

Love Potion #69

Eve Vaughn

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Chapter One

Alice stared at the little trailer in the middle of the woods with disdain. “You’re absolutely fucking nuts! Why in the world did you drag me to this place?”

“Because this is where Madame Shaniqua lives. Promise me you won’t say anything to offend her. This means a lot to me.”

“I’ll try, but I’m not making any promises. If you ask me, Ben’s not worth all this. You should have given up on that lost cause a long time ago, girl. You could have any guy you wanted if you set your mind to it.” Alice tossed her long black hair over her shoulder.

“I don’t care about other guys. I want Ben.”

“Shayla, darling, we have a saying in Korean about lunatics like you.”

“I’m sure you do, but right now I don’t need one of your sayings, I need your support. Can I count on it?”

Alice pursed her lips, and her golden almond-shaped eyes narrowed. For just a moment, Shayla thought her friend was going to walk away, until her features softened. “Okay. I’m only going in with you because you’re my girl, but you owe me big time.”

Shayla threw her arms around her friend. “Thank you. I’ll make this up to you. I promise.”

“You’d better. How the hell did you find this place anyway? It’s a dump!”

“I got a flyer in the mail. *Make Him Love You*. Usually, I throw crap like that away. I thought I had, but one night I found it by my nightstand. It was really odd because I’d just gotten off the phone with Ben, who happened to be telling me about a girl he’d met.”

Alice shook her head. “Frankly, I think you can do much better than Ben. I can’t understand why you haven’t realized how shallow he is. I just don’t get you, girl. You’re gorgeous, you have a good job. You’re the type of person to give the very shirt off your back to someone in need. You’re a smart woman, and I can’t figure out what this obsessive devotion to him is all about. He is such an insensitive jerk.”

“Look, I appreciate the glowing review of my character, but I wish you wouldn’t talk about him like that. Ben’s been a good friend to me.”

“*Friend* being the operative word. If you two ever got together, you’d get over him so quick you’d wonder what you ever saw in him.”

“I don’t think so. Are you going to let me finish telling you about how I found out about this place or not?”

Alice rolled her eyes. “Go ahead.”

“As I was saying,” Shayla paused, stressing the moment, then continued, “the

flyer was by my nightstand and I was feeling down, so I called the number. I talked to Madame Shaniqua on the phone, and she said she would make me a love potion that will make me irresistible.”

“How the hell do you know this isn’t some kind of scam?”

“She knew things only I would know. She’s a Gypsy princess. Her specialty is love spells and charms,” Shayla explained to Alice, who didn’t look like she was buying it.

“Well, if she’s so good at what she does, why does she live out here in the middle of the woods in this tin can? If that bitch pulls out a knife, I’m running and asking questions later.”

“Oh, stop it. Don’t be such a drama queen. Now let’s go in. I told her I’d be here by now.”

“I still can’t believe you’re doing all this for that weak-ass Ben. If you ask, me I’d take that fine-as-hell brother of his in a heartbeat,” Alice muttered.

Shayla pretended not to hear. The last person she wanted to think about was Ben’s older brother, Brad. He worked her last nerve.

Shayla tapped on the trailer door. Suddenly there was an explosion within the trailer. Without hesitation, she rushed through the door of the trailer, and immediately regretted it.

The most noxious odor she’d ever had the misfortune to smell nearly knocked her off her feet. “Holy shit! What’s that funky stench?” Alice stopped in the doorway, holding her nose.

“I don’t know, girl, but it smells like...” What did it smell like?

“It smells like feet and ass.”

“It’s the smell of the mystics, my child. You mustn’t mock them lest you anger them,” a raspy voice spoke.

Madame Shaniqua entered the room, larger than life. Shayla wasn’t sure what she’d been expecting, but it certainly wasn’t what she was looking at. The Gypsy was tall and rotund. She had to be close to four hundred pounds, which the bright multi-colored muumuu she wore did little to disguise. Each of her sausage-like fingers sported a gaudy ring, and she wore so many gold chains Mr. T would have been jealous.

Her pale, heavily made-up face looked as if it had been painted with a spray can. But the biggest shock of all was that *Madame* Shaniqua was not a Madame at all. If the crooked orange wig on her head and the hairy arms weren’t clue enough, then the fact that she hadn’t bothered to shave the five o’clock shadow from her face definitely gave it away.

“What the fuck!” Alice sputtered.

“Umm, I think we should go.” Shayla grabbed Alice’s arm to hustle her out of the trailer.

“Wait! Don’t you want your love potion?” Madame Shaniqua asked.

“Why the hell would I want to buy anything from a cross-dressing freak?” Shayla hissed, angry as much with herself as Madame Shaniqua. Yet another dead end in her pursuit to make Ben Carrington love her. How could she have been so gullible? Because she was desperate...

“It’s not nice to say such nasty things, child. Especially when I just mixed a fresh batch of my potion just for you. Didn’t you hear the explosion? That means the spirits

were pleased. You'd be a fool to walk away now."

"Girl, let's get out of here. This is bullshit! Why are you even standing around arguing with this con artist? Besides, the stench is singeing my nose hairs." Alice fanned her face, looking as though she wanted to faint.

"You're right. Let's go." Shayla sighed in defeat. She should have listened to Alice and not come here.

"If you leave now, Ben will never love you," the Gypsy said with a satisfied smirk on his face. Shayla froze.

"How did you... I never mentioned anyone's name."

"Madame Shaniqua knows all, my child."

"Oh come on!" Alice snapped. "This is obviously a scam, Shay."

The Gypsy shot an aggravated look at Alice. "I'd advise you to keep your friend quiet. Her skepticism is disrupting the spirits."

Shayla gave Alice a pleading look before turning back to Madame Shaniqua. "What if this potion doesn't work?"

"It's a love potion from the goddess Aphrodite herself. My au -- I mean, the recipe was handed down from my mother, who received it from her mother and so on and so on... It's a guarantee this Ben person will love you or your money back. What do you have to lose? Obviously nothing you've tried has worked or you wouldn't be here."

He had a point. What did she have to lose? If it worked, Ben would fall in love with her as deeply as she loved him. "Fine. I'll take your potion."

"Great. I'll go bottle some up for you." As he turned around to walk to the back room, another explosion occurred, but this one erupted straight out of his body. "You must excuse the spirits working within me," Madame Shaniqua said as he hurriedly left the room.

"It smells like the spirits are trying to free themselves through his ass," Alice muttered.

"Shhh."

"This is definitely a con, girl! I can't believe you would buy something from this RuPaul wannabe. The fact the nasty motherfucker farted and blamed it on some damn spirits should tell you something."

"We're already here. I'm going to buy it, so be quiet. He's coming back."

Alice snorted to show her displeasure, but remained silent.

Madame Shaniqua returned, with a heart shaped vial in his pudgy hand. "Here it is -- a vial of my famous Love Potion #69. That'll be one-fifty, my child."

"But you said one hundred over the phone," Shayla argued.

"Told you it was a scam," Alice said with a singsong chime to her voice.

"I guess so. Let's go," Shayla agreed, turning to leave.

"Wait! For you, my child, I'll give you a discount. One hundred dollars and it's yours."

All she had to do was walk out the door and end this madness, but a little voice went off inside her head. *Make him love you*.

What if this potion *did* work? Shayla paused before reaching for her purse. Oh, to hell with it. It was her last hope.

Chapter Two

It was her party and she could cry if she wanted to. How could Ben do this to her? Why were men so dense? Already on her fourth tissue, Shayla blew her nose --again. She knew she was being silly, sitting in the bathroom of the restaurant crying her eyes out. She sniffed. She should be out there with her guests having a good time, but how could she have a good time when Ben was out there fawning over some bimbo?

They agreed to be each other's dates for her birthday dinner tonight, but instead, Ben showed up with a redhead with the biggest man-made boobs Shayla had ever seen. As he had entered the restaurant, Shayla had felt her heart plummet. He'd walked over to her, kissing her on the cheek. "Happy Birthday, Shay."

"Who's your friend?" she'd asked him, staring pointedly at the redhead.

"Oh, this is Misty. She works at my office. I knew you wouldn't mind me bringing someone along." He must have sensed she was upset, because he frowned. "Are you okay, sweetie? You weren't really serious about us being each other's dates... were you?"

Now what the hell was she supposed to say without looking like a jerk? "Of course not. We're friends, right? Anyway, I think I'm just being a little emotional because of this turning thirty thing."

Ben nodded in understanding. "Of course. You look pretty tonight."

"Thanks." Shayla smiled, his twinkling blue eyes making her heart melt.

"I guess I'd be upset about getting old too. Why, I just cried buckets when I turned twenty-three this year." Misty shot her a patronizing smile.

Shayla was ready to knock the bitch's teeth down her throat. Instead she smiled, showing a lot of teeth. "Oh, you're only twenty-three? You look so... mature for your age."

The superior smirk dropped from Misty's face. Her green eyes narrowed to slits. "Let's go find a seat, Ben. We shouldn't monopolize the birthday girl's time," Misty practically sneered before dragging Ben off to a table away from her. Damn it. Before the party, Shayla had downed the entire vial of the love potion Madame Shaniqua had given her, but she was no more irresistible to Ben than she'd been before. Was it not enough? Seeing Ben whispering in Misty's ear sent her over the edge. Now here she was crying her eyes out like an idiot.

Alice knocked on the bathroom door, but Shayla shooed her away. She was sure her friend would point out her stupidity in buying a love potion from a transvestite Gypsy. Still, rational thinking didn't come into play where Ben was involved. Shayla sniffed again.

They'd been friends since her family had moved next door to his. Shayla and Ben were both ten years old at the time. She'd been a bit of a tomboy so she and Ben played sports, traded baseball cards, and hung out together. The two of them even had a secret language.

However, things soon changed when they entered high school. Ben realized how much he liked girls... and Shayla realized how much she liked Ben, with his mop of curly blond locks and dreamy blue eyes. He had a devilish charm, making it hard for most women -- and especially her -- to resist.

There was no doubt about it. Shayla Allen had a serious case of jungle fever. And the only cure was Ben Carrington. It didn't seem to help she'd been throwing hints at him about becoming more than friends, because he just didn't seem to get it. The one time she'd actually told him how she felt, they'd been both stinking drunk, and the next morning they had both pretended the words had not been spoken.

After graduating college, Shayla had accepted a job in Atlanta with a large marketing firm, trying to forget about him. She'd even gotten engaged for a short period of time, but things hadn't worked out. Shayla had hated hurting Tyrone. But she realized it would have hurt him much more if she'd strung him along while still having feelings for someone else. Damn her stupid heart. Why couldn't she get over this stupid crush. This love.

Once she had accepted where her heart lay, she'd packed up and moved back to Baltimore. By then, Ben had become quite the ladies' man. He was a successful accountant and as handsome as ever. From then on, short of dancing around naked, swinging her tits in his face, she'd tried about everything she could to get his attention romantically.

It probably would have been easier if she could flat out tell him how she felt -- *again* -- but every time she started, the words would get stuck in her throat... which was why she'd ended up at that stupid Gypsy's trailer in the first place.

Damn it, why couldn't he love her? She knew men found her attractive. Other men complimented her on her smooth milk chocolate skin, her thick eyelashes and dark brown eyes that slanted upward, giving her an exotic look, and her smile. True, she was only average height, but her body was curved in all the right places. So what if her thighs and butt were a little on the thick side. She was still pleased with her figure.

She glanced at her image in the mirror trying to figure out what it was about her that Ben apparently didn't like. Her long micro braids hung down her back and her make-up was expertly done, or at least it had been before she ruined her mascara. She knew it wasn't a race issue. Ben had dated quite a few women of color. He once joked to her about variety being the spice of life. So what the hell was wrong with the idiot?

Somehow she'd make it through this party without making an ass of herself. She would pretend everything was okay. And the first thing she'd do tomorrow was to go by that damn Gypsy's trailer and demand her money back.

A tap on the bathroom door interrupted her thoughts. "Shayla, come on out." It was Brad. Fuck. Of all the people to show up tonight, why did it have to be him?

"Go away!" Shayla yelled.

"All the guests are asking for you. The least you could do is show a little common courtesy and come out instead of sulking in the bathroom like a spoiled brat."

"I don't give a fuck what you think. You weren't even invited so why don't you scram!"

"I'll give you ten seconds to open this door. After that, I'm breaking it down."

Having known him for most of her life, she knew he didn't make idle threats. "Leave this door alone! You have no right to destroy the restaurant's property. You can't force me to come out."

"Ten."

"Go away!"

"Nine."

"You can't tell me what to do, Brad Carrington!"

"Eight."

She splashed cold water on her face, patted it dry with a paper towel, and tucked a stray braid behind her ear. She opened the door just as he counted to one. She wanted to smack the arrogant look off Brad's face.

He'd been the bane of her existence since they first had met. He was Ben's older brother by five years, and no two brothers could have been more different than the Carringtons. Ben wasn't much taller than she was and on the slim side, where Brad was huge, standing 6' 5" and built like a decathlete. His wavy brown hair trailed past his shoulders and he sported a full, neatly trimmed beard. His left ear was pierced and tonight a small gold hoop dangled from it. Shayla grudgingly admitted Brad did have nice eyes -- deep green with gold flecks.

A lot of women thought he was hot. Just *nother*. Even her mother once pointed out how handsome Brad was. Whatever. It was hard to get past the way he constantly taunted her about her feelings for Ben. Brad seemed to take pleasure in the fact that her love was not returned. He was such a hateful bastard.

He probably thought he was so great because he'd gone to New York and become a best selling author. A few of his books had even been made into movies. It was sickening to constantly hear how the hometown boy had made good.

She glared up at him. "You're just an asshole, Brad. Why did you come to my party tonight, anyway?"

Brad's jaw clenched, his green eyes flashing with an emotion Shayla couldn't read. "Your mother invited me."

"But I didn't."

"Nothing would have kept me away from your thirtieth birthday bash." An ironic smile touched his lips. "Isn't this the night you're officially a woman?"

She ignored his asinine comment. "I'm surprised you found my humble little party worthy enough to be graced by your presence. Don't you have any of your little books to write?"

"Actually, I'm taking a break. Are we going to stand here discussing me or do I have to carry you back to the party?"

"You wouldn't!"

He raised a dark brow conveying just how serious he actually was. "I hate you," she hissed.

"So you've already said many times," he said, sounding bored. He grabbed her arm, leading her back to her party. "Now smile," he whispered in her ear.

Shayla smiled -- not because Brad told her to, but because she didn't want Ben noticing how upset she was over him bringing a date. Besides, it was a matter of pride.

Dinner had just been taken away and several people were already on the dance floor. Her mother looked at her with concern. "What happened, sweetie? You were in the bathroom for a long time. Are you sick?"

"I was feeling a little lightheaded, but I'm feeling much better. I just needed a moment." Shayla squeezed her mom's shoulder in reassurance.

"Well, I guess that's okay then." Janet Allen smiled at the two of them. "Thanks for getting her, Brad. Isn't it great Brad could come tonight? When Mary told me he was back in town, I just had to invite him. I know how close you kids were growing up."

It took every ounce of Shayla's willpower not to roll her eyes. Her mother was so oblivious. Close indeed... good buddies...*riighttt* ... She wanted to wrap her hands around his throat and just squeeze.

Marvin Allen came up behind them, taking his petite wife by the hand. "Hey Janet, our song is playing. Let's go show these young people how it's really done."

"You kids enjoy yourselves."

"My mother can be so misguided sometimes. You and me, close? Ha! That's pretty laughable. I suppose you're here to ruin yet another one of my birthday parties." She looked at Brad.

"Do you always have to be so Goddamn unpleasant? Tell me, what have I done for you to treat me the way you do, apart from telling you the truth?" Brad asked.

"You have a lot of nerve to ask me that. You know perfectly why."

Brad sighed. "You'll never let me forget that night, will you?"

Her eyes narrowed. He was starting to piss her off. "Not as long as I draw breath. You had no right."

"It was a long time ago, Shayla. It's time to grow up and get over it," he said softly.

"Get over it? You ruined my chances of --"

"Hell no! I saved you from doing something you would have regretted, you stupid little fool. What do you think would have happened if your scheme had worked? Just because you were willing to give it up so easily doesn't mean Ben would have considered a relationship with you. That wasn't very smart."

"But that didn't stop you from taking advantage of the situation."

"Oh, so that's what pissed you off. Well, I only took what you offered."

Shayla bit back an angry retort when Ben approached with his date.

"This is a great party, Shay. Sorry, hon, I forgot to bring your gift tonight with me. How about I give it to you tomorrow over lunch?"

