smiled up at him.

He lifted her in his arms and carried her back to the bedroom. He laid her on her back and spread his body on top of her. She parted her legs. He pressed between her thighs.

"Trey!" She stroked her hands over his back. "Please. Take me!"

"I intend to take you, repeatedly, my sweet, beautiful girl." He lowered his head. She closed her eyes as his mouth touched hers. His kiss was slow, soft, and gentle. She had waited such a long time to feel his lips against hers again in a kiss this tender and full of the promise of unconditional devotion. She sighed and slipped her arms around his neck, pressing her breasts against his chest.

His kiss deepened and one hand came up to brush against her breasts. A tingle shot through her. She shuddered, pressed closer to him, and parted her lips.

Keeping his hand cupped against her breasts, he kissed her again and again, raining long, sweet kisses against her mouth, cheeks, and neck. She arched her back, longing to share the ultimate delight with him.

She made no protest when he took one of her hands from his neck and urged it down between his legs. He pulsed against her fingers. She gasped into his mouth. He rotated his hips against her. Heart thumping, she closed her fingers around his warm length.

Holding him in her hand, she kissed him with a mounting passion that clouded her reason. She didn't want to think about what she was doing or the consequences. She just wanted to finally make love to him. "Take me, Trey. Please," she begged.

He lifted his head and stared down into her eyes. That's when she realized that the nightlight was on. "The light," she whispered. "Turn it off."

"No. I want to see you." He brushed his lips against hers.

As he kissed her, he lifted his hips, grasped his cock in one hand, and brought it to her entrance. Heart thumping, pussy damp, she pressed a hand against his chest. "There's something I have to tell you."

"Oh, baby, not now!"

She shoved a balled hand against his shoulder. "Trey, please! Wait!"

He stiffened and stared down at her. "Baby, there's no need to sound so frightened. I won't ever take you without your full and willing permission."

"You have it."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I just need you to be gentle."

"I'll be gentle, honey."

"And go slow."

"Slow? Carlee, you've been begging me to take you for several minutes. Now you want me to go slow? Is there something you want to tell me?"

She moistened her lips. "No! Yes! Oh, Trey, I've never done it before."

"Made love without a condom? Don't worry, baby. I haven't touched a woman without one in over thirteen years. If you're worried about catching something..."

"That's not my only concern, Trey. I meant I've never had real sex."

He rolled off her and sat up, turning the bedside light on. "What?"

She sat up, her face burning. "I'm a virgin."

She waited for the disbelief. Instead, she saw acceptance in his blue gaze.

He stroked her cheek. "Honey, I'll be as gentle as I can, but sometimes the first time is not very pleasant for virgins."

"I know and I want you. I just didn't want you thrusting in and breaking my hymen with one fierce lunge."

He kissed her lips and stroked her bare breasts, sending a coil of heat straight to her pussy. "Sometimes that's the quickest way to get through the pain."

She pulled away from him. "How would you know? Do you make a habit of breaking in virgins?"

"I've had my share," he said. "Before you give me a hurt look, remember that I am thirty-eight years old. For most of my adult life, I've had the normal male lust for virginal pussy."

Now wasn't the time to worry about how many women he'd slept with, while she'd saved her vaginal virginity for him. She lay on her back, parted her legs, and stretched out a hand to him. "Make love to me, Trey."

"Oh, yeah, baby, I will." He turned off the bedside lamp, leaving on the nightlight. He lay on top of her, settling himself between her legs.

She closed her eyes and tensed her body, trying to prepare herself for the hard thrust she dreaded and yet longed for. He kissed her lips gently and slowly, while he fondled her breasts and caressed her thighs. "Relax, love. I'll do my best not to hurt you," he promised. "I don't want you to be afraid of becoming mine."

The feel of his heavy body on top of her increased her hunger for him. "I know it's probably going to hurt, but I've waited a very long time for this moment, Trey. Take me."

Encouraged, he grasped his cock, pressed it against her entrance, kissed her, and shot his powerful hips forward.

"Oooh!" She gasped and shuddered in pain as his hard, thick length tore through her hymen, and plunged several inches into her passage.

He paused and lifted his head to look down at her. "Sweet?"

She stared up at him, wide-eyed. She had known he was thick, but she feared that if she moved, he would split her open.

"Are you all right?"

Almost afraid to breathe, she nodded slowly.

"Good. We're almost there, love."

"What?"

He smiled down at her. "Just a few more inches and I'll be all the way in, honey."

She stared down their bodies and felt a wanton thrill of lust as she realized that several inches of his thick length remained outside her body. "You're so big and thick," she whispered.

"And it's about to be all yours. Brace yourself, honey. Here I come."

She bit her bottom lip and exhaled through her nose as he slowly pressed forward, stretching her and forcing the remnants of his shaft inside her.

He cupped his hands under her butt, tilted her lower body, and ground his hips against hers. Finally, when she felt as if she'd burst if he pushed another inch of cock into her, his pubic hair came to rest against hers. "There, baby, it's all in," he whispered. "Now you're all mine."

"Oh," she moaned. "It's too big and thick. I don't think I can keep it all in me."

"Of course you can." He peppered her lips with kisses, holding himself still. "You just need a few moments to get used to having a cock inside you." He lifted his lips from her mouth and flicked his tongue against her breasts. "In a few minutes, it will start to feel good and you'll develop an insatiable lust for my cock."

Her pussy felt stretched and uncomfortably full, but the pain had been momentary. She was ready to feel him moving inside her. "Make love to me," she begged.

Settling most of his weight on his upper arms, he made love to her. Although she could feel the tension in his body, he kept his movements slow and controlled. Still, with motion, the pain returned. Determined not to show it, she wrapped her arms around him and lifted her chin. When he claimed her mouth and tongue, she moaned against his lips, dreading the pain, but loving the fact that every inch of his hot, thick length was sliding slowly and deliciously in and out of her.

"Hmm," he groaned and thrust his cock back into her pussy until she felt his pubic hair against hers again. "Damn, honey, you're so tight and hot. Oh, God, you feel so good. So good, baby. I'm about to come. Get ready. I'm going to come in you."

She felt the difference in his body as he began to thrust into her with a heated passion that sent a tremor of desire through her. Under the pain, she experienced jolts of bliss as he reached between their bodies and rubbed her clit. His movements became hard and fast until he pounded into her. A wave of pleasure crashed over her and carried her away on a tide of unexpected delight. Drowning in a combination of pain and joy, she was nevertheless acutely aware of him losing control. She wrapped her legs around him and held him tight as he shot his seed deep into her body.

"Oh, yeah! Good!"

"So good," he echoed.

* * *

Carlee woke on her side. Trey lay behind her, an arm thrown across her waist. She listened to his deep, even breathing. He must be asleep. She lay still, her eyes closed, savoring the memory of surrendering her virginity to him. Recalling the length and thickness of his cock, she shivered. His cock had brought pleasure and pain.

But she had been foolish to allow him to come inside her. Having his children had always been in her game plan. Of course that had been when she had expected him to remember her. He didn't. Yet she'd allowed him to take her virginity and come in her

-- without any commitment on his part. All he'd had to do was kiss her and tell her she was his to get her to sleep with him.

She opened her eyes and looked at the bedside clock. Nine-fifteen! She eased from under his arm and slipped out of bed. He had made love to her three times before she'd whispered that she was sore. By that time it was after five a.m. and her pussy felt raw.

