



MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S STEAM

OVERHEATED

LADIES! MEET RED HOT
ALASKAN MEN

NANCY LINDQUIST

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Ladies! Meet Red Hot Alaskan Men

Nancy Lindquist

Dedication

To Bunti. Living life in the last frontier, and loving it! I'm so glad we bonded in the parking lot nightmare. Also to Cruise Critic. Thanks for supplying me with my dearest friends. Bet you never thought you'd be mentioned in an erotic romance!

Chapter One

The room buzzed with conversation, anticipation and promise. Chastity Cuthbert glanced around with a smile and pushed up the damn glasses that slid down her face for the umpteenth time tonight. Over one hundred well-dressed women milled around the refreshment table, held seats or chatted animatedly amongst themselves.

She peeked at her watch. Seven on the dot, perfect. She reached up to smooth the tightly coiled bun holding her hair in place at her nape, rubbed a finger over her teeth and stood with a smile. Heels clicking, she made her way to the microphone. *Ouch!* The stylish shoes pinched unbearably. She'd planned to wear something with a lower heel. Served her right for stopping by her neighbor, Freddie's apartment on her way out of the building.

She looked down and plucked a stray bit of fuzz from her sleeve. The damn glasses slid forward once more. Frowning, she shoved them back into place. *Of all the days to lose a contact.*

She tapped the mic. "Ladies, ladies. Can I have your attention please? If you'll all have a seat, we can begin."

She stood back, folded her arms, then remembered her last videotaped evaluation. With a sigh, she dropped them to her side. "Schoolmarmish." Eight of the ten evaluators had made it clear that she needed to get a handle on her personal style. She'd received high marks for speech, word use and overall presentation, but her appearance... She smoothed the serviceable blue suit and mentally kicked herself. She should have listened to Freddie's advice about the red one she'd coveted at Carson's. At least the torturous shoes looked amazing.

The room around her settled into anxious giggles as nervous smiling women took their seats. She tried for an air of calm sympathy, and with a deep breath, glanced at her notes and began.

"I'd like to welcome everyone to this informational meeting for The Alaskan Connection. If you're not here to find the man of your dreams then allow me to direct you down the hall to Knitting 101." She waited for the expected titter to die down. "I'm Chastity and I'd like to show you why you're here." She pushed a switch on the podium,

dimming the lights, and hit a key on her laptop. The screen behind her lit up with a ruggedly hunky smiling face. Oohs and ahs pelted her from all sides. She smiled. This was the best part of these meetings. Introducing the ladies to the natural wonders of the forty-ninth state.

She waited for the buzz to die down before continuing. “The Alaskan Connection prides itself on being the top matchmaking agency in Alaska. Each year we go to a different town, gather information on available men and bring that information back to you. Unlike other agencies, we run background checks on all perspective candidates. We want real romance for our clients and that’s why, I’m happy to say, we have matched a record fifty-four percent of our clients within the first six months. The figures only get better after that.” She clicked to another slide, this one of the gorgeous Alaskan wilderness.

“Does this sound like something you ladies are looking for?” Feminine cheers rose around her. She raised her hand for silence and continued the slideshow.

“Alaska is not for everyone. Harsh winters can make conditions brutal, but the rewards speak for themselves.” Photos of her clients’ weddings, with stunning scenery as a backdrop, beamed from the screen. Awestruck faces bloomed like flowers around her. Good, she’d sign up enough women tonight to make the trip a go and not have to put on any more presentations this season. She breathed a sigh of relief. She hated these sales talks. The butterflies never went away, no matter how many times she stood at a podium. Chastity much preferred the one-on-one matchmaking time and soothing her clients jangled nerves.

“I’m proud to say that this year our destination is...” she clicked once again, “...Smithfield, Alaska, population one thousand three hundred and six, and ladies, here’s the best part. While the overall ratio of men to women in Alaska is eight men to every one woman, Smithfield’s ratio is ten men to every woman. That’s right. I said ten. Now I’d like to give you an opportunity to hear from a couple of my past clients. Rich and Lisa Murphy. Come on up, you two, and talk to these ladies.”

She sat down, sipped her warm bottled water and waited while Rich and Lisa shared their love story. Normally she listened with rapt attention every time they told of their meeting, falling in love and subsequent marriage—she loved the romance, the joy on their faces, all of it. Tonight something felt off.

She glanced around. An uncomfortable feeling crawled over her skin, prickling it to goose bumps. Not the normal angst she felt speaking to a crowd, but something more. A woman shifted behind her and she caught a glimpse of a lone man in the crowd. She

frowned. Men did not come to these seminars unless they were worried papas—this guy looked far too young to be the father of an adult woman. Something in his expression unnerved her and it wasn't his piercing gaze, alone.

The woman shifted back and Chastity lost sight of the man. She shrugged and turned back to face the stage. Silly—there was no other word for her feeling of foreboding. She must have imagined the irritation she thought she'd seen in his eyes.

The Murphys kissed. The applause of the crowd around her brought her to her feet. She mounted the stairs to the stage to hug Rich and Lisa. She turned back to the mic as they stepped off the stage and walked arm in arm to the back of the room. She smiled. They loved getting “outside” and visiting the lower forty-eight and she loved seeing them when they visited. *So in love*. Longing filled her heart, making it tough to draw a deep breath.

“Aren't they delightful? I'm thrilled to have had any part in bringing them together. Now I'm going to end this lecture and turn you loose. If you'd like to schedule a one-on-one meeting with me to discuss your interest in our summer trip, my four representatives are waiting at the long table in the back of the room. Each of these ladies has extensive training in psychology and matchmaking and can answer any of your questions, including those about fees. I will say that if you'd like to go with us this summer, you need to sign up soon. Only one hundred spaces are available for our next weeklong trip.” She moved the slider on the dimmer, bringing the room lights up, and gestured to her employees who sat at long tables along one wall, waiting for the women who would soon swarm over them.

“I'd like to thank you for your time this evening and happy hunting.” She clicked off the microphone. Whew. Another nerve-wracking presentation over. Maybe next year she'd hire someone to do these for her. She snorted. Who was she kidding? She was far too much of a control freak to ever let this portion of the business out of her hands. She gathered her notes in a neat pile and glanced around the podium for any scraps of paper she might have left behind.

“Miss Cuthbert?” The unexpected voice, low, masculine and very sexy, washed over her like warm sunshine after a long winter. She glanced up. Her gaze slammed into the greenest pair of eyes she'd ever seen. Forest green. No, leaf green. No, that wasn't quite right either. Sea green? They seemed to be all the shades of cool restfulness rolled into one. Her gaze traveled lower to the soft, full mouth. It sat above a stubble-covered chin that looked carved of stone, and his shoulders... She mentally shook herself. If she didn't

stop her cerebral exploration of this man she'd be gawking at the front of his pants before long.

"Miss Cuthbert?"

"Hmmm." She glanced up and up. *Heavens, he's tall.* With a swallow, she composed herself. "I'm Miss Cuthbert. Call me Chastity." She stuck out her hand.

He reached out to shake it, his long fingers and large hand swallowing her smaller one. Tingles raced up her arm. She dropped her gaze to their hands, fitting together perfectly, then looked back up into his eyes. For a moment she read confusion there, then amusement.

"Chastity?"

She blushed. "My parents watched a lot of Sonny and Cher when they were dating. And you are?"

"Dave Wellington."

She knit her brow. She knew that name, but from where?

Her confusion must have telegraphed itself. "I'm the mayor of Smithfield, Alaska."

Pulling her hand from his, she slapped her forehead. "Oh right. You were out of town when I did my initial assessments. Good to meet you, Dave. You flew a long way for an introduction. I'll be up in your neck of the woods in a few weeks." She smiled broadly.

His green-eyed gaze didn't quite meet hers. "Actually, that's what I need to talk to you about. Your visit. I tried to call, but you've been out."

She shrugged. "Sorry, that's the nature of this business. I spend eighty percent of the time traveling. I'm always drumming up clients or towns to visit. I don't get to spend a lot of time at home."

"May we talk in private? Can we go somewhere? For coffee maybe?"

She shook her head. "I need to be here to answer questions. Would you like to meet some of the ladies we're signing up?"

He frowned. The movement turned his face dark, dangerous and sensual. Chastity shivered. "I don't think you understand. This isn't a courtesy visit. I'm here to stop you from bringing these women to my town." He leaned in as he spoke, until he was uncomfortably close to Chastity.

She blinked up at him. "Pardon me?"

"I really would rather not do this here."

Numbly she nodded towards a door behind her. He gently steered her towards the kitchen.

“Oh, Chastity? Well...hello, aren't you a hunk. Is he yours?”

Chastity swallowed a groan. *Not now*. Poppy Sinclair, her most hopeful and hopeless client. She'd been a member of The Alaskan Connection for three years now. Never missed a trip or a new town and then chased every available man with the glee of a starving vampire in a blood bank. Chas winced as subtly as she could manage.

“I just want to say that I'm super excited about the trip this year. I think it's going to be a super good time and I just L.O.V.E. the thought of so many tasty men for us ladies to munch on. I'm sure this will just be a super summer for me. Don't you think so?”

Chastity pasted a professional smile on her lips. “I'm sure it will be, Poppy.” Dave's hand bit into her elbow and she frowned back at him. *Bully*. Was he reminding her he was here? Like she could forget this he-hunk man who hung from her arm. “Um, Poppy, why don't you go over to Sue's table and talk to her about what your hopes are. I'm sure she'll have some good ideas to help you make this summer your last one with us.”

The other woman made a face that would probably wrinkle her brow, if she wasn't careful about her four times yearly Botox injections. “My last? Are you kidding? And give up this all-you-can-eat buffet? No way, Chastity. I'm going to stay single forever. It's just super, all the attention I get up there in the wilds of Alaska.”

Chas concentrated on the ole smile and nod. She was not in the mood to try to educate this woman about The Alaskan Connection's purpose. To get couples together for a long-term relationship or marriage. Not find them summertime playmates.

“Well...if that's your goal.”

The other woman laughed. High and sharp, the sound grated on Chastity's already frazzled nerves.

“It sure is. Oh wait, I see Kelly Maloney.” She waved a red-tipped hand in the air that jingled from what had to be five pounds of bracelets. Great, Kelly. That woman was all Chas needed to complete the night. Kelly complained bitterly that she'd never met a man worth seeing again and used the company's guarantee to keep coming back summer after summer. “Yoo-hoo, Kelly! Here I am.” Poppy leaned in. “I better go and give Kelly a big hug or she'll never forgive me.” She smiled up at Dave, batted her eyes and brushed a hand over his shoulder. “You, I'll find later. It's just a super night! Toodles.”

Chas let out a breath and allowed the tall man to resume directing her into the kitchen. The swinging door waved closed behind them, leaving them in relative privacy. He turned her to face him and took a step back. Great, he was staring down onto the top of her head and all she could do was lean back and look up so high her neck would be

kinked in the morning. Not exactly conducive to good conversation. Irritation climbed within her and she swallowed hard to push it back down and play nice.

“Well, what do you have to say for yourself?”

She narrowed her gaze in confusion. His folded arms pushed his biceps out in the most appealing way. *Shut up, Chas. This guy is not here looking for a date and especially not at you for a date.* “What do you mean, what do *I* have to say for *myself*? You’re the one who dragged me into the kitchen. I’m listening.” She crossed her arms and glared up his impossible length. She could be intimidating too.

The review comments about her appearance once again swam in her head and she hung her hands at her sides. *Shoot.* Oh well. Right now, she had a feeling schoolmarmish would be helpful. She re-crossed them.

He threw up his arms in obvious annoyance. “I was going to speak to your better nature, but after that little slide show, I’m not sure you have one. So I’ll get right to the point.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about asking you to pick some other town to inundate with your wild women from the lower forty-eight. *We* don’t want you in Smithfield.”

Was this guy for real? She dropped her head, reached up and rubbed at what felt like the beginning of the mother of all headaches. “I hate to argue with such underwhelming logic, but I was there last fall. We had two hundred men sign up for my program. That doesn’t sound like the welcome mat was exactly pulled out from under me.”

“That was then. The town council is no longer interested in your business. We’ve voted to keep you out.”

Her blood began to simmer, but she clamped a lid on it. “Your council welcomed me with open arms last fall. They were one hundred percent behind this trip. They even assisted me with room reservations, all paid in advance by the way, and backed up with an ironclad signed contract. What happened?”

“What happened is that I came back from a fishing trip to find out my fellow townspeople had lost their damned minds. I talked some sense into them. There’s no such thing as love at first sight, Miss Cuthbert. I’m not sure love even exists at all. You’re selling snake oil to these women and the good men of *my* town and I won’t stand for it.”

“Did you use a stick on them when you talked sense into them? Because what you’re doing here feels more like bullying and coercion, than a gentle lecture. Am I wrong?” She stepped forward, only to have his gaze bore into hers. The menace behind the glare felt real—a bit too real. She stepped back, one step, then two, running into the stainless-

steel prep table. She reached behind to steady herself. The closed shutters separating the kitchen from the hall looked pretty flimsy. If she screamed... She glanced back into his eyes. On second thought, he appeared pissed, not menacing. Maybe if she heard him out without getting her back up, he'd say his piece and go away.

Damn he smelled good. A mixture of pine and something wild and sexy. Where the hell did that thought come from? She was losing it. The man was treating her like a four-year-old and she was busy analyzing his cologne? Yep, she was certifiable.

He ran a hand through his hair. The thick, shiny, brown mass curled at the ends, like he needed a haircut. She swallowed and tried to remember that this hunk was not playing nice.

"I'm sorry. I'm not trying to bully you. I just think this is a very bad idea." He actually looked contrite. Maybe she'd misjudged him?

"Why?"

"Why?"

"Yes, why do you think this is a bad idea?"

"We just put in a new dock for cruise ships this year. My saloon puts on a historical reenactment for the tourists. This summer will make or break our town. We can't have any distractions. The cruisers will be a tough crowd. We can't afford to lose those contracts."

She snorted. "I hardly think that a few women dating some of your men will wreck your business, or harm your town."

"Look, I didn't want to be blunt, but here it is. I don't need a bunch of empty-headed bimbos coming into my town and breaking the hearts of my men, just as we're switching from a mining-based economy to a tourist-based one. The trip is off. Find another town to storm with your red-lipped floozies."

