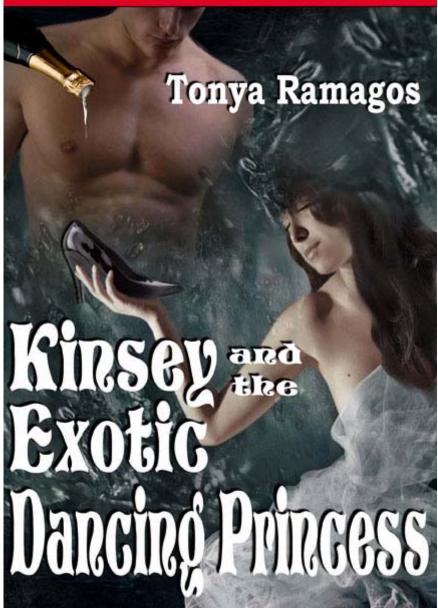
SIREN ADULT FAIRY TALE



A Siren Adult Fairy Tale

Kinsey and the

Exotic Dancing Princess

Being a princess isn't all its cracked up to be. Even as she reaches adulthood, Princess Damita feels suffocated by the king and queen. Damita longs to experience life as a normal woman. She sneaks from her room at night and finds her way to the neighboring village.

Soon the king discovers that Damita is up to something and issues a proclamation.

All Kinsey must do is discover where Princess Damita spends her nights and he will be rich, but will he be richer with Damita as his lover?

Sensuality Rating: SCORCHING Genre: Erotic Fairy Tale Length: Novella

KINSEY AND THE EXOTIC DANCING PRINCESS

A Siren Adult Fairy Tale

Tonya Ramagos

EROTIC ROMANCE



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First E-book Publication: May 2007

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PUBLISHER

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KINSEY AND THE EXOTIC DANCING PRINCESS

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Chapter 1

The king's anger pierced the air like a razor sharp dart. Princess Damita crept to the partially open door of her parents' bedchamber and listened with bated breath. She could just see her mother, the queen, through the crack in the doorway. Though she couldn't see her father, she heard his voice loud and clear.

"She has been leaving her room at night," the king raged.

"How can she when you lock her door from the outside every evening at dusk and do not unlock it until just before dawn each morning?" the queen asked in the reasonable voice Damita heard so often from her.

"I know not but I assure you I will find out. You defend her, yet how do you explain *these*?" A hand shot out, thrusting a pair of

shiny black heels into the queen's arms. "Look at the soles so worn, the heels scuffed. Look at the toes scratched beyond polish. Explain to me how this can be if she is truly remaining locked in her room all night."

The queen's gaze darted almost imperceptivity to where Damita eavesdropped in the hall. "I cannot."

"She has found a way out of that room," the king insisted. "I will find out how. I will find out what she does by the light of the moon."

"What do you intend to do, my King? Surely you can not keep watch over her throughout every night."

"No. I will not."

Damita saw his tall, robust figure pass the slightly open doorway then disappear from sight only to pass once again mere seconds later. His chin tucked in his hand, head down as he paced, he didn't look toward the door where he surely would have spotted her listening. Her heart pounded hard in her chest, and her pulse was almost deafening in her ears. Fear blossomed deep in her stomach even as her mind rebelled further against her father's heavy rule. She would not give up her nocturnal life.

"I will send a messenger to the village," the king said in a contemplative tone. "Yes. Yes. He will spread the word."

Again the queen shot a fleeting glance at the doorway. "What word, my King?"

"I shall offer a bounty. The man who can tell me what our daughter does each night when she is trusted to be safely asleep behind her bed curtains will be rewarded with his weight in gold."

"You are to have men spy on our daughter?" The queen sounded appalled by the idea.

"Three nights should do it." The king passed the doorway and Damita shrunk back but not before she saw the determination in his walk, the confidence in the set of his shoulders. "Any man who wishes to try will be given three nights in which to solve this little mystery."

"And if he should fail at the end of those three nights?"

The king fell silent but only for a moment before he replied, "He shall become my slave until such time as he has worked off an amount equal to his weight. I should think one week per pound should do."

Damita thought about her father's plan with a growing dread. If a two hundred pound man decided to attempt the quest and succeeded, he would gain two hundred pounds of gold. To any man in the land aside from the king himself, that amount of gold would set the man and his entire family for life. And if he failed? She did the quick calculations in her head. Well, at one week per pound even a two hundred pound man would only be forced to spend three years and eighty-four days as the king's servant. Not so much to risk when one looked at what he could gain should he accomplish the task.

Silently, Damita crept away from the door and returned to her bedchamber in the north tower of the castle. She encountered no one on her short journey there so she needn't worry about questions arising as to her goings on near the king and queen's quarters. Once inside the sanctuary of her room, she began to pace much like she had seen her father do. Her mind reeled, and different scenarios played out in her head, some good and some bad, as she attempted to figure out what to do.

The shoes. How could they not have thought about the shoes? It seemed so obvious now. Though, in their defense, neither she nor her mother ever expected her father to inspect her shoes. She guessed that's what she got for underestimating the king. She would do good not to let that happen again.

She stopped before a full-length mirror and stared at her reflection as she glided one finger alongside an obscured button on the wall to the right. Ingenious really, that button, she thought. No one, not even the king, knew that bump in the stone wall was really a trigger that when pushed would cause the mirror to swing away from the wall to reveal the narrow, secret passageway it concealed. Even she had not known about the tunnel that lead underground and she lived her entire life, her nights virtually as a prisoner, in this bedchamber.

But the queen knew of it. When Damita came of age, her mother told her of the passage. It became a secret between Queen and Princess, mother and daughter. Her mother didn't know exactly what she did outside the castle walls nor where she went and never asked. The mere fact that Damita left the castle grounds each night was one of the few secrets they were ever able to share and keep. Now their secret was in danger. What to do? How could they keep the secret now?

A knock sounded outside the heavy bedroom door and Damita spun from the mirror. Before she could say anything, the queen hurried into the room and shut the door behind her.

"Mom," Damita cried and rushed to the queen, threw her arms around her neck. She didn't care that it was a childish gesture. She only wanted to feel close to her mother at that moment, to be comforted.

"I only have a minute, my sweet princess," the queen said softly. She brushed her lips in a chaste kiss over Damita's forehead and stepped back, the better to see her daughter. "You heard everything." It was a statement and not a question for the queen knew Damita had in fact heard it all.

Damita nodded. Her eyes grew warm with a rush of tears, and she blinked them away, unwilling to show her weakness. "Leave it to him to find the one detail we overlooked."

"He only has the best in his heart for you, Damita. You know that."

She did know. The king loved her implicitly. Making sure she was watched over by day, leaving her in a locked bedchamber by night...everything he did was merely his way of protecting his

Princess. If she felt smothered by his affection, she simply hadn't reached the mature age of understanding. Lucky for Damita, the queen disagreed.

"Please don't tell me I must stop going out at night," Damita pleaded. "I will find different shoes so he won't get suspicious anymore. I'll go barefoot if I have to."

"No. You mustn't change a thing. If you stop wearing the shoes now your father will become even more suspicious."

"But he intends to have me followed!"

"He is giving the messenger his orders even as we speak."

Damita hung her head. A feeling of hopelessness too powerful for words tightened her throat. "Then I must stop going out."

"And make you father look like an absolute fool to the whole kingdom? No. I say again Damita, you must not change a thing."

"Then how are we to continue to keep our secret? Once he posts the first man outside my door all night, he will learn I have found another way out. I will not be hard to follow after that."

"My darling, Damita. Have you lost all faith in your mother?" the queen asked, her tone more mocking than sympathetic by the thought.

"Of course not!" Damita had all the faith in her mother a girl could have. The queen was her only ally in a castle of controlling love, the only one who understood a girl's need to grow and explore, to have a few secrets all her own. She also possessed a conniving mind that deserved envy and admiration. "You have a plan."

"It won't take long for the first hopeful man to respond to the king's challenge. A few years as servant in this castle is nothing to risk when there is so much to be gained. I expect your first stalker to arrive tonight, tomorrow evening at the latest."

"Stalker?" Damita raised a brow and couldn't stop the grin that came to her lips.

"He will be looking after his own well being, not yours. He

will care not what happens to you should he report the truth of your mischief to the king. It is for that reason," she lifted a hand, glided the back of her fingers down Damita's cheek, "and my love for you, that I will help you escape his eye and any that come after him each night."

"You speak as though you know where I go, what I do each night."

The queen smirked. "You do underestimate your mother, Damita."

She didn't bother to ask how her mother found out. Instead, she asked, "But how am I to escape the watchful eye of my stalkers?"

"Sleep is a very peaceful and freeing thing, my dear Princess."

And so it began. The very next evening the first stalker, as the queen termed him, was shown to the chamber next to the one where the princess lay. Damita had a moment to study him. *Pure skin and bones*, she mused in pity. When did the man eat last? She relaxed in the thought that even if he did somehow manage to follow her, his lack of nourishment and apparent weakness would prevent him from getting far.

Sure enough. Not long after the queen delivered the stalker's meal for the evening, Damita heard him snoring loudly in his bedchamber. She didn't question why the queen herself chose to deliver the man's food, couldn't find an ounce of compassion for the years he would spend as servant in the castle should his next two nights on guard duty turn out as this one would.

Then again, it could be exactly what the man needs, she thought as she slid her arms into the long cloak she had taken to wearing over her dance clothes and clipped her feet into the latest set of brand new heels. At least if her stalker became a servant in the castle he would be guaranteed three square meals a day. No one went hungry under the king's roof.

With one final glance at the sleeping, would-be stalker, she hurried on tip-toed across her bedchamber to the full-length glass.

A light push of the concealed button, a quick step to the side as the mirror swung open to reveal the dark passage and she was off for her nightly journey to the village where she would dance the hours away.