In the bathroom, she stood in the shower with cool water pouring over her body. A measure of sanity returned. Closing her eyes, she leaned her forehead against the tiles. She didn't regret sleeping with him. Which was just as well since she knew she wasn't going to be able to stay away from him while they remained at the lodge.

That might not be such a bad thing, as long as she protected herself against an unwanted pregnancy or possible STD's. She would spend every waking moment in his arms until she left. Then she would forget him and move on with her life. As wickedly delicious as it was, no more naked cock, she decided. He wore protection or else.

* * *

When Trey woke, the sun shone into the room. Alone in the bed, he lay back against the pillow, marveling at how many times he'd made love the night before. Prior to the previous night, he had come to terms with the painful realization that he had an extremely low sex drive and wasn't likely to be able to maintain a satisfying sexual relationship. He'd been perfectly satisfied to make love once or twice a month. His low sex drive hadn't pleased Paulette at all. She'd suggested he see a doctor more than once.

Relief washed over him. There was nothing wrong with him. He'd just been waiting to meet Carlee Vanleer. His woman. He smiled. His woman. He liked the feel of the words.

Becoming aware of sound from the bathroom, he rose. Time to go say good morning to his woman.

* * *

Still in the shower, Carlee felt a draft on her back. She looked over her shoulder. Trey stood in the open shower door, naked and aroused. Thoughts of soreness and

being sensible vanished. "Trey. I was just thinking about you." She smiled and opened her arms.

He joined her in the shower, sliding the door shut. He slipped his arms around her and held her close. "Good thoughts?"

She nodded. "Yes."

He nibbled at her neck. A shiver danced along her spine. "How do you feel?"

"Sore."

He stiffened against her. "I'm sorry, sweet. I didn't mean to rut in you like that."

She spread her hands against his chest. "I'm sore, but still hungry, Trey."

"Hungry enough to enjoy some early morning lovin'?"

"Here?"

"Yes -- with the water cascading over our thrusting, locked bodies." He lifted her left hand from his chest and sucked her fingertips. "Carlee, you have no idea how special last night with you was."

The tender passion she saw in his eyes took her breath away. "It was special for me as well. I've waited several lifetimes for last night and you didn't disappoint me."

"I won't now either," he whispered, moving against her.

She spread her legs and leaned against the tile at her back. He pressed forward.

"Oooh!" She closed her eyes and grabbed his hips as his cock slowly penetrated her already moist pussy. "Oooh. Yes!" She thrust her hips forward.

He matched her movement and he was fully seated in her within moments.

As it had earlier, his possession left her uncomfortably full. Also as before, she loved the feeling. She wrapped her arms around his waist and fucked herself along the length of his thick, hard shaft. Sweet, exquisite pain enveloped her. "Oooh, Trey! It hurts. Oh, I love how it hurts!"

He clutched her behind in his hands and took her hard and fast, quickly pushing her toward an orgasm. "Trey! Don't stop. That's it. That's it... oooh!" She shuddered and exploded.

He groaned, pulled her closer, and fucked her harder. And then harder still until she moaned and came again. Only then did he slam his cock deep up in her and fill her with his seed.

Holding her close to him, he devoured her lips while he pumped the last drops of his seed in her. "Carlee, honey! Your pussy feels so good full of my seed."

Happy and content, she smiled, stroking her fingers through his hair. "We have to stop doing this without protection."

He bit lightly into her right breast. "You think I'm giving up fucking your bare, unprotected pussy now that I've tasted paradise with you? Dream on, Carlee."

Sighing with pleasure, she drew away. She bit her lip to smother a sob when his cock slipped from her body. "We're not going to see each other again."

He stared down at her. "Who says?"

"I do. I'm not getting involved with you again."

His lips tightened and he reached out and pulled her back against him. "You're already involved with me and you're going to stay involved with me."

She drew out of his arms and quickly washed her genital area. She watched him clean his cock and balls before she opened the shower door. "Not after we leave here. I'm not going to allow you to hurt me again."

He followed her out of the shower. They stared coolly at each other as they dried off. She longed to surrender to him fully, but she knew if she was to keep her heart intact, she had to attempt to maintain some emotional distance between them.

"I'll stay for the full ten days, but --"

"Yes. You will."

She ignored his interruption. "And I'll sleep with you as many times as you want while I'm here. But when we leave here, I'm leaving with my heart intact. Once I leave, I'm going to move on with my life."

He tossed his towel aside. "So what? I'm just a hard cock available to scratch your damn itch?"

She wrapped her towel around her body. "Please don't make this difficult. The sex with you is more wonderful than I could have imagined, but I'm not getting hurt again."

"Damn it, Carlee! I don't plan to hurt you and let's get one thing straight. I didn't hurt you in the past."

Sudden tears filled her eyes. "How can you still not remember? We meant so much to each other. How can you have just forgotten me like I wasn't important to you?"

He closed his eyes briefly, shaking his head. "Please, Carlee. Don't do this. What we just shared was special. Don't penalize me for a past I don't remember." He cupped a palm over her cheek. "Don't you think I'd remember if I could?"

She balled a hand into a fist and hit it against her thigh. "I don't want to talk about the past or the future because we have none together. If you want me to stay, you have to accept my terms, Trey. We can be as uninhibited as we like while we're here. When we leave, we'll leave separately and both consider this chapter in our lives closed -- permanently. Can you do that?"

Tiny flames burned in the depths of his blue gaze. His lips tightened. He inclined his head slightly. "It seems I have no choice."

"Not if you want me to stay."

He drew her into his arms. She went willingly, pressing her cheek against his damp shoulder. Giving him up at the end of their vacation wouldn't be easy, but she would do what she needed to do to avoid being hurt again.

He picked her up and carried her back to bed. Lying on her back with her legs parted, she welcomed him into her arms, gasping softly as he kissed her and propelled his thick length deep into her pussy.

"You're mine," he grunted, thrusting into her. "This pussy is mine!"

She moaned.

He raked his teeth against her ear. "Say it. Tell me what I want to hear."

She closed her eyes, clutched his ass, and whispered in a low, shameless voice, "My pussy is yours, Trey."

"Just your pussy?"

"All of me."

"Damn straight, sweet!"

He thrust hard against her, driving his cock deep into her quivering depths. She ground her hips against his and mindlessly surrendered to him.

Chapter Four

After dressing, Carlee and Trey went to brunch. She watched in amusement, sipping coffee, as Trey ate two helpings of eggs, bacon, and home fries.

He arched a brow as he finished his third cup of coffee. "What? Making love all night makes me hungry."

Heat shot into her cheeks, but she smiled. "You must spend a fortune on food."

He put down his coffee cup and reached across the table to clasp both her hands in his. "Why don't you move in with me and find out for yourself?"

She moistened her lips. "Move in with you?"

"Yes. Why not? I have a huge three-bedroom condo in the city with every conceivable amenity, including a custom-built Jacuzzi you'll love, a fireplace, gourmet kitchen, and a balcony with a breathtaking view of the city. In the morning we can sit in the master bedroom and watch the sunrise. At night, depending on the season, we could either make love in front of a roaring fire or dance the night away under the stars on the balcony."

He lifted her hands to his lips and kissed them. "Come live with me, Carlee. I promise I'll protect and cherish you always."

