



Stripped

Nikki Sparks

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Chapter One

“Oh. My. God.”

Alyssa wished she'd taken a moment to ask what Carly was freaking out about before she just dived into the scene—not that the scene was bad. It was good—very, very good.

Her man—well, her *ideal* man who also just happened to be her brother's best friend, and who also just happened to be the venture capitalist funding her struggling lingerie boutique—was *seriously* getting it on with two women.

Two women that strangely look a lot like me, Al thought, peering through his ajar office door. *That is, they both have curly dark brown hair and pale skin. Can't tell if their eyes are blue, though*, she mused as she took note of the two women passing licks of Justin Taylor's quite impressive member.

“Damn, I always knew that boy was fine, but goddamn, he soooo surpasses the quota for fine. That man sets it,” whispered Carly, Al's sales assistant.

“Sssh...”

Carly rolled her eyes. “Yeah, right. Like they can hear us.”

She had a point. There was a lot of slurping going on and definitely a lot of mouth-filled moaning between the two women. It was as if they were competing on American Idol—the Porn-Star version. *Just imagine the grand prize—a pussy filled with that hard, bulging cock*. Al's thong dampened as her eyes strained to trace every throbbing, purple vein entwining Justin's curved shaft.

Unconsciously, Al licked her lips as she watched Girl One slide her tongue up him as Girl Two slid her tongue down then wrapped her mouth around his balls. “Good God,” Al exhaled.

Though Justin sat with his back to the door, his ergonomic chair had a swivel to it, affording them a perfect view. Plus, the man loved the minimal look, otherwise they would have missed the show. A big executive leather chair would have blocked everything. Justin's chair, however, was a sleek little number with a perfect peek-a-boo leather slat back.

Al felt a twinge that she'd been missing for months vibrate between her legs, and another flutter in her chest. *Okay, so you get that twinge every time you see Justin, and up until now, the man has been fully clothed. Just admit you love him*. Al sighed with the silent admission. Literally, she'd spent her lifetime with Justin, and had always had a smudge of longing for him across her heart.

There were many things that Al loved. She was a passionate girl, but also a perfectionist—the kind who had no qualms about taking a long time to make the right choice, whether it be for a new car or for a flavor of ice cream. *If a girl's going to indulge, then goddammit don't fuck it up making a poor-ass choice*. That was her motto. Not a thing about Justin Taylor was poor or sloppy. Given the chance, any sane woman would choose him over and over again—six foot three, rock hard from head to toe, a gleaming bright smile, dark chocolate brown eyes. *Mmmm ... obviously the man tasted as good as he looked, judging from the fighting sucks and tongue strokes the double-dipping duo were enthusiastically lavishing upon him*.

Bitches, Al hissed inside. *I've known him since I was a week old and I never got my share of licks.*

Al mentally sighed again. *Then again whose fault is that? That's right, girlfriend. Yours*, she reminded herself.

This is just what I get for another one of my brilliant ideas. Rather than just tell the man, Take me. Fuck me. Do me. I'm yours. No, you have to play coy. All week she'd been planning on surprising Justin on his birthday. Nothing big. Just a small gift and bottle of his favorite wine. Thoughtful and tasteful. She and Carly would just pop in and say Happy B-day. Then Carly would take the train back to open the store while she and Justin had their weekly meeting. *So cute and sweet, right? Oh, pleeeassse...*

It was only 9:00 in the morning. Al hadn't counted on Justin having a private meeting going on. *Does he start every day like this?* Al wondered.

When Justin grabbed Girl One by her hair, Alyssa all but whimpered.

Damn, she needed a man. She needed to slide her tongue up and down a man. She needed a man to grab her by the hair. *"Face it, you need that man to grab you by your hair,"* a tiny part of her thought.

When Justin rose from the chair, Al finally got to see what she always was sure would be true about Mr. Taylor. Yes, the man truly did have a perfect ass, perfectly tanned, perfectly taut, perfectly sculpted.

"You could bounce a *roll* of quarters off that—forget just one," Carly whispered as if she'd read her mind.

Al nodded, suddenly feeling parched. She licked her lips again and swallowed. Her eyes were jammed open. She couldn't look away from that sculpted, six-foot plus body if her life depended on it.

When he turned and faced the door, it was like he was giving Al a kiss from heaven—a *full frontal view*. She tilted her head and sighed. His bare chest trickled with sweat; his toned arms were pumped without his even needing to flex them.

Flashing a gorgeous, perfect white smile down at the two office groupies, Justin grabbed his cock in his hand. Then in that intoxicating voice that always made Al wet even when the man was just saying hello, he asked, "So who goes first?"

It took every ounce of restraint in Al's body not to jump through the door, crying, *"Pick me, Justin, for the love of God, pick me."*

Immediately Girl Two assumed the position, turning and gripping the chrome arms of the chair, ass out in the air to him. None too gently, he smacked it.

That's what you get, you greedy bitch, Al thought viciously.

Then, stroking that amazing penis slowly from the base of his shaft to the head of his cock, Justin stepped up to her. His free hand gripped into her hip as he sunk his eight—maybe even *nine*—inches into her. Not to be outdone, Girl One went to work, kneeling behind him, caressing his balls. Soon she was tonguing his ass, and...

Oh, shit, he's looking dead at me. "Go," Al said, pushing over Carly.

"Go?"

"Come on. Let's get out of here," Al said, grabbing her by the arm. Al hadn't noticed that she was still clutching the bottle of wine and tiny wrapped box she'd brought for his birthday gift. *Yeah, like a nice Cabernet and box of cigars could top that!* "Come on, Carly."

"Are you kidding? If anything, I'm gonna join..."

Al clamped down harder on her arm and yanked it. "I mean it. Let's go." Flustered and wanting nothing more than to be abducted by aliens at that moment, Al hastily left her gift at the receptionist's desk. She hoped the poor girl was running really, really late because boy, did she have a surprise waiting for her when she checked into the office.

Once they made it out of the building, Al sighed, relieved that her legs made it to the parking garage. On the other hand, Carly wore a wry smile the whole way and melted into the passenger's seat of Al's beat-up BMW. She sucked in a deep breath. "Damn. I need a cigarette."

"You don't smoke," Al reminded her, wishing her car could flip out wings and fly far, far away from here. *Christ, he saw me. Dammit. Dammit. Dammit.*

"Well, I just may start now. Suddenly, I just have a craving for a Virginia Slim."

Al shook her head and turned on the radio. "It's not like you had an orgasm."

"Don't be so sure," Carly said, raising an eyebrow at her.

Al's mouth dropped open. *Leave it to Girl Wonderbra.* To say that Carly had a reputation for being—well, loose, and proud of it was about as understated as saying that Liberace liked to wear a ring from time to time. "Did you have an orgasm?" It was a dead serious question that Al just had to ask.

She shrugged. "No. But I was pretty damn close. Did you see the size of his..."

"Yes," Al said, cutting her off.

For a moment there was nothing but the radio blaring Nelly's *It's Getting Hot In Here*. Definitely not the tune to pound out the picture of that erotically curved penis from her brain.

"But, did you see the head of his..."

"Yes. I don't suppose that you'd be willing to just let this little ... incident go," Al said, nabbing her with a look before she took a corner.

"There was nothing 'little' about that 'incident'," Carly said, laughing. She turned in her seat and peered at Al. "Did you two ever..."

"He's practically family!" Al screeched, proud that her lie even sounded convincing to her ears. Well, it was a half-lie. It was true that she and Justin had never slept together. However, Al knew that there was a time that he had wanted to sleep with her, and lately it was all she could think about ... those dark brown eyes piercing her soul as he split her wide open was a recurring vision every spare minute of her day for the past several months.

"He's not family. He's your brother's best friend."

Al shrugged. "I said *practically* family. It's all the same. He might as well be my brother. I mean, I've known him since the day I was born. He's totally like a brother to me."

One look at her and Al knew that Carly was on to the lie. "Like hell," she said, throwing her head back. "I wish I had a brother with a huge..."

Al put up her hand to stop the onslaught. Though Carly was the best sales girl ever for Al's lingerie boutique, the girl had a mouth rinsed with gutter water. Dick, cock, ass, pussy—she called them out frequently like she would call out the name of a friend.

"Carly ... please ... enough with the construction site jibber-jabber."

"Come on. Just once. Say it," Carly egged her.

Al remained silent.

Giving up on her, Carly clicked her tongue and shook her head. “You’re *such* a prude.”

“I’m not a prude. I just don’t like that word,” Al countered, tilting her nose into the air.

That was lie number two. Al knew she’d been known to say all kinds of things about God, Jesus Christ and Christ Almighty attached to the words cock and pussy when in the heat of passion. Still, she felt her employee could use some training in the art of feminine grace.

“I was only going to say ‘shaft’. What word don’t you like? Dick?”

“Carly!”

“Well, how about cock? Do you like cock?”

“No. I don’t like cock,” Al said, hating that she sounded like she very much indeed did *not* like cock. Rolling her eyes, relaxing, she sighed and twisted a smile on her face. “I don’t like it. I love it,” she said, fighting off laughter when Carly high-fived her. “I just prefer to call it something less uncouth.” She couldn’t help but laugh at herself when Carly cried out in cackles.

Flipping her sun-streaked strawberry blond hair from her face, Carly regained her composure. “Okay, like...” she said, leading Al and Al so did not want to go there with her.

“Like penis.”

Carly fell into laughter again.

“What?” Al cried. “What’s wrong with penis?” She stopped at a red light and glared at Carly.

“Nothing, if you happen to be a nurse clutching his balls in your hand when you ask him to cough.”

Hitting the gas again, Al shook her head. “You know, if you weren’t my friend, I’d fire you.”

“Yeah, right. On what grounds?”

“Sexual harassment.”

“Right. Sexual harassment. I can’t see how you—owner of STRIP—could possibly have a case. Aren’t *you* the one dragging *me* to a swingers convention?”

“There’s nothing harassing about the boutique. Besides, we’re only going to sell some products. We are not conducting any research.” *Though if it would drive sales, I’d be game*, Al thought.

The truth of the matter was that STRIP was going down if she didn’t come up with a plan quick. Thus, she and Justin—who also was her business manager since his cash was paying the bills—came up with the grand idea of selling some extras.

Al never dreamed her shelves would house the likes of *The Rejuvenat-Her!* She still couldn’t bring herself to even touch the twelve-inch purple dildo. It strangely made her feel like Barney’s pimp. Why couldn’t she just sell beautiful lingerie? She had the right staff, the right look, the right location. In every business book that she’d read she’d seen nothing but location, location, location on page after page when it came to retail.

Well, in Al’s opinion all location did for her was give her a pretty corner on which to sit and wish for customers to walk in.

Southport Avenue was one of the hottest strips in Chicago. It was streaming with young, energetic, go-getting women who owned their own condos, dined out every night,

talked on cell phones as they hailed cabs and conquered the world. They wore shoes that cost as much as the boutique's monthly lease. Al thought she knew these women because she *was* these women. These were her peers! So why wasn't she connecting with them? Al wondered what the hell these women wore to bed. Obviously nothing that she sold.

"But, did you see how long his..." Carly started up again.

"Yes, Carly, I did."

* * * *

Justin Taylor closed his eyes before he walked into Alyssa's office. The way he saw it, he only had three options. The first being that he could pretend like this morning never happened.

That was the coward's way out and definitely not for him.

Option number two was that he could address it, be open about it and maybe his frankness would win him some points and get him closer to the real kind of relationship he'd like to have with Al.

As if a closer relationship was possible now. This morning, she caught you banging two women in your office, and it's not likely that she'd want to join in.

The truth was that he wouldn't have wanted her to join in. Since as long as he could remember, he only wanted one woman—Al. The all too close but not close enough Miss Alyssa Moore was all he had ever wanted.

His third and last option was that he could simply put it behind them—not exactly ignore it, but not exactly go there either.

Shit. Not a single one of his options appealed to him. Once again, he'd messed up his chance with Al.

Taking a deep breath, he plunged into her shoe box office. Being inside her space was like being inside her every fantasy. From the sheer silk samples draped over her tufted ivory chairs to the honeycomb glazed walls, seduction wagged a finger at him from every corner, daring him to take a step closer. Being inside her private office always turned him on. He felt it was the closest he had ever come to being deep inside her. True to nature, his dick began to twitch at the thought of burying himself inside Al.

Besides the eroticism of her office, of course, there was Alyssa as well. The woman was seduction personified starting with that silky head of thick curls, almost black, that always looked wind-blown and tousled. Justin allowed his gaze to move on to the pale skin that she always showed plenty of, wearing lacy camisoles and satiny numbers as blouses under her business suits. As if all that weren't enough, there was that face that made Justin's heart cave in every time he looked at it. It would be too clichéd to call it angelic. Her face was much more evocative than that. Her beauty was fiery but ethereal; it wasn't just in her features or form, but in the grace of her movements, the spirit in her eyes, and in the warmth in her voice. Her beauty lay in an indescribable something that was the essence of Alyssa.

When she finally looked up from her paperwork, Justin hoped the longing he felt to take her there on the floor wasn't evident in his eyes. Nothing said pathetic like desperately needy—except maybe having to apologize for being caught, literally, with his pants down.

"I'm sorry about this morning," Justin said, finally deciding relative frankness would be best, given the situation. Explanations would only make the awkwardness worse and

he certainly didn't need any more awkwardness between them. Their long, shared history had stirred the air between them enough, added to the numerous times he'd smacked heads with her ex-husband. Plus, she currently was indebted to him to the tune of two hundred and eight thousand dollars. Justin didn't care about the money, but he knew Al did.

He dropped his briefcase beside one of the guest chairs and sat down across from Al behind her desk. He wanted to look at her. What man didn't want to look at Alyssa? Unfortunately, he felt like shit, beyond embarrassed, and slightly perverted because just the scent of her made him want to fuck all over again.

Smiling softly, Alyssa shrugged, shuffling papers and sex gadgets on her desk. "Hey, it's your birthday. It's just that since we had a meeting about the convention, I thought I'd surprise you by bringing the meeting to you."

He sighed deeply. "None of that was planned. Susan and I had an eight o'clock, then Brenda stopped by to drop off some papers, and they hadn't seen each other in a while. Then, my birthday came up." He sighed again, omitting the fact that he'd had an inkling of what was to come when Brenda showed up. "It ... I'm sorry. It completely got out of hand."

Alyssa shook her head, seemingly not wanting to go into it. "No, don't apologize. I've always appreciated women who could ... multi-task. Talk about coordination," she teased.

*

Al loved the blush spreading across Justin's olive skin. Her skin prickled. *Whoa, to make a man as dark and sexy as Justin blush, now that's power.*

Resisting the urge to rub her hand against the duskiess trailing his squared jawline, Alyssa decided to let it go. So what? He was doing two women at once. It could have been a lot worse, like catching him with a donkey and sheep. *Face it, girl. The man is fine as hell. What woman wouldn't be willing to share him if that's what it took to get a piece of that enormous cock?* With a shake of her head, she said, "I think we should just get down to business."

*

Justin watched as she strolled around her desk and sat down in the chair next to his. Not surprising to him, his erection was lengthening, filling out by the second. It couldn't be helped. He wouldn't be human if he could contain his appreciation of her body slipping inside the powder blue suit. Her skirt had a slit cut high up her leg and when she crossed one over the other, he broke out into a sweat. She wasn't wearing nylons, just silky, ivory skin to torture him with. Her heels were high and open-toed, of course. Her pedicure made him suddenly catch a case of foot fetish. Damn, she had the tiniest feet, delicate like the rest of her. He knew he was a large man and that if ever he had the chance, he'd have to take it easy with Al due to her delicate frame.

Many times Justin had wondered how glorious it would feel to have to hold back. It would be a sweet torture, taking it nice and slow, giving it to her soft and easy, inch by inch. Even full-figured women had complained of his size, but were damned if they'd walk away from it. He wondered how much coaxing it would take to convince Al that her petite, five-foot frame could handle it.

"Where should we begin?" she asked while she looked over her notes.

Justin leaned forward to hide his hard-on. The gesture afforded him a nice view of the valley between her small, round breasts. *Perfect mouthfuls*, he thought. Her nipples were pebbled and showed through the soft netting of her lace camisole. He had always known that they'd be pink like the natural color of her lips—but man, it was a big turn-on finding out that he was right. The knowledge made his already strained cock swell another inch.

*

“Justin,” Alyssa said.

When his dark eyes rose to meet hers, Al was flooded with heat. His eyes were so dark they were almost black. Still, she could tell his pupils were half-dilated and glassy. She couldn't help but wonder what was on his mind. Fearing that it wasn't her, but instead reminiscences of Girl One and Girl Two, she kept her curiosity under wraps.