Chapter 2

Kinsey tugged on his horse's reigns and muttered a few soothing words of encouragement. How ironic, he thought, that he was the one injured, the one who might very well walk with a limp for the rest of his life and yet he was the one doing the pampering and gentle prodding. Waldo needed new shoes and Kinsey couldn't remember exactly when either of them last ate a complete meal. Unfortunately for both, neither shoes nor food came free and Kinsey's pocket that once jingled loudly with silver had gone silent long ago. He had but one silver piece left and, injured as he was, no real prospect of replenishing his pockets until the news of the king's challenge reached his ears.

Solve the mystery of what the princess does at night, where she goes. How hard could that be? he mused as he and Waldo trampled through the forest toward the king's castle grounds. It surprised him that so many had befallen to slavery rather than lining their pockets with gold from such a simple task. If word through the kingdom rang true, a dozen men attempted the quest thus far, each falling asleep on their three nights only to awake with nothing to report to the king come morning. The king now had a dozen new servants but still no answer to his mystery.

A dozen men, Kinsey thought again. He found something odd about that, for it seemed far too coincidental that twelve men would all sleep through the night and never once hear the princess as she got up to her mischief.

"Unless they were tricked," he muttered. He stopped in the middle of a small clearing. One hand idly smoothed Waldo's head while the other massaged his knee in a gesture so common now that he hardly realized he did it.

"You think that's it?" he absently asked Waldo. The horse whinnied. "Yeah, me too. But how? Maybe the princess promised not to do anything while the man took a short nap," he considered. His hand moved to Waldo's reigns, gripped them tightly and they began their slow walk through the forest once more.

"Naw," Kinsey continued to think aloud. "Only a fool would believe such a promise." Yet, hadn't all twelve men been fools of some caliber? To have fallen asleep three nights in a row, each surely aware of the fate that befell his predecessor. Could the princess really be that sneaky, that patient? To wait it out until her pursuer became so exhausted he could no longer fight the sleep and then to sneak out of the castle, off the grounds without ever causing him to wake?

He ignored his stomach when it grumbled, intent on pinning down the princess's trick before he reached the castle grounds. She was no dammed magician, he knew. She couldn't simply vanish from a locked bedchamber at the snap of her fingers or the wiggle of her nose and appear miles away somewhere. So how did she do it?

He fell into an almost meditative state as he limped along, careful of holes and thorny branches. When his stomach growled a second time he merely pushed the hunger from his mind once more. He didn't have time to worry about something he could do nothing about. Surely once he reached the castle, faced the king and accepted the challenge he would be fed. The king was known by all to be quite generous to those under his roof after all.

Kinsey stopped so abruptly that Waldo walked into his back even as a low hanging branch slapped him in the face. His cheek burned immediately, a sure sign the branch had given him at least a surface scratch, but he merely covered it with his palm, his mind elsewhere. Food was the key, the trick. He would be served food all right, but that food would be tainted with something sure to put him in a peaceful, oblivious slumber right through the night and into the morning.

"Looks like there isn't any food around the bend after all," he said to Waldo. "At least not until we can buy it with our own gold awarded once we report the princess's goings on to the king."

And he would, he thought with a growing determination. Before his injury, he had been a solider, one of the best. A man didn't gain that reputation, didn't survive battle after battle by being a naïve fool. It may have been days since he last ate well but his mass remained heavy, his muscles solid. Muscle, after all, weighed more than flesh. He *would* reveal the princess' secret. He wouldn't allow himself to think about why the king locked her away each night, why she chose to deceive her father by sneaking out. All he would think about was how she pulled it off, where she went. He would tell the king and collect his weight in gold as promised.

He wasn't surprised when he reached the castle just before dusk to be so well received. He informed the servant who opened the door of his business and moments later found himself facing the king. A plump man, Kinsey thought as he surveyed the king and couldn't help but wonder how many years of slavery his weight would equal. Certainly far more than Kinsey even with his hardened muscles and considerable height.

That height had Kinsey looking down at the king. Not good to look down on royalty, he thought but until offered a chair he hadn't much choice. The king didn't seem to mind though and actually beamed—his plump cheeks reminding Kinsey of two freshly ripened strawberries—as he craned his neck to look up at Kinsey.

"You have arrived just in time," the king said with a noticeable nod toward a nearby window. The last golden glimmers of the sun were barely visible as the darkness overtook them.

"A long journey, your majesty, and not an easy one." Kinsey

glanced down at his injured knee. It hurt like hellfire and would likely be dammed near immobile by morning after he followed the princess. Yet, such pain and temporary handicap would be a small price to pay once he received his reward.

"Your knee soldier, were you injured in battle?" Kinsey focused his attention on the voice, the woman...the queen. Surprise made him stare impolitely for a long moment. He had heard of her beauty in his travels through the neighboring villages to the castle, but no words seemed to do her justice. Hair long and glimmering black, eyes as blue as the sea, and a figure that made the mouth run dry. He looked back at the king before he could catch himself and thought of just how blind love could truly be.

Not love you idiot, he thought, *but money*, *power*. One look at the odd couple the king and queen made and he knew he had to be right. *And what of the princess*? he wondered. Had she gotten her looks from her plump and rosy father or her striking mother? Few in the villages ever saw the princess for she rarely left the castle grounds, and when she did it was under heavy guard and disguise. He didn't know why the need for such mystery. Apparently, Princess Damita's whole life was a mystery.

"A battle, yes, my lady. A very vicious battle in the far kingdom."

"You arrived with a horse yet you chose to walk with an injured leg rather than ride. Why?"

"The journey was not easy on my horse either, my lady. His shoes have worn thin. Better that I endure a bit of pain rather than destroy his hoofs and legs by making him carry me."

"Your concern for your horse is admirable, soldier. I will see to it that Waldo is given a sound meal and new shoes."

"Many thanks, my lady," Kinsey bowed.

The queen seemed to study him, her gaze scrutinizing. "You have been hurt before soldier."

"Yes my lady, many times."

"Yet you return to battle at the first opportunity."

"I am a solider. I am sure you know what they say about men such as I. All muscle and no wits."

The queen's lips twitched but she didn't smile. "And you will fight again when healed."

"If the Gods see that I am able." Kinsey nodded, suspicion growing inside him like a slowly inflating balloon.

"He will have no need to fight come morning for he will have enough gold to start his own war." The king grinned and dimples appeared in his plump cheeks.

"Your confidence is inspiring, my lord."

"I hope that it is. I grow tired of men failing at this task." The king sighed. "Because of this I have decided to up the reward. Should you report to me before the end of the three allotted days with the answer I am looking for, you will receive double your weight in gold."

"Double, sir?" Kinsey repeated, awestruck. His weight in gold was already more than he thought the opportunity to earn in a lifetime. The idea of double his weight in gold left him completely flabbergasted.

"But," the king held up a heavily jeweled finger, "should you fail, you will spend the rest of your life as my servant."

Kinsey barely heard the consequence over the roar of excitement in his ears. "I will not fail, my lord," he said confidently and looked to the window again. The land was now fully dark. "If the king and queen would be so kind..."

"Yes, yes. You shall be shown to your chamber now." The king gestured for a waiting servant with one gallant flourish of his arm.

The man stepped to Kinsey's side, assumed a parade rest stance—hands behind his back and feet shoulder width apart. Was this one of the dozen who attempted the quest and failed?

"You shall dine on a feast brought to your chamber while you await your task to begin."

Chapter 3

Damita just managed to convince herself that she would get an evening without worry or concern when she heard heavy footsteps pass outside her door and enter the chamber to the right of her own. She waited until his tray of food was delivered, until all voices ceased, until she heard the soft rap outside her door—her mother's signal that all ran smooth—then she hurried to the wall that separated the two chambers.

Intrigue and curiosity made her peek through the small, secret hole bore some time ago through the stone. It was through that hole that she watched twelve men arrive in three-day intervals in the past months, held her breath as they ate their fill of the tray her mother brought to them, smiled when they curled up on the canopy bed and fell fast asleep.

Tonight, she looked in on number thirteen and felt her stomach dance with desire. Beauty and sheer male exquisiteness met her vision. Not looks like that of the pretty boy, she mused and thought of the rather handsome man who had actually believed that one look at him would actually cause her to reveal all her secrets and even possibly pledge her undying love. Men could be such idiots.

But this man...Well, this man might be worth a secret or two. Not her biggest secret, of course. Not the one secret that every man in the land seemed hell bent on attempting to find out—and failing miserably, she smirked. But surely she could come up with a couple of other secrets she could share.

She lost herself in the entertainment of long legs and lean hips, trim waist, wide back, and broad shoulders. She stifled a moan of appreciation when he removed his shirt, treating her to a bare view of that back, those shoulders. His skin had the deep tan of a man who labored in the sun and the faint scars she could just see only added character. Her fingertip itched to trace those scars—the long, thin line that looked to be made by a sharp tool or blade maybe. The rounded, jagged edged patch just below his shoulder blade that appeared to be a bullet wound.

No, this man was no pretty boy, she decided as he turned and finally afforded her a view of his front. The rippling muscles in his back continued in his biceps, his chest and abs, as did the scars. His face had a chiseled, rugged appearance even with his rounded chin, heart-shaped lips and predominate cheekbones. Through the tiny hole in the wall, she couldn't tell the color of his eyes but she guessed they were dark...chocolate brown or even ebony to match his hair.

She wondered briefly what it would feel like to run her fingers through his hair, skim her hands over his chest. She fantasized about him brushing those lips over her flesh, kissing her, and licking her everywhere his tongue could reach. Then she brought her daydreaming to an abrupt halt because even her standing as princess couldn't make those dreams a reality. Not unless she wished to give up all that she had become, all that she wanted, and face her father's wrath. A quick roll with a man—even one who made her panties wet simply by removing his shirt—wasn't worth such a price.

But love...Yes, love would be worth any price. She sighed wistfully and stepped away from the hole. It was no use going there either. That man wasn't out for love. He looked for money and nothing more. In a matter of minutes he would eat the tainted food the queen served him and fall fast asleep like all the others. Then she would be on her way and in three nights her father would have another servant to add to his quickly growing collection. * * * *

Kinsey knew she watched him. He felt her gaze on him, felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end not long after he entered the bedchamber. He knew her chamber to be next door, guessed she must have a peephole somewhere in the adjoining wall. Because he knew, he carefully kept his back to that wall as much as possible.

