

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

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# *Quickies*

*Naughty Nuptials*

*Orchids and Orgasms*

Alyssa & Larissa  
Brooks & Lyons

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Orchids and Orgasms

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# ***ORCHIDS AND ORGASMS***

**Alyssa Brooks & Larissa Lyons**

## *Dedication*

To Larissa, who not only had the idea to write this book, but hunted down all my embarrassing typos! Larissa, writing wouldn't be the same without you! Here's to many, many more titles to come!

~ Alyssa

To Alyssa, who dropped what she was working on so we could finish this story together (and to her husband – without the piranha, it wouldn't be the same).

~ Larissa

## *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

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Ben Wa: Ben Wa Novelty Corporation

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## **Prologue**

"How much longer is this going to take? I'm in a hurry." The Manhattan pretty boy was practically breathing down Nate's neck, peering at the engine as though he knew the difference between a transmission and a tire iron. One of the man's spit-polished dress shoes crowded Nate's foot and he shifted, moving his scuffed, steel-toed boot aside.

Why did these pretentious types always think a car could be fixed in two minutes? Nate straightened, automatically ducking to miss the Mercedes' hood.

"Have you figured out what's making that racket?"

Wiping his hands on a grease-stained rag, Nate faced Bradley Linsey. The immaculately groomed man stared him down, hands jingling coins in both pockets. Linsey might be a pompous ass but he was a loaded pompous ass. And a paying customer.

"Yeah." Nate fought the urge to roll his eyes. The state of New York gave a driver's license to just about anyone, didn't they? "All you need this time is a new belt. Shouldn't take long at all."

"Well, can you get a move on? The flower shop closes in forty-five minutes."

Nate headed over to his selection of belts, quickly finding the right one. "Flower shop?" He grinned. "You don't exactly seem the corsage type. When's the prom?"

Linsey dogged his steps, still jingling those damn coins. The man needed to get laid, Nate thought. Definitely too uptight.

"Damn fool errand, if you ask me," Linsey complained. "I'm picking up a 'pre-bouquet'. Have you ever heard of anything so asinine?"

One of Nate's hands slipped beneath the hood. "Shit!"

"What's wrong?" Linsey breathed over his shoulder.

"Nothing. Just cut my hand. Pre-bouquet, you were saying?" Nate prompted. There was only one woman in the world who talked about wanting a pre-bouquet.

"Yeah, my fiancée ordered orchid bouquets from five different flower shops. She said she had to see them, made to her specifications, in order to pick the right one for the actual wedding. Just my luck, flower shop number three is on my way home."

Orchids. Lexi's favorite flower. Nate's chest tightened, squeezing his heart. The spot on his left groin twinged. Shit. Lexi? Engaged? He knew without asking but glutton for punishment, he did it anyway. "So who's the lucky lady?"

He'd let her go, Nate reminded himself, for both their sakes. He didn't have any call to be jealous. Oil and champagne didn't mix. Never would.

"No one you'd know."

Nate slammed the hood, harder than necessary. "All done."

Linsey reached for his bulging wallet and pulled out several twenties without even asking what the charge was. "Yeah, Alexis and I go way back. Finally agreed to marry me six months ago. She's put me through hell planning this damn wedding. I'll be glad when it's over."

The image of plowing his fist into the other man's jaw flitted through Nate's mind. Too bad slugging customers wasn't good for business. Using all his willpower to refrain, he made a commiserating sound.

"Thanks for getting this done. I'm meeting a sweet little piece for dinner. Just didn't want to miss getting the bouquet. I'd never hear the end of it."

"A sweet piece?" Nate's other fist yearned to fly. "You mean your fiancée?"

"Not tonight. She's cut me off, if you can believe it. Fucked me for months then said she wanted to wait until our wedding night." Linsey pulled his keys free and patted the unimpressive lump centered between his front pockets. "Tonight, I'll be getting some

action from a hot little number who just started temping at my office.” Linsey flashed him a man-to-man grin. “Just what the doctor ordered, if you know what I mean.”

Well hell. Nate yearned to wipe the smirk from the other man’s face. Nate knew he wasn’t husband material but anything was better than this piece of cheating shit. Lexi didn’t deserve a lifetime of being stepped on like the soles of Bradley Linsey’s polished Florsheims.

Linsey climbed inside the car but Nate kept the door from shutting. “So, when’s the big day?”

## Chapter One

He'd given her the orgasms.

She wanted the orchids.

Velvety, long curling leaves, beautiful and heavily veined, like the underside of his cock.

Dammit! Why was she thinking of Nate again? Now? This was her wedding rehearsal, for heaven's sake. She never should have allowed Jenny to talk her into using these Ben Wa balls. Her best friend meant well but Alexis didn't think the balls were having the right effect.

They were supposed to be strengthening her inner pelvic muscles for her wedding night, while *gently* arousing her, so that by tomorrow, she'd be ready to attack Bradley like a wildcat. And maybe enjoy their sex for once.

Instead, all she could think of was Nate.

*Nate, Nate, Nate.* Thoughts of her ex-boyfriend were driving her insane.

"Alexis? Did you hear me?"

Smoothing the skirts of her long summery dress, Alexis turned toward the pastor. She wanted to whimper as she squeezed the muscles of her vagina, clasp the balls tight. "I'm sorry? What?"

*Gently arousing?* Her legs were slick clear to her knees.

The elderly man nodded graciously, the lines of his face wrinkling in gentle humor. "Getting nervous?"

Crap. Had she done anything weird? "Of course not." She shifted her stance and sensation radiated through her pussy. Was that her g-spot? Damn! She had to stand still. "I'm ready."



To get laid.

She heard a snicker and glanced at Jenny, who was trying vainly not to bust a gut laughing. Alexis could strangle her. Jenny mouthed, *Are they working?* then had the audacity to wink.

Alexis only squeezed her legs tighter together.

"It's natural to worry, my dear." The preacher's voice was soothing—but doing *no* good for her current affliction. "But we'll all be here to support you, to make sure things go perfectly tomorrow."

*Stand still, stand still, stand still.* "Thank you."

"Now, we're finished with the rehearsal. Unless you have any questions?"

*The velvety, long curling leaves, heavily veined, like the underside of his cock.* "No. I believe I'm good." Alexis blinked. "Um, I'm good."

*Except for the part where I'm losing my mind. And about to orgasm in a church.*

"Thank God." Her fiancé sounded as though she'd been putting him through labor. "I'm starving. Come on, babe."

Bradley headed for the church's immense doors without even waiting for her, his best friend in tow—a snobbish jerk she couldn't stand. Most of the wedding party followed quickly behind them, murmuring among themselves, making her feel like a huge inconvenience. Was everyone so hungry? Should she have chosen an earlier rehearsal time?

Maybe if she'd been more focused on the rehearsal—instead of these damned Ben Wa balls—they'd be eating already.

It was all her fault. She was screwing everything up. But this was her wedding! She'd only get one and she wanted it to be absolutely perfect.

Yet it felt far from perfect. Everything was in order but something felt wrong. Dreadful.

It had to be the Ben Wa balls.

*Or Nate.*

She really had to stop that, thinking about him was off limits. From here on out, *Nate* no longer existed in her vocabulary or her thoughts. With a sigh, Alexis turned toward the front of the church. By tomorrow it would be overflowing with guests, fresh orchid bouquets and happiness. Just like she wanted. Right?

"Excited?" Jenny came up beside her, smiling widely.

*Not like I should be.* "Not like you mean," Alexis told her darkly. It was nice seeing her so happy but Alexis wasn't ready to forgive her for suggesting the damn balls.

"I was talking about the *wedding*." Jenny laughed. Too bad her enthusiasm wasn't contagious.

"Yeah. So was I."

Jenny grabbed her arm and tugged her closer. "After dinner," she whispered, "I'm throwing you one heck of a bachelorette party and tomorrow you're getting married – to Bradley! You lucky dog!"

*Now why can't I be that excited?* I am! "Bachelorette party? I thought my mother said not to waste –"

"Pfft! What your mom doesn't know won't hurt her. Ready? The sooner we eat, the sooner *va-va-voom*." Jenny shimmied and held her mouth open, as though she was watching a male stripper.

Alexis laughed, squeezing her newly toned PC muscles for all they were worth. Her crotch had a date with the bathroom. "I'll catch up with you at the restaurant."

"Gonna catch a quickie with Bradley?" Jenny gave her a thumbs-up.

Alexis flashed what she hoped was a secretive smile and watched Jenny join the other bridesmaids, who were jostling and flirting with the groomsmen as they exited the building.

Inside, Alexis suddenly wanted to cry. Or hit someone.

Or have an orgasm.

"Alexis, dear? Aren't you coming?" her mother asked, looking at her watch. "We're late for our reservation."

"I need a moment, all right?"

Her mother continued to stand there, waiting.

"Alone. Please?"

Her mother harrumphed in displeasure. "Don't be long. I'll tell Bradley to wait for you."

"Thanks."

A second later, the wooden doors closed, the tiny click echoing throughout the ornate building. She was alone. Beautiful satin bows entwined with silk orchids adorned every pew. Alexis stepped forward to finger one. Tomorrow, she and her attendants would be carrying the real thing. Why wasn't she more excited?

She couldn't deny that deep inside she was questioning her decision to marry Bradley. But why? He was perfect husband material. Blond, well-muscled, handsome as a Greek god, Bradley had a solid reputation in Manhattan, a respectable upbringing, a thriving import-export business and a desire for children.

What more could she want? Her parents loved him. Her friends loved him. He loved her.

She loved Nate.