She straightened in disbelief. "You have got to be kidding? What kind of talk is that? Are you even from this century? That sounds like something my grandpa would have said."

"I'm just trying to be nice and not call those women out there"—he stuck a thumb out in the general direction of the hall—"any more names."

She fluttered her hands in the air. "You didn't hold your tongue before." She moved forward and punctuated her words with finger pokes at his chest, her fear gone. "Look, *Mr. Wellington*. I've got contracts, they're signed and they're actionable, should you talk anyone into trying to duck out of them. I have interested men and I have women who are paying good money for an opportunity at love. A chance at real, lifelong happiness. I'm

not going to cancel this trip because you or anyone else seems to think it might affect them in some made-up negative way. I'm sorry you came all this way for nothing. Now, if you will excuse me..." She pushed past him.

He harrumphed. Something in the sound worked her last nerve. She turned. "Oh, and another thing. I'll thank you not to call my clients dumb. Every one of those women is smart and well-educated."

"Oh *really*? I couldn't tell from Miss Super out there."

She felt her lips go thin. "Poppy is a smart and interesting woman. All my ladies are."

"Are you implying the men in our town are not well-educated?" He took a step forward, then another, and his body pressed into hers. The rock-hard abs under the deceptively squashy-looking flannel pushed into the softness of her breasts. She gulped. Butterflies danced in her stomach. This was one manly male. Too bad he was so dead set against her company and its plans for Smithfield. He could be one hot poster boy to advertise the wilds of Alaska.

She tipped her head back and stood on tiptoe. It brought her exactly one half inch closer to the bottom of his chin. So much for trying to gain some kind of height advantage on this giant. "No, the men in your town are smart. You, however, are a pushy, overbearing sycophant in desperate need of an education."

He leaned down. "'*Frailty, thy name is woman.*' Don't look so shocked, Miss Cuthbert. All pushy, overbearing sycophants attend good colleges and read Shakespeare. Mine was Harvard. Perhaps you've heard of it?" He took both of her shoulders in his hands and moved her to the right, clearing a path to the door.

"Pardon me. I'm not a toy to be pushed around, *Mr. Mayor.*"

He bent forward, his voice low. "Don't cross me, Miss Cuthbert. I'm not a man who likes to be bested. Just cancel your trip, or find another town. The men of Smithfield are off limits to you and your desperate nymphomaniacs."

"Why, because you want the men all for yourself?" Did she say that? She instantly regretted it and opened her mouth to apologize. She never said things like that. He just got her so...

His eyes narrowed. "What are you saying?"

The apology she was about to offer him died in her throat as he placed a hand at the nape of her neck, removed the glasses from her face and brought his lips to hers. The action, quick and deft, took her completely by surprise.

Tingles raced up and down her spine as his mouth stole over hers. The kiss felt brutal, almost punishing. She held her lips still, fought against the tide trying to pull her under, then gave in to the rush. She parted her lips and melted into him. His tongue flicked over her lips and invaded her mouth. He nipped at her mouth teasingly, with lazy movements that mesmerized her. She licked her tongue over his, delicately at first, then with more enthusiasm. His other arm came up, wrapped around her body and drew her tight against him.

Her breasts pressed to his chest, she leaned in to make more intimate contact with his hard body. God, this felt so good, so...sexy. All internal arguments drained away and she blatantly pushed her belly into his growing erection.

He pulled back. Bent over in his arms, she blinked up at him. For a moment he looked dazed, then his lips thinned and he brought her upright in one smooth motion.

"I think that should answer any lingering questions regarding my sexuality."

That was it. She'd tried to be civil and rein in her tongue, but the way the man treated her burst her tightly held dam of control. "You're an ass."

"Very professional of you."

She slapped a hand over her mouth. "I'm sorry, but you just made me so damned mad. I never swear. Ever."

What looked like the beginnings of a smile played over his features. Damn, the man was downright stunning when he smiled. "I probably deserved that. I'll be going now. I hope you will keep what I said in mind." The smile vanished as easily as it had come. Once more, his face was shadowed and angry looking.

He walked through the swinging door and out into the large room without a backward glance. *The mayor has left the kitchen.* Frustrated, she followed after him, intent on coming up with one last zinger to hurl in his direction. It must have been the silence in a room she expected to be full of buzzing noise, or maybe the shock that seemed to hang palpable in the air, but something grabbed her attention. At least two dozen pairs of eyes were directed at the door to the kitchen. Mouths gaped open as Dave Wellington snatched up his coat and stalked from the room.

Chastity blushed. They'd heard. All of the women heard the whole stupid exchange. She felt mortified.

Dawn, her assistant, hovered behind her. Chastity shook her head. There was nothing she could say to regain her misplaced dignity. Her shocked employee looked at Chas like she'd grown snakes from her head.

Chastity walked to the corner chair where she'd laid her coat and purse. Grabbing them, she turned to Dawn with as much cool as she could muster. "Thanks for everything. If you would, please pack up my laptop and hang on to it over the weekend for me. I'll see you Monday."

Good, at least her voice didn't shake like her insides. She pulled her coat over her shoulders and headed to the front door of the recreation center. Hopefully she'd be able to hail a cab, that or maybe the earth would open up and swallow her. Now that sounded like a plan.

Chapter Two

Cold rain pelted Dave as he headed to the taxi stand. He popped open his umbrella and strode up the sidewalk. *Shit*. Why did he even bother to come all this way? Chastity Cuthbert was one stubborn lady. *Stunning, though*. He frowned. Yes, she was gorgeous, but too much trouble to bother with. With a snort of disgust, he fought the urge to shift his semi-erect cock in his pants. The kiss had shocked him. His lips still burned. He'd meant it as a lesson to her, but it had quickly built into something more.

What the hell happened back there? He tried to sort it all out, but Chastity's face kept swimming before him. Her huge eyes, soft skin, the way her ass felt in his hands. Shaking himself, he held out his hand in the direction of the yellow taxi lights. The cab inched forward.

Reaching for the door handle, Dave looked back in the direction he'd come. A bedraggled and irritated Chastity was hot on his heels. Without an umbrella, she was soaked through. While he watched, she stopped, pulled the pins from her hair and let it drop down her back. It hung longer than he'd expected. Wet tendrils wrapped the sides of her face, showcasing her delicate features. Finally at the cab stand, she looked at him, then pointedly turned her back.

The cold rain rapidly became an icy wash. The streets shone in the lamplights, and the cab's windows took on a sheen that could only come from sleet. Great. You'd think the lower forty-eight would have tame winters in comparison to Alaska, but Dave rarely saw this kind of ice in the north.

He cleared his throat. "Would you like to share a cab?"

She shook her head. "No thank you. There'll be another cab along soon."

Stubborn. Dave fought back a smile. "You're a horrible liar. Get in. I won't bite." The urge to say, *not hard*, washed over him and he gave in to the smile.

Once more her head shook. This time frozen strands of hair smacked her in the jaw. He winced for her. "Really, I'm fine." She peered into the warmth of the cab and her face took on a longing look.

"I'd be happy to call a truce for the duration of the ride." He'd kept his voice low and soft. Almost like he spoke to a scared animal.

She looked up at him, eyes huge. "Are you sure?"

He reached out and touched her cheek, then traced his fingers along her jaw. He wasn't sure if her tremble was from the cold or his touch. She captured her lower lip between pearly teeth and nibbled. He wanted to pull her tight to him, but held back. He didn't want to scare her.

"I don't want to read in tomorrow's paper that you died of exposure Please get in the cab, Chastity."

A sploosh of icy liquid dropped onto the top of her head and rushed down her face. With a defeated sniff, she nodded. "Okay."

A feeling like joy bubbled up in Dave at her acquiescence. He did feel like he'd won. Helping her into the car, he quickly headed to the other door and climbed in.

"Where to?"

Dave gestured to Chastity to give the driver her address.

"You got the cab, you go first."

"Sounds fair enough." He leaned forward and his thigh brushed hers. Sizzling heat replaced the ice cold he'd felt. The warmth traveled up his leg to settle in the region of his cock and happily tortured him. Chastity pulled her leg away, crossed her arms and stared out the window, but not before he caught the startled shock of awareness in her eyes. So, she felt it too. For some reason, this made him feel good, darn good. At least he wasn't the only dope on the planet. Attracted to a woman who wanted to ruin his life.

"Park Hyatt."

"That's a nice hotel." Her voice was soft, but held an edge. Like she'd not really let her guard down.

"Huh?"

She cleared her throat. "The Park Hyatt. It's newly renovated."

What the hell was she up to now? Making small talk? "You live around here?"

"Not far from your hotel, actually." She turned away again. The sudden frost in the cab rivaled what was going on outside.

Dave shrugged. Normal conversation with this woman was a lost cause. It was a shame they hadn't met another way, in any other circumstance.

"I'm sorry you came all this way for nothing."

"I didn't. I told you that I would stop you, and I meant it."

She faced him now. Even in the half light of the streetlights he could see her confusion. Her mouth formed the shape of an O, and she sucked in a breath. "Of all

the...” Her small hands balled into fists. “Look, you’re the mayor, not the owner of the town. Those men want us there and my ladies paid good money to visit—”

He didn’t know why he did it. Didn’t even think about it, not really, just went on instinct. Dave leaned forward and kissed her.

She pulled away. “What do you think you’re doing?”

He ran a hand through his hair. “I don’t know. It seems to shut you up.”

“Of all the arrogant, irritating—”

Fingers traced the skin of her cheek. Soft, so incredibly soft. How could someone so beautiful be such a damn pain in the ass?

His hand slipped around to the nape of her neck and pulled her close. For a moment her eyes went wide, but she didn’t speak. Trembling, she leaned in, their mouths meeting.

Gently, he sucked her lower lip and nibbled on the delicate skin. She smelled like flowers, light, spring-like. Her body, all curves and softness, fit against his like it was meant to be there.

He should end this. She represented everything he hated about women, but she deepened the contact, turning his will to mush. She tangled her tongue with his in an erotic dance that drained the blood from every place in his body. Every place but his cock. Turgid and ready, it strained between them. She shivered in his arms and he drew her sexy little body onto his lap.

The cab came to a wobbly stop. Their mouths parted and she looked up at him with a gasp. He too felt like the breath had been sucked from his body. The red stoplight above them was blurred by the ice on the windows. It turned from red to green. Beneath them, the cab’s tires spun uselessly on the pavement as the ice made it almost impossible to accelerate.

The cabdriver swore as the engine revved and the tires fought for purchase on the slick street beneath them. Inching along, they finally came to a stop in front of his hotel. Chastity slid off his lap.

Dave looked at the woman next to him. He shouldn’t want her, shouldn’t be drawn to her. The V of her shirt showed a hint of breast and he swallowed, hard. “Come with me.”

Where the hell had that come from? He opened his mouth to take it back, when she turned to face him and licked a pink tongue over her lips. Dave’s heart skipped a beat.

“Sorry, folks. This is the end of the line. I’m not risking it out there till they salt the roads.”

She glanced up at the cabbie, and back at Dave, confusion clear on her face. “I don’t think that’s a good idea. I can walk from here. Thank you very much.”

Dave looked around. Iced over, the sidewalks appeared more than treacherous. “You’re not going to walk in this.”

Her head came up, the fight back in her eyes. “Don’t tell me what I can and cannot do. I’ve been taking care of myself for a long time and—”

Dave placed a hand over her mouth. Her eyes narrowed, but she went silent. “I don’t know why I’m so attracted to you. I should spank you. I think the attraction’s mutual. I don’t want to fight right now. I want to take you to my room and make love to you. What do you want?”

Reluctantly, he pulled his hand away and waited for an answer.

Lip between her teeth, she turned her head to him, then up the street. “Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.”

“The devil? Am I really so bad?” It came out almost a whisper.

The indecision was clear on her face. “If I do this, and I’m not saying I’m going to, that does not mean I’m giving in. The Alaskan Connection has a signed contract and we’re coming, like it or not. This is just animal attraction, plain and simple. Nothing more. Agreed?”

“Agreed.” Something in Dave released and he felt like howling into the moonless night.

Dave grasped her hand, afraid she would pull away, and helped her from the cab and into the lobby. He barely noticed the warm wood tones and masculine feel of the lobby he’d been so impressed with earlier in the day. He was bringing a woman to his room, Chastity Cuthbert no less. Pressing the up button at the elevator, Dave leaned in and kissed her once more.

His fingers wrapped in her hair, and he pulled her close with a groan. The elevator doors whooshed open and somehow they moved inside. It felt like all the passion of their ongoing fight was in her mouth and tongue. The touch of her mouth against his felt unbelievable.

“Oh God.” Her needy moan ripped straight through his body in a way he’d not expected. The elevator came to a halt, the doors whispering open. She looked up with a dazed expression and laughed.

He smiled in return. “I think we’re supposed to get off the elevator now.”

She nodded. “Yep, I think that’s what we’re supposed to do.”

Hand in hand, they headed to his door. Impatiently, he hunted for the keycard, jammed it in the lock and twisted the door handle.

Her arms wrapped around his waist and they fell into the room, onto the floor, Dave's body cushioning their fall. Twisting around, he captured the shell of her ear with his lips. Nipping at her ear, he held her wriggling body against him.

She felt soft and sexy and full of desire in his arms. She left no questions about what she wanted. Good. Dave hated games.

"Let's get out of these wet clothes." Her throaty voice made him harder, if that was possible. Passion filled her gaze. There was no hesitation at all. She wanted this as much as he did. No teasing, just yearning. Standing, she unbuttoned her coat and dropped it in the entryway behind her. Her suit jacket and skirt followed. Her fingers toyed with, then fumbled over the buttons on her shirt.

Nerves. She's as nervous as I am. Something about the tension in the line of her body surprised and touched him. A look of frustration crossed her beautiful face. He rose and placed his hands on her shoulders, massaging gently. Slowly they moved down, brushing the tops of her breasts through the cloth of her shirt, until they reached the small pearl-colored buttons.

Tenderly, he undid each one, bottom to top. When her hands covered his, he paused at the button over her bra. Did she want him to stop?

Pulling his hands, she popped the button off the fabric.

Lips curving in a playful, kittenish way, she grabbed his jacket and yanked it down his arms. Buttons flying, his shirt followed hers.