He called asking her to move in with him cherishing her? After several lifetimes waiting for him he expected her to shack up with him? They clearly had very different ideas on what constituted a commitment.

Forcing a smile, she gently pulled away. "I have an apartment and a life of my own to live, Trey."

He recaptured her hands. "What kind of life would it be without me?"

Excellent question. "I've lived through that once. I can do it again."

"I'm not giving you up. You might as well know that now."

"Even if I were interested in pursuing a relationship with you, we live a good two hours apart."

He shook his head, looking exasperated. "Would that be an issue if I remembered or pretended to remember a life I never lived?"

"But you don't remember, Trey, and that makes all the difference." She softened her tone and offered a tentative smile. "Please, Trey, let's just enjoy this brief glimpse of paradise, and let the future take care of itself."

He smiled suddenly. "All right, love. If you want sex with no commitment, I can do that."

I'll just bet you can, she thought sadly. Sex without love was easy when there were no real feelings involved. She tugged at her hands. After a moment of resistance, he released them. "So tell me about her."

"Who?"

"The woman in your life. And before you say again there is none, I know there is."

"Carlee, let's get this clear. There is no special woman in my life. If there were, I damn sure wouldn't be here alone. She'd be with me. And even if there had been someone I was interested in, it would have been over the moment I saw you. I don't believe in reincarnation, but I know you're the woman I've spent my whole life waiting to meet."

Then why did you ask me to live with you instead of marry you? She gave herself a mental shake. They had already agreed to go their separate ways after their vacation. There was no point in wasting time longing for the impossible. "Tell me about yourself, Trey. What do you do for a living?"

"I'm a financial analyst."

"Successful?"

He nodded. "Very. What about you, Carlee?"

"Erinae and I started an interior design firm three years ago."

"How are you doing?"

"Not as well as we'd like. We both have other jobs on the side to make ends meet right now."

"Are you any good?"

She nodded firmly. "We're much better than good. We just need one really big account to put us on the map. We work long hours and this vacation is really cutting into time we should be spending wooing new clients."

"Are you sorry you came?"

She answered with her heart. "I wouldn't trade this time with you for a million-dollar account."

His slow, warm smile was ample reward for her honesty.

"Now, tell me about this woman."

He sighed. "You don't give up, do you?"

"No."

"Why do you want to know if you're not interested in pursuing our relationship once we leave? I'm not married, nor am I engaged or in love. What more do you need to know for a holiday romance?"

After her insistence that she didn't want anything more, there was not much she could say to counter that. "Fine."

"Not angry with me?"

"No, Trey, I'm not angry."

He smiled and she smiled back.

She wasn't angry, but she was hurt at how easily he could keep secrets from her.

That night after a walk in the moonlight, they returned to her room where she did a slow striptease for him. Then, feeling reckless, she made no protest when he joined her on the bed with a hard, bare cock.

"I'm going to love you all night until you're full of my seed. Then I'm going to fuck your tight, sweet pussy some more," he told her.

She parted her legs, exposing herself. "Are you going to talk about it or are you going to do it?"

He rubbed her pussy. "Oooh. You're nice and wet."

"And ready for you. Spear me, Trey."

"I'm definitely going to spear you, baby." He slid his big body on top of hers. Sighing with anticipation, she wrapped her arms around him. He pressed his lips over hers, while his hard, thick cock invaded the depths of her pussy. He felt so good sliding into her. She closed her eyes and gripped his hips, loving his slow invasion of her body.

He loved her slowly. With his hands cupping her behind in his palms, he seemed to savor each languid thrust into her, rotating his hips to ensure she felt every inch of his thick length. He would pull out and then push gently but firmly back inside her. Balls deep. Oh, Lord. Again and again. Icy heat sent chills and bliss all through her. Her body cried out with joy, her heart ached with love.

She moaned against his lips, her hips jerking off the bed to meet his downward lunges. Each time he pressed forward, penetrating deep, her stomach muscles clenched. She shuddered under him, passion and desire building inside her until it peaked. She exploded, coming on his cock. Nearly insensate with joy, she clung to him.

Clutching his hands on her butt, he shortened his strokes and thrust hard and fast into her. His powerful lunges became uncomfortable, but she continued to hold him, savoring the sweet, savage pain. Groaning, he stabbed his hot cock deep into her heated pussy, fucking her with a delicious fury that sent her rushing toward another fiery explosion. Burying his face against her neck, he called out her name, and shot jet after jet of seed in her.

He collapsed on top of her. She clutched his clenching buns, delighting in being crushed under his big, sweaty body.

Finally, he eased out of her and rolled off her. Without his body covering hers, she felt cool and deserted. Almost as if he knew how she felt, he drew her into his arms.

She pressed her face against his shoulder.

He kissed the top of her head, stroking a hand down her trembling body. "Are you all right? Did I hurt you?"

She smiled, feeling like a well-fed kitty cat. "A little."

"Did you enjoy it?"

"Lord, yes."

"You like pain?"

She licked at his damp skin. "Depends on who's inflicting it, doesn't it?"

"When I inflict it?"

"I love it."

He tipped up her chin and kissed her. "In that case, would you like to do it again?"

"Yes, please," she whispered.

They lay kissing and touching until her passions rose and his cock lengthened against her. He urged her onto her stomach and gently spread her legs apart. Lying on top of her, he put his cock at her entrance and thrust up into her from the rear.

"Oooh!" She pressed her cheek against the bed. "Oh, yes!"

He withdrew and then thrust forward again. He raised his upper body, resting most of his weight on his extended arms as he fucked her. He thrust forcefully, his powerful hips sending his cock surging into her, hard and deep.

Her clit was pushed against the bed with each of his upward strokes. In a matter of minutes, she gasped, curled her hands into fists in the sheet beside her, and exploded.

Moments later, he lowered his upper body against hers, clutched her hips in his hands and began a quick, fierce fuck before he groaned and came. When he did, he thrust so deeply into her, she had to bite her lip to keep from crying out with the combination of pain and bliss.

She lay squashed under him until he kissed her neck, eased out of her, and took her into his arms. She curled her body against his and fell into a contented sleep.

He woke her an hour or so later. They made love again, this time doggie style with her on her hands and knees and him kneeling behind her, holding her breasts in his hands. He thrust leisurely into her, apparently determined to enjoy every second of

their lovemaking. Still not satisfied, they did a sixty-niner and he ate her to a blistering orgasm that left her incapable of holding up her end of the deal.

When he rolled her onto her back and thrust his still hard cock into her, she lay like a limp rag and let him rut into her until he came. Then whispering softly to each other, they fell asleep in a tangle of arms and legs.

* * *

The next morning, Trey woke, alone, his body drenched with sweat. He lay against the pillow, trying to hold on to the remnants of a dream. The pounding of his heart and a lingering sense of fear suggested he'd had a nightmare.

He frowned. God he hoped the nightmares weren't returning. With adolescence had come a series of frightening dreams. He would often wake terrified. Yet when his parents had tried to comfort him, he had bitterly rebuffed them. For some inexplicable reason, with the beginning of the nightmares, his relationship with his parents had taken a nosedive. It had fallen to his older sister, Delta, to hold him in her arms while he sobbed himself back to sleep.

The night terrors had become infrequent when he began dating at sixteen. They had finally ceased just after he graduated from college. Although he dreaded them, he had hoped to one day remember the dream after waking so he might understand why it left him so distressed.