Alexis gritted her teeth at the forbidden thought. She had to get these damn Ben Wa balls out of her swollen pussy and *him* out of her mind. Tomorrow she started a new life. It was time to leave the old one behind.

She spun on her foot and headed toward the bathroom. As she was passing the back door, the sound of deep laughter made her pause. Alexis turned the handle and opened the door a fraction, listening.

"My damn balls can't get any bluer," she heard Bradley complain. "The way Alexis has been holding on out on me, I've been *dying* Well except for that hot little —"

Tom chuckled. "Bet you can't wait until tomorrow night."

"Are you kidding? It's past time I shifted gears and drilled into her sweet little ass."

Alexis eyes widened. Her stomach churned. *The jerk!* She shoved the door open with all her might, knocking into one of them. The ugly scent of tobacco greeted her nose. Disgusting!

Her fiancé stumbled down two steps, almost dropping a glowing cigar in the process. "Shit, Alexis!"

A roar of thunder boomed in the distance as she stepped outside. To the west, gray clouds loomed threateningly. A warning...from God perhaps? A symbol of her wrath? Or a portent of things to come if she proceeded in going through with this wedding?

Alexis shook off the unwanted thoughts.

"Oops," she said brightly, secretly wishing she'd knocked him on his ass. *Perfect husband material?* He couldn't wait to *drill* into her? "Smoking, Bradley?"

"Just one. I'm celebrating." He straightened, painting on a charming smile that could make any woman melt. Even her. Damn, he was handsome. And rich. And he came from good stock. Mother always said breeding counted for everything.

"Celebrating? What?" Drilling into her?

Bradley stepped closer. Her nose wrinkled from the stinky smoke.

"Tomorrow I'm marrying an angel." His fingers brushed her hair and she warmed inside. Marrying an angel? That was sweet. Maybe she hadn't enjoyed sex with Bradley yet but she *would*. It was just...different...from how things had been with Nate. "You know, the next time I have one of these," he lifted the cigar, "we'll have a baby boy."

A baby boy. Or a girl.

That's what she wanted more than anything—marriage, a family, happily ever after.

She wasn't exactly coming to their marriage pure, she reflected. The fact that he saw her as an angel had to be a good thing, wasn't it?

Alexis forced a big smile. Of course Bradley was perfect. Any man needed grooming, right? As soon as they were married, she'd talk to him about respecting her and not smok —

A sliding sensation in her vagina grabbed her attention. *The balls!* "Oh shit!"

Both men stared at her.

One of the Ben Wa balls had slipped free and was now rolling around in the crotch of her panties. Alexis fought back a moan, then couldn't help laughing. Thank God she hadn't worn a thong.

She clenched her pussy muscles to hold the second ball in and squeezed her thighs together. "Bradley, I don't want my car to smell like smoke. Why don't you ride with Tom and I'll meet you there?"

"Sure, babe —"

Alexis ducked back into the building.

\* \* \* \* \*

Over his dead body.

Concealed beneath a willow tree in the church parking lot, Nate tightened his white-knuckled grip on the narrow steering wheel of his '57 Chevy convertible. It took all of his restraint not to jump from the car, chase Linsey down and pound pretty boy's interest in Lexi away.

Nate watched his girl — his *ex*-girl — dash back inside the church. Meanwhile, Linsey and his butt buddy headed to a pathetic excuse for a sports car. Nothing but a tin bucket — just like Linsey. Flimsy outside, empty inside.

What was Linsey doing, anyway? Leaving her? It was their rehearsal, for Christ's sake. Even he had better manners than that.

Jesus, she'd looked so beautiful. The way she smiled, gestured. Lexi oozed sexuality, from her silky cocoa hair, to her heavily lashed, huge eyes and full, pouting

lips. On the same note, her body was far from innocent—she had more curves than a race track. One glance at her was like a punch to the gut—or rather, cock.

The sight of her alone was enough to make him hard.

He *had* to stop Lexi from marrying Linsey. She was making the biggest mistake of her life. Linsey could never make her happy. Not that Nate thought he could but Linsey damn sure couldn't. And Lexi was too appealing to suffer a pig like that.

Nate was certain he'd never sleep again if he didn't stop her. His damnable conscience was keeping him up at night—every night—hence his presence here, at the eleventh hour.

Linsey's butt buddy revved the engine and peeled wheels from the parking lot. Showing off...how mature.

Everyone else had already left. Acting on instinct, Nate grabbed his keys, leapt from the car and sprinted to the door he'd seen Lexi disappear into. Easing the door open, he stepped inside the cool sanctuary.

There before him, by the grace of God, was Lexi—bent over, with her hands in her panties.

Nate grinned. "Now, I don't doubt a pansy like Linsey can't satisfy you, baby but is this really the time and place?"

*Oh God!*

"Nate?" Alexis hissed under her breath.

Her fingers grappled in the crotch of her underwear for the elusive damned ball. Frantic, Alexis crammed her middle finger as high inside her vagina as she could, pushing the remaining ball back into place so she wouldn't lose it too.

*Where was the other one?*

She heard a small thud.

"Oh God," she squeaked.

Why was this happening to her?

“Looking for this?” Nate swept down between her legs and picked up the missing ball. Whipping her hands free, Alexis wiped her fingers and faced the bane of her existence, Nate Tonetti.

Hungry for him, she devoured the vision of sin personified – shoulder-length black hair, triangular goatee, captivating blue eyes. Tanned and tattooed. Wicked and wonderful. Irresistible. And he’d been hers. For a time.

Where was his ever-present leather jacket, she wondered, catching a faint whiff of the garage that always seemed to cling to him, even fresh from the shower. Leather and motor oil, two things synonymous with Nate. Two things guaranteed to turn her on.

Today he wore tight, tattered jeans and an even tighter black t-shirt, bulging in all the right places. Her fingers itched to trace his sculpted pecs, to raise the left sleeve of his shirt so she could set her eyes on the cougar adorning his muscular biceps. The sight of the tattoo always made her drool.

The scent of Nate made her pant. God, she was wet. And ready. She wanted to fuck him. Bad.

*I’m in a church! Planning my wedding! Down, libido, down!*

Nate held the gold, glistening ball at eyelevel and sniffed. His nostrils flared. “Smells like you. Would it taste like you too, I wonder?”

“Give that back!” Alexis shook free of her stupor and reached for it but he snatched his hand away and she lurched, almost losing her balance. The movement jiggled the second ball between her legs and she tried to suck it up. Damn Nate. Damn these balls.

“Uh, uh. Tell me what it is and I *might* let you have it.” His wicked grin reminded her how much she loved him...*it, it, the sex, anything but him!*

“What are you doing here?” She clenched her thighs in an effort to prevent further embarrassment. Why had she listened to Jenny? Her pussy muscles were fine, thank you very much!

His piercing eyes took in the flower-bedecked pews lining the aisle. "I see you have your orchids. Not much of an odor to them, is there?"

"I mean it, Nate. Tell me what you're doing here."

"Tell me what this is first."

"Nothing."

He looked at the ball, then popped it in his mouth, swirling it around. His cheeks inverted as he sucked. "Delicious."

"Oh disgusting." Alexis looked away. She had enough issues to deal with without...*that*.

"I used to lick you all the time. You didn't think that was disgusting."

"Yeah but that fell on the *floor*!"

"Now that you mention it," he said, shifting the ball to the other side of his mouth, "I see what you mean. That is kinda gross." Putting his hand to her nape, he pulled her to him. Their noses brushed. "Watcha say we get dirty together, Lexi?"

A heartbeat later, he meshed their lips. At the taste of him, Alexis shattered. She forgot where she was, what she was supposed to be doing, even who she was. Instead, she became Nate's sex-starved *Lexi*. She sucked on his tongue, loving the thick glide of it against hers as he plundered her mouth.

His hands roamed her back and butt, warming her, heating her crotch to boiling. When he grabbed a handful of ass and kissed her harder, Lexi moaned in appreciation.

Something clanked against her teeth—the ball! Nate was trying to thrust the damn ball into her mouth. Dick-whipped for him or not, she drew the line there.

It took all of her willpower but Lexi broke free, spitting out the hated ball. It fell to the floor with a plop.

"Stop!" She turned her head to the side, unable to believe what she'd just allowed to happen. Just participated in. *Encouraged*. "A kiss doesn't change anything. I could have just kissed the minister and I'd still be getting married tomorrow."



The minister wouldn't have had a Ben Wa ball in his mouth.

Lexi licked her swollen lips. His taste, mingled with hers, brought it all back. All of her dreams, all of the heartache.

His fingers brushed her chin, pulling her gaze back to him. "But you didn't. You kissed me." The look in his eyes went straight to her soul.

She wanted to puke at the thought of marrying anyone but him. "Why are you doing this to me?" She wrenched away. What had she done? She was getting married tomorrow – to the perfect guy.

*The perfect guy who smoked and drilled?* Dammit. Now she just wanted to puke. And fuck Nate. "Leave me alone! You had your chance."

"Lexi, you can't marry him." His voice was firm. As if it was his place to tell her what to do!

She wanted to smack him. The absolute nerve! Showing up out of nowhere, thinking he had any say in her life. She tried to shove past him. "Move. I need to get to the restaurant."

"Lexi, hear me out. Linsey isn't the guy for you."

"Neither are you."

He grabbed her again, trying to force her to meet his gaze. "You *can't* marry him."

Needing to see the look in his eyes, to see if he *felt* anything, she lifted her gaze. Concern, love even, sparkled in his cobalt eyes. She'd never seen his gaze glow like that, like the hottest part of a flame.

She was confused to her very core. Nate had made it clear she was nothing but a fling to him. He'd had eight months – *eight months!* – to convince her otherwise.