Now this is more like it.

Pushing him to the ground, she straddled his body. With a sly smile, she unhooked her bra, yanked it from her body and dropped it to the floor. He sucked in an appreciative breath. Her breasts, now free, were stunning. Large, but beautifully shaped. Perfect for his hands to cover. His thumbs moved over her nipples, flicking them gently, while she wriggled seductively against his cock. Letting out a needy moan, he pushed against her. She felt amazing against his body. Warm and willing.

With a laugh, he flipped her on her back and ran his fingers over the mound of her panties, playing along her slit. She lifted her hips and he pulled her panties from her in one movement.

Naked under him, she looked like a sexy angel. With a shiver, he placed one, then two fingers inside her and slowly fucked her with them. Her eyes closed ecstatically.

"You're so beautiful. Do you like this? Do you want more?"

She moaned. That was it. He either took her or came in his pants like a teenager. Standing, he removed his pants and shorts as fast as possible, adding them to the thick pile of discarded clothes.

Pushing herself to her elbows, she watched him get naked, her gaze hungry.

Gorgeous. It was the only word to describe Chastity. Her body pale, but not too white, the sheen and color of well-worn pearls. Legs, long for such a petite frame. He'd heard the young kids in Smithfield refer to some of the tourists as hot. He never got that, before tonight. Chastity Cuthbert was hot. *Smokin'*.

Holding out his hand to her, he helped her to her feet, picked her up in his arms and carried her to the bed. He dropped her in the middle of the mattress. She let out a laugh and held her arms out to him. Never let it be said Dave Wellington had to be invited twice. He grinned, crawled up on the bed and hovered over her, supporting himself with his arms. His mouth came down on hers in a quick kiss, and he leaned over the end of the bed and reached into the suitcase on the stand. Fishing around, he pulled a condom out.

Ripping the foil open, he leaned back and pumped his cock a few times.

Chastity stared. Dave fought back an evil grin. He wasn't exactly a monster, but still, he was comfortable with his size and girth.

She rose to her knees, bent down and drew the tip of his cock into her warm mouth.

Smile gone, he sucked the breath in with a hiss. Moving her hair out of the way, she leaned in and licked him, base to tip. The feeling of her tongue on his cock made it jump in need. Her hand encircled the base as her velvet-soft mouth washed the length of him. He moaned. Her hot mouth on his shaft felt incredible. He watched, glassy eyed, as her cheeks hollowed from the force of her suck.

She pulled back and held out her hand. Dave just stared dumbly at it.

"The condom..."

"Duh." He placed it in her outstretched hand with a sheepish grin.

With two hands, she rolled it down over him.

"That's a neat little feat. Should I ask where you learned it?"

"Eighth grade."

His brows knit. "Isn't that a little young?"

Her laughter rang like bells. "It was a dare at a party. I used a banana."

"Lucky banana."

She guided herself onto the tip of his waiting cock. Pushing down, she impaled herself on him with a gasp.

God she was incredible.

His hips pressed into her and withdrew gently. Forcing herself down, she filled herself with him again. She was incredibly greedy and he loved it. *Here's hoping you don't come on the third stroke.* Maybe he should think about bricks, or being chased by lions. Anything but this incredibly sexy woman fucking him senseless.

He pulled her ear to his mouth. "Careful, sweetheart, or I'll think you want it hard and wild."

She moved her hips suggestively.

"Okay, pretty lady, you get what you asked for."

"Bring it on, wild man."

His thigh trapped hers and he flipped her onto her back, forcing his cock to the hilt, withdrawing and pounding into her again.

She moaned and wrapped her legs around him, meeting him thrust for thrust.

Their gazes caught and held. He felt orgasm build at the back of his mind until it rolled over his body in wave after wave of mind-bending pleasure.

With a gasp, her head dropped back, her fingernails bit into his shoulder and she began to shake beneath him.

Spent, he held her close, kissing her along her ear and neck. Something about the closeness felt intimate in a way that Dave didn't expect, but welcomed. He didn't want to analyze this moment now. He didn't have the energy. Besides, he was sick of worrying about women and their motives. He brushed the hair from her face as she sleepily snuggled down against his body. It felt good and right and he'd worry about tomorrow later.

"You bring out the passion in me, Chastity Cuthbert. I want to get to know you better. I'm in town for a few more days. Will you stay with me?"

She stiffened, then nodded. It felt reluctant, but the warmth of her body against his lulled him. Her body relaxed and he let go and drifted into a dreamless sleep.



Dave reached out. There was something off, but he couldn't put his finger on it. He moved. Sore, his hips were sore. Memory flooded back. The argument, Chastity bedraggled but sexy as hell in the cab. Her open willing face as he made love to her.

With a smile, he opened his eyes. To an empty pillow.

Confused, he stood and looked around the room. His clothes lay in a heap on the floor, but her things were gone. He stalked over to the pile and frowned. Nothing. No

evidence that she'd even been here. A dull gleam caught his eye and he bent down to investigate. The button from her blouse. The one that flew off when she pulled his hands apart and exposed her bra. He picked it up and stared at it.

“Well, Cinderella left the ball, but she left something behind.”

Angry, he balled his fist around the mother of pearl, then dropped his hand to his side, drained of all energy. With a snort of indifference, he grabbed his clothes and began to pack with his free hand, tossing clothes into his open suitcase. If that was how she wanted to play it, then fine by him. He'd fly home early and stop her business dead in its tracks.

Hand open, he looked once more at the button, then placed it carefully in the zippered pocket on the side of his suitcase. At least he'd have a reminder of his stupidity, *and Chastity*. He ignored his inner voice as he headed to the shower.

Chapter Three

“Here, drink this. You’ll feel better.”

Chastity took a sip from the cup Freddie handed her. It burned all the way down and she coughed uncontrollably, while Freddie pounded on her back.

“Dear God, what is this? I thought you said it was tea?” She furrowed her brow accusingly.

“It is tea.” He looked sheepish. “With a little Jack Daniels thrown in for good measure.” He flopped down on the couch, adjusted a lighted mirror on the coffee table, opened a plastic box and removed one black spiky object with the tip of a finger. “So, tell me what happened next.”

“I screwed him and then I ran away with my tail between my legs.”

Finger to his eye, he stopped, pulled the false eyelash back and stared at her. “Oh no you did not.”

She sucked in another swallow of Freddie’s tea. It burned just as badly as before, but this time she didn’t cough. “Oh yes I did.”

Freddie stood and applauded, the lash on the end of his finger waving in the air as he did so. “Well good for you, screwing Mr. Big and Beefy. I’m proud of you. Woman power and all that Helen Reddy shit.”

“I’m in shock.”

“That I applauded?”

“Nope, that you know who Helen Reddy is. I thought you only worshipped Barbra and Liza.”

“Honey, I’m a cliché transvestite, but not a total cliché transvestite. I am woman, hear me roar.” He stopped, his mouth opened in an O and he began to applaud again and jump up and down like an excited three-year-old. “Oh my God! I love you!” He bent down and pressed a kiss to her forehead. “I can put that into my act. Why the hell didn’t I think of that before? It’s a scream. I can see it now. ‘Freddie Fabulous Sings for Feminine Emancipation’. Don’t you just love it?”

She smiled. “Actually, I do. I’d come to see that every night for a week.”

He waved his hand in the air and sat back down. "You always come to see my act. You're more reliable than my parents. Speaking of whom, they send their love and lots of frou-frou air kisses."

"How are Mabel and Ned?"

"Oh, you know, off on another cruise. This time to India. They swore to bring me back a fabulous sari."

She sucked in another mouthful of the drink. She had to hand it to her friend. The thing became less nasty as you drank it. "You must have the coolest parents in the world."

He'd gone back to placing his eyelash. She watched him carefully line it up with his lid and press it in place. "There, perfection. Oh and to answer your question, sure do. They always wanted a daughter. With five boys, they were almost relieved when one of them turned to the dark side. So, what's this animal's name? Mayor somebody or other."

"Dave Wellington."

"Like the boot?" He laughed. That's one of the things Chastity loved about Freddie. He had a strong sense of the ridiculous.

"Yep, just like the boot."

"Well, good for you for going for what you want. A year ago you would have run home to your vibrator, boo-hooing all the way."

He stood and sashayed to his closet. Chastity smiled. Freddie's studied movements were more feminine than any woman she'd ever known. Too bad more of it didn't rub off on her. They'd been friends for five years, since she'd moved to Chicago and the small apartment where Milwaukee, Ashland and Division met. All alone, she'd initially been afraid of the six-foot drag queen, but he turned on the charm, pulled her under his wing and fussed over her. Chastity loved it. Since her parents died in a car wreck when she was in college, she'd been alone. Freddie made a great big sister.

"So, dahling, what are you going to do about Mr. Big and Beefy Alaska?"

She shrugged. "What can I do? Maybe I'll see him this summer and... I have too much riding on this to change now. Even if I am terrified of running into him again. Besides, summer in Alaska is one of those things that cleanses my soul. I'm not giving it up because I had hot and dirty sex with a stranger." She leaned forward, set the cup on the coffee table and placed her chin in her hands. "I don't get it though. Why did I run away? What scared me so much?"

"Hard to say, maybe he really did something to you and you were afraid of getting hurt? What do you think of this frock?"

She shook her head. “Too busy. I don’t know why you bought that one. Grab the plum. You never wear it and it’s fantastic on you. Highlights your long legs and hides your pitifully flat chest.”

He tossed a silk-covered hanger at her. She ducked easily and laughed.

“Poo, just cause you’re blessed with an overabundance of boobbie-liciousness. Have some of it cut off and put on me. Lord knows you’ve got it to spare.”

She cupped her breasts, squeezed, then fell back on the couch giggling. The booze was getting to her. “Yea, well, fat lot of good these have done me. Do you see a line-up of men? I don’t.” Her mind wandered back to the night before and the hot man asleep on the hotel bed. Nope, she couldn’t go back now.

“Knocked your bobby socks right off, did he?”

She nodded.

He grabbed the plum dress, walked to the floor-to-ceiling mirror and held it up. “You know, this does seem to do something for me. How the hell do you manage it? You dress like a librarian and you dress me like a dream. I’d say it was unfair, if it didn’t benefit me so much.”

“I don’t know. I just suck at dressing myself.”

“Well, at least you let your hair down. You look positively eighteen twenty-three when it’s up.”

She reached back. Used to it up, the feeling of it resting against her back was almost erotic. “I wear it that way to look older, so the clients will respect me.”

“Oh la-de-da, the clients. Can’t have them think of you as any sort of competition now, can we? Nonsense. You’re a woman. Dress like one.” He plopped next to her. “Look, just try this. Go to Alaska this summer with a few new pairs of jeans, your hair down and some reasonably sexy T-shirts. Can you manage that?”

Chas shrugged. “I don’t know what good you think it will do, but yeah, I can do that.” She stood. “I better go, you’ll be late.” She bent down and kissed him on the cheek. “Break a leg, sweetie. I’ve got to try to get some sleep.”

He laughed. “Saturday night’s show’s a breeze. The audience is all drunk. Catch you tomorrow for din-din?”

“Yep.” She yawned. “I’m making Chicken Vesuvio. You coming alone, or with a date?”

“Alone. I’m single for the entire month of April. I’ll screw around again in May.”

“You and your weird schedules. Love ya. Mean it.”

“Right back atcha, honey-cakes. Silly little air kisses and dogs that fit in your purse to you too.”

She made her way over discarded gowns, six-inch heels and various makeup cases to the door.

Crossing the hallway, she pushed the door to her apartment open. The stale smell of old air met her. She closed the door shut behind her, hit the light switch and dropped her keys on the counter. Clean to the point of being pristine, her apartment felt sterile and unloved. Furnished from a package sold by the local high-end decorator du jour, it lacked warmth.

Wandering into her bathroom, she pulled the rumpled white shirt from her navy skirt and tossed it on the floor. She glanced down at it and sighed in frustration. Scooping it up, she dropped it into the hamper. She admired Freddie’s mess. It spoke of his wonderfully spontaneous life. Staring into the mirror, she brushed her hair out. It fell in brown whirls around her shoulders and halfway down her back. Removing her glasses, she stared at the face that peered back at her. For thirty-one, she looked okay. No lines, no wrinkles and her skin was finally clear of the acne so bad she’d been called Spots in school. Still, she wasn’t exactly gorgeous either. *Bor-ing*. She finished undressing and grabbed her nightgown from the hook on the back of the door.

A few steps had her in the bedroom. Without flipping on the light, she crawled to the headboard and gazed out at downtown Chicago. The city twinkled. She’d been so happy to move here. To leave the pain of her parents’ deaths behind. She loved it, at first. Now the air seemed to press down on her with smog so thick she could feel it when she breathed. The EL, once so amazing to her, now just another crowded way to get from point A to point B. She longed for...what?

She blew air out. Her lips felt bruised and sore. She ran her fingers across them, remembering Dave’s kiss and his body moving against hers. Was this what her life had come to? Holding fast to memories of a hasty mistake made by a man she was afraid to see again? She punched her pillow and lay down, willing her mind to shut off and let her sleep.

Images of Dave Wellington’s strong face and stunning body swam in her half dreams. She rolled over and sat up. The man was in her head and she wanted him out. *You’re a horrible liar. You want to go back there and molest him some more.*

The clock on top of the TV flashed the time, eleven fifty-nine, then midnight. April first. April Fools’ Day. Well, that man had certainly made a fool out of her. So what? So what if she responded to his touch, begged for him to take her? She’d forget all about him

by the time she took her party to Alaska in June. Sure, Smithfield was a small town, but she could avoid him. Alaska was a big state. She'd only be there for a week. Besides, there were ten men to one woman in Smithfield. Maybe it was time for Chastity Cuthbert to meet an Alaskan hunk of her own?

With that thought, she lay her head back down and finally began to fall asleep. Her own Alaskan man. She tried to ignore the forest green eyes that seemed to mock her half-formed plans.

Chapter Four

“Oh shit.”

Chastity looked up at her home for the next week—the Lazy Fish motel in Smithfield, Alaska—and her mouth dropped open. One half of the hotel’s roof was caved in.

“Now, don’t you worry, Miss Cuthbert. We have alternate plans.”