Unconscious of what the gesture would do to him, she licked her lips and he gave a faint groan. Alyssa momentarily forgot her words. Could she possibly be what was obviously turning him on? Al did a quick body check and noticed how her nipples pushed against her camisole. Yes, she'd known it was see-through when she put it on in the morning, but she thought her suit jacket would cover anything tell-tell. Her nipples stood at attention when Justin was near. *And now he's looking right at them*. She cleared her throat, shaking away the unsettling knowledge that Justin was getting off on her nipples. “I ... um ... I asked where should we begin.”

“Of course,” he said, letting his eyes slide down over her breasts and down her bare legs. “Show me what you got.”

Mesmerized for a moment too long, Al snapped back into herself. *He means for the convention, dumbass. Show him what you ordered for the convention and get your mind back from your crotch*, she scolded herself.

When she stood up to grab her props from her desk, she felt his eyes on her ass. It felt as good as a caress. Hell, a kiss—it had been so long for her. Turning back to him, she dropped a platinum chain with two crystal-tipped padded clips at either end into his lap. “What do you think?” she asked, taking her seat and crossing her legs again.

“I wouldn't know,” he said, raising a brow at her.

Al's eyes flicked from the nipple clips, back to Justin, then back to the clips. She could feel his eyes stroking her breasts and her nipples hardened even more, pointing achingly towards his gaze. “I ... I wouldn't know either. Carly, could you come in here for a second?” Al called out.

“Absolutely,” Carly called back.

Swinging her hips, Carly swayed into the miniature office. “Happy birthday,” she purred to Justin in a breathy, Marilyn Monroe voice. He blushed again, shaking his head.

Al cleared her throat. “Carly, we were hoping that you could give us some feedback on the products I selected for the convention.”

Carly strolled over to the desk and fondled the assortment of dildos on it. “Mickey's great. Solid. Flexible. Nice. Real nice. But, I prefer vibration as well. You know, a tickler for my clitoris. So, my choice is always Lady. Plus, you gotta love that she's so pretty. And she comes with a free butt plug. Which I like because...”

Again, Al cleared her throat, breaking Carly's nanosecond of foreplay. “I meant the customers. I was hoping that you could give us some customer feedback.”

Blinking, Carly shook her head. “Oh. Well, Lady’s been a real crowd pleaser,” she said, picking up the lavender toy, raising a brow at Justin.

Getting the pun on the words “crowd pleaser”, Al swallowed a small snicker. “Thank you.”

“No problem,” Carly replied, eyes pinned on Justin. Al swore the girl would drop and give him ten licks right then and there if the man so much as twitched the request.

“That will be all, Carly,” she said and Carly sulked away.

Fiddling with her notes and suddenly feeling hot and anxious to move things on, Al forged ahead, deciding to treat the toys as she would any other merchandise in her boutique. *Say like a nice silk robe or a g-string studded with diamonds.*

Truth be told, she wasn’t entirely sold on Justin’s suggestion to carry a line of sex favors. They had never been a part of her sexual experience. They always made her feel uncomfortable and slightly ashamed—like she couldn’t get laid for real. Not to mention that some even looked painful, but she thought she did a good job of finding some that she thought looked “user-friendly.” However, he was the venture capitalist and the one with the Harvard MBA. *And he’s definitely having more sex than me*, she reminded herself. He would know what would finally make the boutique start to turn a profit.

“I like the nipple clips. Sexy. Beautiful,” Justin said.

“They are beautiful,” she agreed, licking her lips, watching the platinum glint from Justin’s thick fingers as he caressed them in a way that made her want to peel her blazer and camisole away from her skin.

“I bet,” he murmured, letting his eyes wander over her nipples again with a scorching gaze.

Alyssa flitted a hand across her face. “I’ve never ... I don’t ... I...”

A sly smile touched the corner of his mouth. “You haven’t ever tried your new wares, have you?”

She shook her head. “Not exactly.”

“Tsk ... tsK ... tsK ... Business rule number one: You gotta know what you’re selling.”

“I do.”

“Really?” he asked, arching a brow again.

“Yes. Of course,” she said, though the affirmation came off extremely weak through her cracking voice.

Justin brought his face to hers. Instinctively, Alyssa’s lips parted and for a moment his gaze settled there, making her want to reach for his lips. Quickly, he flicked his gaze to her eyes and she trembled in need of that absent kiss. His eyes darkened deliciously, as if burning in heat.

Though she watched his fingers reach for her nipples, Al was suspended in disbelief of the moment. At first his touch was light, just brushing the tips of her nipples. Her hard buds ached for more ... like the touch of his mouth, or his bare chest brushing against them.

She sucked in a breath and he groaned his delight in the touch, making her nerves shoot in every direction. “Okay, so tell me,” he said, his voice so warm and deep that Al’s thoughts swam right into it. “Do these bite into the nipple like this?” he asked, pinching her nipples so hard, she winced and her mouth dropped open. As if wanting to catch her pleasure, he licked into her mouth—but he moved away before Al could close

her tongue around his. He groaned again when she whimpered in protest and she watched him work a knot in his throat. "Or do they feel more like this?" he asked, his voice huskier, his touch softer, plucking her erect buds.

Closing her eyes as he rolled her nipples with his thick thumbs, Al tried to think. It was hard given that she was having trouble just breathing with her nipples ripening from each stroke and pussy wet with need. "I don't know," she murmured.

"You should," he said, taking his hands from her breasts but visibly as aroused as she was. He couldn't hide the ridge bulging inside the inseam of his slacks. "You need to get familiar with whatever products we take with us. I suggest you start with this," he said, tossing her the bright red butt plug.

When he rose from his seat, his cock was inches from Al's nose. She sucked in a breath and closed her eyes, wishing that for once in her life she could be a naughty girl like Carly and take full advantage of him. *Just reach out, cup him in my hand and then ...* Al licked her lips at the thought of sucking him, pulling his hard flesh between her lips. Pressing her lips together, massaging her lip gloss in, she hummed a soft sigh. *Always the good girl. Never the fucked girl.*

"By the way, thanks for the wine and the gift."

"You're welcome," she said, gripping her notes to keep herself from grabbing his cock and making him stay to explain what the hell just happened.

"And, next time, if you're going to drop by my office, you should phone first," he said, swiftly heading for the door.

Chapter Two

The rest of the day was going to be as long as Justin expected. He was damn sure that it wasn't going to be a productive day. It would be impossible to get anything done and stay focused when every time the wind stirred he was rock hard again since he left Al's office no more than an hour ago.

Sitting at the bar of his and Brandon's favorite hangout, his dick stirred again with thoughts of fondling his best friend's little sister's nipples. Damn, she was responsive. The slightest touch and she was ready. It took every ounce of moral fiber not to sweep a hand up that skirt and stroke her lace-covered mound. He'd always imagined that pussy clad in lace. *Wet lace*. Her soft whimper when he licked that hot mouth of hers told him that her panties must have been drenched. He could have fucked her right there on top of her desk. He knew from the way those blue eyes glazed over and softly closed as his thumb managed to fuck her nipples.

Blowing out a long breath for the one-hundredth time since the encounter, Justin tried to push the vision away. He took a sip of his Glenlivet and reminded himself that there were other women. *Hell, I've had two today and I haven't even had lunch yet*. Still, his appetite craved Al's lips against his. Her mouth had tasted so good—like hot, burnt sugar. His thoughts couldn't stop clamping down on every memory of the touch of heat rising from it. *Damn*.

Finally Brandon arrived, stepping up to the bar and clapping a hand on Justin's shoulder. "Happy birthday," he boomed out. Every year, Brandon took the afternoon off to celebrate Justin's birthday. Brandon was utterly loyal to Justin. It was impossible not to think of him as a brother. Plus, the man was forever in a great mood and relaxed though he made life and death decisions on a daily basis as a cardiologist.

"Yeah. Thanks," Justin murmured, cursing himself because damn if Brandon's dark hair and intense blue eyes didn't make him think of Alyssa.

"Don't tell me. You're depressed because you're starting to see the faintest of tiny lines and wrinkles? Is old age getting you down?" Brandon teased, motioning for the bartender.

"Not exactly."

Brandon ordered a beer and threw a couple of twenties onto the bar. He obviously could read Justin enough to see that it was going to be a long lunch. "What's going on? Dude, we're still young. Young enough. We're successful. There are plenty of women to go around. It's good to be us."

Justin nodded. He was right about that. There was a lot of T and A being displayed in the posh cocktail lounge. Redheads, brunettes, blondes, Asian, African-American—it was as if a trailer packed with Miss Universe contestants had pulled in. "Yeah, well, I just want one," Justin said.

"My advice is that you tell her."

Since the age of three, Justin and Brandon had been best friends. Though they never mentioned it, Justin knew that Brandon was all too aware of his infatuation with his baby sister. Brandon never gave him any warning to steer clear, nor did he sweep his arm out

in invitation. He'd just sometimes razz him that his choice in women always steered towards petite beauties who resembled Al.

"It's about time that you let her know."

"That was the plan. But..."

"But?" Brandon asked, but Justin couldn't bring himself to a confession. "As if anything you could say could shock me."

"She walked in on me at my office with Brenda ... *and* Susan."

"Whoa. The Dynamic Duo? Didn't they give you the same thing for your birthday last year? Oh my God! Shit," Brandon said, first choking on his beer before chuckling and shaking his head.

"Yeah," Justin said leaving out the part about him feeling Al up shortly thereafter.

"Man. Your timing sucks," Brandon said, punctuating the point.

"Tell me about it."

"Last time you were gonna tell her..."

"I know. She busted in the door and announced that she was marrying Keith-Fucking-Asshole-Wilson. Don't remind me."

"Look, I'm sure as hell not the guy to be giving out lessons on love. You were always the romantic one," Brandon said, motioning for the next round of drinks. "Maybe that's just it. Romance her. Wine and dine her. It worked for Keith Wilson. Alyssa has always been a sucker for a bunch of roses and a poem. Sweep her off her feet. Shit, I don't know. Works in the movies."

* * * *

The good news was that Alyssa had taken Justin's advice. She'd tried out the merchandise. The bad news was that it was good—but not good enough. She needed more. She needed Justin to come back and finish what he'd started.

When he'd left her with wet dew trickling between her inner thighs, Al walked tightly to the boutique's sales floor. "I'm going to take an hour or so to go over some things from the meeting. Could you just hold my calls?"

Carly gave her a curious look but shrugged and nodded before continuing to go through the day's shipment.

Back in her office, Al's body swelled with the overwhelming necessity to come—and come hard. Justin's scent—herbaceous and raw—lingered in the air and in a moment he was there with her again. Closing her eyes, she could feel his sweet coffee-tinged breath against her lips once more.

Al moaned, sinking into the chair with her legs splayed open. She pulled her skirt up to her waist and rotated her hips in the chair. *Why, oh why didn't he just do her right then and there? Couldn't he see she was so ready?*

Slitting her eyes open, Al pulled her camisole from her breasts. Her nipples were so hard they caught on the intricate lace pattern. She lifted the delicate material and they sprang forward, throbbing, searching for a caress. She gave in, pinching and rolling each, squeezing her legs together and envisioning the dark look across Justin's face when he'd done the same thing to them. *Why didn't he use his mouth? He should have tongued them.*

Scooting down into the chair, Al gripped her pussy in her hand. "Ooooh..." she sang, knowing that it wouldn't take long. Mr. Taylor had more than given her enough of a start.

Peering down her body, Al pulled the crotch of her lace thong aside. Still thumbing a nipple, she sucked in a breath seeing a drop of wetness nestled on the crest of her pussy lips. She tilted her head and massaged the drop into her clit. "Oh God..." she panted softly. She swirled and swirled and swirled in tiny circles against her clit, imagining Justin's brown eyes, almost black with lust, watching her make herself come.

Shakily she did so, amazed at how wet she was, smelling her sex mingled with Justin's remaining scent. She was still needy. Her pussy was begging for a good hard fuck. It was then her eyes flicked to the toys still displayed across her top of her desk. Al licked her lips. *Ohhh ... Justin, you make me want to be so bad*, she thought, reaching for a large black dildo.

Testing it in her hands, Al reminisced that her selection wasn't as large as Justin. *Not enough girth but the perfect length*. Indulgently, she licked it, letting her lips massage the head. It was hard and rigid. It didn't curve like she remembered Justin's sex did. It wasn't warm and pliant like a cock, but still it might be better than her fingers.

With her legs splayed again, Al used her fingers to part her folds. If only it was Justin peeling her open, sucking her clit, making it rise and bow to him. "*Mmmmm...*" she moaned. She'd always loved having her clit teased and tortured just before the decadent pleasure of penetration. It always made her so wet for sex, she thought as she ran the rigid toy along her clit and lips.

Watching as she did so, she finally pushed the dildo into her wet pussy. Just the head at first and she was already twitching, an orgasm dangling before her. Throwing her head back, she plunged its length into her dewy sex. If this was so good, she could only imagine how good it'd be to feel Justin's hot cock split her.

Fucking herself hard, pounding the dildo in and out its long length, Al held her hips perfectly still, wanting to just spread her legs and be fucked, wishing it was Justin. Her pussy greedily gripped the toy and with a few more hard strokes, she was coming again, biting down on her bottom lip to keep silent. Though, faintly, her imagination heard the grumbled breathing of a Justin going over the edge with her.

* * * *

The torturously long day was finally coming to an end. After a few more things, Al could pack it in. Carly had already left, but couldn't resist letting Al know that she knew *exactly* what Al had been doing the entire afternoon in her office.

"I hope you at least gave my recommendation a try," she said to Al as she locked the front door to the boutique.

"Recommendation for what?" Al snapped, clicking off the lamps, burning with embarrassment.

"Lady."

"I've been a little too busy for playing with toys today. I have a business to run," Al said, stalking back into her office.

She was still embarrassed and fuming when the phone rang. The store was closed but Al nonetheless picked up. She always did when she stayed late—a habit that Justin was trying to break her of, telling her that she was defeating the whole purpose of staying late so that she could work without interruption.

"Guess who?" Al's ex-husband's voice rang out.

“Well, it’s not exactly Satan—but a close relative,” she sighed. Of all days, she didn’t need Keith as an interruption.

“Ah, babe—don’t you miss me? You don’t even have to answer, gorgeous. I know you do.”

Shaking her head, Al smiled. He was a charmer—an arrogant bastard—but a charmer. Though it had taken a while, she and her ex now managed to be on friendly terms, connecting every now and then. “How’s LA?”

“Perfect. Babes, drugs and sunshine. What more could a guy want?”

“Indeed,” Al agreed and decided to skip pointing out that two of the three ended their marriage. She knew that Keith was in his element, probably walking down Melrose as he talked to her on the phone while he eye-licked every woman that passed by.

“So to what do I owe the pleasure of this call?”

“Need I have a reason other than hearing the smile in your voice?”

“You do know that I’m flipping you off right now? You do feel that, don’t you?”

Al gave a small sigh. Keith always had an agenda. Her ex was a master bullshitter. With Keith, every situation was an opportunity to charm. It was part of his appeal. Because of that, however, even the simplest things had to be questioned. It didn’t hurt that he was handsome and blond; his all-American good looks and warmth made every woman want to buy any line he was feeding her. Once swept in, though, it was hard for a woman not to try to crack the code to his behavior, only to find it was virtually impossible. Keith never revealed the true essence of himself. No woman ever inspired him to quit the bullshit and get real. *God bless the woman who finally manages to succeed in doing it*, thought Al, though she wondered if such a woman even existed.

As for their marriage, after a while Al got sick of asking question after question only to be lied to again and again. Even though she knew it in her heart, she got tired of watching and waiting for proof of his unfaithfulness, both with his body and soul, to appear.

It never did.

Men like Keith *never* got caught. Their women simply knew, but the situation was hopeless without proof.

At first, their marriage was magical. Life with Keith was fast and exciting. There were parties and money, money and parties. He’d made partner at a practically adolescent age at a top law firm in Chicago. He was generous in his success and in constant celebration of it. It was six months into the marriage before Al realized that was all there was—money and parties.

Shortly after they’d celebrated their first anniversary, her darling husband told her at a dinner party of twenty that she’d never catch him playing the game. Instead, he told her how many women there’d been and pointed out the ones at the table that he’d had. Many were married, breaking into tears and apologies and denials to their spouses. None of them offered any excuse to Al.

Though not particularly close, Al thought these women had been her friends. They were the ones she shopped with, met for coffee, and bumped into at the spa. Al had expected at the very least something of a bond of sisterhood.

“You can stop looking for evidence now,” Keith had spat at her that night. “I’ve just confessed. Now what are you going to do about it?”

She knew he was high again, speeding on cocaine, juiced with enough alcohol to kill a herd of cattle. Nevertheless, Al still thought she'd never feel herself breathe again. The divorce would only reveal more humiliating truths that she'd known long before the wedding, but had never admitted to herself. How would she be able to look herself in the eye again?