All Ben had to do was smile at her and all was right with the world. "Great! Our usual place?" Shayla shot a glare at Misty, who didn't seem happy about this turn of events.

"That sounds fine. Meet you tomorrow at noon. Now, I'm taking Misty for a spin on the dance floor." Ben looked to her, then at his brother, and winked. If she didn't know any better, she would have thought he was hinting about her and Brad being together. Good Lord, it seemed her mother wasn't the only oblivious one.

As Ben led Misty away, the redhead said, "I thought you said this would be *afun* party, Benny." She just knew the bitch had purposely said it loud enough for her to hear it.

Shayla took a step but Brad grasped her shoulder. "We might as well go out and dance."

Was he on crack? He was the last person she wanted to dance with. "No, don't bother. I'm sure someone else would love to dance with the *great* Bradford Carrington, or should I say B.C. Jennings," she mocked, referring to his pen name.

"And you've just proven my point." Brad looked as if he were about to lose his cool. Good. She didn't want him here anyway.

"And pray tell, what point have I just proven?"

"Ben will never love you because he wants a woman, not a child."

Seeing red, she raised her hand to slap his hateful face. Brad caught her by the wrist before her palm connected. "Darling, you just keep proving my point. Now are you going to be a good little girl and come to the dance floor of your own free will or must I drag you?"

Shayla was boiling inside, but she knew when to attack and when to retreat. Discretion was the better part of valor. Not wanting to cause a scene, she allowed him to lead her to the dance floor. A slow song began to play. *Damn, just my luck*. Why couldn't it be Ben out here with her?

Brad took her into his arms. Shayla tried to keep as much space between them as possible. "Relax, or I'm going to think I'm dancing with a robot."

"I'd rather be dancing with a robot," Shayla muttered under her breath.

"I'm sure you would, but you're not. Act your age, dammit, and at least pretend you're enjoying this," he hissed.

"You're holding me too close."

"I'd really rather wring your little neck, so stop arguing."

Shayla sighed, letting her body relax a little. She enjoyed dancing and soon became a slave to the rhythm. She closed her eyes, resting her head against his broad chest. In her mind, this was Ben, and they were the last two people on earth. The two of them were dancing by a lake at night and the stars were shining just for them.

Her body responded to the warmth of his. She inhaled his tangy scent, her heart beating faster. This felt so good, so right. Her knees grew weaker. Her pussy began to contract as thoughts of lying beneath him naked filled her mind. Thinking of his cock pulsing in and out of her body made her so wet. She felt a soft kiss against her hair and she wrapped her arms around his neck. His hand stroked her back, sending shock waves through each one of her sensitized nerve endings.

"Mmm," she murmured as she listened to the steady beat of his heart.

"You look beautiful tonight," he whispered in her ear.

Her nipples hardened as he pulled her tighter against him. She didn't want this moment to ever end. How she wanted this man. She felt the evidence of his desire against her as he molded her against him, their bodies becoming one.

"Oh, Ben," she sighed.

She felt him stiffen.

"Open your eyes!" his voice thundered.

Reluctantly, she lifted her lids. Shayla gasped in horror as her eyes locked with Brad's angry green gaze. "I'm not Ben."

Of course he wasn't. How could she have ever imagined him to be?

"That's the second time, Shayla. I promise you this. There will be no third time. The next time, you'll know exactly who I am!"

"There won't be a next time!"

"So you say."

"Look, you knew I didn't want to dance with you in the first place, so I don't know why you're getting so bent out of shape because I made a tiny mistake."

"You know, for a beautiful, seemingly intelligent woman, you don't have a lick of common sense. When are you going to grow up and realize my brother isn't worth any of this?"

Why was it he could set her off so easily? "I'm grown up and you're in no

position to judge me, Mr. Party-all-the-time. Oh yes, I've read about your wild orgies and your Broadway starlets. Maybe with your depraved life you can't understand the type of love I have for Ben. That doesn't give you the right to judge me. Fuck, I don't know how Ben could have possibly ended up with a brother like you. You're rude, you're arrogant, and he's worth two of you."

Brad went very still. Shayla cringed. As much as she disliked him, she still shouldn't have said that. This wasn't like her at all.

"Is that how you really feel about me?" Her mouth opened to speak but no words came out. "You don't have to bother. I can see it on your face. Well, you win. I'll remove my undesirable presence from your party. My apologies for ruining your night. Happy birthday, Shayla." He left her standing alone in the middle of the dance floor.

He acted as though she'd hurt his feelings. How was that possible when he was always so damn hard to read? He'd always purposely set out to irritate her. She glanced around her and saw Ben still dancing with Misty, holding her tight. Tears sprang into her eyes. It was her birthday. It should have been her in Ben's arms. Was Brad right when he said Ben would never love her?

Suddenly, a tight pain squeezed her chest. She couldn't catch her breath, and the room began to spin. *Oh my God, I think I'm dying*, was her last thought before the room went completely black.

Chapter Three

A desperate voice called to her. "Shay, open your eyes, honey. Speak to me." It came from far away, yet so near. It felt as if her eyelids were being held down by heavy weights. "Please, sweetie. Wake up."

It was Ben's voice calling out to her. She struggled to open her eyes. As they fluttered open, the room seemed out of focus. Something was different, but she couldn't guess what. "Ben?" A hoarse voice croaked his name. Was that her? She was burning up, and her throat was dry.

"Yes. Oh God, you gave us all such a scare." He pulled her up against his body.

Her eyes came into focus and she noticed the crowd of people surrounding them. "What -- what happened?" The last thing she remembered was arguing with Brad... and then nothing. Now she was lying on the floor with a jacket over her body and her head cradled in Ben's lap.

"You passed out."

"I need a glass of water," she whispered.

"Of course, my darling." He leaned down to kiss her brow. *My darling*? Since when was she his *darling*? Whatever had come over him, she wasn't about to analyze it. "Someone get her some water," Ben called out to the crowd.

"I'll get it," a woman said.

"No, I will," another person cried out.

"If anyone is going to get the lady water, it's going to be me," an angry voice hissed.

Shayla sat up to see who was arguing over something so stupid. One of the men

was Alice's date. The other two were her co-workers. A fight broke out. *What the fuck ?* "Oh dear Lord," she muttered.

"Do you want me to take care of them for you, Shay?" Ben asked.

There was a feverish gleam in his eyes that made her a little uneasy. "Umm, no. Help me up."

No one paid attention to her anymore. Her parents were trying to break up the fight. Alice was shouting obscenities at her date, and the poor restaurant staff and the remainder of the partygoers looked on helplessly. Her party had gone from bad to worse. *Ohmygodohmygod !*

Ben pulled her up to her feet, and she ran over to the brawling trio. "Stop this right now!" she shouted as loud as her sore throat would allow.

Almost like magic, the three men stopped at the sound of her voice. They all, at the same time, turned to her with the same feverish gleam in their eyes. What was going on? Had these men been abducted by pod people?

Her mother walked over to her. "Come on, baby. Let your father take care of those thugs. I'll take you home. Are you sure you're okay?" Janet asked with concern etched on her dark face.

"I feel fine. I don't know what came over me." Shayla shook her head.

"I'm so sorry your party turned out this way, baby," her mother apologized, patting her hand.

"Well, I guess I can say thirty came in with a bang and a pow." She laughed, though she'd never felt less like laughing.

"I'll go get your purse and coat, and we can go."

"Mrs. Allen, I'd like to take Shayla home if that's okay with you." Ben walked over to them, slipping his arm around her.

Her heart raced with excitement. *Ben's arm is actually around me. Am I dead, because I think I'm in heaven .* "That would be great. Yeah, Mom, Ben can take me home." Maybe this party wasn't a total loss after all.

Her mother gave her an assessing look. "Okay, but when you get home, you go straight to bed, and I want you to make an appointment with your doctor in the morning."

"But, Mom --"

"Don't you but Mom me. I mean it. You take her straight home, Ben. Don't let me find out you two went somewhere else," she warned as if they were ten years old all over again.

"Yes, ma'am," Shayla and Ben answered at the same time.

"Good. I'll be back with your things, honey."

"Your mom is one tough lady." Ben laughed.

"I've been told I have a lot of her in me."

Her mother was back within minutes. As they headed out the door, Misty came running up to them, jacket in hand. "Benny! I can't believe you were going to leave me here alone at this party."

Ben turned to the redhead as if seeing her for the first time. "I have to take Shayla home. You can take a cab, can't you?"

"Whaaat?" Misty screamed incredulously.

Shayla frowned. The thought of Ben dumping Misty should have made her happy, but it didn't seem right. It bothered her Ben could be so thoughtless. "Ben, you have to

take her home.”

“Why?”

What had gotten into him? “Because you brought her here and it’s the right thing to do.”

Ben lifted her hand to his lips and she thought she would melt right then and there. “Of course you’re right, sweetheart. Come on, Missy.” He turned to his ex-date as if she were an afterthought.

“It’s Misty! How dare you treat me this way? Everyone in the office is going to know what a jerk you are on Monday morning,” Misty threatened.

“So what? I only asked you out because you’re easy,” Ben retorted.

Shayla and Misty gasped simultaneously. The redhead turned a shade similar to her hair color. “If that’s how you really feel then I think I will take a cab. You’re an asshole, Ben Carrington.”

Shayla watched Misty storm off. “Ben, what the hell is wrong with you? That was so rude.”

“I was only being honest, my love. I must have been crazy to bring her here tonight when the only person I want to be with is you. Let’s get out of here. If I can’t make love to you tonight, I think I’ll explode.”

Was this the same Ben who’d casually walked into her party earlier with that clinging vine on his arm? Was it the same Ben who had been smashing her heart into tiny pieces since high school? Then it came to her. The love potion! It had finally kicked in. The Gypsy must be good at something other than cross-dressing. This was what she’d been waiting for. Ben was finally hers!

* * *

Back at her apartment, she invited him inside. “Would you like some coffee?”

“No, but I’d like some chocolate,” he said before pulling her into his arms. She wasn’t even out of her coat before he started to press butterfly kisses over her face and neck. She’d been waiting for this for such a long time, but she hadn’t imagined it would be like this. She’d certainly never envisioned pushing him away, but that was exactly what she did.

“Wait a minute, Ben. Let me at least take my jacket off. Slip my shoes off. I want tonight to be perfect,” she pleaded.

“The night will be perfect as long as you give me some booty. I need you, Shay. I’m burning up for you. Don’t know why it’s taken me so long to figure out, but now that I have, I think I’ll go crazy if I can’t have you.” He reached for her, but she sidestepped his embrace.

“And you will, but hold on, lover. All I’m asking for is a couple of minutes. Okay?”

“Okay, love, but only for a couple of minutes. I ache, Shay.”

“I know. Just hold tight. I want this to be perfect.”

He nodded, although he didn’t look very happy.

Shayla raced into her bedroom. She wouldn’t allow anything to ruin her special night. When she used to dream of her and Ben’s first time, she’d always imagined scented candles, with soft music playing in the background. She pulled out her candles and placed them in strategic places around her room.

As she lit them, Ben called out to her. “Shay, what’s taking you so damn long?”

"Give me a few more minutes. Why don't you look through my CD collection and put something on. Something romantic."

"Okay, but hurry."

"All right."

Shayla rushed around the room. She sprayed the room with her bottle of Victoria's Secret Love Spell. She wished she had time to take a shower to freshen up, but she knew her Ben was impatient. Oh well, the least she could do was make sure her coochie was fresh for him. At the sink, she took a damp soapy rag and washed slowly between her legs. Hmm. If Ben was in an eating mood, she'd at least smell nice down there.

"Shayla!"

"I'm coming!" she called out as she was drying herself off. For the final touch, she ran to her closet and quickly slipped on a pink teddy she'd saved for just this occasion.

With one last check in the mirror, she walked out to the living room to be greeted by a naked Ben. Her jaw dropped. She'd imagined him to be... bigger. His penis -- it wasn't quite big enough to think of as a cock -- wasn't *that* small, but her fantasies certainly didn't match the reality. In her dreams, when he got undressed he would reveal an anaconda, but this was more like a garter snake. Oh... well...

To make matters worse, Ben's choice of romantic music left much to be desired. Nine Inch Nail's "Closer" blared from the radio. Trent Reznor screeched, "I want to fuck you like an animal."

Shayla's fantasy was fast becoming a nightmare.

"Ben, why the hell did you choose that song? This isn't romantic in the slightest."

"You don't think so? It's exactly how I'm feeling right now. Come on, baby, don't change your mind now, especially when you're looking so damn sexy in that teddy."

Damn him for being able to reduce her to Jell-O with just a smile. "You know damn well I'm not going to deny you. So you want some of this pussy, Ben?" She ran her hand slowly down the length of her body in a seductive gesture.

He licked his lips. "Oh yeah!"

"Then come and get it." She walked toward the bedroom. Before she could even get through the door, he grabbed her from behind and began to plant frantic kisses on her neck. His hands cupped her breasts, squeezing them hard. She leaned back against him as his hands played with her now pert mounds. Shayla couldn't believe she was here with Ben like this, finally, after so many years of waiting.

"Oh, Ben, that feels good," she moaned.

As Ben tweaked one stiff nipple between his fingers, his other hand slid down her belly, slipped inside the teddy and touched her neatly trimmed bush. She wanted to feel his fingers inside her. As though reading her mind, he crammed three fingers inside her. It hurt. "Oww, easy, Ben."

He didn't seem to take heed. His fingers continued to push their way inside her. "I'm sorry, Shay. You're so damned hot I just can't help myself. Don't you like the way my fingers feel?" he murmured against the nape of her neck.

"Not if you're rough about it."

"I'm sorry. I guess I got a little carried away. How's this?" He removed one of his

fingers and slowed down the pace. It did feel better.

“Yes, I like that.”

Ben’s thumb rubbed her clit and she sighed in delight. His lips caressed her skin. One hand slid over her breast and his fingers pumped in and out of her pussy. She thought she would lose her mind. Shayla rode his fingers, finding her pleasure, feeling herself get slick for him.

Abruptly, Ben removed his hands and turned her around to face him. The feral look in his eyes frightened and excited her. He crushed her lips with his. She thrust her tongue forward to meet and circle his. She wished he hadn’t stopped caressing her. That felt good. He wasn’t as good a kisser as she expected, but that was something they could work on.

He tugged on her braids, jerking her head back. “Easy, Ben,” she hissed. What the hell was wrong with him tonight?

“Sorry, Shay. You’re driving me wild, woman. I promise, I’ll be more gentle,” he said, kissing the exposed column of her throat.

She allowed her body to relax again as he pushed her back to the bed. Shayla wrapped her arms around him, giving him a kiss on the neck. She ran her tongue along his taut flesh. “Shay, don’t do that or I won’t be able to control myself.”

She smiled up at him. “That’s what I’m counting on.”

“Oh no you don’t.” He grasped her wrists in one hand while he ripped the teddy from her body.

“Ben! What are you doing?”

“You don’t need this.” He frowned.

“Maybe not, but I didn’t want you to tear it beyond repair.”

“Forget about it. I’ll buy you more. You know what, you talk too much. Just lie back and enjoy this.”

She was too stunned to say anything. Besides, his mouth latched onto her nipple and he was doing the most sensational things with his tongue. “Mmm, don’t stop, Ben,” Shayla moaned.

He sucked the throbbing peak briefly before turning his attention to the other one. He lapped her breast, making her wiggle beneath him. Ben only gave her breasts a minimal amount of attention before he released her wrists and kissed a trail from the valley of her breasts to her navel.

Shayla was a little disappointed he hadn’t suckled her breasts longer but it seemed as though he was anxious to get to her pussy and she didn’t have a problem with that. In fact, she couldn’t wait. She was hot and needed relief.

Ben moved lower, kissing her on the bush and the tops of her thighs. She quivered as she waited for him to part her thighs, but he sat up abruptly. “What’s wrong? Doesn’t it smell okay?” She was sure she’d given it a thorough washing.

“It smells fine. I want to fuck you. Are you on the pill?”

“Well, yes, but --”

Before she could even finish he opened her legs and plunged forward.

“Ben, you’re not wearing a condom!”

“So what? I’m clean. We’ve known each other for a long time. Relax, Shay.”

She couldn’t believe what was happening. Shayla bucked her hips to get him off her. “No sex without a condom, Ben.”

He shot her an annoyed look. "You don't mean that. Come on. It feels so good raw."

"I don't care. Get the fuck off me."

He grunted. "Fine. Where do you keep the condoms?"