Chastity faced Smithfield’s deputy mayor, William Pierce-Prince—or Bill as he’d asked her to call him when he’d picked her up at the airport. “Um, how long has this been like this?”

“Oh, it happened over the winter. We didn’t want to alarm you none. We thought it would be fixed by now, but the cruise ship shows keep us all pretty busy ’round here.”

“But what about my clients?”

“Don’t you worry about them. We still have fifty good rooms here and we got rooms at the married couples’ homes for the rest of the women, excepting you.”

“Where am I going to stay?”

“Oh, we got a place for you. Our esteemed mayor is off on a fishing trip. So we figured it would only be neighborly of him if you stayed at his place.”

She turned to Bill, eyes wide. “You mean you’re going to put me up in the house of a man who does not want me here and not tell him about it?”

He grinned. “Don’t worry on it. I’ll escort you to your digs and the rest of the boys here will meet the ladies coming in. They’re mighty excited about the ladies, but don’t expect too much. In Alaska the odds are good, but the goods are odd.” He chuckled. “Can’t wait till the dance tonight. You should see the town hall. It looks mighty pretty.”

She smiled. “I’m sure it’s lovely, but about using Dave Wellington’s house...”

He held up his hand. “Nope, don’t want to hear nothing ’bout it. Dave’s a fair man and he’d not want you sleeping in the cold. Don’t know as you can tell, but houses round here are pretty small. Built up on flat places on the hillsides. We did what we could, it’s important that you ladies have a nice warm bed, with privacy. Don’t want to shove you in with a bunch of desperate bachelors.”

Just then, a high-pitched giggle sounded above the crowd. Poppy. William cocked his ear to listen.

“Although, seems like maybe some of your ladies would enjoy that sort of thing.”

Chas laughed. “Seems like you may be right.”

He gestured with his arm. “After you.”

“Um, my things...”

“Don’t you worry ’bout them none. The men will bring ’em by later. Won’t hurt them one bit to do some real work. All that fake mining and acting for the tourists turns ’em soft.”

Chas raised an eyebrow. “So, I take it you aren’t keen on the changing of the guard around here?”

“Bah, you mean that crap Dave’s putting on? Nope, it’s not what real men do. Still, since the closing of the mine, it’s the best we’ve got. His cabin’s just up this road a piece.”

Chastity looked down. The “road” Bill referred to was nothing more than a dirt two-track. “Aren’t the ships bringing jobs to the town?”

“Yep, good ones. We almost can’t keep up. That’s why we’re pinning so much hope on you and your lady Cheechakos. We need to settle these Wild West types down. Start a few new families. We’ve lost some, we’ll lose some more, if we lose too many...”

They’d been steadily climbing the entire time they’d been walking. Now Bill turned and looked back, Chastity followed. The view almost took her breath away. Below her, peeking through the trees, was the town of Smithfield. The buildings, all made of logs and timber, gave it a feel she’d only found in Alaska. Beyond the trees was the inside passage, beyond that, more tree-covered islands.

“Where’s the dock?”

Bill waved his arm to the right. Through the trees, a long stretch of concrete laid out in the water, like a pier.

He took off his hat and rubbed his head. “I don’t like the changes the big ships bring. Three thousand people at a pop coming in here, taking over the town. All wanting crap souvenirs and bitching ’cause they don’t see bears in the middle of the street. What kind of town has bears in the middle of the street?”

She laughed. “I don’t know, but I’m pretty sure I don’t want to find out.”

He continued walking. In a few more steps they came to a clearing with a neat log cabin in the middle. Small by any standards, it held the charm only a cabin in the Alaskan woods could. Wildflowers filled the meadow-like area in front of the house. A small

garden, sprouts barely out of the ground, stood off to one side. She wanted to look around, but Bill was making his way to the door.

“Isn’t it locked?”

“Nobody locks up around here. It’s an island.” He pushed the door open and held it for her. “Here ya go. Your humble abode.”

Cautiously, she entered and looked around. The inside was as small as the outside promised. One wall held a sink, oven and refrigerator. A large table, covered in a red-checked cloth, sat near the kitchen. To her left was what passed for the living room. A couch, comfortable chair and a coffee table sat in front of what looked like a well-used fireplace, filled bookshelves on either side.

“Ain’t much, but it’s comfortable. Bedroom’s through there.” He nodded at a door. “Bath’s next to it and that door’s his office. Pretty plain, Alaska cabins are, but it serves Dave well. Speaking of him...” Bill cleared his throat. “He don’t mean to be so inhospitable. He’s just... Well, it’s hard for him, all you women. Hurts his heart.”

She knit her brow. “I thought we were a bunch of sirens here to steal the menfolk. How does that hurt his heart?”

“Begging your pardon for gossiping, but you oughta know the truth. He has a brother who met some gal on the internet. She came up here, hated it and broke the poor man’s heart. Kid bought a homestead near Fairbanks and won’t even talk to Dave anymore. Blames him. Seems the woman compared Tad to Dave a lot and Tad always came up short. Tad blames Dave and Dave blames women in general.” He looked at the door. “Well, if you won’t be needing me, I’m gonna head over to the town hall to finish setting up for the dance.”

Wandering over to the bookshelves, she looked back and nodded.

“Good. I expect you’ll find your way to the hall. Straight down Dave’s road, make a right. Hall’s on your left as you enter town. Don’t blink, you’ll miss it. Eight on the nose.”

“Sure thing, Bill.” Still caught up in the books, she nodded again and heard the door close behind her. She hunted through the books for one in particular. Then she saw it. “Damn.” The complete works of William Shakespeare. She stuck her tongue out at the book and turned to check out the rest of the cabin.

The door to the bedroom swung open easily. Larger than she thought it would be, the room smelled of dark wood and Dave. Sunlight filled the room, lighting on warm cherry furniture and soft muted colors of the linens. She ran her hand over the bedpost. It appeared to be hand carved with leaves and vines climbing the sides. The bed, dressing

table and side tables were smooth as polished glass. A framed photo caught her eye. A smiling Dave, fish held triumphantly in both hands, stood next to a sober-looking man whose eyes resembled Dave's too much to be a coincidence. This must be Tad, his brother. She was glad Bill took the time to explain Dave a little better. The sad story made him seem like less of an ass. Her gaze caught the green of his eyes and her stomach lurched. She ran a finger over his face. She missed him. How could she possibly miss someone she'd been with for only a few hours? Even if they did... She blushed.

She put the photo down and headed to the bathroom. A large soaking tub, along with a gorgeous pedestal sink and marble on the floors, stood in complete contrast to the rest of the cabin. A quick poke into Dave's office was met with a mélange of papers piled high on every surface. Closing the door, she turned to the kitchen, her tummy rumbling.

Ugh, food. How long had it been since she'd eaten? Too long. She wandered to the cupboard and pulled out a can of soup.

"Well, Dave, I sure hope you aren't saving this for a special occasion." He sure was going to be mad when he found out that his home harbored the head jezebel of The Alaskan Connection and woman who'd snuck out like a thief in the night from his hotel room. She shivered. She planned to be long gone by the time he got back.

Chapter Five

Chastity forced herself up the hill. The day had been an unqualified success. The ladies were thrilled with the men they'd met and the men seemed equally enamored. Everyone had found someone, everyone but her. She'd worn her tight jeans and pretty tops. She chatted animatedly with everyone, but no one struck her fancy. *That's 'cause you're hung up on the one Smithfield resident who's out of town.* She told her brain to shut up.

The cabin loomed before her. It was eleven o'clock at night, but the sun had just set a half an hour earlier, leaving the world in perpetual twilight. It would rise again at three-forty-five in the morning. The world seemed magical in the half dark, like fairies could come out and dance in the spaces between the trees.

Dismissing her imaginings, she dragged her tired self into the bedroom, pulling clothes off as she walked. She left her undies on and crawled into the soft bed. Ah, heaven. Dave Wellington was a jerk, but a jerk with a heavenly bedroom.

She snuggled down and took in a deep whiff. Her eyes opened. The pillow, even in his absence, smelled of the woods, musk and soap, a smell that was uniquely Dave's. She sat up, the memory of hot sex vivid in her mind. The smell drew her mind back to that night and the feelings that washed over her body when he held her against him and sweetly assaulted her body with his.

Thinking about the sex brought heat to her face, but liquid warmth to her center. God, he was sexy as hell. Why fight it anymore? She wanted him again, so what? She also wanted to screw Brad Pitt. That didn't mean he was any more for her than Dave Wellington was.



Damn. He blinked hard and rubbed his eyes with his free hand. They didn't want to stay open anymore. He was about to lose the battle to stay awake. Served him right, heading home in the middle of the night. "I'm an idiot." Dave Wellington ignored the

little voice that whispered to him that he'd packed up his fishing gear and headed back for more than some belated intervention with the town's men.

The tall pines on either side of the road loomed in the dark, like furry sentinels that blocked his peripheral vision. Normally they made a cozy tunnel to drive through. Now the sameness of the darkened scenery closed in on him, making sleep look all the better.

Finally, the opening to the double track that led from the main road to his cabin came into view. He turned the wheel left and shot gravel from the back of his tires. Home sounded too heavenly to take his time.

He pulled up to the house, pushed open the car door and shoved it closed behind him with his boot. It was good to be home. A warm glow in the windows caught his eye. He wrinkled his brow. He didn't remember leaving a light on. He shrugged. Bill stopped by and raided his fridge on a regular basis. He'd probably forgotten the light. Dave hoped his old friend had remembered to close the door, unlike a year ago. Nothing like a bear shitting on your living room floor to welcome you home after a long trip.

He tested the door. Good, latch tight. No bears this time. Walking into the cabin, he switched off the living room light, but not before catching a glimpse of his sink and the clean dishes stacked neatly beside it. Bill never bothered to wash a dish after a raid. The guy was getting daft in his old age.

"Someone's been eating *my* porridge."

He chuckled. The bear memory brought out the bad jokes in him. He shrugged out of his jacket, pulled off his shirt and un-buttoned his fly. Opening his bedroom door to pitch black, he kicked off his boots and shucked his jeans.

What was that?

A deeply drawn breath stopped him in his tracks. Shit, maybe a bear had managed to get into his house. He fumbled for the light switch and flicked it on.

He looked at the bed and blinked, trying to make sense of the view. There, practically naked, lay the reason for his stress. Chastity Cuthbert snoring away, oblivious to his presence. *What the hell?* Well, well, this was an interesting turn of events. He flicked the light off and on a few times to rouse her. She didn't so much as move a muscle. Were it not for the loud breathing he'd wonder if she were alive.

She lay on her side, long reddish-brown hair spread out behind her, mouth slightly open, breasts moving with her breath and her ass round and full in her panties... Damn, his cock rose, along with his irritation. What was it about this woman that made him both pant like a dog in heat and want to take her over his knee? At that thought his cock jumped. *Down, boy. She's not for you. She left you in the middle of the night.*

She snorted and rolled over. One breast popped free of the sheet. The large perfect globe moved tantalizingly with each inhalation. He gaped. Damn, he was invading her privacy in all kinds of unforgivable ways, but the sight of that perfect pink-tipped mound turned his brain to mush and rooted him in place as if she'd tied him there.

See, this is exactly why you didn't want these women up here in the first place. They rob you of your focus.

Yeah, what the hell was she doing, mostly naked in *his* house? He crossed his arms, leaned against the doorjamb and took a breath. "Someone's been sleeping in my bed, and that someone's still here."

Chapter Six

Chastity's brain crawled grumpily out of the fog of sleep. She blinked her eyes open and held an arm up to ward off the light from the ceiling fixture. Had she fallen asleep with it on? No, she vaguely remembered collapsing in the dark. She sat up and looked around the room. Everything seemed just as she remembered it, everything but the mostly naked man lounging casually against the wall, enormous bulge in his undershorts.

"What the *hell* are you doing here?"

"Enjoying the view." His gaze moved lazily over her body, leaving liquid heat behind.

She glanced down. "Oh my gosh." Grabbing the edge of the sheet, she pulled it over her. She swallowed her embarrassment and looked him in the eye. Smug. That was the only word to describe his face. She raked a gaze pointedly up and down his mostly naked form. She intended the glance to be dismissive, but she lingered a bit longer than necessary on the amazing-looking protuberance in his shorts. *Maybe he didn't notice.* Unbelievably, it grew even larger. *Damn, he noticed.*

Drawing her legs beneath her, she rolled to her knees. Good, she felt less vulnerable. "Bill told me you went fishing." She'd not meant to affect such a snotty tone, but the nearly naked man by the door dragged it out of her.

"Let's just say I was not comfortable leaving my town to your ministrations and came home early. To my home, which you're in I might add."

She lifted her chin. "Bill told me it would be okay."

"Bill talks out his ass."

"Fine then, if you'll just leave the room, I'll pack my things and go."

"By go, I hope you mean home."

She lifted her chin a bit higher. "No, go sleep somewhere else. I'm not leaving Smithfield. You can't make me." *So there, neener, neener, neener.* Her teeth clamped down on her lower lip. She sounded like a dork. Something that happened far too much around this man.

He waved a hand. "Forget it. You can stay. Bill's an ass, but not a complete ass. He didn't expect me to be home. The town's full. When he finds out, he's gonna have a good laugh. Far be it for me to wreck his day."

She narrowed her eyes. "Oh, no. There's no way I'm staying uninvited."

The wide, strong shoulders lifted and sank with surprising elegance. "It's up to you, but you're welcome to my bed."

She felt her pussy tighten and her panties become damp. *Oh no, not again. Not this man. Anyone but this man. I am not attracted to him anymore.* Her body seemed to think otherwise, because her stomach filled with the flutters of what felt like a thousand wings. She pulled the sheet closer to her chest and tried to muster something resembling proud dignity.

He turned, displaying his amazing, hard ass, casually grabbed a robe off the door, pulled it on and belted it tight. "It's late. We can't fix this tonight. Just sleep here. I'll go to the couch. I can worry about getting your ass out of here in the morning."

"What? Oh no. You don't call the shots, I do. I'm leaving—tonight!" She tossed her legs over the bed, stood, then bent over and plucked her clothing off the floor. Dropping the sheet, she looked down at exposed boobs, grabbed the edge of the sheet and wrapped it back up. With a huff, she marched to the door to push past him. His hand shot out, grasping her upper arm. The firm yet gentle grip sent her body into overdrive.