Fortunately Keith sobered up and gave her a more than an amicable divorce. Over time, he became just a character of her past without any weight to it. With her money from the settlement, she was able to put her dream of a lingerie boutique into action. Though it wasn't quite enough to bring STRIP totally to life.

Justin Taylor had taken care of that.

"Say, last night I had this dream about you and me and these two Swedish..." Keith began, teasing, bringing her back from the past.

"I can't believe I really married you. I still just can't believe it."

"*And* divorced me *and* wiped your feet on my heart. Don't forget that part. I was inconsolable," he said, then added, "for *days*."

Al rolled her eyes. Keith was a master at self-deprecation but too conceited to ever let it go but so far. "*Why* do you call me?"

"I like to spread the joy. Speaking of spreading the joy—guess who's back in town?"

"Say it isn't so," Al said, clearing her desk of toys and notes.

"It's so, Gorgeous—that is, Friday it will be so."

Al smacked her tongue against her teeth. "I'm going to be out of town. Damn! I'll miss it all. The parade, the streamers."

"You got that right, babe. I'm gonna do this city like a porn star running a train, and you—babe—are gonna miss the sheer magnificence of it all. I bet I'll even get a key from the fucking mayor and you're gonna miss it. Now that's a crying shame. So, where you going?"

"To a convention in Atlanta." She didn't mention it was a swingers' convention and that she'd be selling sex toys with Justin and Carly.

Keith and Justin didn't mix and Carly could take or leave Keith as well. That was unusual, since Carly loved a good-looking man more than air.

"You're going down South, huh? For some more of them fancy, silk crotchless panties that you sell?"

"As a matter of fact, yes," Al said, grinning in spite of herself. If only he knew what she'd really be selling in Atlanta.

"Damn, that's hot. You know, you weren't this hot when we were banging. Speaking of banging..."

"We are *not* speaking of banging," Al interrupted.

"Still got it on lock down, sounds like," he said. "What? Did I turn you completely off of the whole concept of sex? Unless, of course, you could be into girl-girl things these day." He paused a beat. "Damn, my pants got tight just at the suggestion of that."

"You're so crude."

"But you love me. So, guess what? This is your lucky day. I'm staying in town for four months. You can't be in Atlanta for four months. Nobody stays in Hot-lanta for four months."

"No, I will only be there for a weekend."

"Good. When you get back, book us for dinner. My treat."

"I'm not going to sleep with you just because you're buying dinner."

"How do you know? I bet you haven't had it in so long you'd come from the thumb of a midget. Besides, maybe, I don't *want* to sleep with you. Maybe you don't do it for me any more. I bet you can't even fathom the idea of that." He paused. "Speaking of banging..."

"*No one is speaking of banging,*" she reminded him.

"How's that girl working out for you?" he asked. "Your employee," he added suggestively.

"Carly is doing fine."

"You should hook us up."

Al laughed. "I'd rather brush my teeth with gasoline than do that to a friend."

"A guy can at least ask. You never know. Peace," he said before disconnecting the call.

Of course, Alyssa immediately regretted accepting his invitation to dinner.

* * * *

Hours later at home, Alyssa looked at the caller ID. She was supposed to be reading and definitely *not* thinking about Justin. Grateful for her brother's interruption, she picked up the phone. "Let me guess. You heard about my surprise appearance at Justin's office," she said before he could say hello.

"Surprise appearance?" he asked, feigning ignorance.

Smiling, Al rolled her eyes and put her book aside. "I know you two tell each other everything. Frankly, it's very annoying. I mean *I'm* your sister. I should be your confidant."

"Some things just aren't for your ears, kiddo. I'm surprised you made it out of there without fainting," he said. Al could hear the intricate ins and outs of the ER spinning around him.

"Shut up. You act like I'm a virgin or something."

"You act like you're a nun," he retorted.

"Or maybe I'm just more discreet with my sex life. Some things just aren't for your ears, Brandon."

"Like the fact that you know that Justin has an impossible thing for you," he pointed out to her.

Tucking her legs beneath her and sinking into the back cushions of her sofa, Al's mouth opened, then shut. She expected that maybe over the years Justin may have mentioned a little something about her to Brandon, but that he had "*an impossible thing*" for her was so passionate.

Brandon sighed into the phone.

Oh God, he's about to get all sincere on me—just like the time in the seventh grade when he tried to tell me about condoms, Al thought, burying her face in her hand.

Ever since their mom died when Alyssa was twelve, Brandon had tried to play the role of both parents. Their father was not only bizarre in a thousand ways that Al didn't care to think about, but also he was constantly working. Brandon was six years her senior, but back then, he seemed more like forty. He cooked for her, cleaned the house, checked her homework, and even insisted on attending open houses with her father.

Though she loved her father, it was Brandon who really raised her. He had been everything a girl needed when she lost her mother.

"Hey, I just want you to know that I'm okay with it," he assured her. "It's not like I'm all weirded out because my best friend thinks my sister is hot. Hell, I'm totally used to it. Unlike that jerk of your ex-husband, Keith, at least Justin has honorable intentions."

Al rolled her eyes again. "Such as?" she asked. Justin wasn't Keith but he wasn't a novice at "the game" either. He'd had more girlfriends than most men had buttons on the shirts hanging in their closets.

"He loves you."

She squeezed her eyes shut and hugged the phone. *He loves me*. Suddenly, a vision of the two bimbos taking dictation on the man who supposedly loved her popped into her head. "God, Brandon," she said, frustrated all over again. "You should have seen them ... I mean it was like watching the Cirque du Soleil being performed with every act and every acrobat crammed together in one office chair."

It was the closest she'd come to admitting that she didn't think she had what it took to keep a man like Justin happy. *Look what happened with Keith. I did everything I could and I never satisfied him enough*. She sighed. "Brandon, I have to go ... I have another call coming in."

"Bullshit," Brandon flung out, knowing her all too well.

She shook her head. "I don't want to talk about it. Besides, I'd need to grow a Siamese twin out of my left hip to compete with that."

"Alyssa, give the guy a break. Hell, give *any* guy a break. Go out with him. Go out with anyone. You're not getting any younger."

"Hey! I'm not exactly old."

"He's a great guy."

"He's also double-jointed in the most unusual of places," she said making Brandon chuckle. Al sighed again. "I know that he's a great guy. I wouldn't be in business if he weren't a great guy."

"Not everything is about business," he scolded.

"Not everything has to be about a man either," she tossed back.

"I just want you to be happy," he said. "Getting laid has always made me happy."

"God, Brandon, that's even crass for you," Al said, smiling. He might be a tested and proven genius but the man handled himself like a caveman. "Look, I really do have a call coming in. It's Magda," she said after looking at the caller ID. It was only fair to warn him that if Magda were calling her, she'd be calling him too in a matter of thirty or so minutes.

"Shit. Don't tell her you were talking to me. I mean it."

"Don't worry. I don't want to be caught in the middle of you two and your battles."

"Well, as soon as you take me out of playing center for you and Justin, I'll relieve you of your duties of refereeing between me and Magda. Deal?"

"Deal. I have to go. The queen awaits."

"That's not funny," Brandon told her, making her smile again.

* * * *

After two grueling hours of working out at the gym trying his best to rid his body of cravings for Al, Justin stepped out of the shower. Barely drying off, he threw on some

jeans, skipping a shirt. He started to make his way to the kitchen for a beer when the doorbell rang. Reluctantly, his sore body carried him to the door.

"Let me guess. You were just in the neighborhood," Justin said. Carly was dressed like a mannequin from the window display of STRIP.

He wasn't surprised to find her there. To him she'd always seemed like an opportunist—a trait that made her great as a salesperson but dangerous as a friend. In the past, he'd always questioned her loyalty to Al. However, since she'd been working at STRIP for the past two years, she'd never given him any concrete reason to doubt her other than that sexy, sly smile that always played on her lips.

Tonight she'd just proven to him what he already knew. She was a slut. Which in his mind wasn't a bad thing. Some women just liked to fuck. They needed dick like they needed air. She was one of those women. Had it been another day and another situation, he'd be more than happy to give her just what she was prowling his neighborhood for.

"I was thinking that maybe I could drop by and interrupt something," she said, brushing her massive tits against him as she walked through the door.

Christ, this was not good, Justin thought, closing the door and trying to keep his eyes from her ass. "Once already today wasn't enough?"

She turned and faced him. "I still can't believe that you didn't invite us to stay," she said cat-walking back to him. Pouting, she pawed his chest. "I'm hurt. I think you should kiss it and make it all better."

Sorely, he wished he'd thought to put on a shirt. Grabbing her hands, he gently pushed her back. "Carly..." he began.

"I know, I know," she said, running her nail between his pecs and down to his navel. "You'd much prefer that it wasn't me ringing your doorbell. But, the fact is that it *is* me. She would never do this."

Justin closed his eyes tightly and shook his head. *Damn, Carly, why are you doing this to me?* But rather than ask the obvious he decided to rely on the power of the truth. "I love her."

"So?" she shrugged. "What's that got to do with me? And you ... and us ... just for tonight." In a slick sweep, she slipped her barely-there dress over her head. Her hair settled softly on her shoulders and Justin wouldn't be a man if he didn't admit that the vision was fucking glorious. He'd been working a hard-on all day since his surprise visit and this was not helping him one bit. No man in his position could boldly walk away from this without feeling cheated—especially if the sole reason he was denying himself was for a woman he wasn't sure he'd ever have.

But, *he* was going to walk away. *This* was not going to happen.

She moved up against him and Justin stepped back, still shaking his head, not believing her bravado. "Don't do this."

"Okay. I'll do this instead," she said, bending at the waist and unzipping his pants and smiling, finding him hard as hell.

Before her lips could twist his emotions any further away from his good intentions, Justin grabbed her roughly by the hair and yanked her head from his crotch. "I already told you," he started slowly, wanting to make sure that every word sunk into Carly's horny brain. "I'm not interested."

She loosened from his grip, turned away from him and strolled to her dress on the floor. With her back still facing him, she spread her legs into a perfect stripper V to

retrieve her dress. She arched her back to make him sure he knew just what he'd turned down. Bending over, she gave him a show of puffy pussy lips trimmed with light amber hair.

"I was so fucking hot for you today," she told him, peeking at him from between her legs. Flipping her head, she righted herself and clothed her body as seductively as she undressed.

"I'm flattered," he said turning to face the door. When he sensed that she understood clearly that he wasn't the guy for games, he opened the door for her to leave.

Slamming it behind her, Justin felt as triumphant as Rocky when he closed the door on Carly smiling at him, daring him to go ten rounds with her.

Chapter Three

It was like revelations from the mind of a madwoman, Alyssa thought as she brushed her teeth the next morning, her head flooding with answers to everything she'd ever questioned about men and women. Finally, she'd figured out the whole estrogen vs. testosterone thing.

Okay, I married the wrong guy. So what? Sixty percent of marriages ended in divorce, so that means that sixty percent of married women are making the same mistake that I made. Depressing but not life-ending.

At least she was not alone. Sure, Keith cheated on her. *But, I'd bet my soul that ninety percent of those divorcees were victims of slimy, cheating, smooth-talking husbands.*

Did he cheat because all those other women were prettier? No. I've met some of the women—and girls (unfortunately, I even knew some of them) and they weren't.

Were they smarter? No. Some of them had to concentrate just to manage to walk and talk at the same time.

Were they more fun? Sexier? No, not really. I used to be one sexy laugh riot.

So, if this legion of "other women" wasn't prettier, sexier, smarter, and packed with more fun than the legion of unsuspecting wives, then what the hell was it about them?

It was that they were willing.

They were confident.

They were women who just reached and touched what they wanted. They never questioned if it was a good or a bad thing. They didn't count the calories before they made the decision to be decadent. They just said, *"Hey, I'm game."*

They were women like ... like Carly, Al thought, spitting into the bathroom sink and rinsing her mouth.

So, the old adage was true. Men want to marry their mothers but sleep with courtesans. Well, I can be a courtesan. I can be willing. I can play the game. The fact was that she'd fantasized many times about letting go and proving that she more than had enough bang to curl a man's toes.

Well, tomorrow she and Justin were going to a swingers' convention in the hot city of Atlanta. Alyssa smirked to herself in the mirror. *Oh, she was going to swing, all right,* and she was taking Justin Taylor along with her on that flying trapeze.

As of seven-thirty that morning, she was done with tucking all her naughty deeds underneath her business suits. Wearing sexiness beneath her clothes just wasn't going to do it any more. She was going to start wearing it on her sleeve. It was going to be a weekend of toys and lotions and nipple clips. She only prayed the boy could keep up with her so that he could teach her a few tricks.

Yep, Al was more than getting in on the game. She was setting her own rules for playing it. However, by the time she got to the boutique, Alyssa realized that maybe seduction wasn't such a simple thing. Good for her that there was always Carly to depend on.

After a slow and quiet morning, Al took the plunge. "I need your help."

“Well, of course you do, that’s what you pay me for,” Carly said with a little ice in her voice. She’d been a little prickly all morning and, their friendship notwithstanding, this time Alyssa didn’t think it was a good idea to pry. Even though Carly didn’t censor anything she had on her mind, and was even more free sexually, she was still an intensely private person.

“This is personal,” Al said. Carly stopped processing the new arrival of sex toys that Alyssa couldn’t even begin to know how to use, let alone merchandise.

“All right.” Carly shrugged, seeming more on edge than intrigued.

Al took a deep breath. “I don’t want you to go to the convention with me and Justin.”

There was that ice again, Alyssa thought as Carly stared at her as if she could lash her with the delicate chains she had clenched in her hand. “Really? Why not?”

“I want to be ... um ... alone with Justin,” Al said, staring at the floor.

When she looked up again, she saw the frost melt away from Carly’s demeanor. “Well, it’s about time. You can’t get that huge dick out of your mind, can you?” she teased.

“Carly,” Al chided, then immediately hated herself for doing so. *Quit with the grandma act. Get on with the whore with a good heart act. Think geisha, courtesan, call girl, escort—not granny, nana, grammy.*

“I sure can’t get that *dick* out of my mind,” Carly said, really sticking it hard to the word dick as if she’d coined it as a new name for Justin.

“Well, no. But it’s not just that. I need a crash course.”

“On what? You’ve never blown a guy before or something?” Carly peered at her.

“No. Of course I have. I just want to know how to ... umm ... how to seduce a guy.”

Carly dropped the chains on the counter and pushed the invoices aside, then folded her arms beneath her heavy breasts. “I see ... Seduction 101. Well, well, well. You’ve come to the right girl. And, lucky for you, Alyssa, I have a moment to tutor a willing pupil.”

“So?”

“Tell him what you want,” she said, flipping her attention back to her work.

Al waited for Carly to rattle off an inventory of sex props and gadgets. After a few seconds of silence, she realized that the dirty laundry list of paraphernalia wasn’t coming.

“That’s it,” Carly said, shrugging.

Al shook her head disbelieving. “That’s it?”

Carly nodded.

Alyssa’s thin brows pinched together. “What about the toys and lotions and nipple clips? I mean, what should I say? How should I say it? What should I wear? Or, not wear? How do those work?” she asked pointing to chain with the clips and dangling red thing attached to it.

Carly rolled her eyes. “Alyssa, since obviously you haven’t noticed, let me fill you in. When you so much as breathe, Justin is bursting with a boner. It’s not all about that other stuff. Just be honest. Tell him what you want, when you want it and how you want it. With a man like Justin, the rest will take care of itself. You’ll probably make him shoot his load the moment you tell him that you want him,” she said as she lined the chains up on the counter.

Tucking a smile and a little cheer beneath her composure, Al shook her head. “He’s so...” she started, then sucked in a breath through her teeth. “Hot.”

“Yep,” Carly said and Al wondered what was it with her today. The words dick, hot, guy, and nipple clips had been pasted like découpage throughout the conversation and there wasn’t so much as a smirk from her.

Deciding not to let Carly kill her fire, Al continued. “I never really considered actually fooling around with him. I mean I’ve known him since birth.”

“Yep.”

Al stared into space, envisioning her legs sprawled open and Justin just a minute from touching her. “Maybe, that’s what makes it so ... sinful. It’s like taboo.”

“Yep. But not really because it’s not like he *is* your brother. Though, if I had a brother who looked like Brandon...”

“Now, that’s just gross,” Al interrupted, grimacing.

“You wouldn’t think so if he weren’t your brother,” Carly retorted, finally smirking and arching a brow.

“I didn’t know you had a thing for Brandon.” As a matter of fact, Al remembered that she distinctly didn’t like her brother, probably because he didn’t fall on his face at the first sight of her.