"The medicine cabinet." She watched him as he stalked off, wondering if this was even worth continuing. Maybe tonight wasn't the right night to have sex with Ben after all. Maybe the effect of the potion was too strong.

Ben came back with a black condom on his protruding member. It looked even more ridiculous in the condom than it had bare. "Umm, Ben, I was thinking, maybe it's best if we save this for another time."

"What? No way. You can't leave me like this. I ache. Come on. Give me a little pussy. I won't take long, I promise." He wiggled his dick at her and she wanted to laugh out loud, but the boyish look he gave her was her undoing. Besides, no one had ever begged for it quite like this. He did look rather pathetic standing there.

"Okay, but none of the rough stuff."

"Yes," he agreed eagerly, getting back on the bed. He positioned himself on top of her, spreading her thighs. Shayla caught sight of the clock as he slid into her not so damp passage. 11:59. *Happy birthday to me*, she thought.

When Ben was fully inside her, it felt pleasant. Maybe she could get into it after all. He thrust in and out of her, hard and fast. The slow build-up in the pit of her stomach was just starting to spread when all of a sudden, "Oh God, yeah!"

Ben gripped her thighs and began to spasm over her. There was no way he had just finished. She turned her head to look at the clock. It still read 12:30. Was something wrong with her clock? She got the answer to her question when seconds later it read 12:31.

What the fuck? He hadn't been kidding when he said he wouldn't be long. Well, shit, that wasn't even worth the hundred bucks she'd spent on the love potion. She would have been better off playing with herself.

Ben collapsed against her body. "That was some good pussy, Shay. You were so hot."

Shayla didn't trust herself to speak. She never imagined things would be this way with Ben. At least she thought he would last more than a minute. Pushing him off her, she sat up. She suddenly wanted a shower.

"Ben, maybe you should leave. I'm really tired."

Her answer was a loud snore. She shook his shoulder and he let rip a fart that would have put Madame Shaniqua to shame. The motherfucker had the nerve to fart in her damn bed? In his sleep, no less. Maybe it wouldn't have been so bad if the sex had been great, or even good for that matter, but it had come nowhere close. This was officially the worst birthday of her life.

Chapter Four

"I can't believe you took that funky-ass potion!"

Love Potion #69 was ruining her life. She'd decided to give Ben a second chance.

After all, maybe he'd just been having an off night. Besides, there was no way that she was ready to admit to herself that she really didn't love him after all she had been through to get him to love her.

The problem was now he loved her just a little too much. Yesterday morning it had taken her an hour to convince him she needed a little time alone. When it finally sank in, he left, but with the promise he'd be back soon.

Not even an hour later, she'd received the biggest delivery of roses she'd ever seen. They were from Ben. It was hard to stay annoyed with him when he did sweet things like that.

But then the strangest things started to happen. She got a dozen more floral arrangements -- from a dozen different men -- throughout the day. Men Shayla hadn't even heard of.

She stayed locked in her apartment for the rest of the weekend, taking her phone off the hook because it was constantly ringing. Ben came back as promised and he wanted some ass.

Round two was even more disappointing than the first time. He wanted to do it *again*, but she convinced him she'd prefer to just sit in front of the television and watch old movies. They sat down to watch *Casablanca*, but she could barely pay attention to the screen. Ben never took his eyes off her face. It was so weird, this devotion of his.

But this was what she wanted. Or was it?

When Shayla wanted to be alone again, Ben refused to leave. No amount of convincing would make him go -- he began to sob uncontrollably. While Ben slept on her couch, she slipped out with her suitcase.

And Alice was not about to let her live it down. "I can't believe you took that funky-ass potion, and it actually worked!"

"I guess in the back of my mind I only half expected it to work. Alice, I don't know what I'm going to do. I barely made it to your place without strange people following me. I got pulled over by a cop for speeding, but the officer was more interested in getting my telephone number than giving me a ticket! When I was walking to your apartment, a pack of dogs were chasing me and trying to sniff my butt. This little Chihuahua was humping my leg! What am I going to do?"

"Well, you can stay here for a couple of days, but if strange men start showing up, you're going to have to go. You're my girl and all, but I have to draw the line somewhere."

"Okay. It's much appreciated."

"No problem. I know you'd do the same for me. Anyway, tell me about the Ben incident again. Was it really that small?" Alice made a face.

"Well, I suppose it was average." Shayla shrugged.

"Was it so small that you could barely feel it when he stuck it in you?"

"I could feel it, and it did feel nice for the brief seconds it was inside me. The second time, he came the second he entered me."

Alice burst out into loud peals of laughter, causing Shayla to glare at her. "You're such a bitch, do you know that?"

This only made Alice laugh harder, wiping tears from her almond-shaped eyes. "I'm sorry, Shay, but you have to admit, all these years you've been panting over him and you find out he's definitely not packing, and to add insult to injury he's a minute

man.”

Shayla giggled. “Actually, it wasn’t quite a minute. It might not have even been thirty seconds.”

“You’re better than me, my friend, because I would have kicked his sorry ass out of my bed.”

“I’d have kicked him out of my bed, but I was too busy spraying my room with Lysol.” With that they both began to laugh uncontrollably.

Shayla laid low at Alice’s for two days, calling in sick. By mid-week, she realized that she couldn’t hide forever, so she went back to work. Big mistake. The minute she stepped through the door, every single man she passed had that love struck look on his face. It wasn’t even restricted to the men either. Her boss, a known lesbian, kept coming by her desk, finding excuses to touch Shayla. The women in the office gave her angry glares.

She got no work done that day because of all the people stopping by her desk and offering to take her out. By the time Shayla made it back to her place, she was exhausted from fending everyone off. Now she sat on the couch in an exhausted heap and all she wanted to do was be alone and wish herself off the face of the earth.

The doorbell rang, but she didn’t answer it. “Shayla, let me in!”

Ben? What the hell did he want? Maybe if she ignored him, he’d go away.

“Shayla, I know you’re in there. Your car’s in the parking lot. Let me in.”

Shit. Why couldn’t he just disappear? Reluctantly she walked to the door. Ben was standing on the other side of the door with a huge box of chocolates and a pizza. Damn. She supposed he expected to stay the night again. She pinned a smile on her face. She couldn’t send him away when he’d brought her food. “Ben, it’s so nice of you to come over with dinner.”

“Maybe after the pizza, I can get some pussy.”

He had to be kidding. “Uh, just because you bought me a ten-dollar pizza doesn’t mean I’m going to give you some ass. Look, if that’s the real reason you came over, you need to turn your behind back around and leave. I have just had the worst day of my life.”

“I’m sorry, Shay, I didn’t mean to add to your problems. Look, this pizza comes with no strings attached. I just need to be next to you. I can always get some pussy later.”

She wanted to take the pizza and shove it in his face, but there was no point in arguing. “Come on in, but you can’t stay. After dinner, you have to go, okay?”

“Of course, Shay.” There was a gleam in his eyes that she couldn’t read. He looked like he was up to something, but her brain was too tired to analyze it.

They sat down in front of the television and she turned it on. She took a slice of pizza and kept her eyes glued on the screen, hoping Ben would take the hint. When she bought that blasted potion, it hadn’t ever occurred to her that once she had him she might not want him. It wasn’t even their disastrous lovemaking session that had opened her eyes.

She’d never realized how annoying he was.

Somehow, he always seemed to turn the conversation back to him, and although he talked about his undying devotion to her, it was always about what he wanted. A voice echoed in her head. *You stupid little fool, when are you going to grow up and realize that Ben isn’t worth all this?*

Why did she have to think about Brad at a time like this? Was he right? Had she

really been a spoiled brat and a fool? She'd rather walk on broken glass than admit Brad Carrington was right about anything, that was for damn sure.

Shayla was halfway through her slice of pizza when Ben started massaging her shoulders. "How does that feel?" he asked.

Actually, she liked it a lot. Maybe she'd been a little hasty in her assessment of Ben. His fingers were like magic on her tired muscles. "That feels great. Thank you."

She closed her eyes, relaxed and allowed his hands to pound her spine in titillating motions. "You know, Shay, I could give you a better massage if you were lying on your stomach. Maybe if we went to the bedroom I could do this properly."

Shayla's eyes flew open. Did he think she was an idiot? "No, Ben. You know what? I'm not hungry anymore. I think you should probably leave. It's getting late and I need my sleep."

She stood up, and his face fell. "I won't try anything if you don't want me to. After all the time we've known each other, I'm a little hurt that you'd suspect me of trying something against your wishes."

Damn, she hadn't meant to hurt his feelings. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply you'd try anything."

He smiled. "I'll forgive you if you let me finish that massage for you."

That smile of his was fast losing its power over her. "I don't think so. I think you've already done a fine job."

"You just don't trust me."

"It's not that." It was exactly that but she wasn't about to tell him.

"What is it then?"

"It's just that... umm, my chiropractor doesn't advise unlicensed hands on my back."

"You didn't have a problem a few minutes ago."

He had a point there. Shoot. *Why do I have to be such a lousy liar?* "Okay, Ben, you're right. I just don't trust you. What am I supposed to think when you said exactly what you wanted the minute you walked through the door? Is it any wonder I find your motives a little suspect right now?"

"Fine. But I have a present for you. Close your eyes so I can give it to you."

"It's okay. I don't need a gift."

"Pretty please. It would make me happy to give it to you."

"Fine." She closed her eyes.

"Close them really tight."

"They are closed tight."

"Make sure they're really tight."

"They are tight, dammit! Just give me my damn gift. Sheesh."

"Hold out your hand."

Shayla complied. She felt cold metal against her wrist and heard a firm click, followed by another click. She was almost too scared to open her eyes out of fear at what she might find. It was worse than she thought. He'd handcuffed the two of them together!

"What the hell is wrong with you? Undo this right now!"

"I can't," he said with a satisfied smirk on his face.

"What do you mean, you can't? You'd better find the key or someone's hand is getting chopped off and it ain't gonna be mine."

"Shayla, you're being silly. Aren't you pleased? This way we can be together forever. I've always known that you had a crush on me."

She gasped. "You knew? Why the hell didn't you ever say anything?"

"The reasons don't matter anymore, do they? We're together now."

"But, Ben, I don't want to be with you anymore," she confessed.

"You're just saying that. You can't just get over me that easily." He sounded so sure of himself. Had he always been this damned cocky? He was nearly as bad as Brad. Damn him. Ben's brother would probably be laughing at her predicament.

"Okay, this joke is over. Uncuff me."

"I can't."

"Why the hell can't you?"

"Because I swallowed the key."

"You're kidding, right?"

"Nope."

"Ben, I should kick your ass."

"But you won't."

"No, I won't, out of deference to the fact that our mothers are best friends."

"Since I'm not going anywhere now, how about some pussy."

"Ben, I wouldn't let you lick my feet right now, so just shut up while I think."

"Whatever you want."

"What I want is to be free of these handcuffs."

"Anything but that."

Shayla closed her eyes to count to ten, because she was fast losing control of her temper. She only had herself to blame for this entire fiasco. No truer words had ever been spoken than *Be careful what you wish for*. Whoever had said that must have had a situation like hers in mind. The ironic thing was that not even a week ago she would have given her left tit to be cuffed to Ben like this. Now all she wanted to do was smack the shit out of him.

There was only one way out of this mess. She had to go to Madame Shaniqua and get a cure.

Chapter Five

Shayla was going to have to kill Ben. That was the only way she'd get rid of him. Not only was he unwilling to leave the apartment, he couldn't keep his hands off her. She found herself pushing him away, but each time she attempted to break the chain between the two of them he stopped her.

She pulled out a pair of pliers, but he plucked them from her hand. She'd have called the police if she didn't think whoever showed up would be panting over her too. That was the last thing she needed.

"Why are you trying to separate us? Don't you know we were meant to be together like this forever?"

She glared at him. "You're really starting to piss me off, Ben. If you don't help me out of these damn cuffs, I'll brain you."

He laughed as if she had just told the funniest joke. "I know you don't really mean that. We're not going anywhere, so let's go to the bedroom."

"I'm not joking! I don't want to be handcuffed to you. I thought you wanted me to be happy. Well, I'm not happy!"

"I'm very happy." He leaned over to give her a kiss. Shayla pulled away from him. Before she knew it, he was on top of her, his free arm wrapped around her so tightly she could barely breathe. Her free arm was imprisoned in his grip, and it was nearly impossible for her to move the cuffed hand because he had it pinned above her head.

Ben pressed frantic, sloppy, wet kisses all over her face. When she struggled against him, he started licking her face as though he were a damn Labrador retriever. She wanted to gag. "No! Stop!"

"You know I can't. You drive me wild, Shay. I need some ass or I don't know what I'll do," he said, lowering his head to capture her lips with his.

Fighting him only seemed to incite him. She let herself go limp. Ben was kissing her neck, but she felt absolutely nothing. Her eyes strayed to a decorative paperweight on the coffee table.

If she could just free her arm and grab the paperweight, she could knock him out. She forced herself to smile up at him. "Why don't you let my arm go so I can touch you, Ben."

"I like the sound of that." He loosened his grip.

Shayla threaded her fingers through his blond locks, trying her best to seem like she was into this. "I really liked it when you kissed my neck," she murmured.

As he nibbled her neck, she reached for the coffee table. Her fingers just touched the paperweight. She lowered her arm and wrapped her hand around the leg of the coffee table, pulling it closer.

"What are you doing?" Ben lifted his head with a frown.

"Nothing. Don't stop kissing me, Ben." Shayla trailed her fingers down his spine, making him shiver.

When he was once again engrossed in kissing her, she reached for the paperweight. Success. Gripping the heavy marble piece in her hand, she lifted it high in the air before bringing it down on the side of Ben's head.

He collapsed on top of her. Rolling his unconscious body from hers, she sat up. He was so pale and still. *Oh my God! Did I kill him?* Fortunately there was a pulse, but she didn't know how much damage she had done. Perhaps she had hit him a little too hard. What the hell was she going to do if he didn't come to? The last thing she needed to add to her worries was murder.

She could just read the headlines now. *Woman bludgeons man during kinky sex*. Just then, the phone rang, but it wasn't her phone -- hers was turned off. She didn't know what made her do it, but she reached into Ben's pocket to pull out the cell phone.

"Hello?" she answered tentatively.

"Shayla? Where's Ben?" It was Brad. He was the last person she wanted to talk to but she needed help.

"He's here with me."

There was a long pause on the other end of the phone before he spoke again. "Put him on the phone, please."

"I can't."

“Why can’t you?”

“He’s incapacitated right now.”

“You mean he’s drunk. So you’ve had to resort to getting him drunk to finally hook him, huh?”

“Brad, I’m not in the mood for your nastiness right now.” She didn’t know if it was the way he’d just spoken to her, the lousy week she was having, or the fact that she had to knock Ben out. Maybe it was a combination of everything, but to her humiliation, she burst into frustrated tears.

“Shayla! What’s the matter? What’s wrong?” Brad asked.

“Why the hell do you have to be so damn mean to me when I’m in the middle of a nightmare?”

“Calm down and tell me what’s going on.”

Should she tell him? He would probably laugh at her, but it was probably what she deserved. Shayla hated to admit it, but perhaps Brad would know what to do. “I had to knock Ben out.”

“What?” He sounded strangely calm. “Tell me exactly what happened,”

Shayla started from the beginning -- when she received the flyer in the mail. She left nothing out. When she finished, she braced herself for his laughter, but it didn’t come. “Brad? Are you still there?”

“Yes, I’m still here.”

“Well?”

“Well what?”

“What should I do?”

“You’re asking me for help?”

“Brad, this is no time to be cute. You might be my only hope.”

“Gee, thanks. Look, I’m sure you realize that this is a pretty hard story to swallow. I mean, what made you buy something from a cross-dressing Gypsy in the first place? If everything you told me is true, was it really worth it?”

A tear slid down her cheek. It wasn’t, but she wasn’t about to admit it to him. “Look, if you’re just going to lecture me, I’m hanging up.”

“Wait! I’ll help you.”

“How are you going to do that from New York?”

“I’m not in New York. I’m still at my folks’. Mom hasn’t been able to get hold of Ben, which is why I was trying to call him. Give me your address and I’ll be over.”

“But you can’t come over!”

“Why not? You need some help extricating yourself from my charming little brother, don’t you?”

“Yes, but you might fall in love with me, and if Ben comes to before then, I can’t fend you both off.”

“Shayla, you’re being ridiculous. Do you want my help or not?”

She sighed. Why did he have to be right all the damn time? “Fine.” She rattled off her address to him.