Did he care? Perhaps enough not to want to see her with another man. But not enough to commit to her. And he had the gall to tell her she couldn't marry Bradley? "I can't? I think I can. I think I will. Now go home. I don't want to see you ever again."

"You don't have to. Just don't marry Linsey."

"Oh I see. This isn't about you — *us* — you're just here to save the day?" She couldn't face him another second. He was killing her inside.

"You know how I feel about marriage, Lexi. It's not for me. And Linsey's not for you."

Her heart collapsed in her chest. Ridiculously disappointed in him all over again, Lexi shook her head. "You gave up the right to have any say in my life when you decided you didn't want to be a part of it."

"You broke up with me."

"Semantics. We didn't want the same thing. Still don't, obviously." They were finished. Over. They had to be.

Turning away, Lexi headed toward the bathroom, struggling to hold in a sob. How could he be doing this to her? Now? After all this time, she'd finally gotten him out of her system. And he just pops up out of nowhere, determined to ruin all her plans.

*No!* Squaring her shoulders, Lexi walked away standing tall. She'd forget all about Nate, retrieve the remaining damn ball from her cunt and rush to the restaurant where —

Strong arms wrapped around her in a vise. Nate yanked her against him.

"What are you doing?" Kicking, she twisted in his embrace. Up this close, leather, aftershave and the faintest hint of motor oil invaded her nostrils, throwing her off guard. She pounded against his granite chest, trying to push him away, when all she really wanted to do was pull him closer. "Nate!"

Suddenly, his hands cupped her bottom and he lifted her off the floor. She screamed bloody murder as he propelled her over his shoulder with a whoosh. Her stomach landed hard against him, knocking the breath out of her.

"*Ahem.*" From behind her butt, a throat cleared. The minister! "*Eh hem!* Is, uh, everything all right?"

Lexi burned with embarrassment.

Nate swung to face the minister, leaving her dangling over his shoulder. Then the jerk had the nerve to pat her bottom. Good Lord, she was practically mooning the preacher. Why hadn't she thought to wear pantyhose? *Or pants!*

"Everything is fine, sir, just fine," Nate told him in a calm voice that belied the effort he made to hold on to her wriggling body.

The minister walked around and bent his knees, looking up at her, under her curtain of hair. His perplexed eyes studied her. "Miss Tarleton? Is this Neanderthal part of the wedding party? A late arrival, perhaps?"

Blood rushed to her face as she tried to slip free of Nate's grasp. With a sigh, she gave up. Nate wasn't letting her go.

Maybe she didn't want him to.

"Men," she whined.

"Is he hurting you?" the pastor persisted.

A lot. But not enough for her to plead for help.

"I never noticed how very red the carpet is," she mused, staring at the floor. Being in Nate's arms was making her lose her mind. Hanging upside down wasn't helping.

"Miss Tarleton, do I need to call the authorities?"

She smacked Nate on his fine ass. "That's not necessary. He's putting me down. Now."

Nate abruptly jiggled her, stilling her complaint. "What time's the wedding?"

She couldn't believe this was happening.

"Two." Lexi could hear the worry in the pastor's tone.

"I'll have her back in time." Nate grunted as if he were doing them all a favor. "If she wants to be here."

Swinging around, he kicked the door open and stomped down the stone staircase, jarring her with every step.

## **Chapter Two**

Lexi had left him no choice.

A gust of wind buffeted them as Nate rushed to his car, carrying the squirming handful of woman. Overhead, clouds gathered, blocking out the last rays of the setting sun.

A grim smile curved his lips. Wouldn't it be appropriate if her wedding was rained out? Too bad the nuptials weren't taking place outside.

Ineffectual slaps landed on his thigh. "This is crazy! Nate!"

"Woman, I didn't drop everything and drive all the way out here for you not to listen to me." He dumped her in the convertible's passenger seat.

She huffed and crossed her arms, her plump lips pressed flat but she issued no protest. From the look in her sparking green eyes, it was apparent she was dying to know what he had to say but equally strong was her desire to tell him to take a hike.

He hopped over her into the driver's seat, yanked his keys from his pocket and shot her a glance. She hadn't moved. "Good girl."

"Go to hell."

"I can read you every time." Nate couldn't suppress a laugh. She was so damn sexy when she was angry. He'd missed her fire.

He revved the engine and a moment later they were exiting the parking lot. He veered onto a country road, heading away from town. The tree-lined drive blocked out what little light was left and he flicked on the headlights. "This area's beautiful," Nate commented, attempting to break the tension. "I can see why you chose to get married here. Beats the hell out of the city."

"Bite me."

“Ah, Lexi. I love it when you talk dirty.” Her presence captured him. The wind whipped her hair, blowing the long chocolaty strands around her head, making her look wild. The way a woman like she should look. Lexi was built for sex and sin—she had no business trying to look innocent. She couldn’t anyway, no matter how much she wanted to.

She bit her lower lip and cast him a glare. “Keep your eyes on the road.”

God, how he wished it was his teeth on that lush mouth. “Damn, baby, you look gorgeous. I’ve missed you.”

She arched one brow. “Yet ironically, you let me go. You miss me but not enough to hold onto me. Not enough to start a life with me.”

A streak of lightning bolted across the grey sky, punctuating her statement. It was growing darker. Silently, he considered her words. Was that really the way she saw it? He had a different opinion, one that made him think he was driving straight into two storms—one in his car, one outside it.

“A life? Like your family would’ve stood for that. I can just imagine Christmas dinner, slummin’ with the mechanic.” He thought back to the one and only meal he’d endured with her parents. Her mom had apparently *loved* him. He could still recall the snidely voiced comment he’d overheard, *Alexis, dear, go tell your grease monkey to wash his dirty hands. Dinner is almost ready.*

The remark had only confirmed what he’d already suspected—he wasn’t family material, especially for someone of Lexi’s caliber.

Working on cars was a decent job, he’d told himself. It beat the hell out of stealing them, which is what he’d started out doing.

Lexi had defended him, protesting that if her mother didn’t show him some respect, Lexi would ask him to leave *and* go with him. But the damage had been done. While her defense had warmed him, it wasn’t enough. Mrs. Tarleton had only voiced what Nate already knew. Lexi was better off without him.

But that didn’t mean she should be with loose-loined Linsey. Not even close.

"What's this you have against my family?" Lexi demanded.

"It's more like what they have against me."

Lexi released a frustrated sigh and looked away.

"Tell you what, let's talk about something more positive. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Planning a wedding." Bitterness coated her words. "One you seem determined to ruin."

"That's it?"

"Nothing as mundane as working, if that's what you're getting at."

He ignored the dig but offered one himself. "I wasn't but it's nice to know nothing's changed."

"Turn around. I'm expected. I have *commitments*. Bradley is going to wonder where I am."

Nate sped up. "Let him wonder."

"Sure, until he calls the police to report me missing." She twisted in her seat, facing him with narrowed eyes. They were spitting fire at the moment. "Come on, Nate. Whatever this is about, it's pointless."

"Pointless? After that kiss, I'm not buying it."

Silent, Lexi fell back into her seat. Apparently the truth left her speechless. She wanted him. He knew it and she knew it. The question was, what to do about it?

He could think of a hundred things. And they all centered around her body.

Nate licked his lips, savoring the flavor—her flavor—that the golden ball had left in his mouth. One taste wasn't enough. "You got any more of those balls up there?"

"Nate..." She closed her eyes as though she could hide from him. From them.

They both wanted more than just a kiss. Maybe before he worried about convincing Lexi that Linsey was an asshole, he should prove her own feelings to her. She was marrying one man but she wanted another. Him.

And Nate wasn't such a gentleman that he wouldn't take advantage of that.

His hand went to her knee. "Maybe I should check for myself."

"Don't you dare." Lexi tried to cross her legs but Nate wouldn't have it. He dug beneath her dress and wrenched her legs apart. His fingers dove past her panties. The big car swerved, one side of tires running onto the shoulder.

"Watch out!" she cried but even she couldn't keep her eyes on the road. Instead, she focused on the juncture between her legs, where his dark, muscular forearm had set up camp.

Nate straightened the wheel. "Everything is under control, sweetheart. You know I can drive—you're just a handful of distraction." Several of his fingers plunged deep within her. Her traitorous pussy muscles clamped around them and she gasped, wanting more, despite herself. "And you know what I can do to you."

Oh God, did she ever.

Why wasn't she stopping him? The wind tossed her hair about, cleansing her of hesitation, of doubt. If only for the moment.

Fighting tears, she savored the missed sensation of his touch, of his calloused fingers snagging on her lacy underwear, of the way he commanded her body's response, like only he could.

*Oh God.* She fought back a moan. What was she doing, letting him invade her like this? It was one thing to give him time to state his case—part of her still held out hope he was there to profess his undying devotion and sweep her off her feet—but it was another thing to cheat on the man she was marrying. *Tomorrow.*

Keeping his left hand anchored on the wheel, Nate leaned over and rolled his fingers deep inside her, opening her up, exploring her. Weak, she lifted her hips, welcoming him. How long had it been since she'd felt such ecstasy? Two months? Three? Eight? As long as they'd been apart...

Too long.

Her stomach clenched. Her heart pounded. Sweat beaded on her forehead and her nose...no, wait...it was raining. Cool, wet drops washing away her tears.

Lexi leaned her head back and accepted the moment for what it was. She couldn't stop him. She didn't want to. Nobody could make her feel this way. Especially not Bradley.

Nate teased her clit and she gasped, thrilled to her core. Her world became a whirl, the trees whizzing by, the raindrops on her face, his hand driving her wild. Lexi rode his fingers, loving the way he varied his touch, circling her clit, then pushing deep, always one step ahead of her.