“Oh, I don’t have a thing for Brandon,” Carly sighed. “I have a thing for men,” she continued, smirking, with a lift of her shoulder. She then picked up the glittering platinum chain with the crystal clips and the red bobby thing, swinging it like a pendulum. “You should definitely take this classy little number along with you,” Carly said. “It will blow his mind. Not only do you have the nipple clips but, to punctuate his pleasure and yours, you have a butt plug attached. You clip these to your nipples and the chain makes this bohemian drape down your body, where you pull this,” she said, holding the plug, “through your legs, behind you and insert.” Carly smiled. “There’s a loop here in the chain so you can fit your pussy into it for a little friction. Just spread yourself and slip the chain like a V. It works like two fingers pulling you open for him.”

Al smiled with her jaw open. “I can’t believe I’m even thinking like this. But, it’s been a long time and I keep thinking...”

“About his big, fat, thick, juicy dick?” Carly huskily filled in.

“Do you need a paper towel to catch that drool dripping from your chin?”

Waving Al off, Carly shook her head. “It’s been a while for me too. I’m not thinking so clearly these days either. I haven’t gotten laid in *two weeks*.”

“Cry me a river,” Al nearly choked.

“For some of us, that’s an eternity.”

Al scoffed, “Well, for most of us a two week dry spell hardly bears mentioning.”

Carly gave her a soft smile. “He really does have a thing for you. You don’t need to worry.”

“He may have a thing for me, but that doesn’t mean that he’s ready to do anything about it,” she said, holding up the platinum chain.

Carly rolled her eyes. “Trust me. He’s ready.”

“Did he say something to you? It’s like you know for sure or something.”

A deep blush flashed on her face, but quickly faded. “I’m just a very astute girl. I know men. I pay attention and Justin Taylor has it bad for Alyssa Moore.” Carly’s eyes followed the bell ringing at the door. “Your dad’s here.”

“No.” Alyssa buried her face in her hands.

“Girl, he’s checking out the new bustier,” Carly said, laughing, and Al groaned. “I honestly don’t know how in the hell you became so sexually repressed when you have a daddy who likes to wear panties. Or, actually, maybe that could be it.”

“Gee, you think?” Al asked sarcastically before walking over to her father, Dr. Dennis Moore, lately known as “Magda,” the recently out of the closet transvestite. The good of that was that her father, Magda, was her best customer. The evil of that was that her father, Magda, was her best customer. A girl could never seem to win.

Throwing her hands in the air the moment she saw Al, Magda chimed out, “Dear heart! This is as lovely as are you, my dear,” she said, holding up the French silk and lace bustier.

“Hi, Magda,” Al said. It was always a struggle not to add, “*Where the hell did you stuff my father?*”

“You look splendid, dear,” Magda called out to Carly who was still at the counter.

“So do you, Magda. I like the dress,” Carly said. *Typical of Carly. If it didn’t directly affect her, then it wasn’t a problem*, Al thought. The fact that Alyssa was totally stressed whenever her full drag dad came to shop in her boutique with her customers didn’t seem to bother Carly one bit.

“Whenever you’re in a pinch, you can never go wrong with Ms. Donna Karan,” Magda replied. “I tell you everything—absolutely *everything* is at the cleaners.”

Al was suddenly grateful for the slow day, making Magda their one and only customer.

Taking a deep breath, Magda placed her hand over her heart. “Have you seen your brother?”

Here we go, Al thought. “I talked to him yesterday.”

“Hmm. He hasn’t returned *my* calls,” Magda said with a twisted mouth that told Alyssa that she was hardly surprised by that.

Al took a deep breath and swung her punch. “Magda. You hit on his boss’s boss, the Chief of Surgery, at the Christmas party that Brandon spent a lot of money on to throw.”

“I admit that we connected. But it was completely innocent on my part. I truly did not do one little thing to lead that man on.”

That comment summed up what was the real problem with Magda. She looked a thousand times better as a woman than she ever did as a man. Great for her, tough on her only son.

Al sighed. “He didn’t know that you were packing the same equipment because you didn’t tell him.”

“But I *explained* that I didn’t *play* on his team. I could have said, ‘Back off, I’m the host’s father.’ I think your brother would have really hated that more, given I was all decked out in my strapless little red dress. Didn’t you just love that dress? And, my shoes ... Stuart Weizman, you know.”

Al shook her head. “You still gave him your phone number.”

“So he could call about the book club. I’m a chatty girl. I can’t help that. It was a natural thing to do given that I found out that he and I have read just about all the same books.”

“And you made a date for lunch with him,” Al cried.

“Honestly, Alyssa, I would expect that *you* would *understand*. There is a certain power of simply being a woman that interferes with building platonic friendships with men,” she said, throwing Alyssa that “*poor me, I’m so beautiful it hurts*” crap.

Shaking it all away, Alyssa linked her arm with Magda’s and started to walk the store with her. “Let’s not argue about it. How is Michelle?”

“Oh, I’m so in love,” her father replied in his Kathleen Turner tenor.

Magda was in love. This highlighted the capital “P” on Pathetic that summed up Alyssa’s love life. Her cross-dressing, very straight, completely heterosexual father found the love of his life, a wonderful, completely sane, strikingly beautiful woman named Michelle. Al didn’t need to be reminded that he met Michelle while he was dressed as Magda.

Holding a beautiful aqua chiffon number, Magda asked, “Does this come in a fourteen?”

Al knew it was a gift for Michelle since Magda had the nerve to be a size six. What kind of joke was God trying to make when Al could borrow a dress from her father?

“I can check. There should be more in back,” Alyssa said. Then deciding to get back to Brandon, “*Dad*,” Al began. Whenever she needed him to lose Magda and just be her father, all she had to do was call him.

As if peeling back a mask of foundation and mascara and gloss, Magda became Dr. Moore, giving her his full attention with the intent concern in her eyes that had bored through her soul all throughout her childhood.

“This is very hard for Brandon,” Al said softly, knowing that losing his son was hard for her dad too. She shrugged. “He’s a guy’s guy.”

“So am I,” Dr. Moore said, with a subtle Magda touch of his hand to his heart.

Alyssa sighed. “You know what I mean,” she replied, and her father got a crushed look in his eyes. “He loves you. I love you. But ... sometimes, you should take it down a notch.”

That’s all it took for Magda to come back in full form. “I can’t believe you’re saying this to me. Are you *ashamed* of me? And just *how* does one take it down a notch when one is simply *being*?”

“You did it for years ... twenty plus years. You could have done it for one night,” Al said, unable to accept Magda’s need to live her life despite what it may do to others. *If we have to embrace Magda’s need to buy a bustier, she can for damn sure embrace our need to see our dad from time to time.* “Your son wanted his colleagues to meet his father, Dr. Moore, the well-respected oncologist.

“They *did*,” Magda insisted, flipping her blond wig and attention away from Al.

Alyssa yanked her back to face reality. “They met *Magda*, Dad, and while we like her—*love* her—sometimes we just need our father.”

“I brought Michelle with me. I figured that at least they’d know that I wasn’t gay. Isn’t that what Brandon is worried about—that I like boys?”

For the first time since she’d known Magda, Al was appalled by her behavior. *Didn’t her father at least allow Magda to know his son was far from a bigot? How come her father got to ditch his life and literally step into a fresh, new pair of shoes, leaving his children behind?*

“He knows you’re not gay. You know he doesn’t care who you sleep with, Dad. You raised us to be open and accepting of all people,” Al snapped. “Look, I’ve got a lot to do

before I leave for Atlanta. You know that Brandon wasn't embarrassed. This is the kid who delivered his valedictorian speech while he was completely naked beneath his high school graduation gown. He doesn't embarrass easily. He just felt that once again what you wanted came before what he needed."

"I've always put you both first. For *more than thirty* years. This *is* who I am. *Dr. Magda Moore*. There is *no more* Dennis. I think it's time that this family accepted that fact so that we all can move on," Magda retorted.

"Just because *you* 've lived with this all your life doesn't mean that *we* have. What do you expect, *Dad*? It's still new to me. It's still new to Brandon."

"I've been out for several years now," her dad's familiar voice yelled back at her.

"You've been *Dr. Dennis Moore* all of our lives."

"Ummm," Carly said, interrupting with the cordless phone clutched in her hand, "excuse me, Al, but you have two calls waiting."

"Who are they?" Al asked, not wanting to break away from the showdown with her father.

"Keith is on line one and Justin is on line two."

Magda folded her arms over her stuffed bra and raised a brow at Al.

What was it about everyone in her life that they all seemed to know that Justin was the guy for her—not Keith—but no one ever said a word the whole year that she planned the goddamn wedding!

"Not one word from you," Al said, pointing the phone at Magda and realizing she had just answered her own question. *Clearly, I probably never gave them a chance to issue an opinion.*

* * * *

Even though it was eight o'clock in the evening, the effects of the August sun continued to blaze Chicago with record-breaking heat. Al knew that if she was already wilting in the Midwest, she'd be toast once she got down South.

When Justin arrived at her doorstep, she had to contain an "*Oh My Lord Have Mercy!*"

Damn, the man looked good, all fresh and crisp wearing a white cotton t-shirt and faded blue jeans. His dark hair was disheveled and his rich brown eyes glinted in the sunset. Though it was amazing that she'd even noticed the man's eyes, since she was staring at his torso, wrapped in cotton, showcasing a toned chest and flat abs.

Unable to stop her visual tour of his body, she let her eyes wander to the tell-tale faded cup etched in the crotch of his jeans. If she thought she liked that snapshot, she could have framed and hung as art on her walls the two buffed back pockets of his jeans as he bent over again and again lifting her bags.

After packing her luggage across his wide back and slinging them over his muscular arms, he turned and grinned.

Al squeezed her eyes shut and smacked her hand on her forehead. *Damn! He caught you staring again, Drool Girl.*

Chuckling and saving her from the embarrassment of asking if she liked what she saw, he instead asked, "Is this all you packed?"

"It's only a weekend," Al answered distractedly, not realizing that he was making a joke. She'd packed two suitcases, one tote, a designer duffel bag large enough for a dead

body, and two rather large, totally-pushing-it, carry-on bags. Still, she knew she'd get to Atlanta and be missing something.

"There's been a change of plans," Justin said, as they made their way to his car parked in front of her townhouse.

"There can't be a change of plans," Al said as she watched him start to load the trunk with her gear, noticing that he only had one garment bag and a small carry-on.

"Well, there is. Just relax. We're just going to embark on a few extra days of research," he said, packing her last bag.

"A few extra days?" she repeated. "But I have a store to run." *Plus, I only agreed to be willing, confident, play the game, and act like a courtesan for only a weekend.*

"No, you don't have a store to run—at least for a week you don't. Carly has a store to run. And, you and I are *not* going to the convention."

That bitch. She knew all about this. How much did he have to give her? "How did you get her to work a full week? Did you promise her a bonus on top of the overtime? Do you know what that will cost me?" Al said, worried.

"This one was on the house. I was desperate and she couldn't resist."

Alyssa stared at him. *Desperate?* Nothing about the sexy beast with the tousled bed hair and scratchy dark shadow cupping his jawline said desperate.

Nervous now and definitely not confident, Alyssa licked her glossed lips. "I need to go to this convention. At the very least, I'll need to go pack more clothes if you're kidnapping me for a week."

He raised a thick dark brow and nodded towards the swelled trunk.

Alyssa crossed her arms beneath her breasts, forcing herself not to cross her arms over her nipples. They'd been hard points from just looking at him, wanting so badly to be scuffed against his unshaven chin and then sucked by his hot mouth and soothed by his full lips.

"We can buy you more clothes when we get there," Justin said, smirking. He let his gaze settle on her nipples, his eyes turning glassy and dark. "Though I don't think you'll need that much clothing." When he closed the step between them, the heat of the sunset seemed to flare up. "Look, the convention wasn't your thing. It was my idea."

"And a good one," she said. *You have no idea how good that idea could have turned out to be.*

"Really," he said, crossing his arms over his chest. "How many dildos have you sold since my good idea?"

Al flicked a glance to the ground. "A few," she said, lifting a shoulder. "My customers are shy." *Not to mention non-existent lately.*

Justin laughed. His booming voice made Al's skin tingle from head to toe. She could seriously get off just on that laugh.

"Your customers don't want to buy dildos," he said, still chuckling. "At least not from you. They don't want to get off by shopping at STRIP. They want to be *seduced* by shopping at STRIP," he finished in that deep bedroom voice that made Al want to drink the man's bath water.

Just the thought of Justin naked in a tub made her pussy wet. *Bubbles never seemed so decadent*, she thought as she took a moment to envision his cock, hard and wet, breaking the surface of a steaming tub of bubbles and slick water.

Shaking the thought away with a sigh, she asked, “Well, what about our plan to use some market affinity products to up my sales?”

He walked over to the passenger side of his Mercedes and opened the door for her. “I wasn’t wrong about that. I just had the wrong products in mind.”

“You could have cost me thousands of dollars,” she mumbled beneath her breath.

“Yes, I could have. But, you can’t blame me,” he said, smirking again because he knew she hadn’t meant for him to hear that. Then that smirk turned deadly and his eyes darkened. In two steps he had her bent against the hood of the trunk.

When his arms swept around her waist, Al’s heart did a hyped-up samba. Then he bent down, put his mouth to her ear and everything turned white with heat. *Mmmmm* ...she could practically taste him, so hot and sticky sweet like baked cinnamon. His fine mouth was so close to her lips that she couldn’t help but lick her lips, wishing to devour him.

“It seems that I always tend to think of sexually deviant things when it involves you,” he whispered. Nuzzling his nose into her hair, she heard him roll out a long sultry groan. “Usually, I manage to get hold of my better thinking ... but on the chance of getting to see you test out an ass plug ... I got carried away.”

Oh ... good Lord, she could feel his erection pressing against her belly button. “I’ve ... umm ... I’ve never worn an ... an ass plug,” she admitted, leaving out the fact that she did pack one.

Feeling him trail thick fingers down the crack of her ass, Al hissed in air. Obviously pleased that she liked his touch, she heard him chuckle softly as he pulled her body into his. “I know,” he whispered into her ear again, making her shiver. “That’s what made the thought of it so nice.”

*

Reluctantly, Justin pulled his face from Alyssa’s. When she looked up at him, he was rewarded with brazen seduction glazing her soft blue eyes, turning them a brilliant sapphire blue.

“So, where are we going?” she asked, staring at his mouth.

With that soft voice stroking him as he watched her touch her tongue to her pink glossy lips, he didn’t think he could wait any longer to fuck her. *I could take you right here on the hood of this car*, he thought, fighting to get a grip on himself. He touched his lips to hers. *Sweet and warm—just like I remember*, he thought, knowing that even if he never got the chance to feel her pussy, wet and gripping his cock, he could almost live a completely gratified man just by the touch of her hot mouth.

“I’m taking you to the ultimate land of seduction. Paris.”

“France? I can’t go to Paris. What about my passport?” she cried, trying to wiggle free of him. Justin would be damned if he let her go, now that he finally had her body touching every part of his that mattered. If only they were naked in bed and she was wiggling against him like that.

Justin rolled his eyes. Since she was twelve all she had ever talked about was how one day she was going to France, “the most romantic place on all the earth.” *Her words, not his.*

When Brandon suggested that he romance her, Justin had already had a perfect plan in mind. He’d imagined it for years, taking Alyssa to Paris, a city that he knew like the

back of his hand from doing so much business there—and yes, enjoying his fair share of pleasure.

It wasn't easy to book flights and hotel arrangements on such short notice, but being such a good customer for his travel agent over the years had been a definite benefit. In the course of forty-eight hours, he was able to arrange to take her a million miles away to the land of her dreams. *And hopefully fulfill whatever other dreams that swam in that gorgeous head of hers.*

"You've always wanted to go."

"But with a lover," she insisted quietly. "I've never been because..."

Justin growled, shutting his eyes in frustration. *When was she going to get it?*

Taking her face into his hands, he raised her chin until his eyes scorched hers. "I guess talking about my fantasy of seeing you in an ass plug didn't clue you in. So, let me give it to you straight so that there's no question in your mind," he said, trailing one of his hands down her back to cup her tight ass again. He pulled her lush, packed body into his, letting his hard dick rest against her navel. His body clenched instantly at the sensation of his massive girth against her delicate, petite frame. *Damn if he couldn't come just from the feel of her body against his. Couldn't she feel how his body ached for her?*

Taking his time, wanting her to know just how she made him feel, he softly palmed her ass in his hand. As he spoke, he took each word so slowly he almost sounded monosyllabic. "I don't want to be your friend or your occasional big brother whenever Brandon can't be there. I want to take you to Paris. Fuck you mindlessly every single night. Do you think you can handle that?"

"Alyssa," he said softly, calling her back to him, though he more than enjoyed watching her face flushed with heat, her eyes closed and lips parted. Mixed with the heat of the evening, the reality of her body intimately pressing against him sucked his thoughts away. "Do you think you can handle that?" repeated.