He tightened his lips. In any case the dream was over and he had more pleasant things to think about -- like Carlee. He smiled, marveling at how sweet and sexy she was. He wanted her again.

He rose, showered, and went in search of her. He found her in one of the smaller restaurants with her friend, Erinae. He strolled over to their table, resisting the urge to bend down and devour her lips when he reached her. He placed a hand on her shoulder instead. "Good morning, ladies."

Carlee turned her lovely face upward. Her warm smile made his heart thump. "Hi, Trey."

Erinae rose. "Morning. I was just leaving."

"Please don't leave on my account."

She grinned. "Don't be ridiculous. I'm not leaving on your account. I'm leaving for Lee."

Their gazes met and he saw an "If you hurt her, you'll have to deal with me" look in her eyes.

He nodded in silent acknowledgement.

She smiled. "So okay, then. I'll talk to you later, Lee."

"Before you go, I was wondering if you'd join me and Carlee for dinner tonight with my friend, Mick?"

She arched a brow. "Depends. Is he cute?"

He shrugged. "I think he's uglier than a red brick, but women generally seem to find him attractive."

She grinned. "Then it's a date." She nodded and walked away.

He took the seat she had vacated. "Hi."

Carlee's smile widened. "It's after ten. I was beginning to think you planned to spend the entire morning sleeping."

He shrugged. "You nearly wore me out." He watched the hint of red rush into her warm brown skin with tender amusement.

"I nearly wore you out?! I'm lucky I can walk today."

He frowned, covering her hand with his. "Did I hurt you?"

"You already asked me that and I told you, yes. But I liked it. So why don't you go gobble down your breakfast?"

He grinned. "You have something in mind afterwards that I'll need my strength for?"

She tugged at her hand. "Yes, but not what you're thinking. So wipe that gleam from your eyes."

He released her hand and rose. "Let me get some food inside me, then I'll be better able to deal with you."

"Dream on, big fella."

He laughed, hesitated, then bent and pressed a kiss against her mouth.

She responded, stroking her fingers through his hair, stirring his passions. "You still here?"

"I'm not going to be able to give you up when this vacation is over."

She shook her head. "That's the deal or I leave now, Trey. I'm not getting hurt again. Accept this on my terms or we can't go any further."

So now wasn't the time to push the issue. He nodded curtly, pasting a smile on his face. "Okay, Carlee. Have it your way." *For now.*

She clutched his hand and stared up at him. "It's not like that, Trey. I just have to do what I need to for myself. Please understand."

She was determined to make him pay for sins he hadn't committed. Pointing that out wouldn't advance his case. "Oh, honey, I'm not going to hurt you."

"Trey! Please. Please."

He sighed and nodded. "Okay."

Lifting his hand to her lips, she pressed several kisses in his palm before looking up at him again. "We have now, Trey. Let that be enough."

Ten lousy days with her would never be enough. "Living for the moment. So what say we go back to bed?"

She dropped his hand. "Forget it. I want to go walking."

"All right. We'll find a quiet spot and catch a quickie on the trail."

"I don't make out on walks."

"Trust me. You're going to make out on a walk today." He leaned down and pressed an insistent kiss against her mouth.

Her lips parted under his and she returned his kiss with an eager hunger that made his cock stir. He nipped her bottom lip and straightened. "I'm going to fortify myself with food so I'll have enough strength to give you a tender fuck on the trail." He winked at her and walked away.

They didn't make love during their walk. He felt certain he could have sweet talked her into a quickie, but since he knew she didn't want to make love in public, he

resisted the urge. He was out to win her confidence and trust. Trying to talk her into something she would later regret would be a mistake.

They took a different route on their return to the lodge. They encountered a woman walking a large white-gray dog. He looked ferocious, but Carlee took one look at him and smiled. "He's beautiful. Can I pet him?"

The woman nodded. "Sure. He's very friendly."

Carlee patted the large head and the dog looked up at her, wagging his tail.

After they moved along the trail, she turned to look him, her eyes sparkling. "He reminds me of Danny, except Danny's eyes are blue and his coat is white."

He stared down at her. She was so beautiful and sexy. Just looking at her made him want to protect and cherish her. He wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed her nose. "And who the hell is Danny?"

"My dog. He's a white German shepherd."

"With blue eyes?"

"Yes."

"And you call him Danny?"

"Yes. Short for Danton."

A faint remembrance of a huge animal danced along his memory. "Danton? But he was a..." He trailed off.

"What? What were you going to say, Trey?"

She sounded eager. He swallowed slowly and shook his head. "I don't know."

"Yes, you do," she challenged. "What were you going to say?"

"That he was a horse." He shrugged. "But I don't ride and I don't know any horses on a first name basis."

"You used to. Danton was your horse. He was a huge white stallion. When we weren't walking, we used to ride double on him." She stroked his cheek. "Don't you remember the night we both snuck out and rode him along the plantation in the moonlight? And when I turned to say something to you, do you remember what you did?"

I kissed you. The words jumped in his head. He shivered. He had not lived before. Somehow, she was projecting her wishes onto him for a nonexistent shared past.

He shook his head.

"You kissed me," she said softly. "It was our first kiss and that's when I knew I would love you forever, Trey."

"Are you telling me you're in love with me now, Carlee?"

She shrugged. "I used to be. I was so obsessed with finding you again, I let this absolutely wonderful man slip through my fingers."

A twinge of jealousy for this unknown man he suspected she still cared for shot through him. "Is this wonderful man still in your life?"

"No."

"Do you regret that?"

"He loved me, Trey. We dated exclusively for two years and he never pushed me for full intercourse."

Meaning they'd had other kinds of sex. The thought of her lips on another man's cock or another man's cock going up her ass infuriated him. He released her and strolled away.

After a moment, she followed him and grabbed his arm. "Don't walk away from me, Trey!"

He took a deep breath before turning to face her. "I have zero interest in discussing your former lovers."

"Former lovers?"

He raked a hand through his hair. "Okay. I didn't mean that."

"Didn't you?"

"I don't want to talk about other men."

"You've had other women."

"Yes, and I won't bore you with the details of how absolutely wonderful they were or the ones I let get away."

She slipped her arms around his waist. "I didn't mean to make you feel as if I were comparing the two of you. And I shouldn't have mentioned him. I'm sorry." She leaned up and pressed a warm kiss against his lips. "Trey, I just want to enjoy our short time together."

He closed his eyes and touched his forehead to hers. "Oh, honey, you have no idea how much I want our time together to last forever."

"I know," she whispered. "But we were clearly never meant to be together as a couple. God has granted us ten days. Let's enjoy them and not worry about what happens when they're over."

Something in her voice made his stomach churn. "You're going to go looking for him, aren't you? This wonderful guy you let slip away."

"I'm going to go on with my life, but while I'm here with you, I intend to take full advantage of the time we have now."

"What can he offer you that I can't, Carlee?"

"Love," she said simply. "He loved me, Trey. Are you going to tell me you're in love with me as well?"

"Even if I said it, would you believe me?"

"No."

"Why the hell not?"

"You don't remember our past, Trey."

At the rate he was going, he was starting to think he did. "So?"

"So I don't believe in love at first sight. I think real love is a product of knowing a person and loving them in spite of their faults. That takes a little bit of time. What you feel for me is --"

He shook his head. "No, Carlee, do not tell me what I feel. Because you don't believe in love at first sight, it can't happen? Does the entire world revolve around you and your beliefs?"