He considered giving her a real show. Especially when he thought he heard a soft moan as he took off his shirt. He had been tempted to remove the rest of his clothes then turn to face the wall, to face her. The idea to jerk off for her even crossed his mind, but he resisted the urge. Something like that was not a show fit for the eyes of a princess.

He nearly decided to attempt to talk to her but he heard her shuffle, heard her wistful sigh as she stepped away from the wall just as he turned, opened his mouth to speak. He figured she waited for him to settle down and eat. If he possessed any doubts about the food being used to put the quest-seekers to sleep, all suspicions were confirmed when the queen herself delivered his dinner tray. How often, he wondered, did the queen play servant?

He didn't eat, of course, though he badly wanted to. The meal he had been served was one fit for the king. Yet, instead of indulging on a single bite, he moved the tray across the room and out of sight of the peephole should the princess decide to steal another look. He waited what he figured to be the right amount of time for a sleeping potion to absorb in a body his size, then sprawled across the canopy bed and pretended to sleep.

* * * *

Damita fell into a bit of a rhythm—pace to the mirror, over to the wall to glance at handsome number thirteen, then stomp to the mirror once more because he hadn't yet fallen asleep. By the time she finally heard him begin to snore, she'd nearly worn a permanent trail in her bedchamber floor.

"About dammed time," she muttered and rushed to her armoire, reached in and pulled her dance clothes from the hiding spot beneath old dresses. She changed quickly, covered herself with the traveling cloak then peeked one final time through the hole to be sure all remained safe.

His hardened features relaxed in sleep, he looked peaceful and harmless. He hadn't put his shirt back on before climbing into the bed. The sight of his bare chest once more made her mouth water, her juices flow. It could have been worse, she guessed, he could have chosen to sleep naked.

She let her gaze skim his body. Not that she would mind if he slept naked, she decided. The man did have one hell of a body. Her gaze stopped on the rise of his crouch and she nearly let out a low whistle before she caught herself. She had been too distracted by his chest and all his gloriously hard, toned muscles to notice and, looking now, it didn't seem possible that she missed it.

Her pussy contracted as she studied his sizeable bulge and she thought of how it would feel plunged inside her. By the time she tore her gaze away, her pussy lips were slick with her warm juices, her nipples taught and throbbing and she was running late for her journey. She took a half step back, blew a kiss to her sexy, sleeping stalker and promised herself she could take out her sexual frustrations on the stage.

* * * *

She moved with the grace of an angel and the seductiveness of a harlot. He hid in the shadows, watched and knew he found trouble when he began to want. He wondered in awed astonishment where she learned such moves. Where had a woman, a *princess*, learned to tease in such a way? The music that played was an interesting mix of horns and drums, the beat fast yet oddly melodic. She knew the music, the tempo and never missed a step as she glided across the stage.

She stomped, slid, dipped and twirled and left no doubt as to how she ruined each pair of shoes that led to her father's suspicion. Her legs carried her steady and sure with each move. Her hips swayed, gyrated and fell into a hypnotic rhythm that put Kinsey into a trance.

She wore a strapless dress of virgin white lace. The bodice fit snugly to her small but perfectly rounded breasts and her dark erect nipples were clearly visible through the sheer material. The skirt hung freely, billowing out when she turned, and clinging to her curves when she grasped the sides in her hands and pulled it tight. When she danced to a pole at the center of the stage and wrapped one leg around it, he saw that she wore only the thinnest strip of white satin for panties.

Wet satin, he realized and watched with a growing pain in his cock at how that satin formed to her pussy lips. His hands itched to touch. His tongue longed to lick, eat, devour. Her beauty was far more powerful than he could ever dream, her body far more alluring and inviting than what was good for him.

He watched as she slid down the pole, spun herself around it, and gyrated her hips against it. Men of varying stations from the poorest peasant to the most well dressed of the land short of the king surrounded the stage, their gazes transfixed with the hottest of erotic fantasies showing in their eyes as they gaped at Princess Damita.

Kinsey wondered how they did not recognize her as the princess. Then in the next heartbeat he figured he would not recognize her either had he not first followed her from the castle. No one would expect to find the princess masquerading as an exotic dancer by the light of the moon in a village far from the castle grounds.

The song ended and a slower, more seductive tune began. Damita abandoned the pole for this song, choosing instead to pretend she danced with a partner. Her hands held palms out in front of her as though they rested on a man's shoulders, she followed the lead of her imaginary partner around the edge of the circular stage. Her feet shuffled gracefully with each step. He thought he might like to dance with her at a ball. He could be pretty light on his feet too, after all. When his knee wasn't paining him, that was.

He sunk deeper into the shadows as her dancing brought her closer. She saw him. He knew she could make out his silhouette in the darkness. For a moment, he held his breath, worried that she would recognize more than his outline. How well had she been able to see him through that peephole of hers back at the castle? Had she seen him well enough to recognize him now in a place she wouldn't expect to find him? She thought him to be back at the castle sound asleep after all.

He knew he should make his way back to the castle. He had solved the mystery, discovered where the princess spent her nights, what she did while there. He could take a souvenir from this pub as proof, return to the castle and come morning he would report his news to the king and collect his riches.

She slithered to her knees on the stage before him like a silk ribbon dropped from high altitude. Her skirt rode at her hips and her legs spread wide affording him a close up view of sopping wet satin and dark pubic curls.

Kinsey gulped, stared and barely restrained himself from whimpering. He was in more trouble than he had ever been on a battlefield. No doubt he should hightail his ass back to the castle and lock himself in his bedchamber. He had no business staying here, nothing to gain by wishing to bed the princess. Yet, he risked everything. His future, his welfare, Waldo's well-being and that of any family he may ever have depended on the gold he would get come morning.

That realization compelled him to rise, careful to remain in the shadows. He paused only briefly when the princess skimmed a finger down her throat, delved in the cleft between her breasts and moved to trace a circle around one taut nipple. With her free hand, she blew a kiss goodbye into the air. Though he wasn't sure she could see it, he returned her airy kiss and rushed off into the night.

He would return to his bedchamber and eat the food that waited for him there. It mattered not if he took a potion-induced nap now. He knew all he needed...more even. But he barely made it to the line of trees outside the pub when his knee buckled. He managed to catch himself on one of those trees, limped and maneuvered until he bathed himself in the shadow of its trunk to rest before continuing his journey. Apparently, it was a night for hiding in the darkness.

Chapter 4

Damita was always careful when she left the pub in the wee hours just before morning. No one ever recognized her, never put her face to the story of the rebellious princess. They saw her as a showgirl, a harlot. Because of this, a few men attempted to follow her, most likely hoping to get lucky. A woman who would dance nearly completely naked for them, spread her legs on stage and allow them to admire her body would be an easy fuck after all, right?

Wrong, she thought. The thrill of knowing what she did to a man was enough. She glanced over her shoulder, looked to her right and then her left before starting to make her way to the forest. Her feet ached as they so often did after a night of dancing and she limped a little as she disappeared into the trees.

"My but aren't we a pair."

Damita stopped so fast she teetered on her heels. A scream bubbled in her throat as she whirled around and spotted the silhouette that leaned against a tree just behind her. How had she not seen such an imposing figure when she passed?

"There is no need to scream. I will not harm you."

"Who—who are you?" Her voice trembled and even as she asked the question she knew the answer. The man from the pub who hid in the darkness. She had flirted with him, blew him a kiss as he stood to leave but even so had been unable to make out his features.

He shifted his weight on his left leg, his right knee bent at a somewhat odd angle as though he favored it, but he didn't move from the tree. "Let's just say that I'm an admirer."

"You're the man from the pub. I don't sleep with men who come to see me dance."

"Who said anything about sleeping?"

Damita's lips twitched and she relaxed a little. A wise ass, this man was. She did love a man with attitude. She bit the inside of her lip to hold back the smile but couldn't completely hide amusement in her tone. "Got me there, soldier." He stiffened at that and her eyes narrowed. "I don't have sex with men from the pub. Is that precise enough for you?"

"Yes, it will do I suppose." He pushed himself away from the tree and walked toward her with only the slightest limp in his step. Yet, in the darkness of the night, she still couldn't make out more than an outline of his body. He didn't stop until he stood beside her, his chest nearly brushing her arm.

"W-what are you doing?"

"Relax." He spoke that single word in such a way, in such a voice, that made her want to obey, to give him anything.

"You're too close." She could feel the heat radiating from his body and, when he leaned in, his warm breath against the sensitized flesh of her neck gave her goose pimples all over her body.

"I told you I would not hurt you."

"And I told you—"

"That you don't have sex with men from the pub," he finished for her and his tone wasn't mocking but understanding, soothing. "I won't do anything you don't want me to."

And that could present a problem, Damita thought, because she could think of all sorts of things she *wanted* this man to do to her. If she let him touch her, gave in to her own desires to be touched, she would break a personal rule she set the first night she danced at the pub. She would dance for men, allow them to look but never touch. She felt his palm glide down her spine, settle at the small of her back and could almost hear her rule shatter like glass.

"Your dancing," he whispered. His lips brushed the skin just below her ear. "It turns you on as much as the men who watch you, doesn't it?"

Breathless, she nodded. "Yes."

"And do you touch yourself when you get back to your cabin through these trees?"

Cabin? Yes, she would let him continue to believe she lived in a cabin in the next village. Forget that one could probably fit a dozen or more of those tiny cabins in one wing of the castle.

She didn't answer, couldn't. Her heart pounded loudly in her chest as he moved behind her. His arms encircled her waist. She should run, she thought. She should kick, scream, do something, *anything* rather than simply stand here and wait for what he would do next. Yet, she stood still, her knees trembling, fireworks exploding in her belly and waited.

"Do you lay in your bed alone in the hour just before dawn and cup your breasts?" His hands pushed the lapels of her cloak aside, moved the slide under her breasts, hold them. "Do you rub your thumbs over your sweet nipples until they harden for you?" Again, his actions mirrored his words. The callused pads of his thumbs grazed back and forth over her nipples until they became so erect they hurt. Then his forefingers joined his thumbs and he rolled her nipples as though they were marbles between his fingers.