Justin thought she looked as if she wanted to speak, but all she managed to do was nod her acceptance.

Grinning down at her, he gave her another teasing, hot peck on the lips again. "Good," he said, smacking her ass. "Good girl."

Chapter Four

During the flight, Justin didn't know it'd feel so good to finally be "out" with his desires. *No more holding back.*

Reaching for Al's hand, he sighed. *To think of the time I wasted,* he thought as he watched her sleep. He'd always wondered what it would be like to watch Al sleep and he'd spent the better part of the nine hour flight like a scientist taking note of her every twitch and hum as she positioned and repositioned herself in the oversized first class seat.

Justin shook his head, stunned that after all these years, the very sight of her made him yearn for impossible things. For every moment he'd spent wondering what she looked like sleeping, he'd spent double that amount wondering what she would look like waking up next to him.

It was addictive watching her. *Now, you're finally mine,* he thought, his body hardening for her.

Needing to break away from being drunk on her, he sighed, then turned and gazed out the plane's window. Certain things about Alyssa he just knew—like what kind of lover she'd be. *Soft and pliant, like biting into ripened fruit.* His dick hardened still. He'd been aching all morning with anticipation, wondering what the hell he would do if she refused to go to Paris with him. Al could be extremely rigid in her work with the boutique. It pained him that the venture hadn't been easy for her. She'd struggled with every decision before the doors even opened for business. Unfortunately, the struggles didn't let up, not even an inch after she was officially operating. With this trip, he was determined to bring her some grace, some relief.

Of course, he was definitely going to do what he promised he'd do to her before they left for the airport—*fuck her mindlessly every night.* But he'd also planned a lot of meetings with potential vendors for products she could carry in the store.

Normally, he didn't get personally vested in the start-ups that his company funded, but this was Al. Since the day she cried in his arms when the bank refused her first loan application, he'd wanted nothing more than to carry her. It took every ounce of him not to take over and cash in on favors due him if it would pave an easier way for her. But that wouldn't be fair to Al. She'd hate him for it and that was a fate he could never live with.

Hearing her rustle beside him, Justin turned back to her. She awoke slowly, smiling, stretching her sexy body in directions that made his dick want to cry out and beg for mercy. Justin wondered how was it that everything she did was so utterly feminine without seeming fake or put on. With Al, sensuality just flowed. In his opinion, the biggest turn-on about that was that she had no idea that her every move breathed with the potent, silent smack of an aphrodisiac.

Her clothes alone made a man think "*naked.*" Earlier that evening when she greeted him at the front door to her townhouse, the silky little ice blue tank she wore made his gut drop to his knees. When she turned to lead him to her bags, his gut then rolled over seeing the trim of her matching ice blue thong peeking over the waistband of her extremely tight and extremely low-slung jeans.

Goddamn, the way her round ass was accentuated in denim made him want to bend her over a chair, part her sweet pussy lips and slam into her without mercy. Though no

matter what she wore, whether it was a suit or jeans—her body always looked too touchable, too squeezable, and very, very fuckable. He knew that it would be a *long* flight.

Al finished yawning with one last cat stretch. Her belly button pushed forward and he couldn't help but to reach out and stroke it. She moaned and he dearly wanted nothing more than to break a record in the mile high club. *But this is Al. I want a bed, her naked in it, and nothing less*, he reminded himself.

"I date women who look like you," he confessed, liking the added shine the honest admission seemed to give her eyes. "Petite women with sexy, dark curly hair. Full, lush lips. Soft blue eyes. Pale skin. It's like for the past twelve years I've been trying to get you—even if it wasn't really you," he continued.

Tucking in a yawn, she gave him a puzzled look. "Twelve years?" she asked.

What the hell am I saying? Am I like a total a fool or what, admitting such a thing? Still, he nodded and continued with the story of how sweet little Alyssa, his best friend's sixteen-year old little sister transformed into Al, his every fucking fantasy made real.

"I came home for Thanksgiving break—my first year from B-school," he said, pulling her legs into his lap and noticing those pretty toes peeking at him from her high-heeled sandals. "No one was downstairs which meant that you were in your room. I called out before I started up the stairs, wanting to see when Brandon was due back from Stanford. Then, I called out once before I got to the top of the stairs and realized that you had on headphones."

He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, savoring the vision. Opening them again, he found the vision of Alyssa-the-woman much more stimulating. "You were lying on your belly on top of your bed, flipping through a magazine," he said, then shook his head. "I didn't even know it was you. You were so sexy. Panties, bra—nothing else. It's like my dick's been hard ever since."

Al's thick lashes swept down, edging the blush that rose on her cheeks. "How come you didn't ravish me then?" she asked.

Inspired by the thrust of her nipples outlining her tank top, Justin pulled the complimentary blanket over their bodies and then reached his hands beneath it to stroke his thumbs over her hard flesh. "Because you were Alyssa," he answered, loving the way her eyes immediately spoke approval of his touch.

"Brandon's little sister," she countered softly.

He worked deftly beneath the blanket, pushing away the slip of a shirt to expose her breasts. Her bare skin was hot to the touch, softer than he could have ever imagined. "No," he replied, groaning when her knee nudged his rock hard cock, bulging in his jeans. "Because you were *my* Alyssa. The little brat that I loved like a sister. I couldn't understand it. You were sixteen. You were still so young. I'd just seen you that summer and you were the kid I'd always known—bratty and mischievous. Then, I go away for a semester and come back to a goddess."

Justin sucked in a breath, cupping her breasts fully in his hands. Lightly, he let his thumbs graze her hard nipples. *Fuck*, he wanted to suck them. He wanted to tug them between his teeth and bathe them with his tongue.

The look she gave him let him know he was giving her exactly what she needed as she arched her back pushing herself towards him. He noticed how sensitive she was to his feathery traces of her buds. He longed to find other sensitive places on her body.

“Christ, you’re beautiful Alyssa,” he said, looking into her heavy-lidded blue eyes. “You’ve made it so hard for me to just be near you, but impossible to stay away.”

“But you didn’t come to my wedding. Is that why? Were your feelings that strong for me even back then?”

Justin wondered how many years she had been holding back that question. He shook his head. “Alyssa, I can hardly remember *not* wanting you. I knew that and I couldn’t watch you make that mistake.”

Unable to hold back, he pinched her nipples and she moaned, parting her lips. Damn, he wanted the plane to land already. His hard-on strained against his jeans and her soft lips looked too tempting. At the moment, his mind couldn’t keep from wondering how she would suck him. Would she take nice, long licks? Would she moan as she licked her tongue up and down him? Or would she suck and tug at him with her wet lips? He couldn’t wait to find out.

When she spoke, her voice was thick with arousal and all too promising of many good things to come. “Obviously, I didn’t stay sixteen. I turned eighteen, eventually. Then, I turned twenty-six and got engaged. You gave me your blessing. Why didn’t you tell me that you felt that way about me?” she asked him.

Her blunt question made him want to sink his cock into her pussy inch by inch while he gave her an answer. *Because I loved you. I loved you. And it killed me that you wanted someone else*, he wanted to tell her.

“You were so happy. You would have hated me,” he said instead.

“So why now?”

“Because I know that I’m the guy for you. Al, I’m sorry about the other day. That’s not what I’m looking for with you. Let me prove to you that I’m the one.” Justin pulled her into his lap. It was awkward and cramped and his dick ached, but he had to kiss her.

The moment his mouth latched onto hers and their tongues met, he felt like a starving man finally fed after all these years. Her warm mouth worked a magic that seemed to calm the building, pressuring need to bury his dick deep in her and never return. Kisses like this left a man feeling that he could be patient knowing that there was more where that came from. His hand slipped back beneath her shirt without benefit of the blanket to hide them. She sighed into his mouth and he sucked on her bottom lip with pleasure.

“Excuse me,” came a Parisian accent. A flight attendant, flushed with embarrassment, was standing over them. “Mademoiselle, would you please take your seat. The plane is about to land,” she said with a soft smile.

Sighing, glad that someone had the sense to interrupt him before he carried the kiss too far, Justin slid Al’s body into her seat and clamped her seatbelt securely, trying not to focus on her nipples reaching out to him. He’d been so close to sucking on a thick pink bud, swirling it on his tongue. Instead, he gave one a soft peck through her shirt, causing Al to whimper in shock. She was as much on edge as he was, letting Justin know that she had been waiting for him for all these years too.

* * * *

Before they’d even reached their suite, Alyssa was more than intoxicated with Paris.

From the time the plane touched land, Justin spoke in fluent French to the limousine driver, the concierge, the bellboy, and the steward. His mastery of the country’s liquid

language worked its seductive spell over her and he wasn't even trying. Al's insides shivered with thoughts of what the man could do with concentrated effort.

It would have been very easy to believe that she was in a dream. But the warmth of Justin's hand caressing hers and the subtle brushes of his body against hers as he gave her a tour of the suite kept her nerves so twisted that each moment was too concrete to be imagined.

Once their bags were unloaded, Justin made a final request of the steward to have more flowers sent up. Al's heart soared. Never had she known a man to take so much care. Though he whispered his request so that she wouldn't hear, Al made a point to thank him. A girl had to encourage any man that paid that kind of attention. *Sex is in the details*. That was another one of her mottoes; after all, she did own STRIP.

As Justin checked his messages and made calls—in *French!*—Al pretended to explore. Truthfully, she was wandering from one sun-drenched corner of the suite to the next, frantic, excited, scared. After all, there she was in a room that seemed to be painted in the exact hues of a sunrise in heaven and she hadn't a clue as to what to do with the god who'd made it all happen.

All of her life, she'd felt nothing but comfort in his presence. Now, she was clearly shaken by it. *And why? Yes, he's hot. Hot. Hot. Hot. But he'd always been hot. And, yes, he's sincere and sweet and sensual and manly and majestic and powerful and big ... yes, he is very, very big where it really, really matters. But still, this is Justin...*

"Are you thinking about jumping?" Justin teased, interrupting her worries. He joined her on the terrace, coming behind her, pressing his hard body against her back.

Al managed to catch her breath before turning towards him and feeling him evidently pleased to be with her. Like butter in a hot skillet, Al oozed into him. He touched her as if trying to memorize her, lightly grazing strands of her hair, sliding his finger down the side of her face. "So beautiful," he said, bending to her, locking her mouth with a kiss.

Alyssa grasped the band of his jeans. Her thumb rubbed the worn patina snap. She heard his breathing deepen. With a flick, she had entry. Her fingers slowly pushed the zipper down. Breaking the kiss, she stole a glance, looking up at him but his eyes were closed as if he was in a dream. His expression let her know that he liked where it was going. Still, she took tentative touches.

As if sensing her hesitance, he pulled his hard cock free of his boxers, holding it in his hand, offering it as a gift. Al licked her lips, and a heightened urgency kicked in as she realized that they were quite public on the balcony. It was only just after one o'clock in the afternoon, Paris time. *Must be the jet-lag making me do crazy, crazy things*, she thought as she blew out a hot breath and reached out to cup him, knowing her small hand couldn't possibly enclose him.

He sucked in a breath. "My constant state of being whenever I'm around you," he told her as she ran her hand over his hardened, porcelain-smooth dick. "I can't help it."

Biting down on her bottom lip, Al pulled his hands to her breasts. "I want you to touch me." He moaned in response, obediently caressing her breasts, dragging his thumbs against her nipples.

"We have a meeting in twenty minutes," he said, sighing.

"I don't care," she said, shaking her head and taking him in her hand again.

Sucking in another breath before a long exhale, his dick moved by its own will in her hand. "I do," he said. His voice darkened and the grip of his hands on her breasts disappeared.

Smoothing his touch up her shoulders, he spoke gently. "You see, I want to take my time touching you, Al. I've waited so long. I want to start here," he said, sliding his hands to nape of her neck, making her hair stand on end. Pausing to kiss the top of her head, he continued, "And then I want to slide here." He covered her heart with his hand, pushing his body closer to her. His hot dick grew wet at the tip and slipped in her hand. Her heart ran faster.

"Then, I'll move over to here," he said covering her breasts again. God knows, her nipples already missed his touch, standing up and waiting for it. He obliged, grazing them. "And then here." He gave each a hard pinch. Al couldn't help but to cry out, wanting more.

Justin brought his mouth to her ear. "Then, I'm going to work my way here," he said, sliding his hands down the sides of her waist, cinching it as his thumbs pressed against her belly button, causing sensations radiating from her belly that she didn't even know existed. His leg went between her legs and pressed against her sex. Her pussy was so drenched already, it throbbed against his hard thigh. "Then, I'll come around to here," he murmured, grabbing her hips and sliding his hands back to her ass, grasping it and pulling her body to his dick while his thigh held up its assault against her clit. "I could stop here, Alyssa."

She whimpered, shaking her head, needing so much more.

Justin groaned, sliding down her body, gripping the back of her thighs. "How about here?" he asked, stroking the backs of her thighs as he kissed her belly button. He slid his touch down the backs of her calves before he strolled up again, trailing his fingers against her inner thighs. "There's always right here," he said, cupping her pussy hard in his hand, building friction with the wide palm of his hands and long fingers. The rasp of her panties and jeans against her pussy brought her just to the point of coming. But, oooohhh ... she wanted more. Al tried not to give in.

"I'm going to spend a long, long, *long* time touching you right here," he whispered into her ear and her eyes closed into the sweep of his hand pumping her clit, picking up the pace as he gave her soft pecks between his words. "You have no idea how many times I've thought about this."

Alyssa was falling into his words, her hips responding to his rhythm. *Ooooh ... it was too good.* Her sex flooded with heat and need. Her clit was thick and throbbing against his hot hand pulsing heat through her jeans.

"Is it good, baby?" he asked.

Her breath quickened and she nodded frantically as the pressure built.

"You know what, Alyssa? I know exactly how it's going play out," he said, then he gave a hard suck on her bottom lip, his hand gripping her pussy and pumping. His dick was hard in her hand, but her grip had gone slack in her own pleasure. "You're going to come for me right now," he whispered and she did, shaking against his body, crying out into the open Paris sky. "Such a good girl, Alyssa," he whispered, easing up and catching her limp body. "So good, baby. And it's only going to get better."

* * * *

It was useless, but Alyssa did at least try not to be an obvious star-gazer. To think that practically all of Hollywood would come to this part of Paris for a candle? As if reading her thoughts, Justin smiled down at her and lifted a freshly poured candle to her nose.

She inhaled. Her eyes closed and it was like she coming all over again. *Okay, so not as good as that, but close.*

“Figs ... it smells amazing.”

He smiled at her. “Some say that passion begins with the nose.”

Alyssa smiled. Oh, she hoped that she would live through the week. Her heart had been speeding nonstop. In the sun-drenched candle boutique, standing next to her and Justin was America’s latest pop diva du jour. It was hard not to feel like flying when the pop star couldn’t stop ogling her man. A girl had to be proud. *But I’ll drop kick the bitch if she looks at him for much longer.*

“And where do *you* say passion begins?” Al asked, leaning into him and smirking when he wrapped an arm around her waist.

Those dark brown eyes smiled at her—not the diva, Miss Oh-I’m-a-Rock-Star—as he held another candle up for her to sample. Closing her eyes again, she inhaled. Her eyes snapped open. *Her scent? Well, something like her scent.* It was reminiscent of her smell after a shower. It was disconcertingly familiar, but also totally raw and elemental.

He moved closer and inhaled the top of her head. “It’s like they poured this scent right from here.” Alyssa shivered when he fully embraced her.

“Justin,” a deep French voice called out.

“Ah, *bonjour*, Marie,” Justin responded, greeting a petite older woman with bright green eyes.

“*Très jolie*,” she said to Justin in compliment of Alyssa.

He blushed and Al was stunned by his pride in her. “*Oui*. This is Alyssa,” he said.

“Ahhhh ... Alyssa,” Marie said, beaming, and clapped her hands before taking the candle from Justin. She tapped the glass jar. “You are very popular.”

Alyssa stared at the white label on the glass jar of the candle. At first glance, she hadn’t noticed the jumbled black script spelled her name.

“I told her what you said about passion beginning with the nose,” Justin said to Marie.

Marie lifted a shoulder and smiled. “Ah, but of course, what is more fantastic than the scent of your lover?” She selected another candle from the counter and lifted it to Al’s nose.

She didn’t have to even breathe to smell Justin’s scent. Her heart caught somewhere in her throat because she hadn’t known how often she’d loved just the scent of him. To her surprise, tears glinted her eyes.

“*C’est bien*. Everyone is a bit overwhelmed the first time. So many memories, right here.” As she tapped the tip of Al’s nose, Marie moved the candle from her.

Justin put a hand at the small of her back. “We just want a small line for the shop,” he said softly.