Nate honked the horn. Short, happy blares. She lifted her head and stared between her legs. The faded switchblade tattoo on his forearm was moving up and down, up and down, as he pleased her. How she loved his arm, the flexing muscles, the dark hair. She couldn't stand the sight and tore her gaze away, focusing on his other hand. Blindly seeing how his clean yet always stained fingers guided the wheel, so in control, yet so out of control as he swerved and fingered her. Thank God the road was deserted.

Thunder crashed closer, echoing in her crotch. Was she really going to come, just from his touch? She was weak. She gripped his wrist with both hands, holding him to her, when what she really wanted was to push him down, rip off his jeans and climb onto his cock. And ride it to completion.

God, she was weak. She'd always been weak when it came to Nate. It was the main reason why she'd had to leave him when she'd issued an ultimatum and he hadn't buckled.

Pure emptiness settled in her lower abdomen, the need to be filled overcoming her. His hands weren't enough. *More*. She had to have more. She had to have all of him, now, deep inside her.

"You've got to stop," she panted. It was raining harder now, making her feel elemental, raw. "Nate! Stop!"



His hand stilled and started to withdraw. Lexi clawed at his wrist and forced him to resume pumping his fingers into her. "No. The car. Stop the goddamn car! I need you!"

Nate lifted his foot off the accelerator, passed a thick copse of trees, then maneuvered onto the shoulder. They came to a rumbling stop. He set the parking brake but never halted his attentions, pushing high in her vagina, still searching for the Ben Wa ball. "Ah, felt it!"

Her pussy muscles contracted around him. She was so wet, so ready...

The velocity of raindrops increased, coming down harder, hitting the metal dashboard and bouncing off, landing on her clothes, on her hair and sinking in. Sinking in...like his touch.

She humped his fingers, scrambling to get her hands beneath her skirt, trying to reach her clit. She couldn't think anymore, had to come...

Nate's motions slowed. "I've got to put the top up, baby."

An unwilling moan issued from her lips as her cunt twitched in protest. Nate shut off the engine and turned to face her. Flexing his middle finger in her one more time, he eased his hand from between her legs, bringing the ball with him. "A souvenir, for later."

Then the bastard grinned.

*A souvenir.* Because after tonight, there'd be no them. No future. This was just a fling to him...and she was ruining her life for nothing more than a fucking orgasm.

God. What was she thinking?

She wasn't.

Tears flooded her eyes. Lightning flashed around them, illuminating the sky. When had it gotten so dark? Directly overhead, thunder cracked, striking Lexi like a whip. She flinched. What time was it? Nine? Ten? She couldn't imagine what her family, what Bradley, were thinking.

Nate pocketed the ball and nudged her jaw until she looked at him. "This wasn't my intention, Lexi, I just wanted to talk to you. But it's obvious there's unfinished business between us."

Rain had plastered his long, black hair to his face and shoulders. Lexi wiped the wetness from her eyes and saw the drops glistening on his tanned skin, catching on his goatee. He looked so damn good.

She shook her head. This was so wrong. And it had to stop. Now. "This doesn't change anything. It can't."

Nate moved his hand, running the fingers he'd had inside her over her lips, allowing her a taste of what she felt for him. She jerked away violently, avoiding his gaze. She saw the bulge in his pants. "Stop, just stop. You have to. Take me back to the church. I—"

Her heart thudded. The ache in her pelvis grew stronger, her desire seeping through her skirts, onto the seat. It was all she could do not to throw caution to the wind and jump him right then.

*I'm so confused!*

He leaned over and kissed her forehead. "Stay put. I'll be right back."

She shouldn't listen to him. She should run. Steal his car. Anything to get away.

Instead, she found herself mesmerized, unable to move, unable to resist his magnetic pull as lightning flashed and she watched him in the pouring rain, struggling to get the top up.

Nate was ten times more man than Bradley could ever dream of being. So why was she about to shackle herself to the wrong man?

Because Bradley was *right* for her. He was what she wanted—a traditional man, a traditional marriage.

Nate was sexy. Fun in the sack and out. But he'd never settle down. Become domestic. He was all about having a good time. Loving life. Not taking anything too seriously.

Lexi had to stop this before she did something unforgivable. She couldn't throw her whole life away for a booty call...and that's all she was to Nate. A good time.

He'd left the door ajar. Dual lights from the bottom of the dash lit up his empty seat and her lap. Her knees were squeezed tight together, her fingers a mangled mess. Lexi blinked, focusing on his keys, dangling next to the steering column.

In a daze, she wrenched the keys free and threw them with all her might. They skidded across the street.

"Lexi! What're you doing?" Nate yelled, just as he was fastening the top in place.

Blocking him out, Lexi levered the heavy door open and hurled herself from the car. Pounding her flimsy sandals into the damp earth, she headed for the trees. She had to get away. She had to outrun Nate. Outrun herself. Her desire.

If she stayed, she'd succumb.

Dodging pine trees, jumping over debris, Lexi forced herself to keep moving. Almost pitching headfirst to the ground, she slowed her pace. Her crotch was swollen and every step reminded her how much. Rain beat against her back. If only it could wash away her longing.

She traded safety for the hope of oblivion and moved faster.

Her lungs burned. Rain blurred her vision and soaked her clothes, weighing her down. She ignored Nate's calls and ran. Fallen pine needles and mud sucked at her soles. One sandal slipped off. Her foot kicked up mud.

Lexi stumbled but kept going. Her body had never needed Nate this much, to the point that she was ready to forfeit her future. And for what? A quick fuck that wouldn't mean shit to him.

How could she even consider it?

With harsh motions, Lexi brushed away tears that wouldn't leave. She hurt, ached inside. Why did he do this to her?

Why did she let him?

Nate secured the car and tore after her, unmindful of the rain. "Lexi! Stop!"

Damn fool woman. "You'll hurt yourself. Stop!"

Her pale dress flickered through the trees like a ghostly beacon.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. Nate didn't know what he'd expected but it wasn't her braving the elements to flee from him. Breathing heavily, he powered forward, his booted feet easily eating up the distance between them. Not twenty yards from the road, he snagged her wrist.

He whipped her around to face him. Light from a distant strike filtered through the trees, illuminating her face for a second. Tears mingled with raindrops and tracked down her cheeks.

"Why are you doing this? *Why?*" Lexi cried, gripping his upper arms. Her fingertips delved beneath the edge of his t-shirt, holding tight, not pushing him away. "I'm going to marry Bradley. Tomorrow. I am!"

"Who are you trying to convince, baby? Me?" Nate hauled her close and ducked beneath the nearest pine. "Or yourself?"

She hugged him, nuzzling her face against his neck. She sure wasn't acting like a woman about to be married. Nate became more determined than ever to save her from Linsey. "Answer me, dammit!"

Instead of responding, Lexi kissed her way up his neck and latched on to his lips. The rain pounded harder, hitting the ground in staccato patters. Large drops traveled past the branches and slammed onto his head. Inside his mouth, Lexi's tongue dove past his, slamming into the roof of his mouth.

Nate kissed her back, raising handfuls of her skirts to get at her skin. She rubbed against him and her fingers tangled in his hair, pulling his head back. Rain dripped down his neck.

"Are you still going through with it?" he muttered, sucking on her collarbone. No matter what she said, he wouldn't stop. Not now.

"What?" Her breasts heaved against him.

"The wedding. Are you still marrying that bastard?"

"You haven't given me a reason not to."

How could she say that when she was pulling his shirt free from his waistband, scraping her nails over his torso? "You want a reason? Do you ever respond to him like this?" Nate flexed his fingers, easily slipping them beneath the edge of her damp panties. Moist heat dripped over his skin. "Does he make you feel like this?"

She arched against him. "It's not you. The balls. Ben...ah..."

"You can lie to yourself, Lexi but..." Nate swallowed. He had to ask. "Did you catch anything from him?"

"What?" Lexi had his shirt shoved up to his armpits. She was kissing his chest, biting him.

"Sex. STDs." Nate struggled to get the words out. When he'd taken off after her this afternoon, he hadn't planned on abduction—or seduction. He hadn't planned on fucking her senseless and losing his mind in the process. "Dammit, Lexi, have you caught anything from Linsey?"

Her tongue was all over him. She abandoned his pecs and attacked his chin. "Course not. I've always used protection with him." She sucked on the hairs centered on his jaw. "Was waiting until after...the wedding to, um..."

Her words trailed off as her kisses increased.

"Thank God." Nate pushed her against the tree and knelt, shoving her dress up to her waist. The sharp scent of her desire went straight to his head. With a quick tug, he ripped the crotch of her lacy panties aside.

His mouth watered. "After sucking on your little gold ball, I'm dying to eat you."

She whimpered as he lunged forward and suctioned her cunt, drinking the luscious arousal dripping from her.

Unable to be gentle, Nate seized one breast and squeezed her flesh. Through the layers of her gauzy dress and bra, her beaded nipple met his palm. Between her thighs, his tongue delved deep, licking over her folds, pushing inside, lapping, as he gave her breast one more hard squeeze then used his fingers to spread her juicy cunt wide open. Growling, he teased her clit with long, slow glides, coaxing the little bud from behind its hood. Once exposed, he sucked the tiny pearl, flicking his tongue over it. Lexi pulled on his hair and he loved her harder, with everything inside him.

Breathing heavily, Lexi thrust her pussy into his face. "More Nate. I need..."

"I know what you need." Nate pulled back and licked his lips. Guiding Lexi by her upper thighs, he turned her around and spread her legs wide. "Hands on the trunk," he ordered. "And brace yourself, baby."