“That isn’t far from here. I should be there in twenty minutes. If Ben comes to before I get there, stay away from the paperweights.”

“Why you --” she began, but he’d already hung up. Oh God, she didn’t think she would be able to handle it if Brad fell victim to the potion as well.

* * *

As promised, Brad was over in twenty minutes. Shayla dragged Ben's still unconscious body to answer the door. Brad stood on the other side looking... hot. He was wearing a black crewneck that exposed the column of his throat. The jeans he wore were so tight around his lean hips that she could make out the outline of his cock. His hair was slicked back with mousse. A one-carat diamond stud glittered in his left ear, adding to the appeal of his sculpted features.

She'd never noticed how sensual his lips looked. His beard only seemed to emphasize their shapely fullness. What the hell? This was Brad, her nemesis. Brad wasn't *that*. He was just an annoyance.

He cocked one dark brow. "Are you just going to stare at me as though I've grown two heads or are you going to let me in?"

"Umm, yeah, sure." She opened the door wider to let him in.

When he stepped through the door, he looked down at his brother's prone body. "Jesus, Shayla, did you hit him with a paperweight or a Mack truck? There's a huge lump on his head. He could have a concussion. I have to get him to the hospital."

"I can't go to the hospital cuffed to him like this! And what will happen when I walk through the door and every male and lesbian within ten feet of me starts acting like an idiot?"

"How about thinking about someone other than yourself for a moment? That's what got you into this mess in the first place, so don't expect any sympathy from me. Anyway, I didn't say anything about you going to the hospital with us."

Nasty as ever. He didn't seem to be at all affected by the potion. Maybe it was wearing off. "Brad, you don't seem..."

"Are you wondering why I haven't fallen at your feet like an idiot?"

She just nodded. There was a little twinkle within the depths of his green gaze, and he gave her a little smile. "Just because I'm not acting like the others, doesn't mean that I'm not feeling the effect right now. Maybe I'm better able to handle it because I've been forewarned."

"Oh." She didn't really want Brad to have feelings for her, though for some reason the thought excited her. Maybe this potion was starting to affect her brain.

"We'll discuss this later. I brought a key for your handcuffs. I hope it works."

"You just happen to have a key to these handcuffs? Into kinky sex, are you? I guess the things I read about you in the paper were true," she taunted.

Ignoring her, he produced a key from his pocket. She was free within a blink of an eye. His silence shamed her more than an angry retort would have. He'd come over to help her. She should have been grateful instead of acting like a bitch. "Brad, I'm sorry."

"Forget about it," he said gruffly, hauling Ben into his arms. "You better go to that Gypsy or whatever that thing was and see if there's anything you can do to reverse the effects of this potion. I want you to come straight home afterwards and don't open your door for anyone. I'll call you later to check on you and let you know how Ben's doing."

"Brad..."

"I'll talk to you later, Shayla."

As she watched Brad walk out the door, she remembered Brad and Ben's father was a retired police officer. He'd probably have a pair of handcuffs lying around. She felt

like the world's biggest asshole.

Chapter Six

Someone was following her. From the moment she stepped out of her apartment building, she could feel eyes on her. As she drove to Madame Shaniqua's, Shayla kept looking in her rearview mirror. There was a gray sedan on her tail. She took short cuts and sharp turns to lose her pursuer. Eventually, she no longer saw the car behind her, but she still had an uneasy feeling.

She parked near the secluded trailer, hoping Madame Shaniqua was home. The front door burst open as she walked toward it. A wizened old woman stood there, staring at her with dark eyes.

The old woman looked like a witch, with pale skin, a large pointy nose, and a mole on her cheek that had several hairs sticking out. Her long black hair was liberally streaked with gray. The woman was dressed in all black and wore a big silver chain around her neck. "Well, come in, child. There's no point in standing around outside like that, unless you want the person in the gray car who followed you here to get out."

Shayla's jaw dropped. "Umm, is Madame Shaniqua here?"

"Stop gaping, child, and come inside. You need help with a love potion you took, right?"

"Look, I need to talk to Madame Shaniqua."

"You're talking to her. Now come in or I'll leave you standing out here to fend for yourself."

The thought of some mysterious guy lying in wait for her jolted Shayla into action. She walked into the trailer past the woman. "You're not Madame Shaniqua. Please, it's very important that I talk to her."

"And who do you suppose you're talking to, child? I said I am she, and I am not in the habit of lying. Tell me, what do you think your Madame Shaniqua looks like?"

"Well, actually, I think she's a man. She's tall and a little on the heavy side. When I met her she was wearing a bright colored muumuu and lots of jewelry."

"You're probably referring to my nephew Dumbass," the old woman explained.

"Excuse me?"

"My nephew Dumbass. As a favor to my sister I let him assist me around here, mixing potions and keeping my stuff organized. It sounds like he's overstepped his bounds again."

Shayla shook her head in bewilderment. "Look, I still don't understand what you're talking about."

She motioned to an empty chair. "Have a seat, child."

Shayla sat down.

"Would you like something to drink? Something to eat perhaps?"

"No. I just need for you to tell me what's going on. I came here last week and bought a love potion from someone who called herself Madame Shaniqua. He guaranteed the potion would work."

"And I suppose that it worked too well?" The other woman smiled at her.

“Yes, but how do you know?”

“Haven’t I just told you I’m Madame Shaniqua? I guess you require proof. I’ll be back.”

Shayla watched the woman saunter out of the room. Tears sprang to her eyes. What had that weirdo given her? What if there was no cure? She sat alone in the dark little room feeling sorry for herself until the old woman walked back into the room holding a mason jar. The woman handed it to her.

If Shayla wasn’t imagining things, it looked like a little person was inside. The jar contained a mini-Madame Shaniqua banging against the glass. She nearly dropped the jar in surprise. Now this had just gone from regular strange to Twilight Zone strange.

“Let me out, Aunty!” the mini-Shaniqua yelled from the air holes in the jar. He sounded like a chipmunk. “I promise I’ll behave. I won’t mess with your potions without your permission again.”

“Tell this poor woman the truth, Dumbass,” the old woman instructed.

“My name is Cletus!”

“Your name is whatever I say it is. From now on, you’re Dumbass. Now tell this woman what you did or you’re going to stay that way for a very long time.”

Shayla watched the little figure pace back and forth inside the jar before he looked up at her.

“My aunt is really Madame Shaniqua. She had to go away for an emergency exorcism and she told me to tell you to come back at a later time, but I thought that I could make the potion for you,” Dumbass confessed.

“But... but how did you know about Ben? You knew stuff before I even told you about it.”

He shrugged. “I heard you through the window talking to your friend.” He turned to look up at his aunt, the real Madame Shaniqua. “Aunty, the potion obviously worked. She said so herself.”

Shayla rattled the jar. “That damned potion is ruining my life.”

“Easy, you’re crushing the silk,” his chipmunk voice said indignantly as he smoothed his outfit. He was wearing a neon green halter-top and a pair of purple spandex pants covered by a multi-colored silk robe. Even though he was tiny, he was quite grotesque. It was a good thing he was in miniature form, because had he been normal sized, she would have been forced to maim him. As it stood, Shayla was very tempted to let him out of his jar and squish him under her heel.

“Are you finally convinced?” Madame Shaniqua asked.

Shayla nodded. “What about a cure for this potion?”

“That’s easily fixed... for a price.” The old woman eyed her up and down.

“You know, I think I should get a free antidote considering it was your nephew who screwed up in the first place.”

“How exactly did he screw up other than to mess in my stuff like he wasn’t supposed to?” The smile never left Madame Shaniqua’s face.

“I only wanted to be irresistible to Ben. I didn’t say I wanted to be irresistible to all men, dogs, lesbians and so forth.”

“Hmm. Sounds like you’re in a pickle, my child, but this isn’t a charity house, and I don’t work for free. I can give you the antidote, but I will take pity on you and charge you half price.”

“Gee, thanks,” Shayla said sarcastically.

“You know, my child, I don’t have to do anything for you. I could tell you to leave my home and you can fend for yourself.”

Damn. The old bitch had her by the raisins. “Fine. How much?”

“For you, my dear, one hundred dollars.”

“One hundred dollars! That’s robbery! I thought this was half-price.”

“It is. The antidote is always more expensive than the potion. It’s how I make my living, dear.”

“By selling people shitty potions and then selling the cure for an astronomical price? There are laws against scams like this,” Shayla accused.

“You certainly don’t have to buy anything from me. I’m not twisting your arm, and frankly, dear, you’re starting to get on my nerves. Do you want the antidote or not?”

She sighed. “You know I do, but I don’t have that much cash on me.”

“Hmm. That’s a pretty ring you’re wearing.” Madame Shaniqua smiled at her, eyeing the emerald signet ring Shayla wore on her right hand.

“No. Absolutely not.”

“I don’t accept checks, dearie.”

Shayla dug in her purse to see what she could come up with. She could only scrounge together fifty dollars. “This is all I have. Please, can’t you make something for this?” she pleaded, ready to kiss this old biddy’s feet.

Madame Shaniqua pursed her lips and put her finger under her chin as though she were contemplating whether it was worth her time. “Okay. I think I can whip something up for you, but mind you, for fifty dollars, the antidote won’t be as potent. It will take a week before it takes effect.”

It was on the tip of her tongue to ask the woman what the heck she was going to do in the meantime, but Shayla thought better of it. At least she didn’t have to go on like this for the rest of her life.

She handed the woman the money and the old lady counted it, making sure it was all there. “It seems like everything’s in order. I’m going to the kitchen and fix you up something. I won’t be more than a few minutes.”

When the old woman left the room, Dumbass spoke to her. “Let me out of this jar!”

Shayla glared at the little man. “No way. Not after all the trouble you caused me. Why didn’t you tell me the love potion you gave me would make men react like that?”

Dumbass shrugged. “It wasn’t supposed to. Maybe there was a miscalculation with the ingredients.”

“How can you be so nonchalant after what you did?”

“Isn’t this what you wanted? You won the affection of your precious Ben.”

“But the potion made him all weird. It’s changed his personality.”

“No. The potion only made him want you. It doesn’t change people’s personalities.”

“And how in the world would you know that if you weren’t supposed to be in your aunt’s potions in the first place?”

“I haven’t been around my aunt without learning a few things.”

“Why did you do it, Dumbass? Especially when you know you were playing around with something you didn’t really understand?” Shayla asked, trying to make sense

of everything.

“My name is Cletus!”

“Whatever. Tell me why you did it.”

“I should have been born a woman,” he cried in frustration.

“You obviously dress like you think so, but what does that have to do with anything?”

“My family are Rom, but a magical branch called the Mage who have the gift of sight. They make the most fabulous potions, but only the women in our family have the gift. I could have been a great Gypsy, but I was born in this body,” he said in disgust.

“Didn’t you have the desire to be something else?”

“No. I was meant to be a Gypsy Mage. I thought if I could pull this scheme off, I would prove to Aunt Shaniqua once and for all that I’m as good as any female in our family.”

“I’m sorry you feel that way, but dressing like that isn’t going to change things.”

“Maybe not, but I like dressing like this. It’s who I am. I was hoping to make a little money to buy the special ingredients I need to make a potion that will make me magical. My mom and Aunt Shaniqua won’t give me the money for it.”

“And what do you think that will accomplish?”

“People will come to me for advice. They will fear me. They will respect me.”

Shayla almost felt sorry for him. “Having magic powers won’t change the person you are inside and it won’t necessarily garner respect.”

“What the hell do you know about it? Are you going to let me out or are you just going to stare at me like an imbecile?”

Any sympathy she had for the little man vanished. Fuck him. He could stay in his damn jar. It didn’t matter anyway, because Madame Shaniqua reentered the room holding a vial of the antidote.

“Here you go, child. You should probably drink it while the potion is still warm.”

Shayla downed the bitter concoction, grimacing as it slid down her throat. “Yuck.”

“I never said it would taste good. Now, if you ever need a potion, you come see old Shaniqua.”

It wasn’t likely, Shayla thought to herself. If she ever set foot in this damn trailer again, it would be because she lost her mind.

On the way home, she noticed the gray sedan again. What the fuck? Had that person been behind her the entire time? The car followed her all the way to her apartment. When she parked, Shayla dug out her pepper spray, hoping that she could make a dash to her apartment door before her stalker could get to her. Just in case he caught up to her, she planned on spraying his ass.

In a hurry, she got out of her car. As she ran to the door of her building, footsteps followed her. “Shayla, come back! I need to talk to you!” the voice called out to her.

She halted. Turning around, she came face to face with her boss. “Pam! What the hell are you doing following me like that? You scared the shit out of me.”

“You didn’t come to work the past couple days, so I had to see you, Shayla. I just had to.”

Pam Dillard was an attractive woman. She was tall with short blonde hair and large brown eyes. Several men around the office secretly lusted after her, but Pam had

never made her preferences a secret, and at the moment, it seemed like she preferred Shayla. *Damn, I should have kept running.*

“Look, Pam, do you think it’s appropriate for you to follow me like this?”

“But I missed you so much! Let’s go upstairs to your apartment.”

“Umm, I don’t think so, Pam.”

“I know you’re not into women, but I could change your mind if you let me. Just give me a chance. Only a woman knows what another woman wants.” To demonstrate her point, Pam rubbed Shayla’s breast.

Shayla backed away. “Stop that! Just go away!”

“Please! I need you.”

Those were the same words Ben had used. She couldn’t wait until this antidote started to work.

As Pam reached for her again, the two women were interrupted. “Is there a problem?”

“Who is this?” Pam asked, scowling.

“Brad Carrington, Shayla’s boyfriend. If you don’t mind, I’d like to be alone with my woman.” With that, he escorted her into the building and up to her door.

Once they were inside the apartment, she turned on him. “Why the hell did you say that?”

“Did you want to stand out there fending off your admirer?”

“No.”

“Well then.”

“What are you doing back here? I thought you were just going to call me?” she asked, backing away from him. Why did he smell so good? She had never noticed his cologne before.

“I thought I’d tell you that Ben will be okay. He has a slight concussion, but he’ll be fine. He has a nice little headache. So did you go see the Gypsy?”

“Yes, but the damn antidote will take a week to work.”

“Why so long?”

“Because I only had fifty bucks. Now I’ll be holed up in my apartment for an entire week.”

“Not necessarily.”

“What do you mean?”

“I may have a solution to your dilemma.”

“What?”

“Come to my cabin with me for the week.”

“What? We can’t stand each other.”

“Maybe this potion is doing a number on me, but I don’t hate you.”

She narrowed her eyes in suspicion.

“And let me guess. If I go with you, you’re going to want me to give you some ass?”

“I’ll settle for some pussy.”

Chapter Seven

“Brad, you’ve lost your damn mind if you think I’d even spit on you if you were on fire,” Shayla hissed at him.

He laughed at her, revealing large, even white teeth. “Oh, but you’ll give me what I want and I’ll tell you why. You want me.”

“Now I know you’re crazy.”

“I’m not crazy, Shayla. You’ve wanted me for a long time, but you just won’t admit it. You may be fooling yourself, but you’re not fooling me.”

Shayla wanted to smack the knowing smirk off his face. She did not want him!

Did she?

“No, Brad. I’ve always hated you and nothing will change that. I think this potion has distorted your perception of reality.”

“Has it? I don’t think so, Shayla. You may choose to forget that night, but I haven’t. I still remember how you begged me for it. That tight little cunt of yours was so hot and wet for me. My cock was so hard for you. You remember, don’t you?” Brad’s intense gaze swept down the length of her body.

Shayla could feel her face grow hot. To her chagrin, her entire body grew warm as memories of that summer night twelve years ago rose to the surface. Her nipples stiffened as she remembered how good it had been.

No! She would not let him do this to her.

Turning her back to him, she crossed her arms over her breasts. “Stop talking like that. You know I thought you were Ben. You took advantage of me, and I think that was a despicable thing to do.”

“That excuse might have flown if you’d stopped me right away, but you knew it was me.”

“No!”

“Yes, Shayla. Admit it.”

Shayla flashed back to the night of her eighteenth birthday party. Her parents had gone all out for the event, having it catered in a hotel. They even paid for rooms for Shayla and her friends.

* * *

This was the night she would give Ben her virginity. She wanted him to be her first. All she had to do was convince him that it was the only birthday gift she wanted from him.

Shayla took extra care with her appearance that night and she was very pleased when Ben complimented her on how pretty she looked. Everything was perfect. By the end of the night she would be a woman, and Ben would be hers.

She clung to him all night, and he didn’t seemed to mind. During a dance, she told him she wanted to show him something upstairs in her room.