“*Bon*,” Marie said, clapping her hands again. “Let’s explore.”

* * * *

He’d never been so hard in his life.

Though he was enjoying viewing Paris through Al's eyes, he was about ready to explode watching her move along the avenues as they hit the boutiques shopping for items that would make STRIP the shop she'd imagined it to be.

Maybe that was it. Alyssa's obvious excitement turned him on. Lately whenever they had a meeting, she'd been tense and clearly worried about the bottom line—no matter how many times he'd told her that things would work out. Today she'd been the carefree girl he'd known as a kid, bright-eyed and romantic. Always dreamy about everything, her eyes were positively glowing with new possibilities. It excited him that he was part of that.

Still, he couldn't forget the feel of her body in his hands on the balcony that afternoon, or the way she was so pliant to his command for her to come in his hand. He had felt the hot spasms ripple against his fingers. He could only imagine what those spasms would feel like wrapped around his dick.

"How'd they get my scent?" she asked him. She'd conned him into agreeing to stop at a café before heading back to the hotel. Justin only gave in because he was on to the fact that Alyssa loved teasing and torturing him. She made it clear that she wanted him primed and ready for her. He only hoped that she could handle it.

He sighed and took a sip of his wine. "You drove me to the airport. Six years ago," he said, leaning closer to her. "You took off your hat in the car. I stole it." He shrugged. "Paid almost my life's salary to have them copy it. Capture it in a candle." He smiled watching her lips drop into an O.

"When I took your hat, I had no idea why I was doing it," he continued. "But you looked so cute pulling it from your head, fussing with your curls in the rear-view mirror, going on and on about school and how you hated pre-med."

"You were the only one who listened. I still don't think Brandon or my dad has forgiven me," she said, frowning into her wine glass.

Justin shook his head. "They never wanted you to be unhappy. Guys can just be pigheaded. Look at me. It took me twelve years to tell you that I want you. We're a pathetic case."

"Can I get that in writing?"

He grinned. "How about I just give you my balls on a silver platter?"

Laughing, she took a sip of wine. "And when did this hat fetish begin?"

Justin frowned and wagged a finger at her. "It's not about the hat. My fetish is with you. But if you want to know when I noticed that just the scent of your hair made me hard, well, that was Christmas six years ago. We were at your dad's annual Christmas party. You *made* me dance with you."

Alyssa smiled, bobbing her head. "I remember that. You refused."

"I knew I'd get a boner. I didn't want to embarrass myself," Justin explained.

Lifting a perfect brow, she smiled teasingly at him. "You didn't get one, did you? I mean, a guy your size I think I would have noticed *and* remembered."

Damn, if she didn't know just what to do to keep his dick hard. "I didn't," he answered, and she looked wounded. "But I did jack off that night," he admitted and heard her intake a sharp breath of shock before giggling. "You wanted to know the truth, right? You've been the feature of many late night and morning shower sessions."

"So how'd you keep it under ... how shall I say ... under wraps that night while you danced with me?" she asked, shaking the blush off her face.

Justin shrugged. "I thought about Michael Jordan. I just replayed one jump shot after the next all the while inhaling you, burying my face in your hair."

She laughed and he continued with no shame, "It worked."

Alyssa sighed and toyed with the rim of her wine glass and a pensive look crossed her face.

"What are you thinking about or do I even want to know?" Justin asked.

She licked her lips. "I want you to tell me about one of your fantasies. One that involves me."

He took her hand into his and raised it to his lips. "They all involve you."

Al lifted a leg to his lap and Justin scooted her chair closer to his. "I want you to tell me one," she said, softly. "I want that deep sexy voice to fuck me with words."

The dark look he gave her made Al regret her request. She'd been toying with him all day, flicking glances at his crotch to see if her little games were working. He never disappointed, always sporting a nice bulge in his jeans. But now she wondered what it would cost her once she let him have his way with her. After he was through with her, she wondered if she'd be able to walk again. From the look in his eyes at that moment, she doubted it. Those dark eyes all but warned her that she was in for a fucking she'd never forget.

Justin rested his elbows on the café table and tented his hands in front of his face. His erection was wiggled against Al's calf as he cleared his throat before he began. "I'm home for Thanksgiving. I decide to come over to your house and visit Brandon. The door's unlocked. So, I go in. I call out to see if your dad or if Nina, your housekeeper, is there. There's no answer. I figure Nina's upstairs doing something. So, I start up the stairs." He took a deep breath and pulled her leg closer to his body, grinding his cock against her again. The slight moment made Alyssa's wet pussy lips press firmly together.

He continued, "Your bedroom is right there. First door on the left. You're lying on your bed. You're on your belly, flipping through a magazine. Your feet are up in the air, crossed at the ankle. Your toes are painted pink. And, I know I shouldn't be looking at you like that, but your ass is barely covered in a pair of lacy, sheer pink panties. I can't help but stare at you. I can't believe how much you've grown up. You're wearing just those panties and a little white tee shirt. It's cut way above your waist and it's all perfectly innocent except for my peeping." Justin's voice was thick and his eyes closed as if to savor the vision.

Alyssa bit into her lips watching this beautiful man imagine her body in wait for him. "You're practically naked. I can see that tiny little beauty mark just above your hip, just at the curve of the small of your back," he said opening his eyes and looking at her. "So sexy. I'm dying to touch you. But, I can't. You're still young and your dad or Brandon could come home. He gave a low groan. "So, I just keep watching you. You're humming with your headphones on, so you don't notice me."

Alyssa inhaled tightly when he grabbed her hand beneath the table and moved it to the rigid rock in his jeans. "You don't know that I'm there and you roll over to your back. You're not wearing a bra, and Christ, I can see your nipples through your shirt. Pink, perfect, *suckable* nipples. I realize you're not reading a magazine. It's one of those romances; your sweet lips are parted and you're obviously reading a really steamy part. You lick your lips and let out a moan that's so low and so needy my dick jerks in my

pants. Your fingers trail across your stomach and then slip up your shirt,” he said, bringing his lips against hers.

“You bite down into that sexy bottom lip,” he continued, pausing to lean in and give her bottom lip a hot open-mouthed lick. “And you start teasing your nipple. I am so close to pulling my dick out, walking over to you and jacking off to you pinching and squeezing your nipple. Your knees are bent and you let them fall open,” he said, closing his eyes again as Al’s hand gently grips his cock through his jeans. The hot heat of his sex nearly sears the palm of her hand and Al is so ready to feel him settling himself deep inside her pussy. Using her hand, she stroked his dick. “Alyssa. I can’t keep going. I’ll come. I want to come inside of you. Not like this,” he said before abruptly pushing her hand away.

Not realizing that she had stopped breathing, Al exhaled a long breath. “So, I guess I don’t get to hear the part when you walk into my bedroom and fuck my brains out.”

Still wearing that harsh gaze, he shook his head. “Alyssa, it’s the same fantasy every single time and not once has it ever ended that way. I come long before that. I come the moment your fingers touch your pussy,” he said, that hot look dropping to her breasts. “Damn, look at your nipples,” he said. Though he spoke softly, roughly he pinched one, making her pussy and untouched nipple ache in jealousy. “Al, I need to be inside of you.”

“Justin...” she started, but he was already beginning to rise from the table.

“I hope I can stand up and not make an ass out of myself. Damn, look at it,” he said, staring down at his cock that seemed to threaten to rip through his jeans.

“What if it doesn’t fit?” Alyssa asked quietly.

Taking his seat again, Justin gave her an incredulous look. “Are you serious?”

“It’s really big,” she said. He would only be the fourth man that she’d ever slept with. None of the others had been as big as Justin.

Smiling, he leaned across the table and kissed her. “Baby, I am going to spend an insane amount of time getting you so wet and ready for me that I don’t think it’ll be a problem.” He kissed her again and then pushed a finger into her mouth, tracing her tongue with it. “Alyssa, I’ll start with my finger. Just one. Then, I’ll add another. We’ll see how that feels. I promise you, I’ll take my time. Then, we can move on from there.”

Al sucked his finger and kissed it. “It’s not your fingers that I’m worried about. It’s been like ... forever for me. It’s been...”

“Seven months. Give or take a month or two,” he said with an arched eyebrow.

Al shook her head in shock. “You’re scary. That’s like stalker-type shit. How would you possibly know that?”

“You’ve been an obsession,” he confessed. Then he rolled his eyes. “And, Carly told me.”

“She’s so fired.”

“She was saving my sanity. I was about the kill that last guy.”

“Brian?” The thought made her laugh. *Justin Taylor jealous of Brian Hillier?* The man was half his height. He was almost as short as Al, but he was nice—or so she’d thought. *Until he wouldn’t take no for answer and I had to practically go Lucy Liu on him and knee him in the balls.*

“I don’t want to think about another man even looking at you. That would make me insane,” he said as he rose from the table again, the intensity of his words softened by his smile.

Alyssa's eyes widened slightly. *This is moving way too fast. On the other hand, he's probably just sweet-talking me—don't let that change the game.* She smiled back, shrugging off her concerns. "Okay," she assented, standing up with him. *Just get your freak on and move on,* she thought, preparing herself for her debut role as courtesan.

Chapter Five

Alyssa thought she'd spent the entire afternoon torturing him, but no sooner had Justin closed the door to the suite than Alyssa realized that she'd only been tormenting herself.

The kisses that they'd shared throughout the day had been too short. Their preliminary fondling had been too tame. She'd surprised herself with the powerful force unleashed from her body as she pinned his large frame against the door.

Though they were hard and greedy, the kisses she gave his face and chest were still too fast and short. Lifting her from the floor and holding her close to him, he steadied her eagerness.

"Take it easy, Al," he smiled, softening his grip before parting her lips and finally giving her what she'd been so long without. His touch was gentle, his lips warm, heating to scorching as he deepened and tangled her mouth with his wine-kissed tongue.

Al sighed into it. *Oh ... did he know how to kiss.* She was content to relax and let him be her guide. Still, her body couldn't help writhing against his lengthening erection.

"Alyssa, what are you trying to do to me?" he said, pulling his mouth from hers, saturating her with his heavy gaze. "Keep this up and this will be over long before it even starts." He lowered her to the floor and Alyssa stepped back from him. It was time that she made some confessions of her own.

She wanted him. She needed him and God only knows for how long she'd desired him. *Always,* she answered. *You know you've always wondered what it would be like to play with Justin Taylor.*

Taking a deep breath and ignoring her trembling hands, she opened her heart. "I planned on seducing you when we got to the convention."

A quick smile lit the corner of his mouth. "What?" He pulled her into his body again, placing her hand on his cock. He grabbed her by the back of her neck and put his mouth to hers. "All you need to do is exist and I am thoroughly seduced by you," he said, penetrating her fears with another aching, needing kiss.

"But I want to drive you crazy," she whispered. He answered with a kiss. "Wild," she continued and he groaned, kissing her again. "Mad," she said, raising her lips for her reward.

"Insane," he added and his dick flipped in her hand, making them both laugh. "Baby, I *am* crazy, wild, madly insane about you. Look at me, Alyssa."

Slowly, she let her eyes rise to meet his. God, she felt like a virgin all over again—not daring, not anything like a courtesan. She felt like the final splinter of wood being tossed to the fire staring into those enigmatic eyes.

He gave her a smile and tapped the tip of her nose with his finger. "Are you sure you want to seduce me, Al? You've got me pinned up like a madman inside already."

Biting down on her bottom lip, she nodded. *Oh, yeah. There's the courtesan in me that I knew I had,* she thought, grinning inside.

He nodded and strutted from the door to the bed, stripping along the way. "Okay," he said, turning to face her. Stripped of his shirt, his bare chest was so sculpted it looked carved by gods. He unsnapped his jeans and unleashed himself and Al sighed. *Good*

Lord, girl. Thank God you have insurance, 'cause the man could split you into two pieces if he wanted.

"So, okay, huh?" she questioned, nervously staring at his massive, hot body as he finished stripping off his pants and underwear.

Oh, my, my, my, my, my, Alyssa thought as she sucked in a breath.

He threw his arms open before flopping onto the bed. "Seduce me, Alyssa," Justin teased, grinning at her, reclining on the bed, clasping his hands behind his head. His erection reached for the ceiling like a flagpole. He patted a space beside him on the bed. "If that's what you want to do, then okay, baby. It might just kill me, but let's go."

Peeling her body from the door, Al tried on a little strut of her own. *Think Christina Aguilera—Lady Marmalade, Nicole Kidman—Moulin Rouge, Sharon Stone—Basic Instinct,* she thought, smiling down at the god-blessed, sun-kissed man inviting her to take control.

* * * *

He'd been in the store for an hour. "Probably the longest hour of my whole working life," Carly muttered under her breath. Peeved, Carly finally approached Dr. Brandon Moore, Alyssa's nosy brother. *No doubt checking up on his sister's investment. Making sure that I wasn't selling off the store goods in the back alley.*

"Can I help you?" she asked sweetly.

He held up a bra and gave her chest a suggestive once-over. "Just checking out the goods," he conceded.

Carly almost laughed in his face. *As if guys like you haven't been ogling my tits since the fifth grade.* She was a double C and proud of it. However, sometimes she wasn't in the mood to play show and tell, especially with guys like Brandon Moore. Frat boys who thought that now that they had a degree, a job, a condo and a designer car, they could get the girl, Carly thought. *Never had to work for a single thing a day in his life. Probably has a maid around just to flush the toilet and another to wipe his ass.*

She leaned forward and gave him a full view of what he'd definitely be missing. "Really? Here I thought you came all this way to check on me."

He shrugged, smirking. "Something like that," he said, twisting his perfect bow-tie mouth into a grin. "How's business?"

"Still intact, if that's what you mean. I haven't burned the place down yet. No armed robberies. No sudden flash floods in the basement. No wild orgies. Just the day to day. Nothing I can't handle."

Waving his hands as if in surrender, he laughed, kicking up two dimples. "There's no need to be touchy. I'm sure you know just how to handle anything that comes your way," he said suggestively.

Why did all the good-looking ones always have to be such assholes? "Listen, don't you have an ambulance to chase? A life to save or something?"

"You don't like me," he said, faking a hurt look on his beautiful face.

"I don't know you," Carly said, snatching the bra from him and replacing it on the rack.

"And you don't care to. Would you like to tell me why?"

Carly gave him a wry smile. "I know this is going to come as a shock to you, Doogie Howser, but I've never had that adolescent fantasy of growing up and marrying a doctor.

It's *soooo* Barbie meets Ken. Don't you think? Totally clichéd," she said with the added drama of rolling her eyes.

He shrugged, grinning, treating her to his Tom Cruise smile. "That's all right. I never did go for the ex-cheerleader, wanna-be beauty queen, cyberspace porn kind of babe. Or did I get the cyberspace porn thing wrong? You do seem more like the stripper type. I hope those are saline," he said, letting his eyes wander over her breasts again.

A deep, dark place seemed to implode inside her. "You'll never find out."

"That's right. There's no pole here," he said, snapping his fingers. "And besides, I'm fresh out of singles. Unless, I don't suppose professional girls such as yourself tuck credit card machines into your g-strings these days."

Carly just stared at him. *Un-fucking-believable.*

"Nope?" he asked, then sighed. "Well, everything looks more than well here," he said giving her an appreciative nod of his head after licking her body with his eyes. "I'll be sure to give Alyssa a full report." He smiled back at her as he swung out the door.

Breathing rapidly and wanting to punch something, *anything*, Carly watched him stroll down the block. That damn annoying bell ringing punctuated the visit.

She waited until he was well out of earshot before she let out a frustrated, agonizing *ugghhhh*. It wasn't even noon yet. To think she had the entire day to replay her less than enchanted rendezvous with Dr. Brandon Moore.

* * * *

The Paris sky gave way to a heartbreakingly beautiful sunset. Though her body was lulled in a jet-lagged sway, Alyssa's nerves stood at erect attention as she pulled candles from her suitcase.

Arranging the tiny collection of ivory light throughout the suite, she tried to ignore Justin's solid body still stretched out on the bed. He propped himself on one elbow as she passed him to light a candle on the nightstand.

"Don't forget," he said, pointing to the candles they'd purchased at the boutique.

Their scents mingled with their sex? That would be intense. Smiling, she retrieved and lit them, anchoring each at the corners of the fireplace mantle.

"You came prepared," he said to her, his comfort in his nakedness exciting her all the more. He cupped his sex, stroking it with anticipation and Al knew this was a man who had few, if any, scruples about pleasuring himself.

"I'm a girl with a plan," she said, bending beside the bed to retrieve her overnight shoulder bag.

As she rose, his hand gripped her arm, pulling her fully clothed body to his bare skin. "Don't keep me waiting too long. I don't want to have to start without you," he commanded, kissing her and smacking her ass as he sent her on her way.