"I only meant we're both a product of our environments. I don't believe in it. If you do, fine."

"How the hell did you get so cynical, Carlee?"

"Being hurt will do it every time," she said coolly. "If you've never been hurt --"

"I haven't, but I have a feeling I'll soon have up close and personal knowledge of how it feels to be hurt in love."

"I would never willingly hurt you." She stroked her fingers down his cheek. "Never, Trey."

He wrapped his arms around her and pressed his cheek against her hair. She turned her head until their lips met. They shared a brief, gentle kiss before resuming their walk.

Back at the lodge, they separated to shower and change before joining Mick and Erinae for dinner. During the meal, he noted how easily Mick and Erinae fell into mutual teasing. When he and Carlee left to go to his room, Mick and Erinae continued dancing, slow and close together.

Carlee looked at them before staring up at him. "I hope he doesn't hurt her."

"He's not that kind of guy."

"She's been hurt before."

"So has he." He tightened his arm around her shoulder. "Now if I were you, I'd spend less time worrying about them and more time thinking about what I'm going to do to you tonight."

That night after they'd made love and she fell asleep, he lay awake. He was one day closer to losing her, unless he found a way to keep her in his life.

It took a long time for him to fall asleep. When he did, the nightmare returned. He bolted up in bed, sweat pouring off his body, his heart thumping wildly. "No! Father, please, no!"

"Trey! Trey, what is it? What's wrong?"

The light in the room went on and he turned to find Carlee sitting up in bed, staring at him with a concerned look in her eyes. When he didn't respond, she put her arms around him. "It's all right," she whispered, drawing him down onto the bed.

She pushed him onto his back and laid her warm, naked body on top of his. "It's all right," she said again and he realized he was trembling and his eyes were filled with tears. She kissed his lips gently, rubbing her breasts against his chest. "It's all right, Trey. It was just a dream." She kissed him again.

He clenched his hands into fists and closed his eyes, trying to remember the details of the dream that had terrorized him and left him in tears. As usual, details of the nightmare eluded him with the return to consciousness. "Oh, shit!"

"It's all right," she murmured, reaching between their bodies to fondle his cock. "It was just a bad dream, but it's over now and you're here with me, Trey."

That's where he needed to stay -- with her.

She rubbed his hardening cock along the length of her pussy. He shuddered and rotated his hips against hers. "Oh, honey. Make love to me."

She lifted her hips, pointed his cock at her pussy, and moaning softly, she pushed forward until several inches of his shaft slid into her warm, tight body. He sucked in a breath, but held himself rigid and unmoving inside her. He would allow her to control how fast and how much of his cock entered her luscious pussy.

With half his length encased in her tight heat, she paused, breathing quickly. She looked down at him. "I want it all inside me."

"Then take it," he said brusquely. "Take it all. Now, honey, please."

She eased the rest of him inside her until he felt her silky, coarse pubic hair against his. Every inch of his cock was now where it belonged, securely inside her, where he had longed to keep it for an eternity.

An eternity? He frowned. He didn't have time to ponder that errant thought because she sensuously slid her pussy up and down his entire length. She would pull her hips upward until only the tip of his cock pulsed inside her, only to slam her body down and engulf his shaft within the hot, moist depths of the best pussy he'd ever had.

His passions mounted quickly, as did hers. Her slow, teasing movements gave way to short, rough ones. Moaning against his lips, she ground herself against him, driving him closer to his explosion.

Groaning and straining, he cupped his hands over her big ass, and took control of the fuck, thrusting his dick roughly and wildly up into her pussy, claiming it as his own.

Her breasts crushed against his chest, she gripped his hips, moaning and almost sobbing against his lips as her pussy convulsed. He thrust hard into her and held himself pressed tight against her as he felt her coming all over his cock. He clenched his hands on her ass and exploded, pumping his seed deep into her body.

“Oh, Trey,” she whispered. “Hold me.”

He rolled them over so she lay on her back and he lay on top of her, her body still impaled on his cock. He sighed, feeling as if he really had waited an eternity for this incredible pleasure with this beautiful, sexy woman.

How the hell was he supposed to give her up in less than ten days? He kissed her lips. Why the hell should he let her go?

Chapter Five

As the days passed, Carlee found Trey's sexual appetite almost overwhelming. They spent most days making love. Nearly every night, Trey's distressed shouts roused her from a sated sleep. Sometimes, she would hold him in her arms, kiss his hair, and whisper softly to him until he fell back asleep. At other times, she would arouse him and then make love to him, allowing their shared passion to chase away his nightmares and sorrows.

All too soon, she woke to the sickening realization that in two days she and Trey would be going their separate ways. That morning, she was the one needing comfort. As she lay on her back with tears streaming down her cheeks, Trey lay on top of her, kissing her gently and tenderly fucking her.

Afterwards, they lay on their sides, holding each other.

She kissed his damp shoulder. "I'm going to miss you so much!"

"It doesn't have to end when we leave on Sunday, honey."

"I'm not into long distance relationships."

"It's just a two-hour drive from my condo to yours, honey. We can still see each other."

"It's time I moved on, Trey. I want kids and a love with a man I can trust."

"What the fuck?!" He untangled his arms and legs from her, rolled off the bed, and shot to his feet.

She sat up slowly, holding the covers against her bare breasts as she watched him pacing the floor, his flaccid cock coated with their combined juices. "Trey! Come back to me."

He glared at her. "What the hell am I to you? Just a willing cock? Damn it, Carlee, do you give a damn about my feelings? Where the hell do you get off implying you can't trust me? What the fuck have I ever done to deserve this shit from you?!"

She moistened her lips. What could she say that he would be willing to believe or understand?

He stalked over to the bed and stared down at her. "I have never met you before we came here, Carlee. That means I have never hurt you. So stop giving me grief for something I never did!"

She sighed. His attitude was understandable. For some reason he didn't remember on a conscious level. She was convinced he did remember on an unconsciousness one, hence the nightmares he'd been having. She suspected each time he had the nightmare, he was reliving the night they'd been torn apart.

Since he wasn't willing to explore the possibility of their having lived and loved before, it was past time she got on with her life. She thought of Sam and gave herself a mental nod. If he still wanted her when she returned home...

She shrugged. "You're right. I'm sorry, Trey."

He sighed and shook his head. "Honey, I didn't mean to snap, but the thought of not seeing you again after Sunday is making me crazy."

"You'll find someone you can love. So will I and this will just have been a very pleasant interlude we can remember with fondness, but no regrets."

"And if you get pregnant?"

The idea of having his baby held no unpleasant connotations for her. "What about it?"

"Would you tell me?"

"I don't know," she admitted. She'd decided to seek Sam out when she returned home. He was handsome, sexy, and, unlike Trey, presented no threat to her emotional well-being. If anyone were capable of making her forget Trey, it would be Sam.

"I'd have a right to know, Carlee. You would have no right to keep my child from me."

She nodded. "I know, but I'm on the pill. I don't expect to get pregnant."

He shrugged. "A guy can always hope, can't he?"

She slipped her arms around his neck, and urged him back down to the bed. "Shut up and fuck me," she ordered.

He obliged and within moments she lay under him, moaning and sobbing with ecstasy as his big, hot cock shot deep into her pussy, driving her to a blistering climax.