Damita let out a strangled cry as her head fell back to rest on his chest. "Oh God!"

He folded himself around her, leaned in to lick and nip her ear as he continued to fondle her breasts. He applied just enough pressure to her nipples, squeezed just hard enough to pull a sound from her that was half scream of pain and half moan of pleasure. "Do you caress your body?" He whispered it in her ear as his right hand abandoned her breast to graze down the flat plane of her abs, her stomach. "Pull up your skirt for me the way you did on stage tonight."

"I—" She didn't know what she meant to say. Had she gone crazy? She let this man, this complete *stranger*, put his hands on her. She snuck out of the castle and went to the pub nearly on a nightly basis for some time now. Yet, she didn't lie when she said she never had sex with the men, never let them touch her. Until tonight. Until this man. With hands that shook, she lifted her skirt.

"You were wet on stage. So wet your panties were soaked with it. I wonder, are you wet now?"

She was. More wet now than she ever got on stage...because of him. Her panties felt as though she put them on straight from the wash bin without giving them a moment to dry, and when he palmed her mound through those panties, she felt still more juices seep out of her.

"Ah yes. Is that for me?"

Since she couldn't seem to find her voice, she simply nodded. She knew he would feel the movement of her head on his chest.

"Pull your panties down for me."

This request...No, not a request but more of an order, made an excitement more visceral than any she ever felt rush through her. Even as nervousness and indecision mixed with that excitement, she did as ordered. Would she really let this stranger have his way with her? she wondered even as she tugged at her panties and let them fall to the ground around her heels. Hadn't she gone too far to turn back now? When his finger slipped into her pubic hair, wiggled between her pussy lips, she knew she wouldn't stop him.

"By the Gods, you are wet," he whispered and she heard the evidence of his own arousal in the huskiness of his voice, felt it in the rigidity of his cock against her back. "And so hot. I bet you taste sweet too. Shall we find out?"

His finger seemed to take on the attributes of a spoon. It curved even as it slid from a point just behind her opening forward to delve quickly inside her before it pulled out again, skimmed over her clit then withdrew from between her pussy lips. He held the finger up and in the moonlight she could just see it drowned in her juices. Though she didn't see him do it, she knew he brought that finger to his mouth, heard him lick and suck until he dried it of her cum.

"Hmmm, so thick and sweet." His finger returned to her pussy to repeat the action. "Have you ever tasted yourself?"

"No." Because she suspected he couldn't hear her whispered reply, she shook her head.

"Lick my finger, dancer," he said and brought the finger once more covered in her cum to her lips. "Taste yourself."

He traced her lips with his fingertip, left a trail of her cum where he touched then prodded her lips to open for him. She sucked his finger into her mouth, pretended it was his dick she sucked as she licked it, circled it with her tongue, and nibbled it with her teeth.

"You like that, don't you? You like the way you taste."

"Yes." And to her surprise, it didn't shame her to admit it.

He growled low in his throat, a hopeless and frustrated sound. "I want to fuck you." His hand found her pussy yet again as his other hand kneaded her breast. "I want to shove my dick deep inside you, feel your hot juices slide down my balls."

His blunt words combined with his finger now moving slowly in and out of her sopping wet hole drove her mad. She wanted it too, everything he spoke of and more.

"Meet me here tomorrow night."

She nodded because she knew she would. To feel this again, to experience this sense of sheer euphoria, she would meet this stranger at the edge of the earth.

"Know this, dancer," he said and plunged two fingers side by side deep into her pussy.

"Oh Goddess! Yes!" Her cry was breathless, mindless as he picked up pace, began to fuck her hard and fast with those fingers.

"If you show tomorrow night, I will fuck you," he told her and she heard the conviction in his tone, didn't doubt that he meant what he said. "Now, come for me, dancer. Let me feel your hot, sweet juices fill my hand. Let me hear how good it feels, how badly you want me to fuck you tomorrow night."

He found her clit with the pad of his thumb on the inward thrust of his fingers and she writhed against him. With his other hand, he squeezed her breast, flicked his thumb over her nipple. In seconds she was coming. It exploded from her, rocked her back and made her putty in his hands. She would have crumpled to the ground had he not been behind her, holding her. Instead, she melted against him as her body jerked, convulsed.

"Not bad," he whispered and slowly pulled his fingers from her pussy. "Your moans have the sweetest sound. I'll be hearing them in my dreams tonight."

Damita didn't remember making a sound. She had been too lost in the pleasure to pay attention to anything else.

"Tomorrow night I'll make you moan some more." He shifted behind her, gripped her waist and stepped sideways. The moon seemed brighter now yet he still managed to remain shadowed as he moved beside her, leaned her back against a tree for support. He leaned in, nibbled her ear. "And when I push my cock inside you tomorrow night I want to hear you scream."

Damita closed her eyes as anticipation coursed through her veins. He would do it, she knew. He could do it. Tomorrow night he would hear her screaming in mindless pleasure. Tomorrow night.

Why wait? She no longer wanted to wait. She opened her eyes to tell him she wanted him now, reached for him and saw only thick darkness, grabbed nothing but air.

Chapter 5

Kinsey thought of nothing but the princess the following day. When the servant came to him just after sunrise to take him to the king, he sent the squire on his way with word that his first night on watch of the princess had been a failure. In truth, it had been nothing of the sort. The only failure he faced last night had been his inability to keep his hands off her. That delicate, curvaceous body and smooth, sweet scented flesh, her hot juices that filled his hand when he made her cum...

He should go straight to the king, he knew, but couldn't resist the opportunity to give himself one more night. He liked watching her dance, understood her need to do something completely unexpected of a princess. A woman as hot and sexy and exotic as the princess couldn't be counted on to remain behind locked doors for eternity. She should be allowed to blossom, to grow, to experience and he believed she would be a better queen for it when it became her turn to take the throne. Never mind that when his time ended and he reported the truth of her whereabouts to the king, she would likely wither like a dying flower no longer able to bloom and grow.

He would not think of that now, he told himself. The princess's fate was not of his concern. However, his own fate did concern him and because it did he averted his gaze when the queen entered his bedchamber with a tray loaded with more food than he could eat in a month. His stomach grumbled but he ignored the pesky sound.

She walked into the room with her head held high, confidence

oozing from her pores. Like mother, like daughter, he thought as he watched her and wondered how rebellious the queen had been at the princess's age. Strange, but he could almost picture the queen dancing on a stage just as he watched the princess last night.

The queen glided past him to sit the tray on a small table in the corner. She hesitated a moment and then turned, pinned him with a serious and steady look. "You didn't eat last night."

"How—"

"A soldier such as yourself must keep up his strength. Please know that no harm will befall you tonight. The food and drink are safe to consume. I give you my solemn word as Queen."

Kinsey gaped at the queen for a long moment before he recovered. "You know?" He couldn't disguise the astonishment in his voice. He hid a large portion of the tainted food and poured out the wine after returning from his adventure with the princess in the forest. As a soldier, he learned long ago how to move in stealth and speed even when injured and he put that knowledge to good use last night. He left the princess leaning against the tree, hurried back down the trail through the forest and the secret passage and made it to his bedchamber with ample time to spare before her return. He used that time to set the stage of a man stuffed to the gills with spectacular tasting drugged food who slept soundlessly through the night.

"You proved yourself very clever." The queen lowered herself to perch on the edge of the chair at the table. Her gaze never wavered from Kinsey. "Then you made an error in judgment that cold cost you dearly."

Not a woman to play games, Kinsey decided as he watched the queen. "And what will it cost the princess if I tell the king what I discovered last night?"

"Her freedom." The answer came without hesitation but her eyes became clouded, despondent.

"You call having no privacy, being surrounded by the king's

guards by day and locked in a bedchamber at night freedom?"

"He loves her. Damita is our only daughter, will be the only child we ever have, the only heir to the throne. He wants to protect her. If he is strict, smothering, it is only because he looks out for her."

"Yet, you know how she sneaks out at night, where she goes and what she does. You have known all along." When the queen's gaze fell to the stone floor he knew he assumed correctly. "You have been protecting her and when the king found out she was up to mischief you started putting a sleeping potion in the food served to the men to further protect her."

"She is my daughter," the queen said in that way had only by a mother with a deep love for her child.

"You let her dance for men. Have you seen what she wears when she dances?"

The queen's lips twitched. "I have."

"And you approve?" Kinsey asked, unable to hide the surprise in his voice.

"I do not necessarily approve of her choice to dance for men," the queen admitted. "I permit it because I feel she should be allowed to make her own decisions. Her father holds her back from enough. I know from personal experience, from my own childhood, how that can detriment a woman's soul, her heart. I wish better for my daughter. Happiness above all else."

"Your love for her has no bounds."

"No, as it shouldn't. Why did you lie, soldier? Why did you not report the princess's mischief to the king straight upon returning to the castle?"

Though he expected the question, waited for it, he didn't have an answer ready. *Because I want to fuck you daughter tonight before I betray her in the morning.* Though true, he couldn't very well say that to the queen. *Because I wish to remain a guest of the king's for as long as I am able.* Yes, having a warm and dry bedchamber to himself without worry of thieves or poachers for a couple of days would be a nice advantage he had not considered until now. Yet, he couldn't bring himself to use it as an excuse for his silence either.

"You are taken with her."

Kinsey's head whipped around. No way could he miss the look of pleased satisfaction in the smile that tilted the queen's lips, in the look that glistened like diamonds in her eyes. "She is very beautiful," he found himself saying.

"You are protecting her as well. That is why you did not report what you know to the king."

"I will," Kinsey said quickly and hardened his expression, let her see that the words he spoke were not a lie. "I don't intend to spend the next several years as a slave to the king simply because the princess is not woman enough to stand up to her father."

"So it is the gold you want after all." The queen's voice became small and rang of disappointment.