"I'll be right back," Al assured him tossing a quick glance over her shoulder as she disappeared down the tiny hallway leading to the master bath.

Clicking the door closed, she pressed her back against it and finally exhaled. *You can do this. You can do this*, she told herself, though a part of her still wondered if she could.

She'd never been the one to take the lead. If she failed, she knew that Justin was more than prepared to take over. But the thought of that was even more unsettling.

It was hard to ignore those scars across his chest. They reminded Al how privileged her childhood had been, while his had been one of hard battles. Knowing that when

provoked, he could be savage. She only hoped he wasn't too aggressive with his passions. As she started to undress, she became more nervous, not knowing what to expect of him. To think she'd known him all her life and yet now she felt like she hardly knew him at all. Would he hurt her? Was he the kind of man who liked inflicting pain with pleasure?

Al's sex seemed to blossom at the thought of that, making it easier to put on the intricate chain with clips. Her nipples protruded, hard and proud. Wetness seeped down her thighs. Her trickling sweat reached to her tight anus. She'd never been into anything hardcore and the butt plug made her nervous. She used the gel that Carly had recommended and lubricated it just as Carly had instructed her.

Spreading her sex, Al pulled the chain through her legs and positioned the red bauble at her puckered virgin bud. Slowly, she inserted it, surprised at how the pull of the chain dragging against her pussy lips made her tremble with the need of a cock to fill her.

Gripping the marble sink's countertop, she caught a glimpse of herself enraptured in the building pleasure. "Oooooohhh..." she sighed, placing her head against the mirror as she inserted the plug completely.

Finishing the final touch, Al bent over and moaned again as the chain pulled against her clit as she slipped into her four-inch stilettos. Her small breasts jiggled as she fastened the straps at her ankles. Her body was primed and ready for Justin even if her courage seemed to be timidly shuffling behind.

When she returned to the bedroom, the look on Justin's face didn't help her hesitancy. Electric heat poured from his eyes. Alyssa had never felt more desired and imagined how delectable she must have looked with her nipples adorned with crystal clips and her shaved pussy framed in delicate platinum. She ran a hand over her goods as she walked to the side of the bed. Hearing him growl as she did so made her dripping wet.

Though he was speechless, the grip of his cock in his large hand spoke volumes of what he was going to do to her. Feeling in command, Al took a step back when he reached for her.

"First, you have to ask me again," she said, tugging at the clamps on her nipples.

He worked a lump in his throat, his eyes never moving from her pink buds. "Do they bite?" he asked through a clouded throat. "Or, do they feel more like this?" He extended a hand to pull at the chain none too gently. Soothingly, he rolled a nipple between his thumb and finger.

Al kneeled onto the bed beside his reclined body. Her knees were spread and her sex a mere lick from his mouth. Before he could devour her, she pushed him onto his back. "It feels like this," she said, bending over and biting his nipple. He cried out, but then groaned as she suckled the flat nub in her mouth.

Yanking her by the hair, he pulled her mouth to his. Al continued her assault, wanting to fill him with her kisses.

His hands caressed her nipples, tugging on the chains, pinching the clips. "Damn. You're fine," he said into her mouth as he slid his hands down to her waist, lifting away from her to look at her body.

When his hands cupped her ass, feeling the chain attached to the plug, he growled again. "I want to see," he said, nudging her to stand and show him.

Courtesan, she reminded herself, wanting nothing more than to please him. Turning away from him, Al placed her hands on her cheeks and exposed the plug. When he groaned in satisfaction, she turned back to him and licked her lips, staring at him still gripping his dick.

"Damn, Al," he said. "I thought we could go slow at first. But baby, I really need you to get over here right now." He grabbed her hard, making her fall onto his chest. With his dick cradled against the chain draping the crack of her ass, Al straddled his broad body. His heat vibrated inside her thighs.

"You sure you can take me like this?" he asked, twisting a lock of her hair around his finger.

Al rose and settled onto the head of his cock in answer. It was enough to fill her and her head rolled back at the sensual stretch of him breaking her apart.

"That's it, Al. I'm going let you do this, baby. Fuck me, Al," he said, locking his hands behind his head, his body straining beneath her.

Staring him in the eye, Al sank her sex an inch deeper, encasing him. The muscles in his neck corded, but still he locked down his control, letting her take her time, sinking inch by inch onto his curved dick.

"There you go, Alyssa. That's it," he said with a rasped voice, closing his eyes as his dick touched the back of her sex. Gripping his shoulders, Al began to churn her hips. Her nipples ached and her pussy burned, yet she never felt better. Reaching down, she fondled her clit, moaning, throwing her head back again as she slowly lifted and lowered her body, riding him.

"Ohhh..." she moaned, moving a hand to pinch her nipples. "Justin," she panted.

Like an animal unleashed, her soft cry brought the beast in him forward. He gripped her hips and surged deeper into her. Lifting her pussy almost entirely from his cock, he plunged into her again, repeating the motion over and over. Then, as harshly as he started, he tempered himself, then sat up, still cradling her body sitting astride his dick.

Licking into her mouth, he pulled the plug from her ass. Al rolled her pussy around his dick, feeling the plug pop from her body only to be replaced by his thick fingers. "You feel so incredible, Alyssa," he whispered into her ear as he slowly fingered her ass as she fucked him. "I've waited so long for you, Al. Baby, I want to hear you come," he said, making her moan, her pussy clenching around him.

Without pulling from her, Justin rolled Al to her back. Her mouth dropped open, feeling him so deep now with her knees drawn to her chest. Pistoning his hips as he cupped her mound, Justin took a deep breath and whispered uncouth things while he slammed his dick into her, his thumb flicking her clit.

He groaned whenever her sex shuddered around his. He softened the touch on her clit, massaging slow, easy circles though his hips pumped his length fast and hard.

Al wrapped her legs around the opposing sensations, feeling her body tighten and then release into a hard orgasm. She was silent, her mouth open for the scream that seemed trapped inside her along with her breathing.

But Justin's orgasm roared, pumping his seed into her pussy. Like the beast he'd become, his release howled from him as he continued the slow languid touch against her pulsing clit and deep, fast thrusts in her pussy.

Collapsing, empty and spent, Justin rolled to his back, staring at the flickering shadows on the gilded ceiling.

“Mmmmmmm...” Al moaned, a light smile on her face. Her eyes were still closed. “Why did we wait so long?” she asked, curling into his arms.

Justin chuckled, breathless, nuzzling her closer to him. Hell if he knew. But he was damned sure he wouldn’t wait too long before he had her again.

* * * *

“You. Are. Creeping me out,” Carly said, looking up from her magazine. *First the little drive by this morning at the boutique and now interrupting her in her favorite neighborhood Thai dive? What did the man want from her?*

Carly knew. Even if she wanted it too, she’d be damned if she became another one of Mr. Perfect’s conquests.

“I’ve been told before that I have that certain something—but I always thought it was a good thing,” he teased.

Carly rose to leave and he blocked her exit from the booth. “Don’t freak out,” he said, easing her back into her seat. “It happens to be a restaurant. And I was in the neighborhood.” He pulled her *Psychology Today* magazine from her hand. He gave her a curious glance. “What, did they run out of *Highlights* at the magazine stand?”

Carly snatched the magazine back from him and settled back into the booth. “Believe it or not, I do at least read at an eighth grade level,” she retorted, folding her arms under her breasts and daring him to look. “Surprising, I know, what with all that hanging upside down on a pole, spread eagled. One would think that I didn’t have a brain cell left in my head due to all the jiggling.” She gave her breasts a tiny shimmy for emphasis.

He cracked a grin. “Are you really going to try to convince me that this is yours and not something another patron left behind?” he asked, tapping the magazine before gesturing to the empty booth across from her. “Mind?” he asked, but sat before she could tell him to go fuck himself. “I hate eating alone.”

“It’s a wonder you’re not anorexic.”

“So, what’s good here?” he asked, ignoring her sass.

“Definitely not the company,” Carly murmured, hating that she always responded first in body and then in mind. *No doubt Al probably told him what I said the other day*, Carly thought. *Un-fucking-believable*.

If only he were skin and bones and no harm. But the man was far from being frail. He was hard and toned, looked amazing in a suit, wasn’t quite six feet tall, but tall enough.

When she returned her attention to him, his tongue was practically down the front of her blouse. Carly gave him an incredulous stare.

He shrugged, unaffected. “Wow. It’s just that I didn’t realize that they were real. Must have been the lighting in the store giving them that all too telling plastic glow. Damn. What are those? Double C’s? D’s?”

“They’re mine,” she stabbed at him. “All mine. And I don’t like to share.”

Smirking, he shook his head. “That’s not what I heard,” he said and Carly’s face went red. He wagged a finger at her before she could throw the table over and walk out on him. “You might as well face it, Carly,” he began, taking her water glass and sipping from it. “I’m about to be the next man that you live to regret.”

Carly coughed out a laugh. “That’s rather presumptuous.”

He shrugged again, opening his menu and perusing it. "Oh ... it's just a fact. But don't worry," he said, lowering the menu and flicking his brows at her. "I guarantee that while it's more than likely you will live to regret my fucking those gorgeous tits, you won't soon forget it." Her mouth dropped open and he smiled at her. "And you'll definitely enjoy every second of it," he finished, with a nod of his head.

Placing the menu aside, he gave her a pensive gaze. "Suddenly, I'm not all that hungry. What do you say? My place or yours?"

* * * *

It was impossibly late and tomorrow they had buying meetings all day long. Plus, there was the jet lag that he was used to, but he was certain that it would kill Al sometime around ten in the morning tomorrow. Yet he knew that neither of them had plans for sleeping.

She was sexier than he'd imagined. More willing, that was for sure. *Damn, that ass plug. The nipple clips.* Justin groaned and remembered his first glimpse of her strutting back into the bedroom wearing nothing but a platinum chain and a pair of stilettos. When she showed him the butt plug that he couldn't see anyway because she had it well inserted, he thought he'd blow his load. To think that underneath that cool, classy exterior, a sexual predator was lurking. No wonder his dick always went rock hard whenever he was with her.

"Tell me something that you've never told me before," she purred, brushing her hand up and down his chest.

She was lying on the stomach, her perfect, petite ass rising sweetly from the sheets. He rolled over and kissed it, remembering the erotic drape of the chains cupping her ass cheeks and disappearing inside her.

Pushing his hand between her legs, he cupped her sex.

She rolled her hips against his fingers. "I'm waiting."

"Your pussy is so hot, so tight, so wet, I thought I'd come the moment my dick slipped into it," he said, stroking her wetness and his seed seeping from her.

"Mmmmm..." she moaned, propping her chin on her fist. "Though I really enjoyed that, I was thinking of something a little less explicit," she said, tweaking his nipple.

Justin took a deep sigh and clasped his hands behind his head. "I came to your wedding." From the corner of his eye, he watched her head pop up, making her back arch and her breasts push erotically against the plush bedding.

Turning to his side and running a hand down her smooth skin, he continued. "I planned to do that scene from the movie *The Graduate*. I could practically hear Simon and Garfunkel strumming in my head on the drive over to the church. I was going to run in and just as the preacher said, "Is there anyone here..." I wasn't even going to let him finish the fucking question. I was just going to stroll up the aisle. Sweep you into my arms and casually walk out with you."

She was quiet for a beat, searching for his eyes in the candlelit darkness. "Keith would have killed you."

Justin scoffed. "Unlikely. He was a fucking pussy."

"I didn't mean that he was stronger or..."

"I know," he said, cradling her ass in his hand. *To think that asshole cheated on her. Men like that hadn't a fucking clue what to do with a woman like this. But I do, he*

thought, hating that he was still bitter over the time Wilson had with her. "He was just a mean, crazy motherfucker and if I ever run across him I will make sure that he understands just how I feel about him."

She lifted to her knees, shaking her head. "Don't think about it. It's over," she said. Spilling her body to the foot of the bed and spreading her legs, she smiled at him. "And, look at me now. I'm fine. I'm better than fine. I'm with you. Do you want to know something that I've never told anyone?" she said, touching her pussy.

Justin managed to nod before answering, "I want to know everything about you."

"He could never make me come. It's like my body just wouldn't do it. It's like it refused to give that to him."

"But there were other men since him," he said, not wanting the reminder.

Al shook her head. "You can say that I've had orgasm-block. They tried. But I always had to manage on my own."

He couldn't help the pride welling inside of him. "Shit. Baby, if I had known, I would have taken more time, made it last even longer."

She shook her head again. "It was perfect ... *mmmmm* ... you felt *so* good," she sighed, rubbing her pussy lips again, then fingering her clit. "So hot inside of me. You make me so wet. I just think about it and I get so wet. I want you to do me over and over and over again. I want to stay right here in this bed and let you do anything to me."

Groaning, he blew out a breath. "I wanna fuck you in your ass, Alyssa," he said barely able to push the request forward, she had him so spun. "Do you think you can handle that?" he asked, unable to resist stroking his growing cock as she continued to play with herself. "Did you like the plug?"

She nodded and licked her lips. "It was a first. But I liked your fingers better. That was a first too. I've never had anal sex before." She ran her finger to her puckered hole.

Justin couldn't contain the growl crawling from him. "I think you'd like my dick even more," he said huskily. "It can be just as stimulating for a woman as it is for a man. As long as I take my time with you. Get you nice and wet."

She closed her legs on her hands still fingering her pussy. "I'll let you take me like that on one condition."

"Anything."

She pulled a hand from between her thighs and fondled a nipple.

"I want you to finish telling me the fantasy and I want you to jack off while you do it."

Justin shook his head. *Damn, his Al was a nasty little freak and he loved her even more for it.* "The things that I have to suffer through for you," he said, already pumping his hard-on. It wouldn't take long for him to bust his load and then he'd be ready again and sinking into that tight, virgin hole.

Alyssa opened her knees again and pulled them to her breasts. "You were saying that I was on the bed like this?"

"Yeah," he said, his voice gruff as he started jerking his cock. "Damn, you look so good," he muttered, taking a moment to spit in his hand before gripping his dick again.

"Tell me the rest of the fantasy," she said, gently holding her knees open to her chest but not yet touching herself.

"You're reading and inching your hand down your belly," he said and Al started her hand down her flat stomach.

Justin shook his head and moaned, pumping his cock slowly. "When you get to the waistband of your panties ... God, I'm hard as fuck..." he said, feeling himself lengthen and the veins in his thick, curved shaft harden beneath his touch. "Your sweet little fingers are painted pink like your toes and you slip them into your panties and sigh," he continued, panting as he quickened the pace. "You sigh my ... my name. And I can't believe it." He closed his eyes a beat but then opened them to look at her. *Oh, he was going to come so fucking hard and then ride her ass even harder.* Justin blew out a breath and continued the fantasy. "I'm watching you and I can't believe you're getting ready to touch your pussy while you're thinking about me."

Al slipped her hand just to her bikini line and sighed, "*Justin...*" closing her eyes.

"Fuck yeah ... just like that, baby ... then you pull the crotch of your panties aside ... it's like you're showing me your pretty pink pussy. It's like you know that I'm watching you..." he continued, watching as she spread her pussy lips, glistening with juice for him. "And then ... this is where I come ... this is where I shoot my load ... you touch your pussy and it's so wet ... I can see your pussy juices glistening on your fingers and ... God damn..." Justin cursed, rising to his knees with his cock in his hand. He released himself to grab her legs and spread them even wider. Gripping her thighs, he plunged his full length into her. "Fuck!" he said, burrowing deeper. "I'm coming," he moaned, pumping his load into her.

He was still hard when he pulled his cream-coated dick from her. Roughly, he flipped Al over and smacked her hard, making her cry out. He bent over her body, bringing her to all fours as he rasped into her ear. "You're so wet and sticky, baby, we don't need much to get me in," he said, pushing a thumb into her tight passage.

He wanted and needed to make her come like this. He wanted her to want his dick there again and again. He rested on his haunches and felt for his pants on the floor. After he retrieved the tube of lip petroleum, he uncapped it and pushed it into her ass, emptying the contents.

Justin threw the deflated tube aside and pushed his thumb easily into her, loving the way her back arched and she groaned, crying for him to take her. "Yes, Justin ... *please...*"

Gripping her hip with one hand and positioning his cock with the other, Justin kissed the back of her head before slowly easing his wide head into her ass. She trembled and he wrapped an arm around her waist to steady her. "Easy ... easy..." he coaxed as she whimpered. "Let me know if you want me to stop," he said, low and gruff into her ear. Frantically she shook her head no.

"Fuck me in my ass..." she said huskily, and he sank an inch deeper into her.

Damn, she was tight and he wasn't going to last no matter how badly he loved the feel of her surrounding his dick as he fingered her pussy. He had inches to go and yet she seemed filled to capacity. But Justin knew from earlier just how deep her tight little ass could go.