After she came down from her high, she climbed off him, slid down his damp, sweaty body, and drew his pulsing cock between her lips. Oh, Lord! He tasted so good. Fondling his balls, she sucked him until he came. Feeling totally uninhibited, she fingered herself while swallowing his seed.

He pulled her up his body and covered her lips with his. The kiss they shared was long, deep, and deliciously invasive. She knew he got off on tasting her in their kisses as much as she enjoyed tasting him.

They spent the day walking in the surrounding woods. About mid-day, they stopped to eat the lunch the lodge had packed. Afterwards, they spread out their blankets and settled on them for a nap. After twenty minutes, Carlee knew she was too wound up to sleep. Trey's caressing hand, moving over her back, signaled his inability to sleep as well.

"Are your parents alive, Trey?"

"Yes. Why do you ask? Would you like to meet them?"

"No." She spoke in a small, shamed voice. Common sense told her his current parents were not complicit in having separated them and causing her so much heartache. But then common sense also said she could not have lived before. Yet she had.

"I understand."

The coolness in his voice assured her he really did understand. "You're not close with them."

"What makes you say that?"

"How could you be?"

"How could I not be?" he challenged. "They have always been excellent parents."

"And yet you've always resented them."

He sighed. "Yes. I have no idea why, but I have."

"It's because your mother told your father she saw us kissing and your father sold me. I knew you would never forgive them."

He tensed against her. "Carlee, how many times do I have to tell you --"

She sat up and pulled away from him.

He sat up too, staring at her.

"Trey, I know someone who can help you."

"Help me do what? If it's anything other than keeping you in my life, I'm probably not interested."

She shook her head. "She can help you uncover and deal with your past life."

He narrowed his gaze. "Carlee --"

She pressed her fingers against his lips. "Hear me out, Trey. Please. She's a forensic psychic."

"A what?"

"Her name is Dr. Margolis Cheyenne. She has a PhD in psychology, but her passion or calling is helping those who have lived before remember their former lives. As it happens her office is in Cherry Hill, within an easy drive of your condo. She's expensive --"

He leaned back so that her fingers fell away from his lips. "Most charlatans are. I have no need to see this quack of yours. Do I make myself clear?"

She sighed. "I know this sounds crazy, Trey, but she can help you remember and come to terms with your past."

He shook his head. "Did she help you remember? Is she responsible for your thinking you've lived before?"

Heat flashed into her cheeks. She clenched a hand into a fist. "I didn't need any help remembering! I've never forgotten you, Trey. All Dr. Cheyenne did was help me

come to terms with the past. I remembered on my own. She could help you too if you'd just open yourself to the possibility."

He touched her cheek. "I'm wild about you, and I would do almost anything to keep you in my life, but I am not going to subject myself to some quack to appease you."

"She's a sort of medium. Please don't call her a quack. What she does takes a physical toll on her, but she does it anyway."

"Fine. Whatever she is, I'm not interested in meeting her. Now can we drop it?"

She shrugged. "Fine, but when you can no longer convince yourself that nothing is wrong, remember her name is Margolis Cheyenne and she's in the book under psychologists."

"I have an excellent memory. Now can we talk about something else?"

"Okay. What would you like to talk about?"

"You. Tell me about your business."

"What would you like to know?"

"Everything, but first tell me if you have a portfolio handy."

She smiled. "We're working very hard to establish ourselves. Neither Erinae nor I ever go far without a portfolio. We have one at the lodge. Would you like to see it when we return?"

"Yes, I would."

She showed him her portfolio early that evening as they sat on the loveseat in her room. He studied it in silence for over half an hour before looking up at her. "Impressive."

She nodded. "We are both very good at what we do. We just need a couple of breaks to really get established."

He closed the portfolio, nodding slowly. "I can see that. I'm sure you'll both do fine."

"So I am. It will take a while, but we'll get there."

He smiled, brushing the back of his hand along her cheek. "I need to see you when we leave here."

She sighed and shook her head. "Please, Trey. I am so grateful that we've had this time together, but I realize now that we were never meant to be together. Let's try to enjoy what little time we have left. Please?"

He nodded. "Fine, Carlee. What about yours?"

"What about my what?"

"Your parents."

She sighed. "They both died in a train accident three years ago."

"I'm sorry, sweet."

"I still miss them so much."

"Do you have any siblings?"

She shook her head. "I'm an only child, but Erinae and I are not just friends and business partners. We're like sisters. No matter what, she's there for me."

"Good friends are priceless."

"Yes. I don't know what I'd have done without her when my parents died. She was all I had to hang on to. When things get tough, it's the two of us against the world."

"Not anymore, Carlee." He slipped his arm around her, pressing his lips against her forehead. "I'm here for you now as well."

* * *

Carlee expected to spend their last night together making love until they were both exhausted. Instead Trey lay on his side of the bed, staring up at the ceiling. So much for the skimpy, but expensive red teddy she'd bought in the gift shop. She moved her body against his, leaning over him. She brushed her cheek against his. "Let's make love."

He slipped an arm around her shoulders and drew her body against his. "Determined to get a last meaningless fuck out of me, huh?"

She stiffened, jerked away from him, sat up, and turned on the bedside lamps, her cheeks burning. "Meaningless fuck? Is that all you think of me?"

He sat up. "It's what I think of what's been going on between us -- from your perspective. All you seem to want to do with me is fuck. I want more but you insist that's not possible because of something I never did. So if you don't want anything special between us and yet you're asking for sex, that leaves meaningless fucks. Doesn't it?"

Phrased like that, her need and desire for sexual intimacy with him did tend to cast her in an unflattering light. Cheeks still burning, she slipped out of bed, heading for the bathroom. She would dress and return to her room before she slapped his face.

He followed her. Putting a hand on her arm, he turned her to face him. "This is our last night together."

She pulled away from him. "If you think I'm going to stay here with you after those nasty remarks, you're wrong."

"No, I'm not!" He pulled her body close to his and wrapped his arms around her. "If you think I'm going to allow you to spend the night anywhere but with me, you're the one who's wrong." He bent his head and brushed his lips against hers. "You are spending the night with me."

She longed to pull away and sweep from the room with her head up and what was left of her dignity intact. Instead, she responded to the light touch of his mouth, allowing her body to mold itself against his. When he deepened the kiss and lifted her into his arms, she slipped her arms around his neck.

The lovemaking that followed was bittersweet. Devouring her lips, and holding her with a fierceness that promised to leave bruises, he rutted into her. Although he made sure she came before he flooded her with jet after jet of seed, she missed the underlying tenderness he'd always shown.

Early in the morning, he finally pulled out of her, rolled off her, and turned his back to her.

She lay still until she was certain he was asleep before she returned to her own room. Taking the phone off the hook, she fell into bed, and into an exhausted sleep.

* * *

Trey woke from a nightmare to find himself alone the next morning. He lay in bed shaking, his body covered with sweat, weighed down with a sadness so intense, breathing was difficult. He reached for the phone on the nightstand.

Moments later he heard her voice. "Carlee?"

"Trey! I was just about to call you to say good-bye."

He glanced at the clock. Ten-thirty! Damn! "I'll be right there, Carlee."

"No! Let's say good-bye now, Trey. It will be easier than saying it in person."

Like he planned to make it easy for her to leave him! "Fine. Good-bye, Carlee."