Nate opened her buttocks, nosed past her torn panties and licked her from behind, tasting every inch of her.

She gasped. "No..."

He overrode her weak protests and satiated himself on her flesh, licking from her dripping cunt to the puckered bud of her anus. His tongue dove deep inside both holes. His fingers joined the assault, pressing deep into her vagina two at a time. She was crying, moaning. But it wasn't enough. He wanted her to scream. Beg.

To never desire another man again.

He plunged into her with his remaining fingers, stretching her, making her call his name. She rode his hand and mouth, bucking like a wild woman. His tongue grew numb. He slid to the side and nipped her thigh, making her cry out.

"Nate, please!" she panted. "Fuck me, please!"

With his free hand, he kneaded her ass. His fingers dug into her flesh, slowing her movements so he could control her.

He finger-fucked her rapidly, forcefully. His thumb caressed the outside of her rectum. She flinched, tried to move away from the intimate invasion but he easily held her in place. Her pussy clenched tightly around him and she shuddered, her legs shaking. "Nate...mmm..."

"Shhh, baby." He pressed higher in her, going faster, harder. "Just feel me. Need me."

*Want me...*

*Love me...*

"God, I do..." Her words were strained, sounding almost as if she was in pain. She screamed, her shout echoing in the night.

Like angels singing.

His need for her became unbearable. He couldn't play any longer. He had to *take*.

Standing, he grabbed her by the shoulders and whirled her around, trading places with her. He leaned against the tree trunk and fumbled with the button-fly of his jeans, freeing his cock.

"Now!" Lexi clutched at his shoulders. "I need you now!"

"Hold on, baby." Nate felt her feet climbing the legs of his jeans and he clasped her butt, lifting her. Her body hugged his tight, her limbs wrapped around him as she humped against his freed erection, sliding along his length.

He shifted her until he was poised between her thighs. She was soaked from his attentions. Hot, humid air enveloped his cock. He trembled and steadied his legs, then

rubbed the tip of his erection past her opening. Sex juice dripped from her pussy, coating him. Nate's shaft swelled in his hand.

With a hoarse shout, he lunged inside.

Lexi screamed. She bore down against Nate's cock, taking him all the way. God yes! Her inner muscles rippled around him, pulling him deeper. Nate grunted and shifted his legs to a wider stance. The action caused him to surge against her.

Her ass tingled, her loins throbbed. The last of her tears dried as she finally got what she'd been craving. Needing. Not just tonight but forever it seemed.

She coiled her arms over his shoulders and straightened her spine, trying to find friction against her clit with his pubic hair. After what he'd just done with his tongue—God, she could still feel him *there*, licking and biting—she was primed. She concentrated on his thrusting, on how he filled her with his big, hard cock.

Lexi hadn't felt this full, this close to another human being, in months. He changed tempo and she gasped, flailing in his grasp. Her anus itched, wanting...

Nate moved his fingers, sliding them to the crevice of her butt. Before tonight, she'd dissuaded him from that virgin territory but now...something about the memory of his decadent touch excited her beyond her comfort zone. Lexi ground herself against his cock, secretly hoping he'd do more with his fingers.

Her tongue licked over his jaw, scraping against raspy two-day-old whiskers. Her pussy spasmed around his shaft.

Streaks of lightning flashed through her while a stray bolt blazed overhead. A reminder. This wasn't real. It wouldn't lead to anything more. It couldn't.

With every thrust of his hips, Nate's fingers continued to move inward. They teased her crack. She felt her anus tighten then bloom. In invitation?

She could give him this, at least.

"You can do it," she whispered against his ear.



"What?"

"I'm giving you permission to..." Her bottom thrashed within his grasp, asking him silently. The storm raging in her cunt increased at the thought.

"Baby, we can't," he gasped, "not here. Not like this."

"But I want you to. I want —" *This to be only yours.*

She couldn't say it, not out loud. But Nate heard her anyway.

His hands dipped past her anus and toyed between her spread thighs. She felt several fingers swirl against her pussy and his cock. He touched her clit and she flinched, so sensitive it almost hurt.

"Ready?" He murmured slipping his hand free to trail it straight up her crack. She felt him settle one fingertip at her anus, just before it slid inside. And pumped within her.

The forbidden touch set her off and Lexi felt her cunt explode around his shaft. The orgasm flashed through her faster than a bolt of lightning. Every muscle in her body strained against Nate. Her legs tightened. Her pussy clamped down. Her ass ate his finger. "Give it to me!" she screamed.

Nate did, plunging inside both orifices in tandem. Lexi bit his earlobe. She writhed in his arms. She loved him with everything in her because this was the last time. It had to be.

Nate groaned and lurched beneath her, driving his cock high. He came with a shout. She felt the hot spurt of his semen as he pulled his finger free and scraped his nails over her butt.

Their breathing was loud in the dripping stillness. The storm had passed. A stray breeze instantly chilled her body. Lexi scrambled from his hold.

Her legs zinged with sensation. Her pussy ached, a good, satisfied, once-in-a-lifetime-fuck kind of ache. Her ass...well, she refused to think about it!

No longer in the throes of unrelenting desire, her mind sharpened. Her body was satisfied but guilt rose full force.

What had she done?

Without stopping to look at Nate, she ordered her lethargic limbs to move and took off toward the street.

She didn't care how far it was, she was getting back to the damn church—and her car—if she had to walk the entire way. Or crawl.

## **Chapter Three**

Lightheaded from his powerful orgasm, Nate watched Lexi take flight and cursed under his breath. She dashed through the shadows, stumbling in the mud, as if he were a monster she needed to escape from.

And women complained that men didn't cuddle after sex!

Rumblings of thunder growled around him and a new wave of rain began to fall from the angry sky. Blood pumped through his loins. He felt invincible.

But Lexi had run. Dammit!

Drawing a deep breath, Nate tried to steady his feelings. To calm his libido. Maybe he should let her go. Stop fighting the inevitable. The two of them would never be compatible.

Bracing himself against the rough bark of the pine tree, Nate tucked his half-hard cock into his jeans. Even spent, he still wanted her. He let remnants of rain drip from the tree and wash his hands.

What now? Did he drive her to her car and let her go? Give up on them? Or did he keep her with him and prevent her from marrying Linsey tomorrow, no matter the cost?

Yeah, right, you idiot. What's to stop her from marrying him next week?

*I am!*

Lightning flashed directly in front of him. Nate leapt back with a gasp as the air boomed for several seconds. *Shit.* That answered it. They both needed to get someplace safe. Somewhere they could talk.

"Lexi! Wait up!" Nate took off running, his feet sloshing through the wet earth. "Lexi!" She was nowhere to be seen. Chasing after her, he dodged around the trees, heading toward the road. In no time, he'd reached his car.

But Lexi wasn't in it.

Maybe she was hiding somewhere, needing a moment of privacy? "Lexi! Baby! Where are you?"

Nothing.

He flinched when another bolt of lightning landed nearby. Then he saw her, fleeing down the road.

"Lexi." Nate looked to his car, then to her. "Lexi!"

No choice but to go after her. Nate reached into his pocket before he remembered – the damn woman had tossed his keys! His eyes searched the road for a glint of metal.

Another flash of lightning brightened the sky, then disappeared, leaving the area pitch black. But it had been enough.

Across the road, almost in the grass...

Nate searched with his boots and heard a slight clink. He bent down, rifling through weeds and sludge. *Got 'em!*

Keys in hand, he jumped in his Chevy. After tonight, the restored upholstery would never be the same. He started the engine, flipped on the headlights, did the fastest U-turn on record and raced after her, covering the short distance between them in a heartbeat. He slowed almost to a stop as he approached her, his headlights casting her form into shadow. With jerky movements, he wound down his window. "Goin' my way, good lookin'?"

Lexi marched forward, ignoring him. One of her shoes was gone, giving her gait an uneven, clomping appearance.

The rain was coming down faster, plastering her normally lively hair to her head. Her dress clung to her sweet curves and she shook violently, her body quaking. From the cold, from heartache...or from passion?

Poor woman. What had he done—what was he *doing*—to her? Nate's chest suddenly burned as though he'd eaten three double-jalapeño burgers. He'd only come after Lexi because he didn't want to see her hurt but he was hurting her himself.

And yet, he couldn't stop trying. Didn't want to.

"Lexi."

She continued to stomp through the rain as if he didn't exist.

"Lexi, dammit, enough already!" His tone rose with every word. Why the hell wouldn't she acknowledge him? "If you want to go back to the church, fine, get in, I'll drive you."

It was a lie. The church was the last place he intended to take her. He *couldn't*. Couldn't lose her. Couldn't let her marry Linsey. Not now. Not ever.

But how could he keep her?

"Leave me alone, Nate." Her voice echoed with pain and her pace increased. He watched her trip over some loose gravel. "Leave. Me. Alone!"

Her resentment—and now anger—seemed like an impenetrable stone wall. If only he could break through. Touch her somehow. Get her to smile. Wind blew through his open window. Summer or not, drenched as she was, she had to be freezing.

His tires crept along as he idled forward, the speedometer still registering zero. Rain plopped in through his open window. Nate started humming an old B.J. Thomas tune about raindrops falling on heads, as lightheartedly as possible. "Come on, baby. Get in."

Nothing.

"My heart's still pounding from what we did beneath the tree." His cock was still pulsing but Nate figured some things were best left unsaid. "Don't you want to get in the car where it's warm? And dry?"

Nothing.

"Don't you want your little gold ball back?"

Nothing but a slight hesitation in her step.

"Hey now. You can't cheat me like this, baby. I still get to take you in the ass, remember?"