"I told you. You can stay here tonight. I meant it. If you're worried about what's left of your virtue, it's safe with me. I wouldn't touch you with a ten-foot pole."

She twisted her arm and gave his hand an evil look. "You seem to be touching me now. I'm leaving."

His mouth came closer. "No, you're not. Go lie down in the bed."

"No. You lie in it. I don't want to. It smells like you anyway."

"And what, exactly, is wrong with that?"

She blushed and shook her head. "Nothing. Just get out of my way."

"No." His voice was softer now, the insistence gone. Something in his gaze mesmerized her. His eyes, so close and so green. How could eyes be that color? Were they contacts? She searched the edge of the mossy soft irises looking for a telltale line. Nothing. She leaned forward a bit.

Her gaze dropped to his full, mobile lips. The anger that filled her earlier evaporated into thin air. She drew in a shaky breath.

"I *insist* you stay." His mouth covered hers.

She should pull away, should at least offer a token resistance. Instead, she melted into his hard body. The smell of sandalwood and pine forests that clung to him enrobed her. His mouth moved against hers in soft seduction, belying the anger she'd heard in his voice.

Powerful arms pulled her body to mould with his. He licked at her lips, rough, then gentle, until she opened her mouth to his assault. The feel of his tongue over hers sent shivers through her body. They met and swirled together, coalescing into color and need in her pussy.

He lifted her and pulled her onto the hardness of his cock. She squirmed to better feel the turgid member, pushing her slit against it through the robe and sheet, wanting more. A finger touched her chin and he leaned back to look into her eyes. His half-lidded gaze seemed to question her intentions.

Oh God, what am I doing? The finger traveled over her chin, down her neck to her collarbone where it toyed with a loose strand of hair there. She gulped and tried to look away but the compelling green eyes seemed to hold her in place. Was this what she wanted, why she didn't insist on staying somewhere else? His hand, now moving seductively over the tops of her breasts, felt wonderful and sensual. It had been so long since she'd been with him, and he set her body on fire. There would be consequences. She could not sneak out of Alaska if this was a mistake. She had a job to do and she'd have to face him for days to come. She buried her head in his shoulder to infuse her mind with his sexy scent and feel.

Screw consequences, they're overrated. Still nervous, she leaned up and placed her lips against his. He didn't move, barely breathed. His mouth rested against hers, waiting. She reached out with her tongue and ran it over his lips. They parted, and she tasted heat, mixed with something that was all Dave. Opening his robe with her free hand, she moved it over his chest muscles. Her fingers found the flat disc of one nipple and flicked it, teasing it to life. He moaned against her mouth. God, he sounded so needy and sexy.

One powerful leg pressed between hers. She parted her legs to rub herself along bare thigh. Her clit was on fire. The need to relieve the ache growing in her belly felt overwhelming. Tearing her lips from his, she licked down the side of his neck. Dave's head dropped back, and his hand moved from her ass to the back of her head. Strong fingers twined in her hair and pulled her into him. The smell of his neck, the rough hands on her hair, the feel of his hard thigh against her pussy seemed like too much. She sucked the skin of his neck and whimpered against him.

Hair released, strong hands roamed down her back and grabbed her ass. He stroked and massaged the globes, then lifted her up. Surprised, she wrapped both of her legs tightly around his torso as he carried her to the bed. He sank to the mattress, Chastity on top of him. Sitting up, she rubbed her soaking pussy over his rock-hard cock in circles. Their gazes met. The half-smile on his face made him look like a naughty little boy. She smiled in return and they both laughed.

“What are we doing?” She bit her lip and waited.

His lips twisted in a sardonic little grin. “Well, if you don’t know...”

Narrowing her eyes, she circled her hips once more and listened to his indrawn hiss of breath. “Oh, I know what we’re doing. I’m pretty sure I’m about to be thoroughly fucked. What I meant was, will we regret it?”

He shrugged. “Probably, but I’m not sure I can get up and go on if I don’t have you tonight. What do you think?”

She shook her head. “Me either. So damn the cost and full steam ahead?”

His hand moved over her face in a tender caress. “Only if you’re sure.”

“I don’t think I am, but I want you.”

“Want what?” His voice sounded clogged with need.

Running her hand over his chest, she flicked a finger over one semi-hard nipple. “This. To touch you, taste you...”

“Fuck me?”

Dropping her gaze, she nodded. His hands moved up her torso to her breasts. The fingers of one hand caressed her, then squeezed a nipple between his thumb and forefinger until she gasped and tossed back her head. His free hand moved over the other breast and mimicked the action. A quiver of pain-tinged pleasure washed over her body.

“Do you like that, Chastity?”

She looked away. His fingers tightened until she cried out and rubbed her pussy against him.

“God, you’re so beautiful.” He brushed his hands over her shoulders. His gaze followed his hands as they roamed over her breasts and down her body to the top of her panties. One finger ran along the edge, against the elastic. “Do you want me to touch you here?”

His honey-thick voice accompanied by the thumb stroking over her vulva drove her wild. She moaned and tried to press her clit against him.

“Say it. Tell me what you want.”

Panting, she looked down at him. His sea green gaze seemed to bore into her. She felt shy and almost uncomfortable with her need. She hesitated a moment and his thumb pulled back. This wasn't a man who stood for coy. Why was she being so shy now? Last time... Her mind wandered back to the overwhelming emotions he'd made her experience. "I want you to fuck me."

"With pleasure."

Strong arms wrapped around her, his legs somehow untangled themselves from under her and she found herself on her back beneath him. She blinked up at him. "What the...?"

He grinned. "Wrestled all through high school. Impressed?"

She laughed. "Very. Shakespeare *and* wrestling? It's enough to make a girl weak. So, what next?"

He placed his mouth against the shell of her ear. The hot breath stroking against her skin sent tingles through her. "Now, I taste your sweet pussy."

Her eyes widened. "No, I mean, umm..."

He pulled back, his gaze boring into hers. "Chastity, if you're uncomfortable..."

She shook her head. "It's not that. Well it is, but... No one's ever..."

His eyes narrowed. "Not ever?"

"Nope, not even one time."

"Do you want to do this?"

"Yes."

His hand moved over her panties, then under the delicate fabric, fingers brushing over her hard little clit sending shock waves racing through her body. Gentle, then firm, they played with her until she was panting and squirming under his touch.

"Do you like that?"

"Oh God, yes."

"Then take your panties off for me, Chastity."

She reached down to pull them from her hips, when his hand covered hers, stopping the movement. She glanced at him, confused.

"Stand up and show me all of you again."

She bit her lip and moved away from him to reluctantly stand next to the bed. He placed a hand behind his head and watched her. The look in his eyes made her feel powerful and free. With a seductive smile, she hooked her thumbs into the sides and began to shove them over her hips and down her thighs. Shimmying, she flicked them to the floor and stepped out.

Dave sat up. "You're as stunning as I remember." He kissed her belly, then bent his head to the side and moved down to the top of her vulva in a long, sensuous lick. His hands stroked to her hips and he sank to the floor to kneel in front of her. The slightly abrasive tongue played over her vaginal lips, sending lightning flashes to her brain.

He pulled back and she pushed her hips forward. "I take it you want more?"

"Did I tell you that you're an ass?"

He chuckled. "Yep, at least twice."

"Good. Yes, I want more."

His answer was to part her nether lips with the finger of one hand and roughly tongue her clit. She gasped and almost dropped to the floor with the pleasure of it. His hand steadied her as he licked his tongue over and over the sensitive little button. She grasped his shoulders and let her arms support her upper body as she leaned her head back and enjoyed the thorough tonguing. Up and down, faster, then painfully slow and sensual. He seemed to know just when she was on the brink and altered his technique to better torture her. God, she wanted to come. She bucked her hips against his tongue, ran her fingers through his hair and placed his mouth hard against her clit.

With a grunt, Dave grabbed her wrists and pulled her hands to her sides, trapping them there.

The feel of this powerful man holding her back, holding her hands down was the most erotic thing she'd ever experienced.

Her legs shook and his tongue was replaced by teeth that gently nibbled her pussy lips.

"Oh God, Dave, please."

He chuckled and sucked her clit. Fast as lightning, he maneuvered both of her hands to one of his. With the free hand he reached up and moved over her buttocks. A finger played down her ass crack to the tender opening there. She struggled for breath and almost pulled away, but the assault on her pussy was too much. Running his fingers over her pussy, he caressed her asshole, moistening it. Lost in feeling, she was shocked when his fingers delved into her tight hole. She expected it to hurt, but any discomfort passed as he mouthed her clit and swiped a tongue over it. She screamed at the exotic mix of pleasure and pain and came, all but collapsing on the floor in front of him.

Bent over his body, she quaked with her orgasm. After a moment, he lifted her once more to the bed and laid her gently over the covers. Her eyes shot open as he ran a hand over her cheek, then pulled the boxers over his hips.

His cock bobbed out, long, thick and proud.

“You know, that monster is big enough for a porn flick.”

He grinned. “I almost feel guilty being proud of it, since I had nothing to do with how it turned out.”

She laughed. “Almost huh?”

“Yep.” He reached into a bedside table and pulled out a box of condoms.

“Boy Scout?”

His brow knit in confusion. “Huh?”

“Be prepared.” She tried to control the giggle, but it popped out anyway.

“My sister sends me these every year on my birthday. She thinks she’s funny. I never took them on a trip, until...”

She blushed and looked away.

She heard the crinkle of the package and looked back. Dave stroked his cock a few times. “You ready for round two?”

“Ready, willing and able. I’m just worried about the fit. It was, um...a bit tight last time.”

“I like it tight. Just the thought of you panting beneath me as I impale your pretty pink pussy makes me hard. Feel my cock, Chastity.”

God she loved the way he talked when he was turned on.

He placed her hand over his cock and squeezed his fingers around hers while he stroked up and down its length. She licked her lips and he drew in a breath. “I don’t think I can wait anymore. I want to fuck you.”

She nodded and guided him towards her pussy. His breath quickened and he placed the tip against her entrance. “Slow and seductive, or hard and passionate?”

“Hmm, a choice. Well on one hand you have the seductive approach and on the other—”

He leaned in and growled in her ear. “You asked for it, lady.” Grabbing her wrists, he forced them over her head. For a moment, she was stunned, then the feeling of being Dave Wellington’s prisoner sent a shiver of need through her body.

Held down, he impaled her with his thick cock. The shock of it brought a cry to her lips, but the feeling of unbelievable fullness and his body pressed right against her clit were almost too pleasurable. God, how could she forget how good having sex with this man was?

He didn’t give her a moment to get used to the fullness. Instead, he pulled all the way out and plunged back into her once more.

Pressure built within her as he fucked her hard, driving his thick penis into her willing cunt, over and over.

Just when she thought he would explode into her, he pulled his cock out. Confused, she blinked up at him. The look of devilment on his face sounded a warning bell in her mind a second too late. Roughly, he rolled her onto her stomach, pulling her ass in the air.

“Trust me?”

The need in his voice turned her on more than any of his actions. Did she trust him? She gave the barest of nods. His answer was the opening of the drawer on the night table.

Rolling over, she was rewarded with a sharp smack on her ass. The feeling was unlike anything she’d experienced before. Drawing in a gasp of pleasure, she stuck her bottom a little higher in the air.

He correctly interpreted her signal, because his hand connected with her bare skin once more.

“Do you like that, Chastity? Do you want me to spank your naughty ass, or tie you up and fuck it?”

The words rained down on her and turned her brain to fuzz.

“Tell me, Chastity, tell me what you want me to do to you.” The bed creaked, and a hand touched her chin, urging her to look into his eyes. “Is this what you want? We don’t have to. It’s up to you. I’m happy with just fucking you.”

“No, I like it. I like what you’re doing to me. Please.”

He smiled. The impish grin held something that made her heart race, but she didn’t want to evaluate it now.

“Good.”

He pulled her over his lap. The hand, when it connected with her already tender flesh, felt like fire rained down on her. One, two, three smacks across her bottom. Then, his fingers ran down between her ass cheeks, parting them. Something cool touched her tight hole, then a finger pressed against the opening. She clenched her cheeks, and another stinging swat was delivered.

“Relax. I won’t hurt you. I promise.”

“No, I’m nervous. I know you won’t hurt me, but the pain...” She blushed.

“What, honey?”

“It feels sort of good. Does that make me a pervert?”

He chuckled. “Yes, but I like perverts. I want to hold you down and feel you squirm as I fuck your ass, Chastity.”

“Yes. Please, yes.”

She found herself on her knees, bottom in the air, as more of the lube was spread over her. The feeling of his cock pressed at the opening felt dirty, sexy and amazing. He pressed into her and she shook, almost pulling away. Hands grasped her hips, holding her in place as he inserted first an inch, then more. Soon she was stretched all the way out, filled with his huge cock.

What surprised her most was how good it felt. Incredibly good.

“Touch your clit while I fuck you. Make yourself come.”

He didn’t have to tell her twice. She adjusted herself so she could rub the hard button, gasping in pleasure at the feel of flesh on flesh.

“Oh God, Chastity, I’m going to come inside you, sweetheart.” She moaned in answer and pushed her ass to meet him, thrust for thrust.

He pumped her hard and groaned as the waves of her own orgasm built over her. Wash after wash of pleasure moved through her brain as the cock in her tight ass pulsed with the unleashing of his orgasm.

She closed her eyes for a moment and felt his body, heavy and delicious, cover hers with a sigh.

Chapter Seven

Dave sat up, yawned and blinked. *What time is it?* His gaze lit on the clock in the corner. Seven thirty-six.

Something was off. He looked around. The lights weren't on, but a glow came from under the bedroom door. He furrowed his brow trying to remember. He swung his legs over the edge of the bed and memory flooded his brain. The beautiful, naked woman in his bed, the sex, the smell of her hair, the feel of her, warm and sweet against him. All of it. "Damn." What the hell had he done?

Hesitantly, he wrapped his robe around his shoulders and walked into the living room. A movement at the sink caught his eye. She stood there, disheveled and clean looking, with damp tendrils of hair clinging to her face from what he suspected was a shower. She smiled.