As they walked through the hotel lobby, Brad halted them. “Ben, Mom’s looking for you.”

“Oh, but Shay had something to show me. Does she need me right now?”

“Yes.” Brad sounded short for some reason.

Shayla fumed inside. She wasn’t about to let Ben’s brother ruin her special night. “Ben, I’ll wait for you upstairs in my room. It’s room number 319. Hurry up, okay. I can’t wait to show you.” Shayla batted her lashes at him.

"Maybe you can show me too," Brad had said through clenched teeth.

"I don't think so, Brad." She threw him a quick look of dismissal before turning back to Ben. "Don't keep me waiting long. Here's the extra key, so you don't have to knock."

Ben took the key from her. "I'll be there shortly."

Brad grabbed her by the elbow when Shayla turned to walk away. She looked back at him. "What do you want, Brad?"

"Why do I have the feeling what you have to show my brother is beneath that clingy little black dress of yours?"

Shayla gasped at his boldness. Her face was hot with embarrassment. "What I have to show Ben is none of your damn business, so let go of my arm."

Brad let go, but his eyes never left her face. "You're making a big mistake, Shayla. Even if Ben goes along with your little act of seduction, what do you think will come of it? I hope you realize he'll only ever see you as a friend."

Her eyes narrowed. Why did Brad have to be so annoying on her birthday? "When I want your advice, I'll ask for it, but in the meantime, I want you to mind your own business," she retorted.

"You're such a brat."

"And you're such a pest! Now shoo!" She stalked off to the elevator, leaving him standing there. There was absolutely no way she was going to let him ruin things for her.

When she reached her hotel room she dimmed the lights and stripped, so she'd be ready when Ben came in. Shayla lay down on the bed, her body tingling with anticipation of Ben's touch. She thought about how his pale flesh would look against her dark skin, and the erotic picture that it would make. As these thoughts ran through her mind, she fingered herself, thinking about how good it would be with him.

She didn't have to wait long before the door opened. It was dark in the room. She couldn't make out the shadowy figure who entered, but it had to be Ben. He was the only other person with a key.

"Shay--"

"Don't say anything, just close the door."

The door closed with a quiet click and she knew that the moment had arrived. "Come here. I want to introduce you to someone."

"Who?"

"My pussy. Now, come here and get some of it. It's my birthday and you can't say no to the birthday girl."

"Look, I think --"

"Please stop talking. I know you're going to try to be noble and say we're friends and that's okay. Just give me tonight. I want you so badly. Please say yes," she pleaded, as her eyes tried to make out his face in the blackened room. Something wasn't right, but it hadn't registered yet, because she was focused on getting her own way.

He walked over to her then, barely reaching the bedside before Shayla sprang from the bed and leapt into his arms. Her lips smashed into his mouth and her insistent tongue slid between his lips. At first he didn't respond, standing there, letting her move her mouth over his. Then, with a loud groan, he gripped her waist with one arm while his other arm gripped her ass.

"Oh, yes. I've waited so long for this," she murmured as his lips grazed the

sensitive flesh of her throat. Stars burst before her eyes at the startling sensation of his body against her. Her pussy clenched in need.

He gently laid her on the bed, never lifting his head from her throat. She dug her fingers into his hair, reveling in its soft, silky texture. She didn't remember Ben's hair being this long, but she'd always imagined being in his arms would feel this good. God, she was hot for him. Shayla could feel her juices dampening her thighs as she squirmed beneath his solid body.

"You looked so beautiful tonight, Shayla," he said gruffly against her throat before bringing his mouth down on hers. This time he was in charge of the kiss, and she loved the way his tongue danced with hers, teasing and dominating it. He tasted so hot, so male.

Never had a kiss made her this hot and wet. She'd kissed other guys before, but nothing like this. He was all man and she wanted the kiss to go on forever. Shayla whimpered as he lifted his head. "I have to taste you, to make sure you're as sweet as you look."

He slid down her body, the sensual feel of his clothing against her naked skin created a friction that made her ache for more. She gripped his head as he took one tight nipple in his mouth.

"Mmm. I like chocolate. You taste even better than I thought you would."

"Please don't stop. That feels wonderful," she moaned. The unashamed hunger she felt for this man would not be denied.

He suckled her throbbing nipple, gently at first before increasing the pressure. As he nibbled, licked and tortured the turgid peak with his mouth, Shayla thought she would lose her mind. Damn, this felt good. She cried out in pleasure when he transferred his attention to her other breast, causing her to instinctively buck her hips against him. More than anything she wanted to become one with him.

He lifted his head to look at her, but her passion-glazed eyes wouldn't focused. She couldn't see, only feel. He kissed her between her breasts while letting his fingers trail down the side of her body.

Rolling over to his side, he cupped one quivering breast in his palm. "You are so beautiful, Shayla." Shayla? Ben never called her that, but she had been too damn horny to analyze it.

"Do you like that?" he asked as he rubbed his thumb back and forth over her nipple.

"Yes."

"You have the most beautiful brown skin. Let me turn the light on so I can get a proper look at you."

"No! Then you'd have to get up and I don't want you to stop touching me."

"Where do you want me to touch you, Shayla? Do you want me to keep touching your breasts, or do you want me to go lower?"

"I... I want you to go lower."

"Where, Shayla?"

"My vagi... my vagina."

"Vagina is such an ordinary word, don't you think? You want me to touch your pussy, don't you?"

She could only nod.

He let out a deep throaty laugh. "I want you to tell me. I want you to ask me properly to touch your pussy."

Shayla shivered at the erotic tone of his voice. The wanton desire that coursed through her body was taking over her senses. She would have done anything he asked in that moment. "Please, touch my pussy."

"My pleasure, sweet Shayla."

His hand glided down her heated skin, resting when it got to the patch of hair between her thighs. "Mmm, neatly trimmed. I like that."

She gasped when he inserted his index finger to touch her clit. "Oh yes!" she cried out in delight. His hand felt so good. She spread her legs further apart so he could touch more of her.

He rolled her blood-engorged clit between his fingers, pushing her closer to the edge of ecstasy. She never imagined that her body could feel like this and if she died after tonight, it would be with a smile on her face. He played with her little button until she writhed beneath his hand uncontrollably. "Please," she begged, though she wasn't quite sure what she was begging for. All she knew was she needed to be fulfilled, and this was the only man who could do it.

She bucked her hips against his hands. "You're really eager for it, aren't you?" He thrust his middle finger into her pussy and she screamed out in pleasure at the heavenly feeling of his finger, slowly moving in and out of her.

"God, you're wet. I knew you were a passionate woman, but I never thought... You're so damn hot, Shayla."

"Please, I need you. I want more."

"What do you want, Shayla?"

"I want you to make love to me."

"You're not wiggling beneath my hand like you want to make love, Shayla. You want to fuck, don't you?"

"Yes! Please fuck me. Stop teasing me and fuck me."

"How bad do you want it?" He rammed his finger inside her and she shuddered as her body neared its climax.

"I want you to fuck me very badly!"

He added another finger inside her, making her squirm. She moaned, rolling her head back and forth against the pillow. "I like how hot and tight you feel around my fingers. I bet it will feel even better with my cock inside you."

"Why are you torturing me like this when you've known how long I've loved and needed you, Ben," she pleaded.

He withdrew his fingers, making her whimper. She felt empty without them. "What the hell did you call me?"

"Ben? What's wrong?"

"I'm not Ben, damn you!" He got up abruptly and walked over to the light switch.

Shayla's jaw dropped in horror, because standing there was not her beloved Ben, but Brad.

"Get up and get dressed!" he yelled at her. He looked angry, which only served to enflame her anger. He had no right to be angry with her, especially when he had just touched her, and did things to her body under false pretenses. He'd pretended to be Ben!

Shayla grabbed the sheet to cover her body.

“Don’t you think it’s a little too late for that?” Brad asked, pointing to the sheet with a sneer.

“You bastard! You tricked me. I thought you were Ben! What the hell are you doing here anyway? I gave Ben the key. I’m going to tell my parents what you did to me. This was sexual assault.”

“That’s a laugh and you know it. What exactly do you plan on telling them, Shayla? Are you going to tell them how you threw yourself into my arms the minute I walked in the door? Oh wait, let me guess, you’re going to tell them how you just begged me to fuck you and how wonderful you said my mouth felt. Or, you could tell them you thought I was Ben when you knew it was me all along,” he accused. Green fire lit the depths of his eyes.

“That’s not true! You saw me give Ben the key. Why did you do this to me?” Tears sprang to her eyes.

“I guess this is what I get for trying to do something nice. I was coming up here to let you know that my dear sweet little brother met up with a cute blonde in the hotel lobby and they’re going out for coffee. He wanted me to tell you he’ll take you out to lunch tomorrow to make up for it. He seemed to think you’d understand.”

Her face had been hot with chagrin. “You’re lying! Ben wouldn’t have done that to me. You’re just being hateful. Why do you do mean things to me, Brad? What have I done to you?”

His jaw clenched and he looked at her a long time before he answered, “If you haven’t figured it out, then you’re a bigger fool than I thought.”

“Fine, don’t tell me then. Just get the hell out of my room. I still don’t see why you had to take advantage of me the way you did.”

He gave her a look that chilled her to the bone. “You threw yourself at me, Shayla, and I am a man after all. Fix yourself up before you come back downstairs to your party. You’re a mess.” He turned to leave.

Shayla could not have moved even if she’d wanted to. Never had she felt such pure unadulterated hate for anyone than she did for Brad Carrington, and she vowed never to forgive him.

* * *

Now as Shayla stood in her living room she shuddered. She’d tried hard to forget that night. She couldn’t understand why her body went into flames at Brad’s touch. What was worse was that, for some reason, she compared every man she had been with since to him. Did she really want him even when she had been chasing Ben?

She felt him grip her shoulders. His breath was hot against her neck. Her traitorous body began to respond to him. *Oh God, why me, and why him?*

“No, Brad.”

“Yes.” He lowered his hand to cup her quivering sex. “Now, tell me no again, when I can feel the heat of your pussy. Come away with me and prove you don’t want me.”

When he put it like that, how could she resist?

Chapter Eight

Shayla still couldn't believe that she was traveling to Brad's cabin in upstate New York. They drove through the night, neither one speaking much during the duration of the six-hour car ride.

Soft jazz played on the radio, and she tried to relax, but she worried about what was going to happen when they got to his cabin. Was she a fool to agree to go with him? She slept most of the way, but when she was awake, she was very aware of him, his heat and smell.

The sun was just starting to come up and the mountain scenery outside was beautiful. Wiggling in the leather seat of his BMW, she became restless. "How much longer until we're there?"

"Are you that eager for it?" He laughed.

"Don't be so damn smug. I just need to stretch my legs."

"We should probably be there in another twenty minutes. Am I boring company?"

"No."

He gave her brief look, raising a dark brow, but he didn't reply.

"I suppose we'll be roughing it for the week, huh?"

"Why do you think that?"

"Well, when I think of a cabin in the woods, I think of some dingy little hut with the barest of necessities."

"I'm a man who likes my creature comforts. I think you'll be surprised. I like to come up here to write, and to get away from the hustle and hurry of the city. It's relaxing. My cabin is on a lake and it's peaceful."

"Hmm. I thought you liked living the city life in New York with all of the glamorous socialites."

"Do you believe everything you read in the papers?"

"Brad, where you're concerned, I wouldn't put anything past you. Besides, I can't seem to turn around without seeing you in some newspaper or magazine and you're always escorting a different woman."

"Jealous?"

"Of you? Hell, no!"

"Then why should it bother you if I have a lot of women? As a matter of fact, if you hate me so much, it shouldn't matter to you if I had sex with a different woman every night."

She turned in her seat to glare at him. "Brad, you could sleep with two thousand women a night and I wouldn't give a damn. I just think it's gross is all. There are so many diseases out there. If you keep up that irresponsible behavior, your dick is going to fall off."

"So despite the fact that you're concerned about my health, you're coming to my cabin, with the express purpose of letting me fuck you."

Her cheeks flamed with anger and embarrassment. "That is not why I'm going with you and you know it. You know I can't stay at my apartment for the next week. Who knows who will show up?"

"It seems Cleopatra isn't the only Queen of de-nial."

"Brad, just shut up and drive. I wish I had never agreed to come with you to your crummy cabin, where I'll be stuck with you for an entire week."

He looked as though he wanted to say something but thought better of it. The muscles in his jaw clenched, and she could tell she'd made him angry. Damn, how was he able to make her feel ashamed without saying a word? It wasn't as though he'd twisted her arm to come with him. "I'm sorry, Brad. I had no right to speak to you like that. Despite what you think, I appreciate you helping me out."

She could see his hand tighten on the steering wheel. "We're sworn enemies, remember? It's just the potion that's making me help you."

She supposed she deserved that, but why did it hurt when he said the very same thing she had been saying to him all these years? Shayla peeked out of the window in anxiety, wishing she had kept her big mouth shut. They neared a clearing in the woods and Brad steered the car down the path. He drove for about a quarter of a mile before they reached a huge log cabin. It definitely wasn't what she'd been expecting. The cabin was situated next to a lake and it looked like something a magazine would advertise as a secret weekend getaway home.

As she got out of the car, she looked at the house in awe. "Brad, it's beautiful."

"Wait until you see the inside. Here are the keys. I'll be there in a minute with our stuff," he said, tossing her the keys to the cabin.

Shayla needed no further urging. After seeing the outside, she was eager to see the inside. She was not disappointed when she entered the house. It was absolutely gorgeous. There was a huge stone fireplace in the living room with a bearskin rug in front of it, giving it a woodsy look.

Whoever designed and decorated this house had done a good job, but then again, Brad could probably afford the best with all the money he had made with his books and movie deals.

When she made her way back out to the living room, she saw a cluster of pictures on his desk. There were pictures of his family, but the one that caught her eye was a little African-American boy who looked to be between the ages of ten and twelve. He wore a mischievous grin, and Shayla could tell he'd be a hunk when he grew up. Who was he, and why did Brad have a picture of him?

"I see you're looking at my pictures."

Shayla shrieked, nearly dropping the picture in her surprise. "Don't sneak up on me like that!"

"I didn't sneak up on you, actually. I called your name but you seemed too engrossed in the pictures."

"Who is this little boy?"

"That's Justin. He's my little brother."

"Your little brother?"

"Yes. I participate in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Justin and I have been matched for about three years now. He's a great kid."

Shayla's jaw dropped. The great Brad Carrington volunteered? No, he had to be pulling her leg.

"You seem surprised."

"Well... I mean, you never mentioned it before." She turned away to replace the picture.

"You never asked."

"I guess I never pegged you for the type to do something like that."

"Because you were too busy assuming that I spend all my time partying and attending orgies when I'm not writing. Well, it might shatter all of your illusions of me, but I'm not the devil incarnate, Shayla."

She gulped. There he went again, putting her to shame. "I think it's very admirable. I'm sure your presence has made a difference in his life."

His eyes searched her face as though he were looking for signs of sarcasm, but he relaxed when he saw none. "Thank you." There was an awkward silence between them before he spoke again. "Are you hungry? I can check to see what's in the fridge or maybe we can have fresh trout. There's nothing like the taste of fresh trout in the morning."

"That sounds yummy, but what restaurant serves fish this early in the morning? Are we going somewhere that serves seafood all day long?"

"Nope. We're going to go catch our breakfast."

Comprehension dawned on her. "You mean we have to go fish them out of the lake?"

"You're a quick one, aren't you?" He winked at her and she could feel herself melt. How was it possible she'd known Brad all this time without finding him so damn attractive? Her body felt warm all of a sudden as she thought about what was to come later.

"Umm, I've never been fishing before."

"It's easy. I'll show you. I have an extra pole."

"Okay. I'm not touching a worm though."

"Don't tell me you're afraid of a little worm." He smiled at her. She noticed that his eyes crinkled at the corners and twinkled when he smiled. It was very engaging, and she found herself smiling back.

His smile fell and he looked serious all of a sudden. "What?" she asked in alarm. What had she done to piss him off now?

"Nothing." His eyes searched her face. "It's just... I never thought you'd ever smile for me. You have a beautiful smile, Shayla."

She knew it must be the potion talking, but his compliment pleased her. "Thanks. Now, are we going to go catch some fish or what? I'm starving."

* * *

Shayla would never have thought she'd be in the mountains with Brad, fishing in the morning and enjoying it. He tormented her with a worm, chasing her around, threatening to touch her with it. Only when she had pleaded for mercy did he stop. He showed her the proper way to hold her fishing pole. Brad then taught her how to cast her line by standing behind her and guiding her arms with his.