She shot him a nasty look.

Ah, progress. "Don't you want to try it?"

"You had your chance. You blew it."

And wasn't that the story of his life?

And he was probably blowing it all over again. But at least she was talking to him.

He gently applied the brake, slowing to a stop. "Lexi, this is ridiculous. It's storming."

She rounded on him. "Yeah? Well it's a lot less dangerous out here than in your car. No, thank you, Nate. You've caused enough trouble."

There was something in her voice—dread? Fear?

Nate frowned.

"Why?" he questioned. "Lexi?"

No response. Again.

She hiccupped. Great. She was crying. God, he wished this night were over. "What's wrong, Lexi? What are you afraid of? Me? Us?"

Nothing but a loud sniff.

A horrible thought struck him. "Are you afraid of what Linsey will do if he finds out about us? About what just happened?"

Jesus, why hadn't he thought of that before? The guy was axle grease, nothing but an over-groomed playboy with no respect for women. Sure, he didn't seem to have any guilt in relation to cheating on Lexi but how would Linsey feel about Lexi cheating on him?

"If? He's *going* to find out because I have to tell him, now don't I?" Lexi scowled at him and took off again. "And there is no *us*! Go away, Nate."

Was she crazy? Who knew how the bastard would react? His gut told him Linsey wouldn't take it well. "He won't hurt you, will he?"

Her silence struck terror in him and he gripped the wheel, unintentionally revving the engine as he pulled closer to her. "Lexi!"

"Hurt me?" She flashed him a glance, her expression dark and accusing. "You asked *me* about being safe. If I'd caught anything from Bradley. Well, what about you? You're not exactly an angel in the bedroom, now are you?"

"I haven't been with anyone else. Not since you."

Her feet slowed to a halt. For a few seconds she looked straight ahead, saying nothing. A gust of wind blew past her, lifting her long hair and creating a riotous halo about her head. He saw her shiver again.

Finally, she turned and stared at him. "I guess you *are* an angel."

"Pl-please don't marry him, Lexi." Nate's voice broke, cracking with emotion. "Please."

She squeezed her fists together, clamped her eyes shut and shook her head. Fat drops of rain sprinkled down as she silently sobbed. "You just don't get it, do you?" she cried. Her sandaled foot stomped on the shoulder's broken concrete. "I *want* to marry Badley. I mean *Bradley*. You're not doing me any favors, Nate."

"Lexi, please just get in. Talk to me."

She hiccupped. "I can't."

But she sure looked as though she wanted to.

Nate grabbed his leather jacket from the backseat and stuck his arm out the window. "Here, if you insist on standing in the rain, put this on before you get sick. If it's not too late."

Why couldn't his chivalrous instincts have kicked in sooner? Nate's thumbs drummed on the wheel. What to do? Confess? Be brutally honest? "I believe you want to get married, Lexi. But not to him."

Lexi sniffled as she slid the coat on, hugging herself. She looked toward the starless sky and allowed rain to wash over her face. "He's a good man. Perfect husband material."

"You don't love him."

Lexi didn't deny it.

The truth was, Linsey *could* be the perfect guy and Nate still wouldn't approve of him. The only man he approved of was himself. And if he didn't act on that, he was going to lose her forever. Even if he wasn't sure he could be all that Lexi needed... God, he wanted to try. He wanted the chance—

"I don't have to love him, Nate," she answered, whispering as if it was a secret. He stuck his head out the window to hear better. "Don't you see? Don't you get it? I don't want to be the good-for-nothing society dame anymore." Throwing her arms to her sides, she started walking again. "I've grown up, Nate. I'm ready to move on, to make more out of myself."

"Baby, what are you saying? You're fine. You don't need to be any more."

"You don't understand!" She increased her pace and threw over her shoulder, "I want someone to spend my life with. Someone to make a home with, start a life. Have children with."

"But you don't love him."

"God!"



For a moment, he let her go, just like he'd done eight months ago. He couldn't reason with her, couldn't make her happy. Maybe he should just let her live the life she wanted, the life she'd planned.

Maybe she didn't love him with her words—but she'd damn well loved him with her body. Was that enough? One thought of the wild way she'd ridden him beneath the tree and he was hard for her again.

He watched her walking out of his life, the rain sparkling in the headlights. Nate felt himself losing her all over again. *No!* He wouldn't let Linsey have her. Wouldn't let her slip through his fingers a second time. He *needed* her. He loved her. Right or wrong, good or bad for her, he didn't give a shit anymore. They belonged together.

And he knew what he had to do. More importantly, he knew that he wanted it with all his heart. Nate gunned the engine and lunged alongside her. "Then marry me," he blurted.

"What?" Stopping, Lexi whirled to face him. "What did you say?"

He hit the brake. "Marry me, Lexi. Marry me!" he shouted for all the world to hear. "*Marry me!*"

She gawked at him. "That's ridiculous, Nate. You can't just swoop in from nowhere, *the night before my wedding* and pop out a random proposal. Especially one you don't mean." Her hands gestured in the air in total frustration.

He clenched his jaw to keep from protesting. He'd asked, he'd practically begged. Silently, he turned on the interior lights and beseeched her with his eyes.

She leaned down. The rain had slowed again but her long hair hung over the window's edge, dripping water from its soaked tips. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"Very."

"You expect an answer—a yes—just like that, don't you?"

"After what we just did—"

"That was just sex."

"Then you need a new grasp on the English language because *that* was lovemaking at its finest. Passionate. Elemental. Unstoppable."

Her mouth opened as though she was going to say something else but he interrupted her. "Hell, Lexi. I know I'm crazy for even proposing. Compared to that glamour boy you plan to marry tomorrow, life with me pales in comparison." She was staring at him in such a way his throat tightened. Nate forced himself to finish. "You deserve everything Linsey can give you. You just don't deserve Linsey."

"I don't?" she whispered under her breath.

Baring his soul had never been so hard. "You deserve to be loved. And I can do that the rest of my life."

Her hands gripped the edges of his jacket. She started shaking her head and Nate feared the worst. "No! Don't answer me." He set the parking brake, engine still idling and leaned back in his seat. Eyes closed, he pleaded, "Don't say a word, not yet. Just come with me. Spend the night with me. Let me hold you in my arms, make love to you all night long." He opened his eyes and gazed at her, promising, "In the morning, whatever you decide, I won't argue with you. I'll understand if I'm not good enough to be your husband but give me tonight. Please."

"Oh Nate."

"You were always good enough." Lexi hugged herself in the safety of his jacket, inhaling his scent, a sexy combination of oil, leather and hard work. The smell of a *man*. "Always."

Nate looked desperate. She'd never seen him like this. "Say yes, Lexi. Say you'll spend the night with me." He was begging, another first. "Please."

How could she turn him down? She didn't know if she could marry Nate—or Bradley—now or not, but her heart, her future, deserved the chance. He'd asked for tonight. Could she give it to him?

Just knowing that he'd refrained from being intimate with other women for months, when her fiancé was complaining about four measly weeks without sex, screamed possibilities.

Maybe Bradley was the biggest mistake of her life. Maybe getting married didn't matter all that much either. Maybe feeling as loved as she did in this instant was enough. She nodded slowly. Dinner was surely over—so much for her bachelorette party. She'd happily trade it for a night with Nate. "I'll need to call Jenny and let her know where I am."

"Whatever you want."

Lexi rounded the car. Nate reached across the seat to push the door open. Shaking and soaking wet, she scooted in. The moment her bottom squished across the seat, guilt flooded her. "Oh God, I'm sorry. Your seats!" She looked at the car, realizing for the first time all the work he'd done to the vehicle. "Your old clunker...it's *gorgeous*."

"Don't sweat it. The seats'll dry." He chuckled, sounding relieved. "I replaced them once. I can do it again." He reached in the backseat, rooting around. "I'm more worried about you catching a chill."

Her eyes took in the pristine interior, marveling at the vintage chrome accents. Even in the dark, the car practically sparkled. She felt transported back in time. "How long ago did you finish? When we first started dating, you'd just bought this car and it was a—"

"A piece of shit?" He laughed again, tugging an old towel over the seat, likely one from his shop. "This is cleaner than it looks," he apologized, bringing it to her hair and slowly blotting the wet mess. "I've had a lot of free time to work on her lately. As much as I hate to say it, I'd rather she'd still be rusted junk than to have lost the time with you."

Lexi looked at him as he tenderly brushed a stray strand from her face, cherishing her. Did Bradley ever make her feel this way? Had anyone but Nate?

He rubbed his thumb over a drying section of hair. "I noticed earlier at the church—you put in some blonde streaks."

"They're called highlights." She searched his gaze, loving what she found there. "Do you like them?"

"I love them." He reached out and stroked her cheek. "I love you."

She shivered inside, loving him just as much but unable to speak the words. Not yet. She cast about for something to say. "I've been volunteering."

Nate looked at her blankly.

"You asked what I've been doing," she reminded him. "I've been volunteering at the Women's Relief Center. About the time we broke up, Jenny's boyfriend got rough with her and she landed in the hospital for couple of days." Lexi cleared her throat. She hated how thick it got every time she thought about that week.

Nate didn't say a word. Rain pattered on the convertible's top. The only other sound in the car was their breathing. "Um...Jenny went back to him for a while and it drove me nuts. I started learning what I could and volunteering, because I couldn't stand to see her hurt like that again."

Nate released her hair. "I'm impressed."

"And surprised?"

"Not really." He grinned, tracing her bottom lip. Tingles shot through her, clearing the unpleasant memory. "I always knew you had more in you than shopping and tea parties."

She laughed. "That's more my mother than me."