"Hi, um, I made coffee." Her hands fluttered in the air. Why was she so nervous? He ran a hand over his face. The indentations where he drew his eyebrows together were a telling clue. He must look like a grumbly old bear to her.

She pulled a chipped mug from the open shelves above the sink and poured a cup of coffee. "Sugar or cream? I don't know that. How can I not know that? I always know that about the men I—"

"Fuck?"

She looked up, her storm grey eyes wide with shock and what looked like hurt. Shit, he was being an ass. "I'm sorry. Black's fine."

She brightened. "Do you want breakfast? I can whip something up..."

He shrugged. "I don't normally eat anything but cereal, but if you'd like..." He sat and sipped the coffee, then pulled the mug back and looked down at the contents with a frown.

"Is something wrong?"

He jumped. She'd managed to sneak up behind him and drop a hand on his shoulder. He was pretty sure the gesture was meant to be comforting, but something about it made him nervous.

"No, the coffee's fine. It's just that..."

She sat across from him, another one of his chipped, mismatched mugs held tightly between her hands. “This is a little awkward?”

His smile felt grim. “It’s not a typical morning after the night before. That’s all.”

She laughed. The sound was high-pitched and tremulous. Part of him wanted to comfort her, make small talk, eat a hearty breakfast, then... *Take her back to bed and fuck her senseless. Wake up, eat and do it again every day until he died.* Part of him wanted to run screaming into the woods like his brother had. He hid his emotions in a scalding sip of the dark brew. Damn, the woman was adorable, funny, smart, got to him sexually like no other woman ever had and made a fabulous cup of coffee. Too bad this would go no further. He put his cup down.

“Chastity—”

“Chas. My friends call me Chas.”

He raised a brow. “And you’ve labeled me a friend?”

Her hands fluttered again, this time knocking over her almost empty coffee cup, spilling thick, dark liquid in a puddle over the polished maple of the table. She jumped to her feet. “Oh God, Dave. I am so sorry.”

“It’s all right. Just sit down. I’ll get it.”

He watched her place her hands on both cheeks for a moment, then drop them to her seat and clasp them together in her lap. Hair still damp, in a T-shirt and jeans, she looked young, vulnerable and totally adorable. He felt his cock twitch in appreciation. He frowned down at the table and began to wipe up the spilled coffee with sweeping strokes of paper towel.

“I’m sorry. I just don’t know what to say right now. I mean. Well, I have stuff to say, but I don’t know you, anything about you, not really and...”

He looked into her eyes. Tears gathered in the corners. A small movement drew his attention to her mouth, which trembled slightly. Oh crap, was he about to break her heart? No, she’d not known him long enough to have any real feelings and even if she did, she’d get over it. There was no room for a woman in his life. Especially a soft, vulnerable, smart and adorable woman he could... What? Fall in love with? Not likely. He fought back a snort of derision and sank back into his seat. No longer hot, the lukewarm sip tasted bitter on his tongue.

He leaned forward. “Look, what happened last night and back in March. Well, it wasn’t a mistake, but... I’m not a man who sticks around long.”

She stood, picked up her coffee cup and grabbed his out of his hand. With a toss of her head, she marched to the sink and began to hurriedly wash them.

“Chastity, I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

She turned then. Uh-oh, he’d made a mistake. She didn’t look sad, she looked pissed. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “I see. You didn’t mean to hurt me, just fuck me and move me on my merry way. Well then, all’s fair. After all, it’s what I did to you. I’ll just gather my things and go. I can stay with my assistant tonight. She’s supposed to have a private room, it’s in her contract, but she’ll get over it.” She carefully dried her hands on the worn towel next to the sink and headed towards his bedroom.

He stood. “Chastity. Listen, it’s not what you think.”

He watched her stop mid-step and turn towards him. Her eyes narrowed and her hair slapped damply around her head.

“It’s not? What I think is that you had some amazing sex with someone you never expected to have feelings for. I think that you’re scared to death and are so used to your heart being a frozen barren wasteland that you’re afraid you’re going to melt if it’s thawed.” She took a step towards him and punctuated the words with points of her fingers. “I *think* that you are afraid you’re going to end up just like your brother. Living alone on some homestead muttering to yourself about how unfair life is. That’s what I think. Am I wrong?” She crossed her arms in front of her, clammed up and waited. Probably for a reply. His hand strayed to his hair and he pulled his fingers through it.

Now what? Tell her the truth? That she was closer than she knew? “Look, I know I’m an ass. I’m sorry, but what do you want from me? Marriage? Children? I’m not that guy. I’m a guy who—”

“Has one-night stands with women to prove he’s a real man, then boots them out the next day when reality sets in?” She held up a hand. “Never mind, don’t answer that. I don’t really want to know the truth.” Her hand swiped at her eyes. Shit, she was crying.

“I’m sorry, Chastity, I didn’t mean to hurt you. I didn’t plan any of this.”

She pinched the skin at the bridge of her nose, nodded and sighed. “I know, Dave. I’m sorry. I’m equally responsible for last night. Especially after Chicago. I’d like to blame you, I really would, but I can’t. I have terrible taste in men. You’re just one in a long line of failures.” She laughed. It sounded sad and off-kilter. “Oh well, at least my work here is a success. I have some women with some real prospects and you know what they say, those who can’t do, teach.” She hiccupped once, turned and disappeared into his bedroom. He thought about following her, but what for? What would he say? He was a heel. The dirty boot heel of the barn-mucking boots his dad used to wear. He sat back down at the table and hung his head in what he could only refer to as an old-fashioned sulk.

She wasn't long. In what seemed like only minutes she emerged from the bedroom, bags in hand. "I'm sorry to ask this, but..."

"Yep, I'll drive you into town."

She shook her head. "No, just my things. I think a walk will do me good. You can drop them off at the hotel."

"Are you sure?"

She nodded. "I think I need some space right now. I have some serious thinking to do."

Dave felt like an ass, but she was so close he drew her into his arms and placed his lips on hers. The kiss seemed to melt some of his pain, entwining them in a way he could not put into words. She pulled back first and looked up at him, the sorrow in her eyes spilling over in the form of silent tears. His heart lurched and he wiped the liquid that ran down her cheek with his thumb.

"Please, don't. I can't..."

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings."

She smiled a half smile at him, reached up and caressed his face. "Julius Caesar." She turned and walked out of his life.

Chapter Eight

“You have got to snap out of it, girl. It’s been a month already. Your mope time for boot man is so over.”

She sighed. “You’re right, Freddie. It’s just that I got a letter from Poppy saying she’s engaged to Bill and moving, lock, stock and barrel, to Smithfield, Alaska.”

“Well I, for one, don’t know why you’re so surprised. There’s someone for everyone. Even that horrible shrew.”

Chastity sipped her orange spiced tea and made herself more comfortable. In the time she’d been home she’d spent a lot of her free time hiding out at Freddie’s, hating her sterile apartment more and more. She loved her work and was busy scouting towns for next year, but her heart felt lost. She missed Dave. How the hell you could miss someone so much you knew so little was beyond her, but she did.

A finger snapped in front of her face. “You’re not listening. Climb off the love train for a minute and pay attention to the bitchy diva.”

“Oh for crying out loud, Freddie. I am most certainly *not* in love.”

“You’re floating down a river named denial and your barge is leaking there, Miss Cleopatra. Grab the asp already and deal with the poison. You’re in love. Deeply in love, head over heels in love and he’s a bazillion miles away. Sheesh, and you think I’m overdramatic.”

Chastity’s eyes went wide. “Oh dang.”

“Oh dang, what?”

“Freddie, I’m in love with Dave like-the-boot Wellington.”

“Well praise the Gods and pass the champagne. Now, what the hell are you going to do about it?”

She shrugged. “Nothing. He’s out of my life. I just have to go on.”

“Well damn, girl, fight for your man.”

“I can’t, Freddie. I feel like a big enough fool as it is.”

“Well, if you’re not willing to stalk the man to the point of a restraining order, can it really be love?”

She shook her head. "It was just one of those summer things." Damn, she was about to cry again. She'd been mopey as hell since she'd been home. Eating too much, then too little and sleeping more than she should. Crying was the last straw.

"Okay, which fabulous frock?"

She sat up. The least she could do was help Freddie put his ensemble together. It felt better when she got her mind off her own quagmire. "Hmmm, is the new boy-toy going to be there?"

Freddie nodded proudly.

"Then I think the silver lamé. It's over the top, but who else but a diva drag queen could carry it off?"

"God, you're fabu. How do you do it? Can I borrow your silver chandelier earrings?"

Chastity waved. "You can have them. I have no place to wear them. I'm reformed. I'll be a jeans and tight T-shirts girl from now on."

"Well, hallelujah, someone's starting to come around. Feel better since you admitted you love him, don't you?"

Chastity thought for a moment. "You know what? I think I do. Huh, imagine that. I almost feel normal, except for this big empty space."

"In your vagina?"

"*Freddie!* Shut up. I'm going to get the earrings now."

"Don't bother, honey. Sit there and ruminate on your lost love. I'll run and get them. You left it unlocked?"

Chastity nodded.

"Be right back then." He blew an air kiss her way and headed out the door.

Chastity smiled. Freddie had a way of picking her up when it seemed like the whole world was out to get her. She sipped her tea absently. She missed Dave, wanted to be with him. How the hell she managed to fall in love so damn fast was beyond her, but she did. Now that she acknowledged it, she knew in her gut she'd developed feelings and a connection for him that she'd not felt before. She hurt, but she'd get over it. It might take time, but she'd go on with her life. She was already busy planning next summer's assault on the Land of the Midnight Sun. Only this time, she was putting a chastity belt on first. She snorted.

"I crack myself up."

The door clicked open. "Find them, Freddie?"

"The course of true love never did run smooth."

Her head whipped around and she jumped to her feet, spilling the remains of her tea on Freddie's coffee table. "Oh my God..."

"You're supposed to say, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'."

"I, uh, what are you doing here?"

"Looking for you. I ran into your neighbor. He said he needed some new nail polish and would be back in a bit. Nice guy." Dave took a step towards her. "Your friend—Freddie, was it?—mentioned you'd just had some epiphany regarding some guy from Alaska. Care to share?"

She blushed. "I, um, we were talking about you and he asked me a question. I said that I love you. What are you doing here?" She sucked in a breath to make up for the long one she'd let those words out on.

One more step brought him in front of her. "You love me?"

"Well, that's the gist of it. I want you to know you don't have to worry, I can get over you."

"I'm surprised."

She crossed her arms. "Why? Do you think you're so damn appealing that no one can get over you? Well, if you are—"

His hand came up and covered her mouth. "Chastity, I have something to say to you, but you won't hear it if you're busy berating me. Are you listening?"

She nodded.

"Good. What I meant to say is that I'm surprised you can get over me, 'cause I can't seem to get over you."

Eyes wide, she searched his face, but only saw sincerity and what looked suspiciously like love there. He let go of her mouth. "I've been waiting to do this for a month now." He pulled her close, placed his lips on hers and kissed her. His mouth felt so good and that smell that was all him wrapped around her like a warm blanket on a blustery night. He broke the kiss and pulled back.

"I love you and I was wondering if you'd like to try running your operation from Smithfield for a while to see how it goes between us. I wouldn't plan on moving back here though. I'd ask you to marry me tonight, if I didn't think I would scare you off."

"I thought you didn't believe in love and most especially, love at first sight?"

"Yeah, well as it turns out, I'm a moron."

She smiled and hugged him tight. "Yeah. I guess you are."

"Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps."

"'Much Ado About Nothing'?"

“Tricked into love. There’s a moral there.”

“That you’re an overconfident ass, like Benedict?”

“Only without you.”

About the Author

Nancy Liedel, writing as Nancy Lindquist, is the happily married mother of four boys (no, she is not going to try for a girl!). Two adopted and two made the old-fashioned way.

Nancy never does anything by half measures. She adores travel, and her favorite trips are once yearly weekends in Las Vegas and as many cruises as she can talk her husband into. Her cruise history includes the listing event on Crown Princess in 2006. This did not stop her. She booked another cruise on the Crown the moment she got home! She's traveled to many other countries and has never had a travel experience she would not repeat.

As a writer of erotic romance, Nancy is always taking mental notes wherever she goes. Nancy loves life and attacks it with gusto, leaving her wonderful husband and number one inspiration, Gene, to follow along laughing and shaking his head in her wake.

A lover of romance since she was passed *Shanna* under the table in tenth grade study hall by a friend of hers, Nancy finds the uninhibited world of Erotic Romance to be the perfect foil for her wit and naughty imagination.

To learn more about Nancy, please visit www.nancyindquist.com or visit her blog at www.blog.liedel.org. Send an email to Nancy at nancy@liedel.org.

Look for these titles by Nancy Lindquist

Now Available:

How to Conjure a Man
Lady Lillian's Guide to Amazing Sex
Ladies! Meet Red Hot Alaskan Men

When all else fails, what's a girl to do? Conjure your own man, of course!

How to Conjure a Man

© 2006 Nancy Lindquist

Available now at Samhain Publishing

Becky Blake is through with vibrators. Well, to be honest, her vibrator's through with her. The damn thing actually conked out, mid-fantasy. Time for desperate measures. Armed with thirty pounds of candles and a spell created by her best friend and strip mall witch, she heads into the desert to conjure a man.

It's freezing, dark and more than a little creepy. On top of that there's a coyote hanging around howling loud enough to scare her to bits. Please, let this spell work.

Rick Frazier's done with manipulative women. His ex-wife is bleeding him dry. His wallet is almost as hungry as he is. It's time to get a second job, as a bartender at 'The Buckin' Bronco All Male Review'. At least it will pay the bills until he sells his software program.

Back in the real world of work and lonely routine, Becky has nothing to show for her desert efforts except an erotic dream that leaves her more frustrated than fulfilled. That is until her new employee shows up. It doesn't take long to put two and two together. Rick, her new bartender, is the man she conjured in the desert.

Their chemistry is magnetic, drawing them together in a lightning blast of hot passion and incredible sex. Is this true love or the result of a magic spell cast on a cold dark night?