He was so close to her she could feel the outline of his cock against her rear. Her pussy contracted. She wanted him to touch her but he didn't. She found it odd that he hadn't really made any moves on her yet although he claimed to be affected by the love potion. The sexual tension was starting to drive her crazy.

She was pleased when she managed to catch two fish on her own. Brad, of course, caught five. She stuck her tongue out at him. "Did you have to show me up so badly?"

"Catching two fish is good for a beginner. There are seasoned vets out there who sit outside all day and don't get a bite."

"My fish are a little on the puny side." She held them up, giving them a disdainful look.

"They look fine. If I thought they were too small, I would have made you toss them back. Now let's go get these babies cleaned so we can eat."

Shayla had never cleaned fish before. Touching fish guts was a little on the gross side and she was close to losing her appetite. As though sensing her disgust, Brad looked over at her, and said, "Why don't you go and wash up. I'll finish cleaning these." His efficient hands didn't stop working.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, go ahead."

Shayla walked out of the kitchen, looking over her shoulder as she left. She had the strangest urge to be by his side, but dismissed it. *Get a grip, girl, this is Brad, your arch nemesis, remember ?* That thought brought her back to her senses and she hurried out of the kitchen.

In the bathroom, she washed her hands thoroughly to get the fish smell off, and splashed cold water on her face. She had to get herself under control, because having fantasies about Brad just wouldn't do. The last thing she needed was to fall for another Carrington man.

She took her time, making sure she was mentally prepared to face Brad again before she headed back to the kitchen. As soon as she opened the swinging door the smell of frying fish hit her nostrils.

"That smells delicious. I didn't know you could throw down in the kitchen like this, Brad."

He turned around to look at her. "There are a lot of things you don't know about me. Why don't you set the table? The plates are in the top cabinet next to the fridge and the cups are next to them."

She frowned when he turned back to the food. His sudden dismissal was odd and a little hurtful, especially after the morning they'd shared with each other. "Did you want me to set up the kitchen table or the one in the dining room?"

He shrugged, not bothering to look at her. "I hardly ever use the dining room, but you can set up whichever table you'd like."

Shayla went about setting the kitchen table, her eyes darting occasionally to Brad's broad back. When she was finished she took a seat and watched him cook. She wanted to say something to ease the tension that had suddenly cropped up between them again, but the words were lodged in her throat.

Brad placed a bowl of scrambled eggs and a plate of fish on the table. "This looks delicious." She smiled tentatively at him as he took his seat across the table from her.

"Thanks. I hope you enjoy them."

She spooned a liberal amount of eggs onto her plate and then took a piece of fish. "Mmm, this is very good." She savored the taste of the well-seasoned trout.

"Thanks."

"Brad, I... I wanted to apologize to you for..."

"Don't. Let's just think about the here and now and not worry about the past," he assured her.

"But I have to get this off my chest. I haven't been very nice to you in the past," she began. Why was sorry such a hard word to say?

"I know where you're going with this but like I said, let's not worry about the past."

“But --”

“No buts. Let’s change the subject, shall we?”

There was an awkward silence while they ate their meal.

“Why don’t you tell me about your little brother?” she asked.

A faint smile touched his lips. “Justin is a great kid. He lives in Harlem with his mother and older sister. Justin’s father died in a car accident when he was a baby, so his mother enrolled him in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program so he could have a positive male role model in his life. He’s really smart, a straight A student, the junior chess champion at his community center, he’s the star on his JV basketball team, and he wants to be an architect when he gets older. I’m very proud to know him.”

“What do the two of you do when you get together?”

“All kinds of things. His favorite thing to do is go to the movies. We also go fishing, or bowling. You name it and we’ve probably done it,” he chuckled.

“That sounds nice, Brad. I thought about being a Big Sister, but I never had the time.”

“All you would have to dedicate is at least one time a month to spend with your match.”

“Is that all you see of Justin?”

“I try to see him as often as possible, generally every other weekend. When I can, I go to his school events or his chess tournaments.”

“He’s pretty smart if he knows how to play chess. I tried to learn, but I didn’t have the patience.”

“I could teach you,” he offered.

“Good luck. I’m horrible at it,” she laughed.

“You thought you’d be horrible at fishing, but you caught two fish,” he pointed out.

“That’s true. Okay, mister. You’re on, but I doubt I’ll be any better at it than I was before.”

“I think I sense a challenge.” He grinned at her.

“That’s because I’m issuing you one.” She wiggled her eyebrow at him.

“And when have you known me to turn down a challenge?”

After washing the dishes together and cleaning up the kitchen, Shayla and Brad sat down for a game of chess. With Brad teaching her she truly enjoyed the game. They spent the rest of the day in easy companionship. Since they had a late breakfast it was dark before Brad put a couple of steaks on the grill and roasted some potatoes.

Shayla couldn’t remember the last time she had a more enjoyable day. Brad was good company, and he had a dry wit about him that kept her in stitches. But by the time dinner was over she was so frustrated, she could scream. Not once did Brad touch her. She needed a shower.

When she stepped under the spray, she turned the handle to cold. Damn him for making her so hot and not following through. Maybe he was doing this to punish her, but if the love potion really had affected him, shouldn’t this have punished him as well?

Shayla felt like crying. She leaned her head against the tile, so deep in thought that she yelped in surprise when she felt arms wrap themselves around her waist. “Brad! I didn’t hear you come in!”

He pulled her back against his naked body and she gasped. His soft voice caressed

her ear. "Did you think I would let this day pass without having you? I've come for my reward, and I hope you're rested because this is going to be an all-nighter."

Chapter Nine

She turned around to face him. "Brad, what are you --"

His mouth crashed down on hers before she could get the rest of the words out. Brad's tongue slipped past her slightly parted lips, his kiss urgent and hungry. He pressed her body against the shower wall, crushing her breasts against his hard muscular chest. Her body felt as though it were melting under his not so gentle assault. She threw her arms around his neck, trying to pull him closer. Her pussy clenched.

Shayla returned his kiss with a frantic need of her own. Her fingers gripped his hair, holding his head to hers. She didn't want this kiss to end. The dance of their tongues was slow, sensual and hot. She whimpered when he lifted his mouth from hers.

His eyes bored into her and she shivered from the intensity of his stare. He was so beautiful. She reached up to touch his beard-covered face, tracing the outline of his jaw. The hair on his face was so soft beneath her fingers. Her eyes strayed lower. His body was magnificent and his cock... it was huge. Holy shit! She didn't know what she had been expecting, but she had found her anaconda and it was as hard as a rock.

Brad grabbed her chin, bringing her head up. He leaned over and traced her lips with his tongue. She moaned, parting her lips. Her tongue met his. This time the kiss was slow and deep. He nibbled on her bottom lip, tugging it with his teeth. Shayla had never experienced such an intense kiss.

"You taste so good, Shayla. I've been thinking about kissing you all day," he said gruffly.

"You could have fooled me. You did a pretty good job of hiding it."

A humorless grin briefly touched his lips. "Let's just say I've had a lot of practice hiding my feelings."

She didn't know what he meant by that comment, and she didn't have time to analyze it before he bent down to kiss her neck. Shayla arched her back so he could have full access to her sensitive flesh. "You have such beautiful chocolate skin, Shayla. Did you know that chocolate is my favorite treat?" he asked against her skin.

She trembled in delight at the seductive words and the feel of his kisses on her neck. "Mmm. I like the sound of that. Oh, that feels so good, Brad." She sighed when his hands came up to cup her breasts. Shayla cried out when Brad's thumbs circled the hard peaks of her nipples. More than anything she wanted him to take them into his mouth.

He pulled back slightly to look down at her. "It's a little chilly in here for a wash up. Let me turn up the heat, shall I?" He leaned down to turn the nozzle to hot, then picked up the bar of soap in the tray.

"What are you doing?"

"Isn't it obvious? I'm going to wash you. Now be quiet, and enjoy it. I know I will." Brad kissed the corner of her parted mouth. He ran the bar across her nipples, making her knees feel weak.

"Put your hands on my shoulders," he commanded.

Shayla obeyed, arching her head back against the tiles of the shower wall. Brad rubbed the soap across her stomach and down to the tops of her thighs. It seemed as though he was deliberately avoiding her pussy. She pressed her legs tightly together to release some of the need simmering between them.

He knelt before her, running the soap along her legs, causing her breath to catch in her throat. The seductive path he made with the soap made it hard for her to keep still. Unable to remain passive, she threaded her fingers through his thick brown locks.

She gasped in surprise when he grabbed her wrist. "No. It's my turn."

"Don't you want me to touch you, Brad?"

"You have no idea how much, but first I think I deserve my time, considering all the torture you've put me through."

"Me? You were the one who didn't make a move all day long," she protested.

"Maybe that was part of my plan to get you all hot and bothered. Did it work?" He gave her a wicked grin.

She narrowed her eyes. "You know it did."

"Good. Now you know how it feels to burn for someone and wait until you think you'll go crazy."

She froze. What did he mean by that? Who was he talking about and why did the thought of this mystery person bother her so much? When Brad nudged her thighs apart with the bar of soap, all thoughts fled from her mind except how good his hands felt on her. He slid the bar between her labia to touch her throbbing clit. "Oh God!" she yelled in delight as electric shocks jolted every single nerve ending of her body.

He slid the soap back and forth over the throbbing bud. The slow sensual torture was enough to drive her crazy. When he gently thrust the bar inside her hot channel, her knees grew wobbly. She didn't know how much longer she would be able to stand if kept this up.

"Lift your leg over my shoulder and lean back against the wall."

Shayla did as she was told, her fingers still firmly entangled in his hair. He fucked her with the soap with slow deliberate strokes. She moved her body up and down on the bar, letting it stretch her pussy walls, reveling in the feel of the exquisite sensation. As good as this felt, she wanted more. Much more.

Brad leaned over to place a hot kiss on her navel. "Brad, I want you so much."

The thrusting motion of the soap stopped. He looked at her with dark green passion-glazed eyes. Brad trembled as though he were nervous. This wasn't the same confident Brad who walked around as though he owned the world. The uncertain look in his eyes touched her.

"Do you like this?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Tell me how much you like it."

"I like it. I love it."

He dropped the soap and pushed her leg off his shoulder before standing up. "Do you want me to slide my cock inside your soap-slicked pussy?"

"Yes!"

"Say the words."

"Please fuck me, Brad. I don't know if I can take any more," she pleaded, her breath coming out in short pants. She couldn't remember when she had burned for

someone as she did now.

“No.” He smiled at her.

Her eyes widened. What was he playing at? “Why... why not?”

“Because I’m not finished playing with you yet. You’re going to have to be a little more patient. Payback is a bitch, isn’t it?”

Before she could come up with a reply to his strange statement, he kissed her with a savage passion that took her breath away. She eagerly returned his kiss, wrapping her arms around his neck. The feel of her breasts against his hair-roughened chest titillated her senses.

“Do you need me to get a condom?” he asked.

“I’m on the pill. Is there anything else I should be worried about?”

“Trust me when I tell you that I would never put you in danger.”

Strangely enough she did. “I do trust you,” she whispered.

“Good, because I want no barriers between us. I want to feel your sweet cream gushing on my cock. I can already smell that pussy of yours and it’s driving me crazy.”

To her surprise, he lifted her up in his arms and pushed her directly under the spray of the water. “Wrap your legs around my waist.”

She felt the tip of his cock against her pussy, and coiled her legs around his waist. He pressed her against the wall and slammed into her quivering body. His cock was large, but she was so slick and wet from the soap and her own natural juices that he slid into her painlessly. All she felt was mind-numbing pleasure as he filled her so completely.

“Oh my God, Shayla, your pussy is so damn tight. It feels like it was made just for me,” he whispered, burying his face in her throat.

His hands clasped around her waist and he pushed deeper into her. He moved with long slow thrusts. Shayla was on fire, feeling hotter than she’d ever felt. She moved with him, meeting him thrust for thrust.

“Harder, Brad!” she demanded.

“You really want it bad, don’t you.” He grinned as a mischievous gleam entered his eyes and he went still.

She glared at him, squirming over his cock. “Hell, yes, I want it bad, and if you don’t give it to me, I’m going to take it.”

“Do you want it like this?” He slammed into her with one powerful thrust.

Shayla gasped, not from pain, but from the sudden animalistic desire that pulsed throughout her entire body. The need to be fucked, hard and fast, overwhelmed her until she could barely think straight, but then again, she didn’t want to think straight. She only wanted to feel. “Yes! Just like that, don’t stop!”

She bit into his shoulder, and he groaned. “You little savage. So you want it rough, do you?”

“Yes!”

“Well, you’re going to get it. You better hold on, baby, because I’m not holding back,” he warned.

Brad shoved his cock so deep and hard inside her that she didn’t know where he ended and she began. It hurt, but it felt so damn good. He branded her with each forceful thrust.

“I want you to say my name. I want you to know that it’s me, making you scream

out like this,” he said, grazing his teeth along her throat, never stopping the wild pace of his dick moving inside her pussy.

“Brad!”

He speared her roughly over and over again as she screamed out his name. Shayla bounced on his cock, moving with him in a synchronized dance of passion.

“Oh, Brad, don’t stop fucking me!”

“I don’t want to, but God, your pussy is so damn good and tight, I don’t know how much longer I’ll be able to hold out.”

His hands slid down her back, grasping her rounded bottom, his fingers digging into her skin. She could feel herself reaching her peak, the heady sensation running from her head to the tip of her toes.

Brad tightened his arms around her, and called out, “Shayla, oh God!”

She buried her face in his shoulder as an explosion of lights danced before her eyes. A powerful wave swept through her, taking her to heights of desire she’d never experienced before. Shayla screamed out her release before letting her body go limp. He continued to hold her in his arms, letting the spray of the shower beat against her sensitive flesh.

Shayla untangled her legs from his waist and let her feet touch the bottom of the tub. She could feel their mingled juices running down her legs. “That was wonderful, Brad,” she whispered with contentment.

“Yes, it was,” he agreed softly.

He reached for a washcloth, letting it get wet under the water before rubbing it between her legs. Already weak in the knees, she had to grab his shoulders to steady herself.

“Mmm,” she moaned. What was this man doing to her? He was driving her absolutely mad.

As though reading her mind he said, “I’m going to clean you up now. As much as I enjoy our sex mixed together, flowing from your pussy, I’m hungry, and I want to eat it, baby.”

Her heart beat faster at his words. The thought of Brad’s tongue licking her cunt was more than she could take. Shayla’s body tingled all over in anticipation.

She moaned as he continued to wash her pussy, shivering with delight as the damp washcloth rubbed back and forth over her sensitive clit.

When he seemed satisfied with his handiwork, he put the cloth down and turned the water off.

“Oh!” she exclaimed when he swung her into his arms. He stepped out of the tub and carried her to his bedroom, placing her still wet body on his bed. “Brad, shouldn’t we dry off first?”

“What does it matter when I’m just going to get you wet all over again?” Before she could respond, he spread her legs wide open and he latched his mouth over her cunt.

First he sucked on her labia, creating a delicious pressure that sent pulses of desire to the pit of her stomach. Her thighs clamped the sides of his head and she rubbed her pussy against his face, wanting to feel his tongue between the slick folds.

Brad took no heed of her silent pleas, taking his time as though savoring the taste of her. She was on the verge of begging when his tongue snaked out to part her pussy. “Yes! That’s it, Brad!”

He tickled her clit with the tip of his tongue, and she could feel the flow of her cream. His teeth nipped and teased her throbbing bud, making her cry out. Shayla was so turned on, she felt like crying. Brad gripped her thighs, pushing them further apart, before licking every inch of her pussy in long broad strokes. He devoured her cunt like a starving man as she writhed underneath the sexy ministrations of his mouth.

She trembled when he lifted his head to look directly into her eyes. The feral, possessive gleam in his green eyes made her gasp. He didn't bother to hide his blatant need for her. The passion reflected in his eyes matched her own. "Your pussy's delicious, Shayla, but I always knew it would be," he whispered before lifting her hips to his mouth. His tongue stabbed forward, fucking her.

She squirmed, unable to keep still. When she reached a mind-shattering climax, Brad continued to eat her out. "Brad, I can't take it anymore," she panted, but even as she spoke her body responded to his mouth on her. She attempted to pull away from him, but his grip on her thighs tightened. "I'm not finished with you yet, baby. By the end of the night, you will never forget who you were with," he growled.