"Of course it's the gold. Why else do you think I came here?" He said the words, meant them, so why did they leave such a bitter taste in his mouth? Angry now, he threw his hands in the air and spun around, turning his back on the queen.

"I think you came looking to collect the gold, but now you want more. I would not sleep well at night if I did not warn you. The king will see you beheaded if he discovers you know and have not reported to him."

Kinsey felt his blood turn to ice. Beheaded! He would protect the princess for a night, maybe two, and risk decapitation? "Will you tell him I know?"

"Of course not. I do not know you, soldier, but already I like you. Your concern for my daughter is enough to buy my silence."

He heard the rustle of the queen's gown as she stood, the click of her heels on the stone floor as she walked to the door, but he didn't turn. "You can have it all, everything you want and more. You need do little more than ask for her hand." The heavy door to the bedchamber opened with a loud creek. Then the queen said, "She is not to know of our conversation. You would be wise to pretend again as you did last night."

30

Chapter 6

Damita saw him in the shadows of the pub. She never felt nervous when she danced...not since the first night. But she felt it tonight, the constant flutter of butterflies low in her tummy, the slightly accelerated heartbeat. She did her best to ignore it, to ignore him. At the end of the night she even considered taking a different path back to the castle. But memories of the night before, of the promise in his voice, of the confidence in his touch, had her going down her normal trail, going to him.

Tonight was brighter than last, the moon fuller and higher in the sky. Harder for him to hide in the shadows, she mused but when she reached their meeting spot by the huge forked willow tree she saw he could still find a shadow even in the brightest of moonlight.

"You came."

It was the voice from her memory, from her dreams, deep and full of sugar and spice. She walked to him and boldly slid her palms up his chest, over his shoulders, locked her hands behind his neck. "You thought I wouldn't?"

"I confess I wasn't sure." His arms found their way to circle her waist and he pulled her against him, held her tight.

"You're always in shadow. Step forward. I want to see you."

"Not yet, dancer. The shadow adds to the mystery, the excitement." His hands slid down to cup her butt cheeks as he spoke.

"It's—"

"Isn't that what you want, what you look for?" He squeezed her

ass and drew her to her tiptoes.

"I—" Dear Goddess, she had been about to tell him her name. He kept calling her dancer. He called her that last night as well. While the anonymity further added to the mystery, she thought she would really like to hear her name spoken in his deep, husky baritone. But she couldn't tell him her name. He may not recognize her face but her name... No one else in the kingdom held the name of Damita.

"Yes," she hissed instead. She did look for mystery and excitement. She looked for passion and satisfaction too, both of which this man already gave her once.

"Then do not fret. Let me give it to you." He leaned in, captured her mouth with his. He tasted sweet, hot and utterly male. His tongue moved skillfully between her parted lips, inside her mouth, over her own tongue in a dance that made her breathless, week-kneed and mindless before she knew what hit her.

His hands abandoned her rear to glide up her back. When he reached the strips of material that held up her dress, he untied them and the dress slowly fluttered down. Her breasts fell free and his hands were magically there to catch them.

She threw her head back and moaned as he began to caress her breasts, squeeze and knead them. She had missed his touch, battled with the memory of it all day. This time, she wanted to touch too. She let her hands slide over his shoulders, down his biceps. She felt hard, warm flesh beneath his shirt and wanted to feel the skinto-skin contact more. Her hands moved to his stomach, his waist. She found the bottom his shirt, snaked her hands under it and began a slow climb back up.

With a speed that made her breath catch in surprise, he caught her hands, yanked them from beneath his shirt and twisted her arms behind her back, held her wrist together in one of his large hands. He spun her around so fast, pulled her back against him with such quick force that she let out a little squeak. "Mystery, remember?" he whispered and nipped at the side of her neck. He took a wrist in each of his hands, raised her arms in front of her until her palms rested on the trunk of the willow tree. "Keep them there."

Then his hands returned to her flesh. His callused fingers and palms lit a fire within her everywhere he touched. He skimmed over her breasts, her abs, and her stomach. He glided over her hips, pushed at the dress that caught there when he'd untied it until it fell completely from her body.

"Ah, another set for my new collection," he said of the satiny thin strip of panties he quickly removed along with the dress.

She stood with her hands splayed on the tree, her feet shoulders-width apart, back arched and ass in the air. It was a very undignified position for a princess, she thought. Yet, she didn't feel shamed in the least. Especially when his hand reached around her, found the mound of curls between her legs and delved inside.

"Are you wet for me tonight, dancer?" Rather than wait for her answer, he plunged a finger inside her.

Damita cried out, rocked into his hand to draw the finger deeper. "Yes," she hissed. "Yes, yes!"

"Yes you are." He withdrew the finger as quickly as it entered her. "I think we enjoyed enough foreplay last night, don't you?" And before she could answer, he thrust his dick inside her.

This time, she screamed at the intrusion. Not in pain, though his thick shaft stretched her tender inner flesh, but in a pleasure the likes of which she never before felt. Her fingers gripped at the tree trunk, scratched as he pounded into her.

The slow tenderness of the night before gone, he fucked her as he said he wanted to. His hand fisted in her hair, pulled as if tugging on a horse's reigns. His other hand smoothed her ass, one finger slipping between her ass cheeks to graze over her anus.

She made an indecipherable sound at that and involuntarily flexed her butt muscles. She tried to convince herself he touched it by accident. Surely he didn't mean to play there. But he did mean to, she realized in the next heartbeat as she felt his finger move over her anus again, slowly inch just inside the rim.

"Relax," he whispered and slowed his thrusts. "You'll like it. I promise. The orgasm you'll get will be unlike any you've ever had. Now relax that sweet ass for me, dancer."

Her heart pounded in anticipation as much as fear, but Damita forced herself to relax. She felt her anus open, spread. It didn't give as easily to the probing as her vagina and hurt more because of it. But it was a pleasurable pain, an exotic pain that sent her juices flowing and made her clit throb.

"That's it, baby. See, I told you that you would like it. You do like it, don't you?" As he asked the question he slid his dick out of her pussy until only the head remained inside her, pulled his finger nearly completely from her anus before plunging both as deeply as he could in one fast and hard thrust.

"Yes!" The word screamed out of her in both answer and plea for more. He was right. The orgasm would be like nothing she ever had. She could feel it now, that burning flame tangling with the sensations and darts of pain as he plunged inside her, cock and finger. His double penetration filled her completely, left no room for her body to give. She could only take and take she did.

She leaned onto the tree trunk, nails digging into the bark, and let him ride her. She took him inside her with vicious thrusts until the world exploded in a riot of colors before her eyes. The orgasm ripped through her, tore the scream from her throat and in the deep recesses of sound she heard his grunt as he came inside her.

Neither moved, neither spoke for minutes that seemed like hours as both waited for their pulse to slow, for breathing to return to normal. Finally, he slowly eased himself out of her but still did not move away.

Damita remained propped on the tree to spent to be worried or ashamed by her position or nakedness. A soft breeze rippled the air and she shivered from the sudden chill. A palm slid down her back, caressed with smoothness and affection.

"Are you cold, Damita?"

"A little," she admitted and gradually began to stand upright. "The breeze in the air, it's getting a bit..." She froze, the full impact of his question, each of his words finally penetrating the foggy sexual afterglow that remained in her mind. "What did you call me?" she asked carefully, her breath measured even as her pulse began to drum in her ears. When he didn't answer she slowly began to turn. Part of her didn't want to. Part of her wanted to forget what she just heard and walk away secure in the knowledge that she just had amazing sex with an anonymous stranger. Yet, she couldn't do that. She had to know.

Instinctively, her arms folded to cover her breasts as she glared at his silhouette in the darkness. "H—how do you know my name?" Her voice shook, dammit. Now more than ever she needed to sound strong, superior, like a princess. "Who are you?"

He took the smallest step backward, but it was enough. Moonlight streamed across his face, bathed his features in the pale white light.

Damita sucked in a breath. "You!"

He nodded once, his expression unreadable. "Me."

"But how? The food...You were...When I left..."

"I didn't eat, pretended to sleep, followed you when you left." He didn't bother to explain the queen left tonight's food untainted. Best to let her believe he simply hadn't eaten rather than to get her pissed at her mother.

"You followed me." Her voice rang with shock. Her eyes glimmered in disbelief. "And last night..."

"I followed you then too," Kinsey confirmed the obvious. He wished he could rewind time. A few minutes, ten at most, and they wouldn't be having this conversation. She wouldn't be looking at him as though her world just ended because he would not have called her by name. He got caught in the moment, or the after moment as it was, lost himself and her name slipped out.

"My father..." She shook her head, brushed at a stray lock of dark hair that curled at her cheek while careful to keep her breasts covered with her other arm.

"Doesn't know."

She eyed him suspiciously. "You didn't tell him. This morning. I heard you. You told the servant you found nothing. Why? Why not tell the truth, collect your gold and be on your way?"

Good question, Kinsey thought, one I have yet to quite figure out an answer to myself. He opened his mouth to speak but closed it again when no response came to mind.. Then he saw a heat rise in her eyes and wanted to step back, run for dear life.

"You thought you would fuck me first."

Hurt moved behind the heat and he found that harder than her anger. Feeling the need to comfort her, he reached for her. "Damita, please."

"Don't touch me, you son-of-a-bitch!" She jerked away, turned her back to him.

Though he knew it wasn't the time to notice such things, he couldn't help but admire her heart-shaped ass and the two small dimples just above each cheek, couldn't help but remember only moments before when he'd had that ass in the air in front of him as he fucked her. "We need to talk," he said patiently.

"I have nothing to say to you." Venom laced her words. "Leave me alone."

"Damita—"

"I said leave, dammit!"

Kinsey rocked back on his heels. He didn't want to leave her like this, somewhere between an explosion of temper and a river of tears. Yet, staying would do him no good. "I'll go," he said finally. "But we need to talk about this, about what we are going to do. We *have* to talk."

Chapter 7

Damita thought she knew what Kinsey had in mind. He figured he would fuck her again before he betrayed her to the king. He had one more night before his time ran out. Why waste it?