Enjoy the following excerpt for *How to Conjure a Man*:

Holy shit. Scratch that. Holy fucking shit! His hands moved to his eyes to rub away the remnants of sleep. He needed to be sure the image his brain processed was really there. Yep, Becky still rode the pole, spinning like a top to the throbbing beat of heavy metal. Hot damn, she looked amazing. Where the hell had she learned to strip like that? He'd almost come in his jeans when she'd ripped her dress off her tight curvy body. Now she was a goddess in sinful red, long hair flying behind her, a feral half-aware look on her beautiful face.

He had the vague notion that he should return to the couch in the dressing room. Just slip quietly back to sleep and stop invading her privacy. Clearly she had no idea he'd slept there to keep an eye on her. He doubted she'd be dancing almost nude if she knew

he ogled her, a voyeur in the dark bar. Maybe he should cough, let on that he was standing not five feet from the stage, staring at one of her nipples as it escaped the confines of her bra? Screw it. Watching her dance so provocatively mesmerized him. He couldn't speak if his life depended on it, let alone suck in enough air in to cough.

She dropped to her hands and knees, all stalking animal and sex as she clawed her way across the stage. Her tight body showed off sleek muscle beneath tanned skin. Her breasts, full and high under the lace of her bra, begged to be freed. Damn, his cock was hard. If she took off that bra he was done for.

Laying, back she V'd her legs in the air, giving him a glorious display of bunched muscle filled out with soft curves. She pulled her legs beneath her and, rising gracefully, danced to the pole once again. While her legs wrapped around the shining length like a pro, he envisioned them encircling his body. He'd made her promises. Meant every word of them. But right now, sitting on the edge of a table not far from the stage, his cock filling out the front of sweats, he questioned every damn one of them. He was in pain and not sure how much more he her. The red lace and satin landed smack in Rick's hands.

Did she know he was there? Could she feel his presence in the room? No, the stage lights prevented anyone from seeing into the audience more than a few feet. She had no clue what she was doing to him, how hard she'd made his cock. How much he wanted to thrust it into her aching cunt over and over again.

That she was unaware she had an audience made her show all the hotter. Bending over once more, her thumbs hooked the elastic sides of her thong. Exposing her ass, she pulled them down her legs in one smooth motion. Her nether lips were now visible at the apex of her thighs. A glorious pink pouting display. He'd not had time to admire her pretty bare pussy the night before, now then rubbed over it as her mouth formed in a needy "O".

Rick's hand moved to the front of his sweats. He intended to just shift his cock to make it more comfortable, but his rebellious hand stroked it several times through the soft fabric as he watched her touch herself. His member ached and his mouth watered at the self-inflicted assault on her damp pink flesh.

He must have made some small sound, groaned his desire loud enough to be heard over the music, because her slender fingers stilled and her eyes widened. Blindly, she searched the bright wash of light for the source of the noise.

"Is there someone there?"

There was fear in her voice. He thought about sneaking out, pretending he'd never been there, but that would have been cruel. Standing up now, she reached for her dress and shielded her gorgeous body from his view.

“Hello? Is anybody there?” This time a note of panic crept in at the end of her sentence. He was caught. The best course of action was to speak up. Tell her he was there and allay her fears.

“Sorry, Becky, it’s just me. I didn’t mean to scare you, sweetheart.”

“Rick? Is that you?” He could be wrong, but he could swear he heard hope in her tone.

*What does a girl do when she catches her fiancé in her bed with a hooker? Start over—
this time with her eyes wide open.*

Lady Lillian's Guide to Amazing Sex

© 2007 Nancy Lindquist

Available now at Samhain Publishing

Lisa Simpkins is newly single. Catching your fiancé being sodomized by a hooker can do that to a relationship. Unfortunately for Lisa, this mess put a huge kink in her carefully orchestrated life plan.

Good thing her best friend, Gina, can talk Lisa into anything, including a makeover complete with sex toys and a collection of highly erotic DVDs. Gina's determined to bring out Lisa's inner wild woman. Even if that wild woman comes along kicking and screaming.

Imagine Gina's glee when they run into Matt Richards, the oh-so-hot junior partner who stars in Lisa's torrid fantasies. The mission is clear. Get Matt to teach Lisa all about sex. Lisa's not sure about Gina's plan, but the man is gorgeous, smart and funny. Will Matt conquer Lisa's fear of falling in love again or will their tryst end when Matt teaches Lisa everything he knows?

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Lady Lillian's Guide to Amazing Sex*:

"Three and this is the last rule. Our relationship is a limited-time engagement. You show me what you think I need to know and it's over. Agreed?"

Again that heart-stopping hesitation. "What if we don't want it to end?" His voice was soft and honey-thick. He turned, his gaze pinned her in place, the intense longing in his eyes transfixed her.

"We can negotiate that part later." Confused by the mixed feelings that coursed through her, she walked to the window. She stared at the view beyond, tried to find courage in the twinkling lights of the city below to say what came next. "When do we start?"

He stood behind her, silent. His mouth came to rest mere inches from her right ear. Hot breath tickled her neck. His fingers slipped over her shoulders reassuringly. One hand traveled over her collarbone, shifted lower, coming to rest at the top of her right breast. "Tonight? Or would you rather wait?" Seduction filled his voice and mixed with the raw need she heard there.

"Matt, I want to, but I don't have protection."

She saw his smile reflected in the glass. “We don’t need to go from point A to point Z tonight, do we? There are other things...”

She laughed. “I guess you’re right. I just thought...I see where you’re coming from now.”

“I want to pleasure you, Lisa.”

She sucked a deep breath into her lungs. “You know, I’ve never—” She stopped, her cheeks heated. “I guess what I’m trying to say is, I want to please you.”

She heard the sharp hiss of his indrawn breath.

“I’d like that. If it’s what you want to do.” His deep voice rasped in her ear, sending chills down to her wet pussy.

Suddenly her courage left her, blew right out of her lungs. “Matt.”

He kissed her collarbone. “Mmm?”

“I’m pretty scared,” she admitted weakly.

He gently pressed her shoulders, turning her to face him. His eyes were kind and sincere. “I’ll never hurt you. I want you to trust me, but to be honest, I like you a little off balance. It’s appealing. You’re normally so in control.”

“Me?” she squeaked with a half-laugh. “I think you have the wrong idea about me, Matt Richards. I’m scared to death most of the time.”

He smiled. “You hide it well, Lisa.”

Boldly, she ran her hand down his shirt, feeling the muscles below the soft cotton. She stopped when she reached his very erect cock and giggled. “I’m sort of at a loss as to what to do next here. I think you might have to show me.” His teeth flashed white against the background of his tan skin. “I think I can manage that.” He took her hand and placed it over his cock. She could feel it through his trousers, thick and long. While it wasn’t the huge monster she’d been afraid it would be when she’d glimpsed his erection under the table, it was larger than the few she’d felt before.

Tentatively, she stroked him through the fabric. His warm breath brushed across her neck, becoming heavier and shorter. Fascinating, the reaction merely touching him produced. This could be quite an interesting experiment. His tongue began to lazily trace her neck and the shell of her ear. He moaned softly as she nervously squeezed her hand around him a bit, then her grip grew harder, more bold. With his free arm, he pulled her tightly against him.

Her gaze was drawn to their reflected images in the glass of the mirror over the dresser. She wanted to hide, to not see what was clearly replicated in her countenance—the hot need for him. She looked like one of the women in the DVDs she had watched so

closely the night before and it frightened her, but underneath the fear, excitement bubbled through her veins, driving her on. "Should we draw the curtains and go to the bed?"

She saw his slow, sexy smile mirrored in the glass. "No, stay here." The whisper so quiet she almost missed it, yet too erotic to ignore.

"Undress me, Lisa," he urged. She reached for the buckle on his pants. Carefully, she pulled them from around his hips, exposing the soft skin over the hard steel of his erection. It was thick, thicker than she was used to, but definitely not a monster.

She gazed with fascination at his hard penis and reached out her hand to touch the tip. It moved in her hand as she gently stroked it. She smiled up into Matt's glittering eyes. God, she wanted this, wanted to touch him, taste him, smell the heat and maleness of him as she licked every incredible inch of him.

He lightly rested his hands on her shoulders and lowered his mouth to hers. He invaded her, his tongue stroking over her mouth. At first she let him, too stunned to give back the pleasure she received. This kiss was a warm welcome to a world she'd only imagined. She'd thought she understood passion, sex and all that came with it, but this incredibly hot mating of her mouth with his was an abrupt and glorious awakening. She began to give as well as take. Her tongue reached for his, her teeth sharp yet gentle on his lips. He gasped, parodying the act of sex in her mouth with his tongue. She pulled away from him, she had to. She couldn't think, her breath came in panting gasps. Their gazes met once more. Raw sexual need filled the brown depths of Matt's eyes, almost alarmingly so, but it made her feel powerful. She knew she'd placed it there. No one had ever reacted this way to her. The feel of the heat between them stunned her.

She knew what he wanted, felt it in his touch, saw it in his eyes. She shuddered and knelt before him. She listened to his ragged breathing. Probably the result of anticipation. His gorgeous thick cock bobbed at the level of her mouth. She took his hardness into her hands. Her strokes becoming bolder, more purposeful. He moaned above her. His hips moved forward to match her touch.

She focused on his powerful, muscular legs as they bore his weight. Her gaze drifted up. He still wore his shirt, the black fabric tightly covering his chest, up further until her eyes collided with the deep brown hungry depths of his. His assessing observation made her want to make this man shake with orgasm, pleasure him beyond his wildest dreams. Without taking her gaze from his, she darted her tongue out to lick the mushroom-shaped tip of his cock.

He shivered in pleasure and she licked again. This time she swirled her tongue over the head. She loved the feel and taste of him, the musky male scent of his most private areas now available to her lips, teeth and tongue. Her eyes closed in delight at the feel of

him in her mouth. She almost laughed in glee. This moment far outshone every fantasy she'd had of Matt Richards.

This summer, it's going to be Steamy...

**Samhain Publishing Presents
Midsummer Night's Steam
24 Sizzling ebooks
\$2.50 each**

Duty wars with affection when Racor's greatest spy must decide who to trust, the evidence against her sexy suspects, or her heart?

A Scorching Seduction

© 2007 Marie Harte

Lt. Col. Trace N'Tre and Assassin Vaan C'Vail are hiding out in the only place the military can't touch them—on a pleasure planet in an island resort owned by Vaan's cousin. Gathering evidence on the outside, they know it's only a matter of time before they'll have to face their accuser, a high official in the Racor government.

Unbeknownst to them, Myst, Racor's greatest spy, has had her eyes on them for some time. The puzzle of these two alleged traitors doesn't fit, and Myst has made it her mission to find out why. But when the tables are turned and she's caught spying under the planet's hot summer suns, pleasure and affection confuse the issue, making her wonder who to trust—her heart, or the evidence against her lovers.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, frank language, ménage, m/m action, and hot sweaty adventure.

A young minister's celibacy is challenged by an earthy, Appalachian woman.

Blackberry Pie

© 2007 Bonnie Dee

On a blistering summer afternoon, Reverend Nathan Andrews climbs a mountain to meet backwoods members of his congregation. Fresh from seminary, the young man isn't prepared for the onslaught of lust that hits him when he encounters a sensuous girl picking blackberries.

Determined to implement his outreach plan, he helps her harvest the fruit. But their potent sexual chemistry is too intense to deny and they engage in passionate sex surrounded by the beauty of nature.

Grace is earthy and primal, the opposite of the proper young lady he expects to take as a wife some day. Can there possibly be a future for a college-educated minister and a primitive mountain girl?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language.

Can a straight-laced business student and an indie boy with a thing for extremely personal electronics turn one night's wild ride into a trip to last forever?

Catching a Buzz

© 2007 Ally Blue

Adam Holderman isn't your typical twenty-something college boy. He prefers jazz to Goth, shuns body piercings and street-waif clothing, and despises the lack of vocabulary among his peers. Some call him uptight, but Adam doesn't see it that way. Just because he prefers his men articulate and well-groomed doesn't make him a stick-in-the-mud. He simply has standards, unlike most guys his age.

The new employee at Wild Waters Park, where Adam works, single-handedly throws a monkey wrench into Adam's orderly world view. Buzz Stiles wears eyeliner and black clothes, listens to emo bands, and talks like a teenage skate punk. He's the polar opposite of Adam's avowed "type". So why can't Adam get him out of his head?

When Adam finally agrees to go out with Buzz, he finds there's much more to Buzz than a hot body, a sharp wit, and a Goth fashion sense. Buzz is someone Adam can see himself being with for the long haul. But you need more than mind-melting sex to make a relationship last. Can they keep their hands off each other long enough to find out if they have what it takes?

Warning, this title contains the following: graphic language, explicit male/male sex, inappropriate use of personal electronic devices, and gratuitous disco dancing.

Her boyfriend is back...and that's a major problem. Antonia isn't ready to face the one man who shakes up her world...

Full Disclosure

© 2007 Mary Wine

Antonia doesn't need to look at forbidden fruit. The taste still clings to her lips, haunting her with just how good she and Danton had been together...

...Right up until he informed her that he had to get married because he was going to be a father. That just made it worse. Inside him was a man worth dreaming about, even if she knew it was in vain.

Danton always double-checked his facts. It was a habit that kept him alive during missions that should have killed him. His impromptu wedding was no exception. There wasn't going to be any consummation of the vows until he had a paternity test. But doing the right thing had cost him the one woman he loved.

Until the test came back negative. Now there is nothing that will stop him from coming back with the prize he'd been forced to abandon three months ago. Toni was going to be his, right after she got the full disclosure on his hasty wedding and the blunt fact that he loved her.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language and bondage bedroom games with toys.

Does a full moon really cause naughty behavior?

Bad Moon Rising

© 2007 Leeanne Kenedy

Hailey Burke has heard that full moons cause people to behave in strange ways, but she never thought it would apply to her until the night she winds up in bed with a man she doesn't even like. So she'd had a temporary loss of sanity when she slept with Zack Creighton, the womanizing photographer. Big deal. Doesn't mean she's going to do it again, right?

Wrong.

Unfortunately, Zack has something else in store for Hailey. He's liked the sassy redhead from the moment he met her, but he can't get the stubborn woman to let go of the misconceptions she's formed about him. Sure, he's played the field, but Zack is no womanizer, and he has no intention of leaving things at one night. Once he's had a taste of Hailey, he wants another. And he's determined to convince her that he's not the bad boy she's always thought.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language.