"Don't I know it." Nate looked at her so adoringly, she felt like a princess.

How could he doubt himself? He was such a wonderful, wonderful man. "You were always good enough for me," Lexi felt compelled to tell him. "To be perfectly honest, I'm not sure I deserve you."

He pulled away, releasing a frustrated breath. "Lexi, you need more than a dirty-fisted grease monkey. You —"

Her eyes widened in realization. "*What* did you call yourself?"

When he didn't answer, she took the liberty of guessing. Inside, she knew. "You overheard my mother that night! *That's* why you insisted on leaving early. All this time, I thought you'd been bored. That's why I didn't invite you back."

Lexi couldn't believe it. It was no wonder he didn't feel comfortable around her family. She grabbed his chin and forced him to face her. "My snob of a mother insulted you and I'm sorry but Nate, that's *not* how I feel."

"I know. I heard you defend me but —"

"Being a mechanic is a respectable profession."

"But it's not enough for your family, Lexi. It never will be."

Was that why he'd refused to propose to her? Because of something her mother said? He should know *her* better than that. "It doesn't matter, Nate. You're enough for me. Are you kidding? You're more than enough, simply because you love me. For God's sake, you're fixing cars, not stealing them!"

He shot her a look. "I used to, you know. When I was a teenager. Me and the boys of Blade, we had theft down to an art." He was grinning now.

She settled in her seat, loving the warmth that blasted from the vents, from their relaxed conversation. Loving how she still wanted to push him flat and take off his clothes. "Blade? You mean the garage band you were in?" She glanced at the homemade tattoo of a switchblade on his arm. "Let me guess, a drunken memento?"

Nodding, Nate put the car in drive and took off at a leisurely pace. "Young and stupid. That was me." He laughed. "The bad tattoo proves it, huh? As teens, me and the guys took more than our share of joyrides. 'Til we got caught stealing a classic Bel Air just like this—only that one was a '55. Lucky for me, I heeded the judge's suggestion that we *work* on cars instead of *dismantle* them."

“That’s what I love about you. You’re so bad—but so good.” She flashed him a naughty grin, resting her palm on his upper thigh. “I don’t care about something you did as a kid. You’re not doing it now and besides...” Her fingers skimmed higher, outlining the growing ridge in his jeans. “It makes you all the more intriguing.”

“Woman!” He slammed on the gas, taking off with a screech of tires. “You have no idea what you’re getting into.”

“Bring it on, bad boy. Bring it on.”

## **Chapter Four**

As soon as they entered the motel room and he'd locked the door, Nate swept the bedspread back, exposing crisp, white sheets. Less than a second later, his hands were all over her. "Let's get those wet clothes off." His fingers pressed into her waist as he kissed her neck. "You look so damn sexy wearing my jacket."

Lexi kicked free of her muddied sandal. The motel he'd brought them to wasn't the ritziest of places but it would work fine. The room was clean and the bed was big. Contrary to what Nate thought, she didn't necessarily need the finer things in life. She needed happiness. He gave her that.

"Maybe I should leave it on then." Lexi ran her hands over the supple leather, pressing it against her breasts.

"Mmm..." He nibbled her jaw, tiny bites that sent sparks through her and pulled the jacket off, tossing it at the head of the bed. "Maybe you should but first, this dress comes off, before you catch a cold."

Cold? Demonstrating cavemen antics that only heated her blood, Nate ripped the bodice of her dress open, sending the tiny pearl buttons scattering in all directions. His breath was hot on her cheek as he circled her, coming up to whisper from behind her ear, "You do remember your promise, don't you?"

From beneath her arms, Nate allowed his fingers to tease the exposed portion of her breasts, above the lacy cups of her bra. She stood on her tiptoes and leaned into his hands, wishing he'd touch her more thoroughly...wishing he'd quit teasing, rip the rest of her clothes off and jump her! "Promise?" she murmured as he tugged the damp sleeves from her shoulders. Her wet dress slid down her body in a slippery caress, landing on the floor. "You mean to spend the night with you?"

"I want this tempting little backside." His hands left her shoulders and cupped her bottom. He slid his thumbs under the tattered edges of her panties. "I want to make you completely mine."

Slowly, he ran his fingers along her torso, torturing her with the meandering, whisper-like appraisal, while he leaned in close, rubbing his erection against her back. "You promised, didn't you?"

"I didn't exactly promise."

"Promise me now." He reached around her chest, hugged her tight and dove into her bra. With his legs, he coaxed her toward the bed. His knees bent, pressing into the backs of hers, while he ground his cock along the crevice of her butt. "Promise me I can have you, any way I want, whenever I want, all night long." His mouth latched onto her neck, sucking and kissing, as he pinched her nipples. "You want to be mine, don't you? In every way possible..."

She leaned into his fierce attack, circling her hips so that both sides of her bottom rubbed against his thick cock. A rush of arousal slid from her pussy. Fireworks exploded from her areolas, spreading across her breasts in a heated flush. No one but Nate could make her feel like this, so ready to orgasm from his mere touch, as though she was nothing but a sex-machine built to take him inside and ride him forever. "Mmm...and what do I get in return?"

"Lots and lots and lots of pleasure," he promised. "Just like my Lexi likes." He drew her already pert nipples into peaks and squeezed, the backs of his knuckles pressing against her lacy bra. Moaning, she lifted her chest as a tidal wave slammed through her. She wanted him in her...*now*.

"Deal," she agreed on a shaky breath. No man had been inside her butt before and the thought made her nervous. But how could she deny him? Moisture dripped between her legs, her cunt hot and swollen, ready, her anus puckered and anxious. She wanted him, wanted *it*, wanted *everything* Nate had to offer.



He tugged at the straps of her bra, pulling them down. Cupping her breasts fully, he massaged the sensitive flesh and licked along her neck. "If I hurt you, just say *mercy* and I'll stop."

Nate scraped the tips of his blunt fingernails against her nipples. Exquisite pleasure-pain tore through her chest. Lexi reached between them and quickly dispensed with her bra altogether.

Nipping the side of her neck, Nate did the same, easily ripping her pitiful panties from her hips with a quick snap of his wrist. "Anything else you tell me I'll consider play."

"Oh yeah?" Lexi laughed and rotated in his embrace, turning to him and pressing her hands to his chest. She pouted her lips. "Like 'Spank me, Nate, I've been a bad girl'. And 'When are you going to strip, Nate? I want to see your sexy chest'."

"You're playing with the piranha, babe," he warned, toeing off his boots. Staring at her with wicked intent, he took his shirt off in slow motion, stretching the black knit past his broad shoulders and over his head.

"Umm, mmm." Lexi watched the show, drinking in the sight of his bare, sculpted chest. Black hair curled over his pecs and thinned across his stomach, leading her eyes downward. He unfastened the top button on his jeans and stopped, leaving her mouth watering at the memory of what she knew lay hidden beneath the denim. "So, you're carrying a piranha in there these days? Dangerous stuff. Wanna bite me? *Eat me?*"

He chuckled low and deep, the laugh of the devil himself. "You have been bad, matter of fact. Very bad, the more I think on it." Wrapping his arms around her, Nate sank down on the bed and yanked her over his knees.

"Nate!" Lexi squealed, rearing up, only to be pushed back down. She'd been kidding! *Kidding!*

Holding her firmly with one arm, Nate undid the remaining buttons of his jeans and pushed them to his knees with his other hand, so that she lay over his bare thighs.

Lexi took advantage of her prone position and peeled off his socks. “No fair!” she complained. “They’re dry.”

“You would be too, if you hadn’t had run in the first place,” he had the audacity to point out while she wiggled on her stomach and helped him kick the denim free from his legs. The hair on his thighs tickled her belly and breasts.

“Can I help it if—” Her words ended in a squeal as Nate placed his palms on her ass, kneading both cheeks. “Mmm, now that’s more like—”

*Smack.*

Had he just spanked her ass? Shocked, Lexi held her breath.

*Smack!*

He had! “Nate!”

*Smack! Smack!*

Again, his hand landed on her bare bottom with a sting—not enough to hurt but enough to send desire spiraling through her loins. *Smack!*

“Nate!” She wriggled then stilled, realizing that she was literally dripping all over his thighs, getting him all wet.

His hand roamed over her rear, to the apex of her legs. He dipped his fingers inside her pussy and started spreading her cream upward, between her clenched cheeks.

“You promised...” he taunted, returning between her thighs to gather more moisture.

Lexi bit her lip and consciously relaxed the muscles of her bottom. Nate slid his slick fingers up the exposed crevice and over and around her anus. She flinched at the touch.

“A very bad girl,” he chuckled. *Smack, smack, smack!* Using his free hand, he popped her a little harder that time, enough to make her bottom burn. “But you like it, don’t you?”

She...she...

Crap!

"Oh my gosh! *Nate*. I wasn't serious!"

But she couldn't deny the weird feelings rushing through her—unease combined with excitement in her stomach, the way her pussy was becoming so wet, so needy, the way her ass kept flaring open, wanting his touch.

His heavy erection pressed into her stomach and she rubbed against it.

"Ah, yes." The hands fondling her bottom tightened on each cheek, then slid deeper, into no-man's-land. Lexi had to bite back a moan when he teased her anus with his fingertips. But she couldn't keep her bottom from arching toward him, silently asking for more. "That's my bad girl. I like it when you're bad. So I can teach you."

"Teach me," she groaned, digging her nails into his leg. Moisture rained down between her thighs. Nate had raised her desire to such a fever pitch he could do anything—anything—to her now and—

"Running away from me." *Smack!* "Almost catching your death in a storm!" *Smack!*

"I won't, ever again. I promise!" she cried. She was on fire for him. "Fuck me, Nate. Please!"