Torn between a boring evening alone locked in her bedchamber and one final night dancing on the stage at the pub, Damita paced. Like her father, she was good at pacing and often did so when she pondered a problem. Unlike her father, she had never been so quick at thinking of a solution to said problem. No matter how she spent her night, come morning he...

She stopped pacing and shoved her fingers through her hair. She teased him while on stage, met him in the dark, fucked him, let him do unspeakable yet wonderful things to her and she didn't even know his name. Still, no matter his name, come morning he would tell the king everything.

Maybe she should go tonight, let him follow her again, let him fuck her one more time before she lost what little bit of freedom she managed to sneak. She walked to her four-poster bed, flung herself down and stared at the ceiling. He had knocked on her door twice since last night and once even tried to talk to her through her peephole in the wall. She ignored him, of course. What could they have to talk about? Would he apologize? *I'm sorry Damita but I* have to tell your father what a bad girl you've been so he will let me leave the castle and pay me tons of gold.

Funny, even as she thought it, she could hear his deep, seductive voice saying such words. He had been so gentle with her. Even when he took control of her last night, put her in an uncompromising position and fucked her until she felt thoroughly used and sated, he had still been gentle.

You're a fool, Damita, she told herself and closed her eyes. He played you, seduced you, and you fell for it. To bad too, she mused as a clear picture of him formed in the darkness behind her lids. She saw him as she had that first evening through the peephole when she watched him undress. She remembered how she admired his physique just before leaving that night when she thought him to be asleep. Yes, she could have fallen for that man, nearly did fall for him. His voice, his touch, the feel of his body against hers, of his cock so deep inside her all opened a place in her heart she hadn't known she wanted to fill.

Thoughts of what could have been twisted with fears of what would happen tomorrow. Tears filled her eyes and blurred the picture in her dreams of the one man she ever met that she could have loved.

* * * *

Kinsey fingered the straps of material he made by tearing the skirt of one of Damita's most worn-looking gowns and stared down at the sleeping princess. She wore the cloak she used when traveling the forest path to the pub and nothing else. He guessed she tossed it on earlier after bathing as a simple means to cover herself. The sides of the cloak had parted in her slumber and the pale rounded edges of her breasts teased him now.

She'd cried herself to sleep. He hated watching that but knew she would only balk at any attempt to comfort her. So he watched, waited, and plotted. It came to him in the darkest of night hours, a whisper in his ear and a sudden understanding. *You need do nothing more than ask for her hand*, the queen had told him.

Ask for her hand, he thought and nearly laughed. She would give him her hand all right, right upside his face. So he came up with a better plan, one certain to protect his face and leave her no choice but to listen.

* * * *

"Damita."

She stirred, the voice penetrating the deep realm of darkness in her sleep.

"Damita, wake up. It's time for us to talk."

She didn't want to wake, didn't want to face the impending doom of the daylight hours. *Best to sleep*, she thought in her unconscious haze. She wanted to roll onto her side, to pull her knees to her chest and make a protective ball of herself but she couldn't. Why couldn't she move her legs? she wondered feebly and attempted to reach for her ankles.

Fear made her eyes pop open when she discovered she couldn't move her hands either. She blinked rapidly, forced her mind to do a fast climb from the grogginess of first waking. Alertness came quick with fury fast at its heels.

"Untie me, you son-of-a-bitch."

"Whoa! Such poetic language from a princess."

She growled at the mocking tone of his voice. "There's more where that came from. Now untie me!"

"No."

"What do you mean, no?" His calm demeanor only made her fury deepen. "I'll scream."

He shrugged. "If you must. You should know that it is unlikely you will be heard."

It galled her that he was right. Worse, that he knew it. They would be the only two in her wing of the castle at this time of night. When she wanted to, she could be a loud screamer but no one could wail loud enough to be heard through the twenty-plus room and four floors of solid stone and wood between them and any other occupants of the castle.

"You should know," she began, turning his own words around on him, "that when I do get free of these ties, I am going to cut off your dick and feed it to you."

He laughed. "A creative idea." He walked around the bed and perched on the edge. "I can see I am going to thoroughly love being married to you, Damita."

"Married to me! What the hell are you talking about?"

"The perfect solution to both of our problems," he told her, his voice full of certainty and confidence. He lifted a hand, brushed the backs of his fingers over her cheek.

Though she didn't want to feel it, desire sprang to life inside her at his simple touch. She turned her head away from him, from his hand and quashed any warm fuzzies he awoke in her. "How is my agreeing to marry you going to solve my problems? And what makes you think I would want to marry you? I don't even want you to touch me!"

"Yes, you do. You crave my touch as badly as I crave to do the touching." He turned more toward her on the edge of the bed, settled a bit. "But first, we will talk."

"We have nothing to talk about," Damita said through gritted teeth.

"Sure we do. I can't marry a woman I don't know now, can I? What's your favorite color?"

"I am not—" She glared at him as his question cut through the fog of anger in her mind. "What?"

Amusement sparkled in his eyes. "My favorite color is brown. What's yours?"

She wrinkled her nose. "Brown? But brown is so...blah."

"There are lots of beautiful things that are brown. Deer are brown, some rabbits and dogs. Tree trunks are brown." He grinned just a little and she knew he was remembering last night in the forest.

40

"So is mud and shit," she countered but felt herself starting to weaken. He saw beauty in things most simply took for granted, she realized, and even knowing that small bit about him tugged at her heartstrings.

"I can't say much for shit," he said, his grin growing wide, "but mud can be quite fun. Ever had a mud bath or even a mud fight?"

"No, but give me some mud and I will be happy to throw it at you."

He chuckled. "I bet you would, princess. You never answered me. Your favorite color is..."

"Red," she finally answered. "Deep, dark red."

"Like a rose." He nodded. "It suits you. Strong and beautiful yet delicate with a sweet scent that overwhelms the senses like a seductive caress."

"I thought you said you were a soldier." She looked at him through narrowed eyes.

"I am."

"Soldiers are not usually so poetic."

"Princesses are not usually so moody and cynical."

"Touché," she said with a sneer. "I was thinking more of the color of blood, not some silly rose."

"Princess, you are breaking my little red heart."

She almost smiled but caught herself.

"Why red? Why not pink?"

"Pink is too soft. Red is the color of fire, of passion, of..."

"You can say it. Red is the color of love. What do you love to do most in the world, Damita?"

"Dance," she answered automatically, her tone wistful.

"Is that why you go to the pub?"

"Part of it. The pub is the only place I can go at night to dance for people. When I'm on stage I feel so...alive. I'm not Princess Damita on that stage. I'm someone else, someone free and exotic, mysterious and sought after. I'm so much more, can be so much more there than I can held prisoner in this dammed castle." To her horror, a single tear slid down her cheek. She moved to wipe it away and only then remembered Kinsey had yet to untie her. "Are you going to let me loose?"

"I'm not done with you yet."

To her mortification, he brushed the tear from her cheek.

"I told you I don't want you to touch me."

"You are full of surprises, princess, and varying moods as well. I like that about you." He smiled at her and her heart tripped. He had a great smile, warm and seductive and full of heated promise. His hand left her cheek to trail down her neck, over her collarbone and down further still to sneak beneath the material of the cloak she still wore. "Why bother to lie about something you know you want so badly?" His fingers brushed over her nipple already taut with need. "Tell me again that you don't want me to touch you."

She closed her eyes, attempted to focus on anything but the heat forming in her breast, the tingling in her clit. "I—" She stopped, swallowed, then barely held back a moan when she felt his lips close around her breast. His tongue licked circles around her nipple then he drew it between his teeth for a gentle bite.

"What was that, princess?" he asked as he released her right breast, licked his way to her left and covered it with his mouth.

"I don't want you to touch me," she managed on a whoosh of air. But it sounded half-hearted, even to her own ears.

"Then I won't touch you," he said and she felt his hands move away from her, but his mouth stayed to lick, kiss and tease. He bathed her breasts, her abs, her belly in a shower of wet kisses that made her writhe on the bed. Her hands pulled at the restraints on her wrists, her legs tugged at the materials that held her ankles. Each gave from her strength but only enough to allow her room to squirm.

Her eyes popped open when he stopped kissing her and stood but before she could say anything he climbed onto the bed between her legs. The mattress gave on either side of her where he placed his hands, rested his weight and leaned in. His lips grazed her flesh, heated even as goose pimples rose to the surface of her shin, her knee, and her inner thigh.

She shivered and he lifted his head, the expression of his face as steamy and consumed with need as her body felt. "Is that better? I'm not touching." A ghost of a smile toyed with the corners of his lips.

"Smart ass," Damita muttered and would have come off the bed in the next heartbeat if she hadn't been tied down. He covered her pussy with his mouth, sucked her pussy lips between his teeth, and licked her clit until she writhed, panted, begged for release.

He didn't touch her, not with his hands. He didn't need to. He worked the tender flesh of her pussy with his lips and tongue, sucked her sensitive clit until it felt swollen and fit to burst. Tied as she was, she could do nothing but squirm, moan and curse her restraints. When she came, it gushed out of her with such force she screamed from the relief of it and was silently grateful after all that her wing of the castle was deserted.

Her body still shook with the after effects of her release when her eyes fluttered open and she found him hovering over her, gazing down at her. "Are you ready to marry me yet?"

She nearly laughed at his nerve. "You don't give up, do you?"

"I'm a soldier at heart." He shrugged as if that explained it all. "A good soldier doesn't surrender but fights his battles until they are won."

"Well, this is a battle you aren't likely to win, soldier."

"Oh, I think I am already over half way to victory." His hands skimmed down her sides. "I'm going to touch you now and when you cum this time I want to hear you screaming my name." He hitched up her hips and prepared to slide inside her.

How could a man make her so hot yet so angry at the same time, she wondered. Juices flowed wildly through her even as her blood simmered, but she hid both reactions well. "You never told me your name."

A slow, boyish grin unfolded on his lips. "Kinsey."

"Kinsey," she repeated. "What kind of a name is that?"