How can masturbating in a hotel Jacuzzi lead to love? Cassidy Yates is about to find out.

Beyond the Tears

© 2007 Michelle Cary

A year after her husband died while serving in Iraq, Cassidy Yates still nurses a broken heart. Thinking a vacation will help, she agrees to a week in Key West with her best friend, April. Upon arrival, April suggests a way for Cassidy to ease her pain—sleep with the sexiest stud she can find.

Not the type to bed hop, Cassidy refuses April's idea and ends up alone. Abandoned by her friend, Cassidy decides to take a nighttime swim. In the Jacuzzi, she masturbates to the memories of making love to her husband. Mortified by her own behavior, Cassidy retreats to her hotel room, hoping no one witnessed her exhibition.

Chase Dempsey is a man with rugged good looks and a killer smile. He isn't looking to fall in love and only wants few days of relaxation before returning to his Texas ranch. Still, he's curious after watching Cassidy's erotic display and wonders what makes the gorgeous redhead tick. When he finds her dropped sarong, he realizes she's just given him the opportunity to find out...

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex and graphic language.

Is their passion real, or only a mirage?

La Mirage

© 2007 Jennifer Colgan

On a lonely stretch of I-95 in the middle of the Nevada desert, journalist Savanna Blaine and photographer Ben Lantano find themselves stranded by engine trouble on their way back from an assignment. Their quest for a gas station leads them to La Mirage, a beautiful resort nestled in a secluded canyon where they are the only guests.

Invited to spend the night in lush accommodations, passion flares between Savanna and Ben who have suppressed their hidden desires long enough. A single touch ignites an unforgettable night in each other's arms, but the next day, when La Mirage mysteriously

disappears, they're left to wonder, is their newfound intimacy real or nothing more than a trick of the summer heat?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, oral sex.

One tempting heiress. Two sexy cowboys. Three means fun beyond her wildest dreams—until her Cord starts to unravel.

Take Me

© 2007 Mackenzie McKade

Thoroughbred rancher's daughter Caitlyn Culver has always wanted playboy Cord Daily, even after her daddy threatened to bankrupt him. But winning a racehorse in a poker game means Cord is no longer just a cattle rancher. He's come back wealthier and more wicked than ever.

Snaring this cowboy won't be easy for Cait, and keeping him will be even harder. Still, his sexual antics and taste for ménages won't scare her off. She knows the best way to snag a man like Cord is to pretend indifference. So when he comes onto her in the barn, she plays along—only to leave him tied to a ladder, aroused and unfulfilled.

It's payback time.

Cord seeks out Cait and brings along his playboy cousin, Dolan Crane. The two cowboys are enough to set her body afire. She's bound and determined to resist their sexual allure, but ends up experiencing a night beyond her wildest fantasies. Now Dolan wants Cait for himself. Cait's father wants Cord's racehorse. And Cord wants Caitlyn to choose—her father's money or her cowboy's love.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, ménage à trois, and BDSM.

Can a jaded lawyer and a reformed criminal really find true love in the tropics?

Fijian Fling

© 2007 Sami Lee

Dumped by her boyfriend and on thin ice in her law career, Sophie Edison badly needs to re-evaluate her life. She escapes to her favorite hideaway on the tropical island of Fiji, where the attentions of the resort owner – the enigmatic and lethally sexy Dominick ‘Nick’ Dufour – prove a temptation too great to resist. Nick’s obvious desire to take her to bed is just the salve her battered confidence needs, and she embarks on an affair that leads her to uncharted waters. Before long she starts to wonder if she can ever go back to her old life.

Nick has lusted after Sophie for years. When she turns up at his secluded resort alone for the first time he wastes no time in making her his lover. Sophie is his perfect match in bed, and in the ocean and the shower...but although he might long for something more, Nick knows theirs is just a holiday fling. For he is keeping the secret of his checkered past from Sophie and it could prove the ultimate deal breaker...

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language.

Newlywed Catalina Robinson thinks it's not possible to be more satisfied...but then she learns what it's like to love two men.

Honeymoon Castaways

© 2007 Dawn Halliday

Cat has just married Dave Robinson, the man of her dreams. Their Best Man, Andreas Bailey, is flying them to their honeymoon resort in Barbados. But over the middle of the ocean, something goes horribly wrong...

Cat, Dave and Andreas find themselves stranded on an uninhabited Caribbean island. Though she's never thought of him as more than a friend, Cat finds herself connecting to Andreas in a way she never expected and is shocked and aroused to learn that her husband feels the same way. Together, the three of them discover a heat and passion uninhibited by the conventions of society. But will they ever be rescued? And what will happen to their unusual relationship once they return home?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, ménage a trois, voyeurism and skinny dipping.

Two men and a bottle of nut cream...

Nut Cream

© 2007 Jade Buchanan

Nut [nuht] noun, verb.

1. A dry fruit consisting of an edible kernel or meat enclosed in a woody or leathery shell.

2. Slang, Vulgar – a testis.

Cream [kreem] noun.

1. A soft solid or thick liquid containing medicaments or other specific ingredients, applied externally for a therapeutic, or cosmetic purpose.

2. Slang, Vulgar – to have an orgasm.

Toby Madison is coming into his mating phase, and is leaking pheromones all over the place. He is about to find out what happens to bad little wolves, in the best possible way. Cliff Bullen is more than ready to place his mark on the man he has always wanted as his mate – with a little help from a bottle of nut cream.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit male/male sex and graphic language.

Welcome to Fantasm Island! Leave your inhibitions at the door and let your fantasies soar.

Fantasmagorical

© 2007 Annmarie McKenna

That's what the brochure said anyway. A week long fling with a stranger. Where's the harm in that? Take a compatibility quiz and a slew of other health tests, sign a strict privacy agreement and give license to any sexual fantasy you've ever had. Evan Knight couldn't wait.

Gabe and Lance have been searching for their perfect third for what seems like forever. One look at the woman he and his best friend and lover Lance have chosen to claim during her time on the island, and Gabe thinks they may have finally found her.

But what if Evan isn't interested in more than the fling she signed up for? Or worse, what if she can't handle two men who are into each other too? Gabe and Lance have one

week to convince Evan that the three of them belong together...and they'll use every bit of seduction in their arsenal to make sure when the fantasy ends, their reality together will only just be beginning.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit fantasmagorical sex, graphic language, ménage a trois, and hot nekkid man-love.

Falling in lust with a sexy Elvis impersonator gets complicated when Vanessa discovers the real Elvis Presley may have hoaxed his death.

Hunk of Burnin' Love

© 2007 Veronica Wilde

Summer should mean hot men and toe-curling sex—at least that's what Vanessa believes, but a bad break-up has left her spending her summer nights alone. Then her sex life erupts into flames when she meets two very different Elvis impersonators on the same night. One is a sexy young musician who gets her all shook up in a steamy midnight swim. The other is a graying older man who looks just a little too much like Elvis Presley for comfort.

Vanessa can't help falling in love with her new summer hottie. But their burning love gets complicated when the mysterious older impersonator begins dropping disturbing hints about his true identity—hints that suggest Elvis Presley never died at all.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex and graphic language.

One hot summer night and a scorching balcony interlude light the fuse of hidden attraction between neighbors Jill Reed and Cole Adams.

One Night on a Balcony

© 2007 Samantha Lucas

Jill Reed has spent her entire life denying her sexuality, but living next door to Cole Adams the past few months has made it near impossible.

Cole is fresh off his third divorce and considers himself a one-man relationship train wreck. He purposefully keeps his lust for Jill in check because, after all, she's the kind of woman a man keeps.

Jill and Cole have been denying their bone-deep attraction for months, but one night on a balcony, passions ignite, an adventure starts and everything is about to change—forever.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, sex in a public place, graphic language.

Sometimes the truth is the greatest aphrodisiac.

Liaisons in Jubilee

© 2007 Jamie Craig

Katie Mayes is the Executive Manager for a large, east coast beach resort. Unfortunately, her boss has discovered her one secret – her seasonal flings with Caleb Beckett, the Entertainment Director for the resort. Company policy dictates no internal fraternization, especially between managers and their subordinates, so her boss gives Katie a choice. Caleb or her job.

She avoids personal encounters with Caleb, until one fateful night a week before the resort's big summer launch. Then, she runs into him at a local nightclub. When Caleb approaches her, she tries to give him the cold shoulder, but he follows her onto the dance floor where the music, her desire, and his persistence break her will. She claims it's only one more night before they break it off completely, but Caleb insists on more. Far from an ending, he views the summer as their true beginning.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, spanking, light bondage.

A bad marriage is like a fierce thunderstorm on a fragile field of wheat. Will a proud Texas cowboy and a stubborn Boston-bred lawyer find shelter from a real summer storm long enough to rebuild their love?

Second Wind

© 2007 Dee S. Knight

Cocky cowboy Rafe Walker doesn't plan to meet a beautiful woman in designer jeans and ostrich boots at the rodeo, but the beauty catches his gaze just before the gate opens for his bull ride. Talk about losing focus! With one glance, his thoughts are of sex-scented sheets, not hard, sawdust-covered dirt.

A city girl like her would never fit in on his ranch, but a weekend in Dallas? Yes, Ma'am, she'll do just fine. Little does he expect a ride wilder than with any bull. She grabs hold of his heart and his hottest fantasies and holds on tight.

Cathy Fitzgerald, raised in a wealthy eastern family, half falls in love with the rakish cowboy after one impulsive weekend of wild sex. She returns to Boston, breaks off her near engagement and waits to hear from Rafe. After months of silence, he surprises Cathy with a proposal. It's a shock to both of them when she accepts, and moves to his ranch in nowhere, Texas.

They soon find that passion alone can't sustain a marriage. Rafe's pride and Cathy's long hours at work breed distrust and broken hearts. Giving their marriage its second wind will take an act of nature.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex and graphic language.

Life's not always about the journey, but who takes you on the ride.

Custom Ride

© 2007 K.A. Mitchell

A stint in the Air Force left Ryan MacRae with a bitter memory of life in the closet. Jeff Allstein is a mechanic who has too much to lose if his private life becomes public. The heat of their attraction boils over on a stormy summer night, but satisfying that need only makes them both crave more.

Their searing connection makes it hard for Ryan to understand the road blocks Jeff continually puts down. Ryan will have to buckle up if he's going to find love at the end of his custom ride.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit male/male sex, graphic language.

What Leilani wants, Leilani gets...and she always gets her man.

Skin to Skin

© 2007 *Dionne Galace*

What Leilani wants, Leilani gets. That is, until she meets the enigmatic Oliver Clayton, her new neighbor. For some reason, Oliver seems to be intent on avoiding her even though he's obviously interested. Leilani has tried to everything to get his attention, from wearing skimpy little outfits to walking a neighbor's dog six times in front of his yard. Leilani wants Oliver...and she always gets her man.

In the heat of the summer, the temperature's not only thing rising. Luckily, Oliver has that pool in his backyard and Leilani knows just how to cool off...

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, light bondage.

Hot summer nights make people do crazy things.

Spontaneous

© 2007 *Karen Erickson*

Sophie Kincaid doesn't want to be attracted to her boss but she is. Sick and tired of being used by men, she's sworn them off. But her hot and now slightly drunk boss just became too hard to resist.

His girlfriend dumped him and now Ian Grey is drowning his sorrows in alcohol, something he never does. Flirting with Sophie the sexy bartender inspires him to do even more things he'd never consider. Like have hot sex with her in the storage room.

They can't deny their attraction for each other but Sophie's afraid she doesn't measure up. And what does Ian want from her anyway? She'll have a naked good time figuring it out...

Warning this title contains the following: Hot, steamy, explicit sex and graphic language.

Roping the naughty girl is all fun and games until someone falls in love.

Knotty Girl

© 2007 Maggie Casper

Shelby Langley was not sub, slave or Mistress, she was merely kinky. Point her to a BDSM club where she could watch and experience pretty much anything the mind could conjure, without the tangled web of an actual relationship, and she was in orgasmic bliss.

Long into the lifestyle, Craig Jensen was able to spot a submissive in denial from a mile away. Usually he left them be to find their own way, only keeping an eye out for their safety while on his turf, but there was something about the sweet, young blonde who had a love for rope bondage that called for him to claim her as his own.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, anal play and an overall spanking good time.

When a school teacher with a backbone of steel meets a hard-nosed lawman, more than the desert will heat up.

Marielle's Marshal

© 2007 Beth Williamson

Marielle Bloom never expected to be the victim of a stagecoach robbery stranded in the desert in the middle of summer with a sexy marshal who sets her body on fire with one look from his steely eyes.

Marshal Ramsey Whitfield doesn't know what to make of the outspoken teacher, but he does know she feels perfect in his arms. As they trek together across the barren landscape, searching for civilization, they discover that their desire for each other is hotter than the desert sand.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, violence.

When a man who isn't human is accidentally enslaved by a woman who has no idea what he is, the result is magical.

Sealed With a Kiss

© 2007 Lila Dubois

Signing up for a one-week adventure vacation, Helena expects to be kayaking in the Pacific, not having every sexual fantasy fulfilled in her guide's bed.

Ocean is more than he seems, his kayaking business a cover for his deepest secret.

When Helena accidentally enacts old magic, enslaving Ocean, he doesn't know if she is the luckiest girl on earth, or an enemy of his kind, bent on imprisoning him forever. Ocean's strange behavior worries Helena but she's distracted by the mind-blowing sex.

After the truth is revealed, will their budding love be Sealed with a Kiss?

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, voyeurism, and fantasy fulfillment.

When his girlfriend demands he settle down and start a family, Cole Winchester has some hard decisions to make. Marry his girlfriend, or finally own up to his taboo attraction to other men.

Taboo Desires

© 2007 Amanda Young

Cole Winchester feels like a rat, boxed into a corner. Faced with the prospect of being trapped in a passionless marriage, he makes the hard choice to end his relationship.

A run in with an old friend on the beach, propels Cole's fantasies out into the open and forces him to confront his taboo desires. Before him, lies the choice of a lifetime—embrace his desire for another man and all the pitfalls that come along with it, or return to his girlfriend and live out the safe half-life he carved for himself.

Warning, this title contains the following: explicit sex, graphic language, and hot nekkid man-love.

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