Brad stayed between her legs for what seemed like hours, pushing her to yet another explosive orgasm. He only lifted himself off her when she lay weak and helpless on the bed from having been eaten so thoroughly. "Damn, Brad, you eat pussy like nobody's business," she chuckled, when he sidled up next to her, pulling her into his arms.

"That's because it was good pussy." He kissed her forehead.

"Let me reciprocate," she said, moving out of his arms.

"No. If you put those sexy lips of yours on my cock, I won't be able to hold out for more than a couple of seconds. Besides, we have the rest of the week for that. Right now, I just want to hold you."

"But I can feel your cock against my thigh. I know you're still horny. At least let me ride you."

"You're a horny little devil tonight, aren't you?" he chuckled.

"Please?" She batted her lashes at him.

"You really are a spoiled brat, did you know that? But how can I resist you when you look at me like that?" He gave her a gentle kiss on her lips.

Shayla pushed Brad back against the bed. She kissed his heated skin, savoring the taste of him, which was salty, sweet, hot and masculine. Her tongue darted out, flicking one pink nipple. He moaned. She planted kisses all over his chest before moving down the length of him.

Brad said he didn't want her to suck his cock, but she had to have just one taste. It was too inviting to leave alone. She lifted the large shaft into the palm of her hand, bending down to place a kiss on the blood-engorged head. It felt like velvet under her lips. "Shayla, oh God, I told you I can't hold out," he groaned.

She stroked the head with her tongue before licking the entire length of his shaft. "You have a beautiful cock," she whispered, taking some of it into her mouth.

"Shayla!" Brad cried out, lifting his hips to thrust into her mouth. She tried to get as much of him into her mouth as she could, enjoying the feel of him on her tongue. Her head bobbed up and down on his cock while she reached down to fondle his balls.

He pulled away from her, creating a loud popping sound as his cock left her mouth. She whimpered, feeling empty. He pulled her up the length of him. "I'm still

waiting for that ride, lady.”

Without further prompting, she straddled his hips, positioning herself over his dick before lowering herself onto his large member. “Holy shit!” she screamed in pleasure. He was so thick, long and deep inside her, and it hurt so good. So damn good.

She created a steady rhythm, bouncing happily up and down on his cock. She arched her back when his hands reached up to fondle her breasts, pinching the hardened nipples. “God, you’re beautiful, Shayla. I l -- I love the way you feel on my cock.”

His hands grabbed her hips to increase the pace as he lifted his hips upward to meet her pussy. The flame of their desire threatened to consume them both, but she didn’t care. The only thing that mattered in this moment was being with Brad like this.

Their coupling was wild, hungry and abandoned. She spasmed, collapsing on his chest when she reached her peak. Shayla could feel his seed shoot up her channel, making her climax more powerful.

He held her, turning their bodies to the side. “That was fantastic. You were fantastic,” he said before giving her a tender kiss on the lips. She smiled, exhausted, and content. He whispered endearments against her forehead as she drifted off to sleep.

Later that night, Shayla woke up feeling an insistent nudging between her legs. Brad had rolled on top of her and was slowly entering her. She gasped in surprise and delight. Her pussy contracted around his cock. “Hmm, what a way to wake up.” She smiled up at him, wrapping her thighs around his hips.

Brad kissed the tip of her nose. “I’m sorry, but I couldn’t wait for you to wake up. You have the sweetest, most addictive pussy I’ve ever had.”

“Oh yeah? I guess we go well together because your cock is addictive too.”

“Shayla, there’s something I have to tell you. I --”

She covered his lips with her index finger. “No. Don’t talk. Let’s just enjoy this. I just want to feel.” Her arm went around his neck and she held him tight as he continued to gently thrust into her wet tunnel.

Shayla buried her face in his neck, feeling the sensation of her passion wash over her. Brad was so tender and gentle she wanted to cry. When he kissed her, it was as though they were true lovers and not just two people thrown together in extraordinary circumstances.

When they reached their climax, Brad didn’t let her go. He continued to kiss her face and stroke her body. If she closed her eyes really tight, she could almost imagine that it wasn’t the potion making him act this way, and he genuinely cared for her.

A sense of dread swept through her. What would happen to them when the week was over and they went their separate ways? That thought bothered her more than she cared to admit.

Chapter Ten

Shayla lay naked in front of the fire on the bearskin rug, waiting for Brad to come back from the kitchen with some fresh strawberries they’d picked earlier in the day. She turned onto her stomach, reflecting on the events of the past week. Tears welled up in her eyes.

The rest of the week had passed by so fast that Shayla didn't know where the time had gone. She and Brad eased into an easy companionship. They spent their days fishing, playing chess, taking long walks and discussing current events. She found Brad's views insightful and interesting. He was one of the most selfless people she knew.

Besides participating in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, he had his own charitable organization that gave money to underprivileged children to go to summer camp, and he also sat on the board of a handful of charitable organizations. If that wasn't enough, he taught night classes in the summertime for beginning writers.

All of her preconceived notions of him flew out the window. It shamed her to think about all the nasty things she'd called him. He never did explain why the newspapers thought he held wild parties or about the different women he'd been reported to be with, but she no longer cared. He didn't owe her any explanations, even though she did wonder about it still.

How could she have ever thought he was an arrogant know-it-all? Sure, he was smart and didn't hide the fact, but his intelligence was very sexy. He had a wicked sense of humor that made her laugh so hard that she thought her sides would split. Sometimes they just sat by the lake not talking at all. Shayla liked just being close to him.

They spent their nights making love, and although she found herself enjoying the time they spent together in the daytime, it was the nights she looked forward to the most. Brad was the best lover she'd ever had. Everything about him turned her on -- his looks, his scent and his touch.

She felt the flow of her juices dampening her thighs at the thought of the amazing things he could do with his tongue. He would make her scream out in passion as he fucked her senseless, then make her weep when he made love to her sweetly. Each time they were together intimately, he would hold her in his arms and tell her how beautiful she was.

After all the time she'd spent hating him, Shayla realized that she didn't hate Brad at all. She actually liked him very much. If she were being completely honest with herself, she more than liked him, but knew that she couldn't risk falling for him, especially when he was still under the control of the potion.

Thinking about the love potion depressed her. She wished she'd listened to everyone when they told her that she was being silly in her pursuit of Ben, especially when that love had never been reciprocated. Ben had as much as admitted he'd known how she felt for him all these years, but he had never done anything about it. It was too bad that it had taken a stupid love potion from a transvestite Gypsy to open her eyes.

On the other hand, had she not taken the potion, Shayla would never have discovered how wrong she had been about Brad all these years. Looking back to the night of her eighteenth birthday, she knew he'd been right when he said she knew it wasn't Ben who came to her room that night. At the time she hadn't wanted to admit to herself her feelings for Ben were no more than a crush. Brad had always known...

This past week had opened her eyes to a lot of things, like the fact that it hadn't been Ben she'd been comparing all her past lovers to, but Brad. She shuddered when she remembered telling him that he wasn't worth half of Ben. Now she knew that it was definitely the other way around.

She couldn't imagine Ben spending time with a child from the inner city. Alice kept telling her how shallow Ben was. When Shayla looked back, Ben did spend a lot of

time looking in the mirror. It wasn't as though he was a bad person, but he wasn't Brad.

She knew there would always be a special place in her heart for her childhood friend, but things would never be the same with them again. Too much water had passed under the bridge. The really sad thing was, she'd enjoyed this incredible week with Brad, but he would stop wanting her once the potion wore off. It was probably what she deserved for being an idiot.

Tomorrow it would all be over. Shayla quickly wiped a tear that fell from her eye.

"Is everything okay?"

A naked Brad came into the room holding a bowl of strawberries in one hand and a bowl of cream in the other. She gulped, taking a look at his magnificent body. Even after a week of seeing him nude and making love to him in every conceivable position, she didn't think she would ever tire of looking at his beautiful body.

"Mmm. You brought cream. I didn't know there was any in the fridge."

He knelt down next to her on the rug, placing the bowls by the fire. "I'm surprised too. I sometimes let people use the cabin when I'm not using it, so the last occupants probably left it here. Now, tell me why you're crying." He reached out to stroke her hair.

"I wasn't crying. I think my eyes got a little glazed from staring at the fire for too long."

His eyes narrowed. "I was born at night, but not last night. Now tell me what's up or do I have to spank that luscious bottom of yours to get it out of you?"

She gave a little smile and winked. "Now what kind of punishment would that be? I would enjoy it too much."

"Shayla, you're not going to change the subject. What you were thinking about?"

She searched his face. It didn't look as though he would bend. She reached for a strawberry and dipped it into the bowl of cream. Shayla got on her knees in front of Brad, and dragged the strawberry down his chest, leaving a trail of white cream on his skin.

"Shayla --"

She leaned over and licked it from his chest before taking a small bite into the red berry, letting a bit of juice dribble down her lips. He shook when her tongue brushed his skin. *I don't think I will ever get tired of the taste of him*. "Mmm, this is good, Brad. You should try it." She put the half eaten strawberry against his lips.

"This conversation is far from over," he warned before taking a bite into the berry, leaving the green stem between her fingers.

Shayla took another strawberry, dipping it into the cream and running it over his nipple. Brad shuddered beneath her caress. "Oh God." He grabbed a fistful of her braids and held her head against his chest while he moaned her name over and over again. Just touching, tasting and getting him off was enough to send pulses of pleasure throughout her body. Whoever said that it was better to give than receive wasn't kidding. She loved the way he responded to her.

The taste of the cream against his taut nipple was very tasty. She suckled the little peak until his breath came out in short huffs. When she lifted her head to look at him, his eyes were ablaze with green fire. Brad looked as though he was holding back, but she wanted him to lose control.

She placed a strawberry against his slightly parted lips. He took the entire thing into his mouth, closing his lips over her fingers. The erotic act of feeding him made her hot. Her own cream dampened her thighs. Shayla leaned forward to lick his lips with the

tip of her tongue. "The combination of strawberries, cream and you is quite good. I think we could market this and make a lot of money," she teased.

"So eager to share me, are you? As wonderful as you taste, I think I want you all to myself. I guess that makes me seem selfish, huh?"

Actually the thought of being with Brad exclusively made her feel extremely happy, but she only smiled at him. "Yes. It's incredibly selfish, but I guess I could forgive you." She gave him a quick, hungry kiss on the lips before turning, reaching for the berries again.

Her eyes never left him as she took another berry and repeated the same steps, but this time she rubbed the cream on his other nipple. "You're a big tease, did you know that?" he groaned.

"I'm not a tease." She smiled at him.

"Oh no? Then what do you call what you're doing to me. Oh Jesus!" he cried out when she leaned over to suck on his other nipple. Her teeth nipped him gently before she lifted her head.

"I call this a sample of what's to come. Besides, how can I be classified as a tease when I always deliver?" she asked, popping the juicy strawberry into her mouth.

"You have a point there, but I think it's my turn to feed you now. I want to have some fun too." Brad reached for the bowl of cream and scooped some up with his two fingers. "Open your mouth."

She did so without hesitation. Her lips closed over his fingers, tasting as he pushed them deep, pulling them out to his fingertips before reinserting them, mimicking the act of a cock inside a pussy.

Her body was so hot with need for his. Brad pushed her back on the rug and reached for more cream. This time he took the bowl and poured it against her body. She gasped as its coolness dripped down her nipples to her navel.

"Oops. It looks as though I've gotten you messy. I guess I'm going to have to clean you up." He winked at her.

She trembled in anticipation of being bathed by his tongue. "So what are you waiting for?" Shayla raised a brow as he leaned over her, his eyes roaming her entire body. Just the mere touch of his eyes was driving her crazy.

"I still can't believe that I'm here with you like this. God, you're beautiful." He touched her fast as though he were afraid she would disappear.

For a moment, it almost seemed as though... no, it couldn't be. She was imagining things.

Brad positioned himself on his elbow next to her and ran his tongue over one breast. He lifted his head. "Mmm, good enough to eat, but then again, you already were."

He licked the cream from her skin in long broad strokes, running his tongue from the hollow of her throat to the valley between her breasts. Shayla grabbed a handful of his brown hair, guiding his head over her body. She moaned at the heavenly sensations washing over her, delirious with passion. Her pussy was so wet she could feel her juices running into the crack of her ass.

She squirmed beneath him, having the urgent need to be joined with him and fast. "Brad, please make love to me," she begged.

"I haven't finished cleaning you yet." The tip of his tongue flicked her navel, and she quivered in delight.

"I don't care. I need you so bad, I hurt."

"So you want my cock, huh? You want to be fucked?" He lifted his head to meet her eyes.

She shook her head. "No. I don't want to fuck."

A confused expression entered his eyes and then they narrowed. "Then what do you want? It's too late to back out of this now," he growled.

She touched his cheek in reassurance. "No. I don't want to back out of this, I just don't want to fuck. I want you to make love to me. This is our last night together. Let's just make love and..."

"And what?"

And pretend you love me, she wanted to say but instead, "hold each other tight."

"Shayla..."

"Please. I know you probably think I'm being silly but please just hold me like you don't want to let me go. I really need that tonight."

He frowned as he gave her a searching look. "Okay."

Brad pulled her into his arms and squeezed her tight before slowly pushing his cock into her pussy. She gasped at the delicious entry. Shayla was wet and ready for him.

He moved slowly inside her as he placed soft kisses against her face and neck. "Hold me tighter," she whispered, burying her face in his chest so that he wouldn't see the tears gathering in her eyes.

Brad held her so tight that she could barely breathe, but she didn't care. She didn't want him to ever stop. The sinful pleasure of his cock thrusting into her was making her dizzy with desire.

Life was so damn unfair. Why was it when she only just realized that she was in love with him, truly and genuinely in love with him, she knew she would lose him when the potion wore off?

She moved with him, bucking her hips forward and allowing him to go deeper into her. "I could stay inside you forever," he whispered.

"I think I could live with that."

"Shayla, there's something I've wanted to tell you since the beginning of the week."

"Oh, Brad, can't it wait? I can hardly think straight when your yummy cock is inside me."

Without warning he rammed into her, and her eyes flew open. Brad unwrapped his arms from around her and rested his weight over her body. He slammed into her again, and again, until the course of their lovemaking took a new turn. It became wild, savage and uncontrollable, taking her to rapture's heights. Her nails raked down his back and he yelled out.

"How is it you can drive me to this, woman?" he asked through gritted teeth. She didn't bother to answer him, as she was too busy concentrating on the deliciousness of his cock slamming in and out of her aching pussy. This wasn't what she'd wanted, but she could deny him nothing when he took her so forcefully.

She clung to him, increasing the pace of her own hips. It soon became a contest of wills to see who could slam harder into their partner. Brad screwed her with quick angry thrusts, his balls slapping against her ass in an erratic rhythm.

"Brad!" she screamed out as she reached an explosive climax that rocked her

entire being. He collapsed on top of her, his breathing as ragged as her own.

They lay still for a long time, neither one bothering to speak. Shayla reveled in the feeling of their sweat-soaked bodies pressed tightly together. The smell of sex, strawberries and cream filled the air, tickling her nostrils. If she could, she would freeze this moment in time and they could stay like this forever.

Overwhelmed by the sudden burst of emotions, she burst into tears. She loved him, but she couldn't tell him while he was still under the influence of the love potion and she couldn't tell him when he was free from it because then he wouldn't care.

Brad sat up with alarm etched on his handsome face. "What's wrong, Shayla?"

"I... nothing, Brad. I'm just being silly."

"Oh no, you don't. You put me off earlier, but you're not going to do it again. Tell me what's the matter. We can sit here all night if we have to."

Could she tell him how she felt knowing it would mean less than nothing to him in only a short period of time?

"I'm waiting, Shayla."

"Brad, this week that we've had together, it won't mean anything tomorrow, will it?" she asked, wiping the tears from her eyes.

He stood up abruptly, in all his naked glory. "What the hell is that supposed to mean? Are you trying to say that you're only here because of the potion? It was either me or the rest of the free world, right?"

"No! That's not what I'm trying to say at all."

"Then what are you trying to say?"

"You will... I mean the antidote will work soon and this will all be something we'll have to put behind us. I'll go back to my life and you'll go back to yours."

He stared at her for a long time before speaking. "I see."

"Is that all you can say?"

"What am I supposed to say?"

"I don't know. I just thought that maybe..." She clutched her chest. It began to throb with an excruciating pain.

Brad was by her side in a heartbeat. "What's wrong?"

It dawned on her that she had felt this way just before the love potion had kicked in. It had to be the antidote at work. As she felt herself losing consciousness, she grasped his face in her hands. "It did mean something to me."