He entered her, stopped when just the head of his cock was inside her. "The name you will be screaming for the rest of your life, princess." He plunged inside her, one vicious and rapid thrust that drove his cock to the end of her womb. It wasn't until his hands slid down her thighs and he pulled one leg to drape over his shoulder that she realized at some point he'd untied her legs. The new position made each thrust deeper, harder, more mind-blowing and satisfying.

"Marry me, Damita," he growled as he continued to pound, to fuck.

She heard him though he sounded distant somehow, her concentration focused more on the pleasure he gave her and the frustration over her hands still being tied. "I want to touch you," she panted.

"Marry me," he repeated.

"Untie me," she countered.

"Not yet." His thrusts slowed. His eyes softened. "Not until you listen to me."

"I'm listening for Christ's sake, Kinsey. Untie me!"

He stopped. His dick buried impossibly deep inside her, his thrusts ceased and he stared into her eyes. "Marry me, Damita, and you will not have to give up anything."

"Except my freedom," Damita said dryly.

"And what freedom do you have now? You spend your days under guard, your nights locked in this room. Even the time you manage to steal isn't truly free for you are constantly looking over your shoulder."

Damita looked away and blinked back tears. He was right. She was never truly free from her father's guard. "So I marry you, and

what? You become my keeper instead of my father?"

"I would not become your keeper, Damita. I would not rule you, nor would I attempt to put you under lock and key."

Damita snorted at that. It sounded too good to be true. To be truly free, able to do her heart's desire without fear or consequence.

Kinsey hooked a finger under her chin, pulled until she had no choice but to look at him or close her eyes. She looked at him. "Marry me and you can have the freedom you desire. You can even continue to dance at the pub if you wish."

She raised a brow at that. "You would let me dance for other men?"

That boyishly sly grin returned to his lips and she felt him flex his cock still buried deep inside her. "As long as you save the best dances for me." The grin faded, his expression turning serious. "I would not take from you something that means so much, although I do hope that you would decide instead to spend your evenings with me. We can make up our own special dance if you want."

Damita stared into his eyes and nearly allowed herself to drown in the promises she saw there. Then something in her head snapped, a string on her reality she supposed, and she shook her head. "This is crazy. Why would you marry me? Why give up your bachelorhood when you could leave tomorrow a single man wealthy beyond imagination?"

The answer came to her in a rush of realization, and fury wasn't far behind. She welcomed the fury because it was better than the alternative, better than what she felt behind it, better than the pain. Still, when she spoke her voice sounded small, hurt. "You will have it anyway."

"Have what?"

"Untie me Kinsey." She didn't scream it this time, barely managed to keep it from sounding like a plea. But this time it got his attention.

He didn't pull his cock out of her, didn't need to adjust his

body in any way to reach the restraints on her wrists. With an easy tug on the material, her wrists sprang free. It did her no good with his body still pinning her to the bed and though she was no longer tied it took him only a half a heartbeat to catch her hands in his, hold them on the pillow on either side of her head.

"You're upset again. Why? What did you mean I would have it anyway?"

"Riches." She all but snarled the word. "Oh, you won't have so much to yourself right off but that's not what you're after anyway. You want it all and marrying me will ensure that you get it."

"Damita, what are you talking about?" He actually looked genuinely confused.

"Don't play coy with me, Kinsey. I may be a sheltered princess but I'm not stupid."

"All right. Then let's pretend I am for the moment and tell me what you are talking about."

His patience was waning. She could hear it in his voice but she didn't care. She wanted him to feel something more than the control and confidence that never seemed to leave him. Irritation would do for now.

"Why have just a little gold when one day you can have the whole kingdom?" She saw when understanding dawned in his eyes, watched as it faded away leaving only anger in its wake.

"You think I want to marry you so that I will someday be king?" Somehow, when he said it, even in a voice laced with fury, the idea sounded preposterous.

"You act as if the thought never crossed your mind."

"It didn't," he said and sounded so sincere she laughed in his face.

"Ha! You really do think I'm stupid, don't you?"

"I am not royalty, Damita," he said slowly, as if he were reeling in the string on his patience. "I'm a soldier. To rule a kingdom has never been an option for me. Hell," he let out a short laugh, "I don't even know if I would want to be king."

"Then why marry me? If the gold is all you want, why not take it and go? Why tie yourself to the castle, to my family, to me?"

He cupped her cheek in the palm of his hand, leaned down until his lips were but a mere breath from hers. "Because the gold isn't all I want." He kissed her, softly at first but with more passion and intensity when she responded.

She tried not to react, not to respond with such needy urgency to his kiss, to his touch but her body betrayed her. She opened her lips for him, met his tongue with her own stroke for stroke in a dance that was now becoming familiar with this man. She felt him shift between her legs, ease his cock out until he nearly fell out of her then slowly, so agonizingly slowly, he pushed himself back in.

"I want you, Damita," he whispered against her chin, her neck. "I want to marry you because I love you."

Disbelief twisted with sheer glee inside her at his words. Love her. How could he love her when they only met two days ago? Could he be lying, saying what he thought she would want to hear to get her to agree to marriage? Her eyes were closed, her head turned away from him. She was afraid to look at him, afraid to believe, afraid to hope.

"Look at me, Damita."

She shook her head.

"Please, baby," Kinsey whispered.

It was his tone of voice, so soft and pleading, more than the endearment that made her meet his gaze. This time she allowed herself to see deep into his chocolate brown eyes, let herself see the truth of his words.

"I love you, Damita. Marry me, princess. Be my wife."

She stared at him, let his proposal glide through her. She thought she needed time to think, to decide, to search for her own feelings. It was time she didn't have. Hadn't she thought him to be the first man she met that she could love? Yes, she could love him. She could spend her life with this man and she believed, whether he wished to rule or not, he would make a great king someday.

She opened her mouth, acceptance on the tip of her tongue, but something entirely different spilled out. "It will never work. My father will never allow us to marry."

Kinsey caressed the side of her face with his thumb and did that slow, agonizing out/in slide with his dick that made her squirm on the mattress beneath him. "You let me handle the king. Say yes and I will take care of everything else."

Damita dug her right heel and elbow into the mattress, used them for leverage as she twisted the left side of her body off the mattress, built the momentum and rolled them until she was on top. She straddled his hips, splayed her hands on his chest and grinned down at him.

"Yes," she said and began to ride his cock until, this time, it was he who screamed her name.

* * * *

"I want children," Damita said later. She lay with Kinsey on her bed, her head on his shoulder, one leg draped over his. Idly, her fingers doodled pictures on his bare chest.

"Of course. We will have a dozen if you wish." He brushed his lips over the top of her head, a head that sprang up a half a second later with an expression of pure horror.

"Twelve kids! Have you lost your mind?"

Goddess, I do love this woman, he thought and tucked his tongue in his cheek to keep from laughing at her. "I expected you would want many children with as many servants for we alone would not be able to keep our eyes on them all of the time."

"We won't," she said in a tone full of conviction. "Our children will be allowed to run, to grow, to peruse the castle grounds and the kingdom without guard or disguise." Kinsey skimmed his hand up and down her arm, hoping to sooth, to comfort. "Yes but they will still need supervision, guidance, not shelter or imprisonment but a more open kind of love."

Damita sighed. "I suppose you are right." She lifted her head again, looked at him. "I *could* have a dozen kids with you."

"Pregnancy would interfere with your dancing."

"Who said pregnant women can't dance?" she asked with a raised eyebrow. "You and I will simply have to adjust the dance we make up to accommodate me with a large belly."

He knew what she was telling him, understood it was her way of letting him know she would give up dancing at the pub. "Do not give it up just for me, Damita. Do what makes you happy."

"You make me happy."

Kinsey felt his heart swell with more love than he ever hoped to feel. Yet, even through his own happiness, he felt a sense of dread. "We need to decide what to do about your father."

"We tell him we want to get married," Damita said easily.

"I want it to be that simple, but there is something you should—" Before he could finish the sentence, tell her about the queen's belief that he would be beheaded if he didn't confess his knowledge to the king, the door to the bedchamber burst open.

Chapter 8

They took him. Damita wrung her hands as she paced. Two squires came into her bedchamber with little regard to her or Kinsey's state of undress and all but yanked Kinsey from her bed, took him away. She saw her mother standing in the hallway just before the door to her chamber was slammed in her face and locked tight. She pounded on the door, screamed until she could hardly feel her throat or her hands through the numbness.

Her mother, she thought. How could her mother betray her this way, and where had they taken Kinsey? What would they do to him?

"Damita."

She heard the soft, whispered voice and spun around, her gaze landing on the peephole in the stone wall. Her mother's voice, her mind registered a second later. Anger mixed with hurt and began to boil just below the surface of her skin. "How could you?" she demanded and stalked to the peephole.

"Please, baby, keep your voice down. Someone may hear."

"I don't care if the king in the next land hears."

"Damita, you must listen to me," the queen pleaded.

"You turned on me," Damita shouted. "You told daddy. You—

"Kinsey will be beheaded come first light," the queen spoke over her.

That stopped her. Fear slid over her like a blanket of ice. "Beheaded?" she whispered and felt her eyes burn with instant tears. "Buy why? Is it because we made love?" "Is that what it was, sweetheart? Do you love him?"

"Yes. Oh, mom, yes. I love him. He asked me to marry him." She heard her mother take a quick intake of breath.

"Baby, that is wonderful, but your father...he has found out that Kinsey lied to him, that Kinsey knew what you were doing, where you were going and did not report to the king."

"How—"

"There is no time to explain," the queen said, her voice sounding urgent. "It will be light soon. Damita, I do not know how to save Kinsey."

"I know what to do." Damita kissed the tips of her first two fingers, placed them over the peephole. "Thank you, mother. I love you," she whispered and bolted for the secret passage.

* * * *

"Prepare the prisoner," the king bellowed. "We execute at first light."

"Leave him be," Damita said in an authoritative tone that mirrored her father's. She walked into the Great Room, careful to keep her steps even, her posture confident and regal. She bit back a smile of satisfaction when the servants stopped, looked from her to the king and back again as if unsure which order to obey.