"Trey, it's been wond --"

"Good-bye," he said again and placed the phone on its cradle. He hopped out of bed. After a brief shower, he threw his clothes into his suitcases and checked out. Then he went to Carlee's room. She didn't answer. He used his key card. Her clothes were gone. Fighting back a wave of panic, he hurried to the front of the building. She and her friend stood by a dark sedan watching their luggage being loaded.

"Carlee!"

She turned, wetting her lips as she saw him. "Have you come to say good-bye?"

"No!" He took the hand she extended and drew her into his arms. "I came to apologize for last night."

"It's all right, Trey."

"And to ask you to let me drive you home."

She pressed her hands against his chest.

He reluctantly released her.

"I can't." She nodded at the car. "Erinae and I came together. I drove my car because I have to pick Danny up on the way home."

"We can pick him up in my car."

"He sheds -- a lot. Your car will be covered with dog hair."

"I'll have it cleaned."

"He's very big, Trey, and he doesn't like strange men."

"Did he like your friend?"

Her eyes narrowed. "As a matter of fact, he did."

"Then I see no reason why he shouldn't like me as well."

"He's over a hundred pounds. If he doesn't like you, he's capable of knocking you off your feet and pinning you to the floor."

He shrugged. "I'm willing to take that chance."

She looked at her friend, who stood silently by the open passenger door. "I don't think it's fair to ask Erinae to spend what will probably be a tense ride home in our company, Trey."

He raked a hand through his hair and looked around. "She's met Mick. He and I drove here in my car. Let them take your car home. Come with me."

He watched her turn to look at Erinae again. "Nae?"

Erinae smiled. "If it's okay with Mick, I'm fine with having him drive me home."

"You're sure?"

Erinae turned an intense gaze on him. After a long moment, she nodded. "Yes. I'm sure."

He inclined his head. "Thank you."

Carlee looked at him. "Is this going to be okay with Mick?"

It would be more than Mick's life was worth to do anything but agree. "Of course it will be." He took Carlee's hand and led her to the trunk of the car. "Which are yours?"

"The dark blue ones."

An hour later, she sat in the contoured leather passenger seat of his car. They made the first hour of the four-hour drive in relative silence before he spoke. "Tell me about your life, Carlee. Have you been happy?"

"Happy? No, but I have been relatively content. I was always waiting for you to come into my life."

Keeping his eyes on the road, he extended a hand to touch her knee. "I'm here now, honey."

"I know and I'm thankful for the time we had together. It helped me put the present, the future, and the past in perspective."

He frowned. "What does that mean?"

"That the past is just that -- past." She lifted his hand from her knee, squeezed it, and gave it back to him. "It's time for me to move on."

He tightened his lips. He was going to have a hell of a way to go to change her mind. "I wouldn't want to hold you back, honey."

"I know and I am very glad we met again."

If he had his way they would go on meeting. "Do you want to stop somewhere for lunch?"

"Yes. I'll call Erinae and tell her we're stopping."

"No. I don't want to share our remaining time together with anyone else."

Her fingers closed over his left thigh. "Neither do I."

He stopped at a rest stop and they lingered for an hour over a meal that neither of them did more than nibble at. Finally, she looked at her watch and sighed. "We'd better get back on the road. I want to be home in time to pick Danny up tonight."

"All right."

They discussed sports and politics for the remainder of the drive. He pulled into the parking lot of a kennel and waited until she returned twenty minutes later walking behind a huge white German shepherd. He hesitated a moment, then got out of the car. The shepherd tensed, turning a rather startling pair of blue eyes on him.

Carlee stroked the dog's big head. "Danny, this is Trey. He's a friend." She extended a hand to him. "Come say hello, Trey."

He moved forward, pausing briefly when the dog bared its lethal looking teeth.

"Danny, friend." She looked at him. "Put your hand on his back."

He stopped next to them and placed a hand on the dog's back. "Hi, Danny."

Danny wagged his tail.

Trey smiled. "We have a lot in common. We're both nuts about your mistress." He raised his gaze as he spoke, looking into Carlee's dark eyes.

She smiled briefly before touching the hand that rested on Danny's back. "We'd better go. I want to get home in time to take Danny for a long walk."

The car seemed much smaller with the huge dog constantly sticking his big head between the front seats. Trey felt the animal's breath on his face several times. When traffic allowed, he turned his head once and found himself looking into Danny's blue eyes. He spoke softly. "I won't hurt her." Danny licked his face and turned to rest his head on the top of Carlee's headrest.

"It's all right. I think he's willing to accept you, Trey."

"Glad to hear it. What about you, Carlee?"

"You know how I feel about you, Trey, but I've made up my mind."

He tightened his hand on the steering wheel. So had he.

Half an hour later, he pulled into her driveway. He got out of the car and went around to open the passenger door.

She slid out, turning a pair of dark, wide eyes up at him. "This is good-bye, Trey."

"The hell it is. I'm spending the night."

Her lips tightened. "You haven't been invited."

"I'm sure my invite got lost in the mail." He glanced at the backseat of the car. Danny sat staring at them. "I'll get our luggage inside while you get Danny."

"Trey --"

"Unless you're planning to sic Danny on me, Carlee, I'm spending the night. I promise I'll leave in the morning without making a scene."

She shook her head.

He touched her cheek. "Just one more night to make up for last night."

"Nothing happened between us last night that I didn't want. There's nothing for which you need to atone."

"I need this last night. If you can look me in the eye and tell me you don't want it, I'll leave."

She averted her gaze, shrugging. "This is the last night, Trey."

He caressed her cheek. "You won't be sorry."

"I hope not." She sighed and moved away from him to let Danny out of the car.

He watched them go inside before he got their luggage from the trunk. He followed her, determined to make the most of the coming hours.

* * *

After taking Danny for a forty-minute walk, Carlee and Trey returned to her house. She defrosted and grilled two steaks, tossed a salad, chilled wine, and baked several potatoes. They ate on the patio with Danny lying a few feet away, his blue gaze rarely leaving Trey.

She watched Trey sipping his wine, her gaze drawn to the film the wine left on his firm, sensual mouth. In less than twenty-four hours Trey would be out of her life forever. Her throat tightened and her heart ached.

His gaze locked with hers. He covered her hand with his. "We don't have to end this, Carlee. We can go on seeing each other."

"You live nearly two hours away."

"It's a drive I'd willingly make as often as you'd like to see me, honey."

She frowned. Did she still love him? Or was it now just lust? She had once been so sure of her feelings for him and of his for her. She missed that certainty. She shook her head. "We have different goals and desires, Trey. It's best if we don't see each other when you leave in the morning."

"Is that what you really want?"

"No," she admitted. "But it's what I need. When you leave, it's over."

He sucked in a quick breath, closed his eyes briefly, and then nodded. As irrational as it might have been, she viewed his quick acquiescence as proof that he didn't love her.

His love making that night was tender and unselfish. He made sure she came twice before he exploded deep inside her. Saying good-bye in the morning would break her heart, but she would do it. Dreading the coming separation, she fell asleep, sprawled across his body.

* * *

Trey's cell phone rang as he sat in his car in Carlee's driveway, trying to convince himself to drive away. He reached for the phone, which rested in its cradle mounted just below his dashboard. "Hello?"

"Trey! Thank God I finally reached you."

Hearing the near panic in his father's voice, he tensed. "What's wrong, Dad?"

"Your mother and sister were in an accident last night, Trey."

The tone of his father's voice sent a chill through him. "How are they?"