The darkness took over.

Chapter Eleven

She was running through a forest naked. Someone was chasing her, but she didn't stop long enough to find out who. "I'm coming to get you! You can't hide from me." Up ahead, she saw a trailer. If she could just make it there, she knew she would be safe. As she reached the little trailer, the door burst open. Dumbass stood at the door wearing a pink Lycra unitard. "Come on inside, it's safe here."

"Yes, child, come inside where it's safe," a familiar voice called from the inside. It was Madame Shaniqua.

She could hear the footsteps drawing closer as she stepped in. "Dumbass, get her something to wear," the older woman said from the table.

"My name is Cletus," he muttered under his breath before stalking off to the back of the trailer.

"Come, child, and sit with old Shaniqua."

"What am I doing here?" Shayla asked.

"Only you know, child. Perhaps you are looking for guidance?"

"Who is that chasing me? I thought the antidote was working."

"Maybe it is. Maybe it isn't. I think what you should be asking yourself is why were you running?"

"Because someone was chasing me! Why else would I run?" She could feel herself getting angry.

"No need to get belligerent. Do you want to hear what old Shaniqua thinks?"

"Let me guess; you'll tell me for a price?" Shayla pursed her lips, waiting for the old hag to tell her how much it would cost, so she was surprised when the old woman laughed.

"No, child. This bit of advice is free. I think you should go outside and see who it is you're running from."

"What? No way! What if there's an axe murderer out there."

"I promise you that it is not an axe murderer out there. Dumbass, what the hell is taking you so long back there? The young lady is shivering," she yelled to her nephew.

Dumbass came stomping out of the room with a sullen expression on his portly face. He threw a muumuu at Shayla. "Try not to get it dirty." He glared at her before heading to the kitchen.

"Ignore him. He's upset because I still haven't un-shrunk his balls, not that there's that much difference, but you know how sensitive men are about their privates." Madame Shaniqua shrugged. "Now come, let's go outside."

"No."

"Trust me, child." Madame Shaniqua got up as Shayla donned the muumuu, and then she held out her hand.

Shayla braced herself for what she would find. Standing outside was... her! She looked at Madame Shaniqua in confusion. "I don't understand."

"Isn't it obvious? You were running from yourself, and your feelings."

"Tell him how you feel," the mirror image of herself said.

"But he doesn't love me. It was the potion making him act that way," Shayla protested.

"Do you really believe that or are you afraid to find out the truth? Maybe you're afraid of being wrong because you've been wrong before," the mirror image spoke.

"I'm scared."

"So? The worst that could happen is that he doesn't love you. You're strong, you'll move on with your life, but at least you will know."

Shayla closed her eyes for a brief moment. When she reopened them, she was alone. Suddenly she felt a stinging sensation against her cheek.

"Shayla, wake up!"

She slowly opened her eyes to find herself in Brad's arms. He was patting her cheek. "You scared the shit out of me. Don't ever do that again. Are you okay?"

She sat up and smiled at him. "Yes. I'm more than okay. I feel wonderful."

"You could have fooled me when you passed out like that. Maybe I should call a doctor."

"No. Brad, I believe the potion has worn off. Isn't that wonderful?" Now she could tell him that she loved him.

He pulled away from her abruptly. "How do you know?"

"I just do. Now I can tell you what I really feel." She smiled at him. This was it.

A cold expression entered his eyes that chilled her to the bones, making her shiver. "Congratulations, but I'm sorry. I'm just not interested in hearing it. As a matter of fact, it's getting rather late. I think I will turn in now, and you probably should as well if you want to hit the road early tomorrow."

"But... but... I have to tell you something. Will you just listen to me for a moment?"

"No." And with that he stood up and walked up the stairs, leaving her alone.

I will not cry. I will not cry. I will not cry.

* * *

"You look great, Shay. I like your hair like that," Ben complimented her when he walked into the restaurant.

"Oh, thanks. I had this done about a month ago. I kind of like it short like this although I'm starting to miss the braids a little." She laughed, running her fingers through her short curls. She'd decided to cut her hair the day after Ben dropped her off at her apartment. The car ride home had been tense. Any attempt to make conversation with Brad was answered with short and abrupt replies.

She knew then that it had been the potion all along. It hurt worse than any pain she had ever felt, but she vowed to herself that she wouldn't cry. She was a big girl. At least now she knew what true love was. It was just a shame she would have to learn to live without it.

The entire month back home took some adjusting to. Things were a little awkward for her around the office. Her boss still winked at her when she walked by. Who knew that her boss actually had a crush on her? Some of the men around the office avoided her. She'd thought people would forget what the potion had done to them, but obviously they hadn't. She'd started looking for another job.

Another difference was that Ben was not really in her life anymore. This was actually the first time they'd spoken since the incident. Shayla had been surprised when he invited her to lunch. Curious to see what he wanted, she'd accepted his invitation.

She took a good look at Ben. Really took a good look at him. He was still quite handsome, but he certainly wasn't anything to write home about. What the hell had she been thinking all these years?

"Should we order first?"

"Yes. That sounds like a good idea."

Once the orders were in, Shayla could no longer hold her curiosity inside. "So why did you want to see me?" she asked.

"Well, we haven't seen each other in about a month and we always used to be so close."

"You have to admit that things would have been a little awkward, don't you think?"

He shrugged. "I know about the love potion."

"You do? How... Brad. Oh God. I wish I had never taken that stupid concoction. I owe you an apology."

"No. I'm the one who should be sorry."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I knew how you felt about me for a while, and in a way, I sort of encouraged it. I guess my ego needed a little stroking. You're a beautiful woman, and what man wouldn't want to have a beautiful woman chasing after him."

"You never said anything."

"Because you deserve someone better than a bastard like me. Shay, you're smart, beautiful and have a good head on your shoulders. You can also be very fierce when you want to be. There's no way you would let me get away with a tenth of the stuff other women would. I think your main attraction to me was the thrill of the chase. All your life you knew what you wanted and you went out and got it. You wanted to get the lead in the school play, and you got it. You wanted to graduate valedictorian, you did. You thought you wanted me, and it frustrated you because it didn't come so easy to you. Don't get me wrong. I would have jumped at a chance to be with you, but you had always been too good a friend to me to mess things up."

"I haven't already?"

"No."

She smiled, feeling like a huge weight had been lifted off her shoulders. "Thank you, Ben. That really means a lot to me."

"You don't look like you've been sleeping well lately," he said, taking a bite of the bread the waiter placed on the table.

Shayla realized she must look a horror with the bags under her eyes. She had not had a decent night's sleep in a long time, a month to be exact. "How very gallant of you to point that out," she laughed.

"Brad is miserable too."

She stiffened. "Why should I care about why Brad is sleeping well or not?"

"Because I know you spent the week with him."

"I suppose he blabbed that to you too?"

"He's my brother. I know when something's bothering him. He told me you two spent a week together, but he didn't give details. I just wish one of you would make the first move and put each other out of your misery."

"What are you talking about?"

"You're pretty dense where men are concerned, aren't you?"

"So I've been told. What's your point?"

"Brad is crazy about you, you idiot, and the way you reacted when I mentioned his name, I think you're crazy about him too."

"Is it so easy to see?" she asked, not bothering to lie.

"Yes. Brad, on the other hand, has been hiding his feelings for you for years. He's been in love with you for a long time."

"No!"

"Yes."

"But he's never said anything. We were always arguing."

"Haven't you ever heard of the expression there's a thin line between love and

hate? Go to him, because he's not going to make the first move."

"But I tried to tell him how I felt and he wouldn't hear me out."

"Maybe because you kept going on and on about that damned potion. I did get that much out of him. What was he supposed to think?"

"I'm stunned."

"You really shouldn't be. Have you ever read any of his books?"

"No. Should I have?"

"I think you should. It will certainly give you a new perspective on things."

"Ben, why are you telling me this? Knowing Brad, he would probably kill you if he knew you were here telling me all this."

He shrugged. "Maybe so, but since neither of you were going to do anything about it someone had to."

Shayla was about to reply when the waiter brought their food. Once they had their plates in front of them, she looked across the table at Ben. "I'm scared. The last time I saw Brad he was so cold to me. It was as though he hated me."

"It was just a front."

"I don't even know where he lives in New York."

"He has a penthouse on Fifth Avenue, but you don't even have to go to New York to see him. He's doing a book signing in Baltimore this weekend. Go to him then."

Shayla's heart raced. Did she dare to hope?

Chapter Twelve

Shayla had never been so nervous in her life. Only three more people, and then it would be her turn. She didn't like the way that blonde was eyeing Brad so lasciviously. After she and Ben had parted after lunch a few days ago, Shayla had gone straight to the nearest bookstore and purchased all of Brad's books.

He wrote a series about a billionaire playboy who traveled around the world solving crimes. Brock Carter, the main character in the story, grabbed her attention right away. The story was so good she could barely put it down. By the time she had finished, it was well into the morning.

Brock was handsome, intelligent and the ladies loved him. The only thing was, Brock was in love with the girl next door who only seemed to have eyes for his brother. Shanna Alton was a woman of average height, smooth dark brown skin, and eyes that slanted like a cat. Shanna didn't like him and told him so in no uncertain terms.

Although Shanna was not a major part of the story, she was never far from Brock's heart. To the world Brock was a womanizer, but he was just a man who loved a woman who didn't love him back, and to cover it up he partied and dated other women to forget about her.

Was she Shanna? That was what Shayla was banking on, when her turn finally came up. Ben had been right. Brad didn't look that much better than she did. If she thought she had bags under her eyes, Brad had a full set of luggage under his, but damn, he still looked good.

He seemed surprised to see her as she approached him. "Shayla?"

"Hi, Brad."

"What are you doing here?"

"I wanted to get my book signed."

"I see. I didn't realize you read my books."

"I didn't until a few days ago. Next time, you should ask my permission before you write about me."

"Excuse me?"

"Shanna Alton. That's me, isn't it?"

Brad went very still. At least he didn't deny it.

"Please. Don't lie to me. If she's me, please tell me so, because if it is, I wanted to tell you that I think Shanna is stupid if she doesn't see the man Brock is."

He stared at her with unfathomable green eyes. "Yes."

"Brad, I love you. I wanted to tell you at the cabin, but you shut me off. I was hoping that maybe you still have feelings for me too. I hope I haven't killed those feelings off."

"Hey, other people are waiting in line!" someone yelled from behind her.

Shayla ignored it. "Well, Brad. Have I killed off any feelings you had for me?"

"You know, you have a lot of nerve, showing up here telling me you love me at a time like this when --"

Before he could finish, she turned around abruptly and ran out of the bookstore. Tears filled her eyes. She realized that it was a less than dignified exit. Shayla ran down the sidewalk to her car and she was just opening the door when a pair of large hands turned her around.

"Brad!"

"As usual, you ran off without letting me finish. I was going to say, you have a lot of nerve showing up at my book signing, telling me that you love me when there was nothing I could do about in front of all those people," he said before pulling her into his arms and covering her mouth with his. His kiss was desperate, hungry and greedy. He kissed her as though he couldn't get enough of her.

Shayla returned his kiss, throwing her arms around him. Their tongues met, circling and tasting each other's. The kiss seemed to go on for a long time before he lifted his head. She moaned into his mouth, releasing the pent up frustration of the past month.

"What took you so damn long?" His eyes gleamed with an emotion she hadn't noticed before. Love.

"I didn't know how you felt about me."

"God, how could you have not known? Damn, woman! I've been in love with you since you turned sixteen. Do you have any idea how it felt to love you and you think so badly of me?"

"You've loved me for that long? But you never --"

"I never said anything? And have you laugh in my face? No. I don't think so."

"You've always been so cold toward me. I thought you hated me."

"I never hated you, but there were times when I was annoyed with you to the point of wanting to wring your lovely little neck. The night of your eighteenth birthday party, I only came to tell you that Ben had changed his mind about coming up to your room, but when you touched me, I couldn't resist you. It was like a dream come true for me, holding and kissing you."

"And then I ruined it by calling you Ben."

"Yes, and it hurt like hell. After that I did what I always did, I hid behind a wall of sarcasm. I didn't want you to know how I felt about you, because I was scared of rejection."

"I can't imagine you being scared of anything, Brad." Shayla reached up to stroke his beard, her heart swelling with the newness of her love for him. Looking up into his eyes, she couldn't imagine never having loved him.

"Believe me, I was terrified. After the party I went to New York and started working for the *Post*. I was dabbling with my first Brock Carter novel. A friend of mine who happened to be a literary agent took a look at my stuff and thought that it would sell. He said that he liked the raw emotion -- Brock's feelings for Shanna were so real. You've been in all of my books. Brock couldn't catch a break."

"Poor Brock."

"Poor Brock? Poor *me*," he laughed. "I've been dealing with unrequited love much longer than him. You said I engaged in wild orgies and parties. The orgy thing was an exaggeration, though the parties did get wild at my place, and yes, I did date quite a bit, but I didn't sleep with all of those women. I threw myself into the New York party scene hoping to forget about you, but nothing ever worked. Everything always came back to you. The reason I was in town the weekend of your birthday was because my editor and I were having a squabble. I was going to kill off Shanna in my books, but she had become quite a popular character."

"You were going to kill her off? That seems a bit extreme."

"Maybe so, but it was going to be a symbolic thing. By getting rid of her, I was essentially getting rid of you. I needed to take a break from writing so I went to see my parents. That's when I received the invite to your party. I just couldn't stay away. I thought you would have warmed up to me a little over the years, but nothing had changed. You were still infatuated with Ben and you still hated me. I went off to lick my wounds. Then this crazy thing happened with the love potion. I was never under the influence of that potion because I was already in love with you. I thought if you got to know me better you might start to like me a little. I knew you were sexually attracted to me, although you fought it pretty hard."

"I was an idiot."

"I was an even bigger idiot. There were several times I wanted to tell you that it wasn't the potion making me react to you, but --"

"But I kept interrupting."

"It wasn't just that. I guess I could have made you listen, but I didn't try hard enough. I was so damn insecure. The last night we were together, I thought you were trying to tell me that you didn't want me anymore because the potion had worn off, so like a child, I stormed off."

"You were so mad."

"Not at you. Never at you, my heart. God, I love you. I'm scared that this is just a dream and when I wake up I'll just be the arrogant jerk you always thought I was."

Tears filled her eyes, and she felt shamed at all the nasty things she'd said to him. "I don't know what to say."

"Just say you love me."

"I do. I really do."

He bent over to give her a quick, hard kiss on the lips. "I like your hair like this, but I miss the braids. I like a little something to tug on in bed."

She laughed. "You're so bad."

He pulled her into his arms and squeezed her tight against him. "I love you so much. Let's get out of here. I think my cock will explode if I don't get you to a bed soon. You know, the name of that potion was Love Potion #69, wasn't it?"

"Yeah. So?"

"So, in honor of it bringing us together, we should pay homage to it, by doing a little sixty-nine of our own." He winked at her. Shayla could feel her pussy tighten in response.

"What about your book signing?"

"Damn! I forgot about that."

"It's okay. I'll wait for you. I wouldn't want you to disappoint your fans."

"Damn right, you're going to wait for me, but the only person I'm worried about disappointing is you. Now that I know you love me, I don't think I'm ever going to let you go."

She smiled up into his handsome face. "I like the sound of that, but what are you going to do about Shanna's character?"

He dropped a light kiss on her forehead. "I think I see a happy ending in her and Brock's future."

* * *

Standing several feet away from the couple, who were totally absorbed in each other, an old woman and her cross-dressing nephew looked on. "They make a beautiful couple, don't you think?" the old woman asked.

"I suppose," the rotund she-male answered.

"Love is a wonderful thing, especially if one has old Shaniqua's potion to help them along."

"Was it really necessary for us to go into her dream, Aunt Shaniqua?"

"Sometimes my clients need a little push. I guess my work here is done. Now it's time to find another misguided soul to send one of my flyers to. With no thanks to you everything worked out for the best."

"Well, since things turned out for the best, do you think you can un-shrink my balls now?"

Eve Vaughn

Eve Vaughn has enjoyed creating characters and making up stories from an early age. As a child she was always getting into mischief, so when she lost her television privileges (which was often), writing was her outlet.

Her stories have gotten quite a bit spicier since then!

Eve likes to read, bake, make crafts, travel and spend time with her family. She lives in the Philadelphia area with her husband and pet turtle. She loves to hear from her fans, so feel free to contact her at EveVaughn10@aol.com or join her yahoo group at www.evevaughnsbooks-subscribe@yahoo.com.

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