The king whirled on her. "How dare you contradict an order I give to my men? You are supposed to be locked in your bedchamber. How did you get out?"

Damita stopped a full arm's length from her father. He never hit her before, never so much as raised a threatening hand, but she never stood up to him like she did now. She would keep her distance, not take any unnecessary chances. "I dare, father, because it is *my* man that you have ordered your men to prepare for execution." Though her voice sounded steady, defiant, her heart hammered in her chest. "I got out of my bedchamber the same way I do every night. Isn't that what this is all about, how I've been sneaking out of my room each night?"

"Damita."

She turned to see the queen enter the room, her cheeks a bit red, breaths a bit ragged as though she ran most of the way there. "It's okay, mother. I will do what I have to do to save Kinsey." She turned back to her father and told him of the secret passage.

"How did you find out about this passage?" the king asked, but his gaze was on the queen.

"You have ordered me locked in my chamber at night nearly my whole life, father. I got bored," she lied with a shrug. "At one point I was certain I knew every crack, every dent, every bump in that room. Until one night, I spotted one I hadn't noticed before. The button to open the passage."

"And where has this passage taken you each night?"

Time to play hardball. "Release Kinsey and I will tell you."

The king raised an eyebrow. "You dare bargain with me, daughter?"

Damita took a deep breath, tried a different track. "He has asked me to marry him."

The king raised both brows at that. Surprise overtook the anger in his expression.

"He will make a good king when it comes our turn to rule," she continued, knowing what mattered most to her father. "He is a soldier, a hero. He is strong with both muscle and knowledge. Come to think of it, father, he is a lot like you in many ways," she added almost as an afterthought and hoped he would take it as a compliment.

"You intend to marry him?"

"I do," Damita nodded, her heart suddenly in her throat. "With your blessings, of course. But I can not very well marry a man without a head now, can I?"

The king turned his attention to the servants. "Bring the

prisoner to me. We will dine on an early breakfast."

* * * *

"You wish to marry the princess." The king studied Kinsey over his glass. "Why?"

Kinsey didn't flinch under the king's penetrating gaze but merely looked back, his own gaze steady and confident. He opened his mouth to answer but the queen spoke instead.

"What dose it matter the why, my lord? Look at them." She gestured across the table at Kinsey and Damita. "Damita has stood up to you for the first time in her life, risked an unknown punishment to spare this man's life, to give him her life. They have obviously fallen in love."

"It this true, Damita?" The king turned prying eyes on his daughter. "Are you in love with this man?"

Kinsey turned his attention to Damita, eager for her answer. Though he professed his love for her—something he never said to any other woman—she had not returned his declaration. She agreed to marry him, confronted her father for him, but would she return his love? He suddenly realized the answer to that single question was worth more to him than any amount of gold. *She* was worth more to him.

Damita reached for him, took his hand, gazed into his eyes and smiled. "I do father. I do love this man."

Kinsey's heart filled and he grinned like an idiot.

The king nodded slowly. He coughed, cleared his throat. He made a noise that sounded suspiciously as though he were attempting to cover the fact that his voice was thick with joyous tears when he spoke. "Then you shall be married with my blessing."

Slow, mirrored smiles of delight spread over the princess and queen's faces, proving just how much mother and daughter looked

alike. For a moment, he fell speechless in the presence of such beauty and realized this is how it would be now for all time.

"You have my blessing," the king repeated. "However, you still owe me an explanation, soldier. You have escaped execution for your deceit, yet you still have not told me where it is that you discovered the princess spent her nights when she was believed to be locked in her bed chamber."

Beside him, Kinsey heard Damita suck in a breath even as he glanced at the queen whose face had gone pale. Neither woman expected the king to pursue his quest in the face of the marriage proposal.

Kinsey wondered how the king would react now if he told the truth. More, what would he do if he discovered Damita lied as well? That it had been the queen who showed her the secret passage and knew all along where Damita spent her nights? That the queen even helped Damita by putting a sleeping potion in the guard's food?

He looked from mother to daughter and back again, realized both waited with bated breath to hear his answer. Then he addressed the king. He had a sneaky suspicion the king already knew more than he pretended. "I believe some secrets should remain between husband and wife. Don't you, your majesty? Damita will not be sneaking anywhere anymore for she will be spending her nights and her days with me."

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THE END

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AUTHOR'S BIO

I began writing when I was in Junior High School. (We won't discuss how long ago that was :-) When my parents saw how serious I was about becoming a writer, they enrolled me in a mail course through the Institute for Children's Literature. It was there that I learned much of the ins and outs of the publishing world.

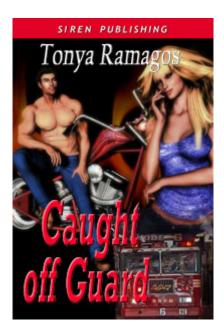
In 1999, my first young adult book (though no long available) was accepted for publication. And I was off! Six books later, I gave mysteries for adults a go. Writing under the pen name of Calley Moore, I had four books published. Meanwhile, my YA novels were still kicking butt. In 2002, I won the Best Author's award at the Book Review Cafe that same year.

As I continued to grow, so did my writing interest. In 2004, I expanded to adult romances, and in 2005, I turned erotic. <grin> I have several books that will be released in the upcoming months.

All writing aside, I am a native of South Mississippi, though I currently reside in Tampa, FL. I am a mother of two wonderful boys, and when I'm not writing, I'm reading. I also enjoy heavy metal music, various types of movies (anything with Matthew McConaughey is a sure winner with me) and dancing.

Check out Tonya's latest books at www.sirenpublishing.com/tonyaramagos

Visit Tonya's website at **www.TonyaRamagos.com**



The Heroes of Silver Springs #1 Caught off Guard

Fire Department Captain Dean Wolcott has struggled to tame the wild boy ways of his childhood. Now an adult, he's a responsible and respected member of the Silver Springs Fire Department. But with all he has achieved, there is one thing he still longs for...Veronica Abbott. The sweet, innocent, rich girl was always been out of his league, but that never stopped her from monopolizing his dreams. Now she's back, and the woman she has become leaves Dean with his jaw touching the floor!

After a life of domineering parents and becoming a widow in her mid-twenties, Veronica is finally in control of her future. And a future of excitement, surprise and spice is exactly what she wants. Her new business—a shop of sexual favors and lingerie—is sure to give her some of that, but it's the prospect of Dean Wolcott that really lights the fire inside her.

REVIEWS for Caught off Guard

5 Stars: "Tonya Ramagos is an author who never fails to tell a great story. Caught Off Guard is most definitely one of those. Dean and Veronica are two characters that harbored a secret crush for each other all of their lives but didn't necessarily know it. I loved that Dean (picture totally hot, buff firefighter) is so in touch with what he wants. He's dreamed of Veronica for years. Even believing that he had no chance, a tiny spark was always there. Veronica is a woman who has finally taken control of her life. She's straightforward in her attraction to Dean and goes after him with a single-mindedness that is enviable. Their initial meeting when she comes back to town knocked my socks off and the blazing hot attraction between these two continues throughout the book. They both have to examine what they want and decide whether they are ready to try to find happiness together. Although their relationship occurs quickly, it flows well in this fast paced tale and only the wrap up felt rushed. If you're looking for a quick, hot read, then grab Caught Off Guard." - Trang, Ecataromance

5 Angels: "*Caught Off Guard* explodes with passion and longing! Dean and Veronica share some pretty serious fantasies of each other, but as they find out, the reality is definitely better than either could ever have imagined. I really liked Veronica. She was very take-charge and upfront about her desire for Dean, while being equally upfront about her hesitations for a deeper relationship. She didn't hide what she was feeling and thus, though she couldn't always give Dean the answers he wanted, at least he knew that there was hope for a stronger relationship to spark.

Tonya Ramagos has been on my author radar for awhile and this book just cements her place on my keeper shelf. Perhaps a simple romance plot-wise, the emotional intensity of these characters marks this story as a winner. I hope Ms. Ramagos has plans to write about the other firefighters of Silver Springs." —**Sarah W.**, *Fallen Angel Reviews*

5 Cups: "What is hotter than a fireman love story? How about a mature woman that is ready to embrace her sensual side? This book hooked me from the very first page. This story draws you in with the action and the layers of details. I have to say

that I loved reading it and hope you do too." —Missy, *Coffee Time Romance*

4 Stars/Hot: "Caught off Guard was a guick fun read. I felt that the brief synopsis of the characters added to the plot of the story. Ms. Ramagos didn't prolong the detailed descriptions of the Dean, Veronica, or the secondary characters, allowing the plot to flow smoothly. I enjoyed reading about Veronica and her discovery that something was missing in her sex life. She didn't blame her husband; she blamed herself for not knowing what she wanted. That was perhaps the most important statement in this story for me. Veronica realized that she was a very sexual woman and became more comfortable in her sexuality from the way she dressed to how she approached Dean. Dean was not as complex as I initially thought; he was the perfect bad boy who realized he wanted to give all of that sexual heat to one special woman for life. The sexual acts between Dean and Veronica were very hot and steamy. I was disappointed when the story ended, as I wanted to know more about the men and women of the Silver Springs fire

4 Blue Ribbons: "Let me start off by saying this book is very entertaining. Veronica is the rich girl who comes home to live a life of adventure. Dean is the bad boy from the wrong side of the tracks who has cleaned himself up and is going after the woman he wants. Dynamite couldn't blow these two apart and the heat they give off is hotter than the sun. Tonya Ramagos is a delightful author and her talented writing will take her far." — **Angel,** *Romance Junkies*

"*Caught Off Guard* was a naughty look at two people whose childhood crushes were still alive and strong years later. I fell in love with Dean completely and absolutely because his intentions were so loving and so honorable. I found myself wincing with Veronica's mannerisms and blatant sexuality, but after realizing how she wanted to finally be free from being controlled, I could see where she was coming from. *Caught Off Guard* by Tonya Ramagos was a delightful read. I liked the plot and love when true love prevails!" —**Talia Ricci**, *Joyfully Reviewed*



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