"It doesn't look good for either one of them at the moment. I know you've had problems with me and your mother, but I could really use your support, Trey."

He put on his seatbelt and started the car. "It will take me a little over two hours to get there but I'm on my way, Dad."

* * *

Danny licked Carlee awake. "Go away, Dan!" Eyes still closed, she reached out a hand to touch Trey. Her fingers encountered only bedding. She opened her eyes and bolted into a sitting position, her heart racing. She saw the folded paper on her dresser top. She jumped out of bed and ran across the room to snatch up the single sheet.

I'm sorry I left without waking you, but I knew if I didn't, I'd find leaving you impossible. I hope you find what you're looking for. As for me, I won't ever forget you. Be safe and have a happy life, honey.

Trey

Her eyes filled with tears. She allowed them to spill down her cheeks as she sank to the floor. Danny whined and settled next to her. She sobbed and threw her arms around him, burying her face against his coat.

Two hours later, she arrived at work to find Erinae standing at her office window. She forced a smile. "'Morning, Nae. What's up?"

"How are you, Lee?"

She shrugged, closing her office door. "I'm fine. Why shouldn't I be?"

"I see you've been crying. He left, huh?"

She moved across the room to place her briefcase on her desk. "Yes."

Erinae sighed. "Was it hard saying good-bye?"

She sank into one of the two chairs in front of her desk, willing her eyes not to fill with tears. "He left while I slept. I woke up to a 'Dear Carlee' note." She dropped her gaze, shrugging. "It's over, Nae."

"I don't think so, Lee. I saw the way he looked at you. He'll call you or come see you soon."

She shook her head. "No. He won't. He said he hoped I found what I was looking for. He wished me a safe and happy life. It's over."

"That's what you said you wanted, Lee."

She sighed, nodding. "I know, but I didn't think it would hurt so much to lose him again, Nae."

"If it hurts, call him and tell him you want to see him again. You can't make me believe he wants to end it, Lee."

She shook her head. "If he can walk away so easily, I could never be important to him."

Erinae stared at her. "Are you nuts, Lee? You're the one who told him to walk away! Call him and tell him to come back!"

"He didn't even leave a number. If he wants me, he knows where I am."

"And if he doesn't contact you?"

"Then I'll know we were never meant to be together." She sighed before straightening her shoulders. "Now it's time I got back to business."

Erinae arched a brow. "Just like that?"

She suspected Erinae thought she was living up to her nickname of Ice Queen, but that couldn't be helped. If she meant anything to Trey, he would pursue her until she succumbed to her passion and love for him. If he didn't, she would go on with her life.

She rose and walked around her desk. "So how was the drive back with Mick?"

Erinae arched a brow, a smile lighting up her pretty face. "Very interesting. Surprisingly we have a lot in common. When he dropped me off, he took me in his arms and engaged me in a lip lock that nearly made my toes curl. Lord, that man has sweet lips."

"Are you seeing him again?"

She shrugged. "He asked for my phone number, but I don't expect to go out with him if he actually calls."

"Why not?"

Erinae shrugged. "He's a good-looking hunk, but when I get serious, it's going to be with a handsome, well-hung brother."

Her cheeks burned. "So you probably think I'm a fool to have given my virginity to Trey instead of Sam."

Erinae's lips tightened. "I don't think anything of the kind! I know you've been waiting and expecting to meet him for a very long time. If he rocked your world enough for you to want to sleep with him, I know you have some serious feelings for him. Because I want to marry a black man has no bearing on who you fall in love with, Lee. Love doesn't always play by the rules we set up. Don't you dare ever think I think any less of you because Trey isn't black. Got it?"

She nodded, forcing a smile. "Got it."

Erinae nodded. "Now if you're sure you're all right, it's time I got some work done."

"I'm fine," she said.

Erinae's gaze locked with hers. "Are you?"

"Okay. No, but give me time and I will be."

* * *

Carlee's sleep that night was shattered by a nightmare. Recalling that horrible night when she was sold, she sobbed. Danny jumped onto the bed and she wrapped her arms around him, burying her face against his fur.

After two weeks of reliving that nightmare and no word from Trey, Carlee made an appointment with Dr. Cheyenne. She was surprised and excited when Dr. Cheyenne gave her an appointment late the same afternoon she'd called.

After watching her in silence for several moments, the doctor spoke. "Why don't you call him?"

Carlee shook her head. "I can't, Dr. Cheyenne. If he wants me, he has to make the first move."

Dr. Cheyenne tilted her head to one side, considering Carlee in silence for several more moments. "Then perhaps the time has come for you to move ahead with your life without him."

Carlee swallowed. "I know that makes sense, but why did we meet again if we weren't meant to be together?"

"If you feel that way, why won't you call him?"

"I can't!" She sighed. "I know that sounds stupid, but he has to be the one pursuing me this time."

"So where does that leave you?"

"I don't know!" She shook her head. "I came here hoping you could tell me what I can expect."

"I can't foretell the future."

"I know that, but you helped me pull my memories of him into sharper focus. When I saw him again, even though he looked different, I recognized him immediately."

"That's because your love for him is an intrinsic part of who you are. I sensed you would meet him again."

"And I did."

"I did nothing to facilitate that."

Carlee frowned, recalling the mysterious travel agent who had put the idea of the Fantasy Week into Erinae's head. "Didn't you?"

A slight smile tugged at Dr. Cheyenne's lips. "Perhaps I might have planted a seed here and there, but I took no active part in your reunion. You met him again because his memory and the emotional cord between you were so powerful. It drew you together again."

Carlee swallowed. "And now? Is it still powerful? I have to know if I should expect to meet him again or if it's really over this time."

"You can discover that by calling him."

"I can't explain any clearer why I can't. He has to remember me and long for me as I do him or it will break my heart."

Dr. Cheyenne pressed her hands to her temples and closed her eyes, gently swaying from side to side. After a moment, she extended a hand. Carlee clasped it. She felt an undemanding brush against her thoughts. She closed her eyes and allowed the doctor to probe her thoughts and feelings.

After several sessions with Dr. Cheyenne, she no longer felt the instinctive need to protect and guard her innermost thoughts. Her current pain burst to the surface and tears filled her eyes as she feared she would love him forever.

Without words, Dr. Cheyenne whispered softly to her. *Love and obsession are sometimes difficult to distinguish from each other. You are strong. You can survive with or without him. Take control of your life and of your heart. Allow no one else to guide your destiny. If he returns, accept him. If he does not, move on and love one who loves you.*

Carlee nodded, opened her eyes, and withdrew her hand from the other woman's. Life went on. She would be happy and content with or without Trey Brandauer.

To Be Continued

Marilyn Lee

Marilyn Lee lives, works, and writes on the East Coast. In addition to thoroughly enjoying writing erotic romance, she enjoys roller-skating, spending time with her large, extended family, and rooting for all her hometown sports teams. Her other interests include Doc Savage pulp novels from the thirties and forties and collecting Marvel comics from the seventies and eighties (particularly Thor and the Avengers).

Her favorite TV shows are forensic shows, westerns (*Gunsmoke* and *Have Gun, Will Travel* are particular favorites), mysteries (loves the old Charlie Chan mysteries. Her all time favorite mystery movie is probably *Dead, Again*), and nearly every vampire movie or television show ever made (*Forever Knight* and *Count Yorga, Vampire* are faves).

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