*Smack!* "Being difficult!" *Smack!* "Demanding I propose to you!" *Smack!* "Leaving me!" *Smack!* "Marrying another man!" *Smack! Smack! Smack!* "Oh God, Lexi!" His hand landed softly on her bottom, stroking the tender flesh. A sob came from his throat. "No!"

"Nate?"

Was he crying? Her ass felt red-hot. Her vagina convulsed with the need to be filled. Lexi didn't want him to stop the sensuous torture but she scrambled to sit up anyway. His hard cock pressed against her mons as she straddled him. She wrapped her arms around his neck and made him look at her. "Nate, baby?" Tears streamed down his face and she kissed them away, licking the salty trails. "I'm sorry."

"I can't lose you, Lexi. God, I can't lose you."

His fingers clenched her bottom and dug into the tender flesh. "I want you to be mine. All mine."

Reaching behind him, she grabbed his jacket and slipped it back on. Holding his chin, she stared in his eyes—they overflowed with emotion. "Then make me yours. I'm here for the taking."

"Oh God, Lexi." His mouth crashed into hers, devouring her lips as if he would consume her. Pulling her with him, he fell back on the bed and kissed her, kissed her so completely she would've told him *yes*, she'd marry him, if her tongue hadn't been so wondrously occupied.

His hands were everywhere, touching her, pinching and pulling, massaging and stroking—over her breasts, her ass, her pussy, her back and shoulders, up and down her legs, *everywhere*.

Their bodies entwined as they made love to each other with their mouths. Licking and sucking. Flicking and dancing. Tasting each other. Loving each other.

It had never been like this. This wild. She'd never been consumed by such utter abandon. Nate's tongue dove deep within her mouth. He rolled over on top of her and pushed her shoulders into the mattress. The slick inner lining of his jacket slid over her breasts. She moaned.

Suddenly, Nate broke away, staring deep into her eyes. "Damn, baby, you're like a slice of heaven. How could I have ever let you slip away?"

Her hands met on his jaw, fingertips caressing the dark goatee. "Don't ever let me go again. I'm yours, all yours."

Planting tiny pecks from her chin to her chest, Nate moved the jacket's edge with his nose and took one nipple into his mouth and sucked it deep into his mouth. His hand dove between her legs, swimming in her wetness. "I don't want you to regret this," he whispered.

"I won't. Not ever," she swore.

He rolled her over and positioned her on her knees, sliding a pillow underneath her hips. "Relax, okay?"

"I'll worry about me," she teased, "you just keep those home fires burning."

Meeting her challenge, Nate licked across her ass, his mouth and tongue alternating between biting and soothing while his hands claimed some of her rich sex cream and spread it along his cock, then over the crevice of her ass, until he reached her anus. The bud puckered at his touch, ready.

His breathing was loud as Lexi felt him widen her ass cheeks. The head of his cock nudged between them, gently touching the sensitive opening as he reached around with one hand. His fingers pressed against the hood of her clit, seeking it out, while behind her, he pressed inside, slowly, opening her to take his erection.

There was a pinch of pain—almost like being a virgin all over again—as her body adjusted to his. It faded and she moaned and moved against him, twitching her hips and welcoming him, offering herself up to him.

She wanted this. She wanted *him*. Forever.

Marriage or not.

With a loud groan, Nate leaned forward, pressing his fingers deep into her cunt while his cock lunged inside her ass, pleasuring her from all angles.

Lexi's breath caught in her throat. No one had ever completed her like this, filling her to the brim both physically and emotionally.

The long slow glide of Nate's penis moving deep inside her ass, the leisurely, methodical strokes of his fingers inside her cunt...he worshiped her. As if in slow motion, she felt every particle of her body wrap around his, squeezing him, rippling against him while she milked every bit of erotic bliss from the moment.

With surprising stamina in one so long denied, Nate continued to plunge inside her body. Over and over, as if nothing else but the two of them existed. Lexi's hands fisted in the sheets. A whimper escaped her lips.

Unexpectedly, her loins twitched. She felt a catch, deep inside her pussy, heralding her coming orgasm.

She breathed in the leathery scent of Nate's jacked. She was his! He grunted behind her, muffled words of need, of love. Every muscle in her body tightened, straining, seeking the release that was close, so close.

Nate's thumb flicked over her clit, fast, fleeting strokes that had her grinding into his hand. Her ass clenched around his cock.

She panted, unable to catch her breath. Growing lightheaded, Lexi brought one of her hands between her legs and grasped Nate's, directing his fingers to fly over her clit. His other hand dove deep inside her vagina.

Gasping, Lexi felt every muscle of her body spring tight then explode. Proof of her orgasm dripped over their joined fingers and in between her legs.

Nate never stopped moving.

If anything, he slid deeper and slower, the hand on her clit refusing to still. She came again. Lexi screamed. That hadn't happened before. Never this quickly.

The second orgasm kept going, shaking her entire body. She screamed in ecstasy. Nate bit her ear. "Shhh, they'll think I'm killing you."

Lexi laughed and yelled again. "Can't help...can't help myself. Oh God, Nate. I've never felt this way."

Her heart pounded triple time. Lexi took a deep breath and abandoned Nate's fingers, clasping both of her hands together, as if in prayer, supporting herself while she shuddered from the most powerful physical experience two human beings could have.

Above the jacket collar, Nate kissed her neck, then he straightened behind her. He gripped her hips with both hands and lunged deeper, harder. Five strokes later, he buried himself to the hilt and groaned, his cock twitching inside her ass as he came.

"Damn, Nate," Lexi whispered on a sigh, thrumming from head to toe. "That was something."

He withdrew and slid to her side, drawing her into his arms. "Amazing," he agreed.

"Is it always like that?"

"Never. It's not like that with anyone but you and I've never *done that* with anyone but you."

She fell in love with him all over again.

"Are you all right?" Nate asked, skimming one finger along her hip. She hummed a yes and he said, "Gonna ever let me do that again?"

"I might." Her anus constricted at the thought. "But first, I get to explore this fine, hard body at my leisure." She nuzzled against him, breathing in the musky scent of his flesh, the scent of them and the love they'd made. New, different, *kinky*, but love all the same. She'd given herself to Nate in every way a woman could. She was his.

Nate rested his hand on the back of her neck as Lexi trailed her fingers across his body, tracing over the markings and scars on his arm, his chest and downward, over his abdomen. Then she noticed it. "Nate? What's this?"

His hand fell to her waist when she leaned forward for a better look.

A different tattoo—the outline of a heart, with the white wings of an angel and the name *Lexi* centered in crimson—marked the left side of his lower abdomen.

Her mouth went dry. Just below the heart, adorned with two tiny orchids, it read *forever mine*.

"Oh." Nate cleared his throat. "I got that right before we broke up. I wasn't sure about marriage but I wanted you to know how I felt about you." He stroked her hair. "I see now, it wasn't enough."

Tears flooded her eyes as she took in the tattoo. All this time...

It was better than any ring.

"But it is." She sniffed and kissed the tattoo, letting her lips linger. "All I ever wanted was to be completely yours. I wanted the commitment. The forever." Her eyes rose and met his. "I see now that I have it."

"What about Linsey?"

"Who?"

Nate growled.

"Mother was the one who pointed out what a good husband Bradley would make, so what does that tell you?"

"That she should marry him."

Lexi laughed, tracing the tattooed orchids with her tongue. He'd given them to her after all. "If it weren't for my dad, I might be inclined to agree with you. As it is, Bradley will have to find another bride. This one's committed elsewhere."

"You sure?"

Lexi gave the tattoo one last kiss and climbed atop his legs, moving her tongue first through the thicket of hair just beneath the tattoo, then edging through the finer hairs on his stomach. "I know we have some fancy explaining to do."

Nate clasped his hands behind his head and curled upward, watching her. "About why there's a gold ball, straight from your pussy, rolling around in the church building?"

Lexi cracked up, her face flaming. "Oh God. I forgot all about that."

"I didn't." His wicked grin took her breath away.

"Maybe Bradley and the minister can shoot marbles together."

Nate gave a bark of laughter.

"Wonder who'll have the bluer balls when they're done?" She reached his jaw and kissed first his chin, then his black-as-sin goatee. Then she claimed his lips the same moment she grasped the base of his cock and teased below it with deft fingers.

"You're bad," Nate mumbled against her mouth.



“And I’m all yours.”

*“Forever mine.”*

## About the Authors

Slip between the sheets with Alyssa Brooks, erotic romance author...

Author of fun, flirty, and contemporary erotic romance and erotica, Alyssa Brooks currently writes for several publishers, including Ellora's Cave. She resides in Amish country, Pennsylvania, with her husband and daughter in a quaint farmhouse. When not writing and caring for her family, her days are filled with gardening and hiking. She also collects wind chimes, porcelain dolls, and snow globes.

Alyssa also publishes a free monthly ezine, Wicked Escapes, for fans of erotic romance. Chock full of free reads, columns, excerpts, and contests; fans can find this ezine at [www.wickedescapesezine.com](http://www.wickedescapesezine.com).

For someone who once turned down sex with her new husband so she could watch Star Trek: TNG (what was she thinking?) Larissa Lyons has come a long way.

Now an award-winning author of erotic romance and short story erotica, Larissa spends way too much time chasing after an intellectually challenged cat who eats carpet lint (and promptly pukes) all day long.

Visit Larissa's website for plenty of free erotic reads, a gooey dessert recipe—or ten—and to learn more about her crusade to make chocolate synonymous with health.

Alyssa and Larissa welcome comments from readers. You can find their websites and email addresses on their author bio pages at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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