"Damn ... I could come just like this," he groaned, still easing into her, sinking another inch, feeling his cock stretching her. "Just a little bit more ... just a little more," he said, getting about an inch deeper.

Justin stilled and stroked her hair. "Do you like that, Alyssa? Do you like the feel of my dick in your ass?" She moaned, nodding, and his dick flicked inside of her.

“Spread your pussy, baby. Play with it for me,” he said. “Get yourself nice and wet so that you can take every inch of me in your ass. I wanna make it real good for you.”

Her pussy flooded before she even obeyed him and once she did he sank his dick another two inches, pushing himself just about full hilt. “Fuck yeah ... that’s it ... that’s it...”

Justin twisted his hand into her hair, pulling it, snatching her head back. “I’m gonna fuck your ass now,” he said, slowly going deeper, feeling his balls slap against the back of her trembling thighs. *Christ, she was coming again.* Through the thin barrier of the wall of her sex and her anal canal, he felt her pussy clench. “Come for me, Alyssa.”

But instead Justin came. Breathless, he pushed her head into the bedding. *Good...God...* his insides cried out. His lungs ached as a low deafening growl ripped from him as he pumped his load into her ass.

Taking only a minute before easing from her still tight passage, Justin flipped her to her back. Gripping her thighs open again, he kissed her twitching pussy. “Taste so good,” he said against her clit before tonguing her tangy, lemony juices. He sucked and swirled his tongue around her clit as she bucked into her mouth. When she came, he licked her briny release, moaning his pleasure between each stroke of his tongue. “Good girl,” he whispered into her sex as he licked her pussy again, knowing he would spend the rest of the night just pleasuring her.

Chapter Six

Next time, we definitely have to do this in my bed, Brandon thought as he rolled over in Carly's matchbox-sized double bed. When he didn't feel that lovely body beside him, he moaned and sat up to find Carly standing in the middle of the room, putting a robe over that body he'd come to know every inch of within four hours. *Oh no you don't, sweetheart,* Brandon thought, shaking his head. He'd be damned if he'd walk away from her now.

Groaning, he sat up and swung his legs from the bed. "I get it," he said, running a hand through his hair. "You're making it clear that you are woman hear you roar. Now that you've fucked me, I can get up and leave. Right?"

Still naked, Brandon stood up from the bed and walked over to her. If anyone would have ever told him that in a matter of a few hours, he'd fall in love—well, shit—what the hell was he thinking? *In love? With Carly? Man, get a grip. It was just an excellent piece of ass, right?* But he knew better. She'd blindsided him. She showed him that while she was smart-mouthed, she was also very sensitive. While she was a sexual predator, she was also incredibly tender and sensual. While she was one hundred percent woman, she could be coy and girlish at times.

He sighed, wishing that he could convince himself that his heart wasn't feeling like cleaved meat at the thought of not seeing her again. There was no turning back now that they'd come so far. For one night they'd lain aside all fear to just *be* with one another. Maybe they could accept such vulnerability forever. He couldn't believe he was ready to sign up for a lifetime of whispering his fears and hopes to this particular woman's heart and soul.

Admittedly, he'd always been a man of rash decisions. Maybe it's why he was a good surgeon. He always went with his gut. He never second-guessed himself. More importantly, he rarely made excuses for his choices or suffered any regrets. He wanted Carly. Crazy as it was, it was the truth. He wasn't walking away from her.

Brandon grabbed Carly around her waist and kissed her. "And trust me, I'm all for that 'Girl Power' shit," he told her. "I mean, there's nothing better than a woman who knows what she wants and can get it her own damn self while wearing a thong and pasties. I mean that's how I ended up in your bed. Right? I could never resist that *I-carry-a-set-of-big-ass-brass-balls-in-my-briefcase-as-I-step-on-your-small-peanut-balls-on-my-way-to-the-top* kind of girl."

She shook her head and laughed at him, and Brandon slid in for the home run as he opened her robe and moved his hand over her soft skin. "But, here's the thing," he continued. "I don't want to leave. And I know that you don't really give a flying fuck about any of that because what man has ever wanted to leave your bed? That's nothing new to you. But, this is where it gets tricky. You don't want me to leave. And I'm guessing that's new."

Brandon kissed her again, loving the fact that this time she kissed back. "Now, tell me I'm right or give me a gun so that I can just go shoot myself in the head. Because I don't know what just happened here, Carly—but it was good. It was really, really, really good and I'm not about to let it go."

Trickling her fingertips up his chest to his lips, she shook her head. “I was just going to get myself a glass of water.”

“You lie,” he said, laughing. Keeping his arms around her, he walked her back to the bed.

“Only to save myself from the humiliating prospect of admitting that you might be right,” she said, closing her eyes as he peeled the robe from her. She sighed, shaking her head. Seeing her confused take on the situation made him feel all the more confident.

Yes, they’d made love for hours, stopping to sleep or talk or just hold each other in the darkness. Somehow, after conversation and laughing, fucking and letting down their guards, they’d risked everything. He only hoped that in the end they both found that it was absolutely worth it. He hated being wrong. He couldn’t be wrong about this.

“I don’t want you to leave,” she said.

Simultaneously, they both sucked in a breath. He shook his head, more relieved than ever before. “Carly, I know you’re scared. Believe me, honey, this scares the shit out of me too,” he admitted. “But I’m willing to take the risk.” He placed her hand over his heart.

Still unconvinced, she shook her head and chimed in a warning, “There’s a lot at stake here.” But Brandon only answered her with a kiss.

She sighed against his lips. “I can be a vindictive little bitch when provoked. Hell have no fury like a woman scorned—well, if you so much as ruffle me, you’ll be longing for an eternity in hell by the time I’m through with you.”

“I guess this is part where most men would run,” he said, smiling in the dark. “But, this is where I say, now that you’ve gotten that off your chest—so what? Carly, I like to keep the stakes high. I think you do too. Let’s keep it going, baby,” he said, singing like a chorus inside as she spread her legs for him.

* * * *

After three days and four explicit nights, finally Alyssa knew in her heart that STRIP was going to survive. She could practically hear that old disco mantra blaring every time they acquired just the right pieces for the boutique. *I got all my life to live ... I got all my love to give ... I will survive ... I will survive ... Hey! Hey!*

So why wasn’t she doing her own rendition of An American in Paris, singing and skipping like Gene Kelly down the boulevard? It was a silly question. She knew why she was feeling a touch blue, sitting in a cheery corner café, sulking in her café au lait.

This is it. All these years and just five nights together. Now it’s over. It has to be over. He’s investing nearly a million more dollars into STRIP. I can’t continue a relationship. The death of business is mixing relationships into it. How many fuck-filled nights will buy me back my company? I wanted to be a whore with a good heart—not a whore on a repayment plan. Shit. What was I thinking? Sleep with my only investor. Fall in love with him. And borrow more money that I’ll eventually have to repay.

“Hey, what’s going on in that pretty head of yours?” Justin asked, placing his café au lait aside, reaching across the bistro table and taking Al’s hand into his.

Al sighed. *Why did he keep doing that shit? Touching her. Holding her hand. Caring about her. It was starting to drive her mad. I don’t need this shit. I don’t need a man. I need my business. I need to make my life something I can be proud of. I don’t want this.*

Al shut her eyes. *Okay, I don’t need it even if I do want it.*

“Al, come on. You can tell me anything.”

Al looked into his eyes—those sweet brown, sexy eyes and closed her eyes again. “I’m just sad that...” she swallowed and shook her head. “I’m probably just jet-lagged,” she finished, cowering behind the excuse instead of letting her heart tell him that she was scared to death of being with him and scared to death of losing him. *And losing his money, don’t forget that.* Al’s stomach turned over.

As he opened his mouth to respond, a tall, slender woman who could have been Al’s older sister approached them. “Justin?” she greeted him with a light French accent. “Is that really you?”

As he regarded her, Al noticed a slight redness touch his face. “Meghan.”

“It’s Fashion Week. I’m showing, but of course. What are you doing in Paris?” she asked, now looking at Al.

Damn, it was eerie. It was like looking into a mirror that told her future. The only thing was that Meghan was taller and, though still fine-boned, more rounded.

French-er, Al added to her visual sweep of the woman who was obviously more than just a friend of his.

They’d slept together. It was plain to see by the casual way their bodies leaned into each other. Yet, to her surprise, Al didn’t feel threatened. Justin still held her hand. He still felt very much like her man. *Even if he isn’t officially my man.*

Added to that, it gave Al an immense ego boost to know that he wasn’t kidding about wanting her so much that he dated women who looked like her.

“Meghan, this is Alyssa. Alyssa, this is Meghan,” Justin said, introducing her as casually as he’d introduced her to his Parisian business colleagues over the past few days.

When Meghan smiled, a few lines crinkled at the corners of her eyes. Only in Paris could age be a benefit to a woman’s sensuality. *Maybe it’s the accent*, Al thought, hoping to God that she’d age as well as Meghan.

“Finally,” Meghan said, taking Al by surprise. “Your reputation precedes you. It seems that my dear friend Justin has been smitten by you,” she continued, making Al blush.

If he could tell every one else in the world how he felt about me, why didn’t he just tell me years ago?

Meghan smiled at her and took her hand away from Justin to caress it in her own. “I can see why,” she continued, checking Al out like a pro gigolo, making Al wonder if Meghan was tucking a penis between her legs. “Well, I hope it is pleasure that brings you both here,” she said, fondling Al’s hand, causing her nipples to rise even while a voice in her head whispered, *If you’re not careful, girl, Meghan will be your new Daddy.*

“Yes and no,” Justin answered. “We’re here for the shop. We’re looking for additional merchandise. Candles. Products to add on to sales.” Al was surprised. By the way he spoke, obviously Meghan knew about STRIP.

A brighter smile touched the woman’s eyes and she clapped her hands together. “*Trés bon*. You must come to my show,” she insisted, even though Justin already was shaking his head, declining the invitation.

“Promise me that you will come,” she said, smacking his shoulder. “She’s much too pretty to keep to yourself, Justin.”

Ignoring him, she turned back to Al and picked up her hand again. "He never did like to share," she said with an eye roll, shaking her head. Suddenly, she looked girlish with her high ponytail swinging in disgust with Justin's rejection.

"We have a busy schedule," Justin said, taking Al's hand back and squeezing it. Al couldn't help but give a surprised laugh. Was he seriously worried about Meghan taking her from him? *Think about it*, Al reminded herself, *only a moment ago*, you thought you could become Meghan's bitch.

"Nonsense," Meghan said, taking Al's free hand.

Alyssa laughed again, removing her hand from Justin's. "Yes, Justin. That's nonsense," she said, lifting a shoulder. "I'm sure we can make some time for a friend."

He sighed and Al shook her head, ignoring him. "When's the big event?" she asked Meghan.

"Tonight," she announced.

Al frowned. She'd expected a little afternoon fashion show like in the movies. Harmless. Maybe she'd pick up a new dress. "Oh. What time?"

"Midnight," Meghan said and then catching Al's surprised look, she added, "Justin will fill you in with the details. You do remember how to get there, don't you?" she asked. He only smiled his answer.

With a big sigh, Meghan knotted her silk scarf at her neck and smiled. "Well, Alyssa, I certainly look forward to seeing you this evening."

"The pleasure will be all mine," Al said, leaning closer to Justin and wondering what in the hell did she just agree to.

"Don't be so sure, *ma chérié*," Meghan said, arching a brow at her. She gave each of them the standard Paris kiss-kiss on each cheek and was on her way.

"So, are you going to fill me in on the details?"

Justin shrugged and took a sip of his café au lait. "She designs sex toys," he said after pushing his cup aside.

A nervous flutter swam in Al's stomach, but she shook it off. "Perfect. I can't believe she wasn't on our agenda to begin with. Maybe we can use her stuff in the shop."

Justin shook his head. "Look. I didn't put her on the list because Meghan is a little intense."

Al smiled, warming to the fact that she also seemed a little familiar. *Like a long-lost sister*. "She seemed nice to me."

A smirk rode his lips. "That's because she wants to do every little dirty thing to you that I'm already doing to you."

Trying to remain casual, Al shrugged. "So? Women have come on to me before. I get a thrill from it." *And a light panic attack. What kind of dirty things does she want to do to me? And with what?*

"She looks like me," Al said, giving Justin a casual glance. "Wouldn't that be a fantasy? The two of us together ... with you, of course." Al wondered if she could actually go through with such a thing. She'd already done all manner of things with this man, so why not go even further?

Rising from the café table, he smiled at her. "You should know that her 'fashion' shows encourage audience participation." He pulled Al to her feet and swept his arms around her. Her whole body heated from the embrace.

Looking into his eyes, Al told him what she thought she could never say. “All I want is you. Or, should I say that all I want is what you want.”

His head tilted tenderly and Al could see that her words were sealing a bond between them. “I want you,” he said, his voice thick with arousal. “And if it makes you wet thinking about a room full of people fucking one another, I’m game. But only for show. We look but we only touch each other. Deal?”

“I can’t wait.” Al managed to push the words through her dry throat.

Leading her out of the café, Justin shook his head. “Your brother is going to kill me.”

“Unlike you, I don’t tell my brother everything. As long as you keep your mouth shut, Brandon will never know.”

Chapter Seven

Already dressed in his tuxedo, Justin stood on the balcony waiting for Al to finish getting ready. He inhaled the night air and stared out at the Arc de Triomphe illuminating les Champs-Élysées. It was a beautiful summer night in Paris.

It could turn out to be the best night of his life or the worst.

“Alyssa. Man, I still can’t believe this is us,” he said to himself, speaking into the night air.

All those years of pining for her, yet still he pined. Justin shook his head. The more he had of her, the more elusive she became.

After their first night together, Justin figured out that seduction was in fact the only thing that Alyssa had in mind. Still after the seduction, there was always something bare and raw between them—a touch of knowing, a caress of the heart—acknowledging that nothing like this had ever happened for either of them in the past.

Justin knew sex. Man, did he know it. He’d been a carnivore in his youth, gorging himself with women in every imaginable and unimaginable scenario.

With Al, the sex was great. *Amazing*.

At first, he thought it was so good because she was so responsive. Soon he realized it was because she was so vulnerable. He knew that each time he suggested things to explore, it was new for her—though she played as if his suggestions didn’t intimidate her.

To thank and reward her, he did the only thing he could do to repay her for her trust. He made sure she came hard and often. Yet he wanted to give her still more, a lifetime.

Stuffing his hands in his pockets, Justin sighed. *Damn, Al. Let me in*. Whenever he got close to even the notion of maybe making this trip officially their beginning, she closed off.

Justin hated that.

Her quiet, blank reception was unbearable. He’d grown much too accustomed to her hot and greedy heat for him. He couldn’t take the coolness. So he always surrendered, never pushing her too hard for fear of losing what he finally had with her.

So, he’d give in for tonight. If Alyssa wanted to explore, gladly he’d give her that. Granted, her curiosity excited him and turned him on like nothing ever before. He was so pleased to be the one to break down her inhibitions. Still, he hated the thought of her sharing her new sexual freedoms with anyone else. *Including Meghan*.

On his first trip to Paris, he met the infamous Meghan—no last name necessary. He was just an undergraduate student. Unlike other students at Harvard, he worked a full-time job. Though he was on full scholarship, he liked having money. Other students came from wealthy families or nearly wealthy ones like Al’s and Brandon’s. But Justin came from a single-parent home. His mother had worked hard to keep them in a good neighborhood, though their home was the service quarters of his mom’s employer. She gave him the best education and made sure that he fit in well with the kids in school. Justin vowed never to fail her. He turned in straight A’s, headed the football team, sat on the student council and worked part-time jobs. When he got to college, he didn’t know how a person couldn’t expect not to work and earn a living. So he worked for his chance to explore the world.

When he arrived in Paris, he was strapped for cash and content to bum his way through his adventure. Enamored with all things Parisian, he found his way on the streets, conversing in French with the street artisans.

Meghan was a street “artisan” of the oldest profession. She described herself as a courtesan of old when she invited him to join her table at a café.

It didn’t surprise him. The French women had been into him. He always found a bed. Yet Meghan was much more than a passing flirtation. Their attraction was mutual. Hell, he was even willing to admit that his attraction to her was much more intense than hers to him.

When Justin first saw her, his heart skipped a beat. The older woman looked so much like Al. Her eyes looked at him in a way he’d only imagined Al would someday. Luckily for him, her “date” for the evening was into voyeurism and she was on the hunt for a suitable male to help her make a good show.

Justin knew he was being incredibly stupid and naïve to fall into such a thing with strangers, but he was broke and she looked so much like Al that it almost hurt to be with her. So he sold himself to her on one condition: She had to respond to the name “Alyssa”.

“Al, for short,” he’d told her.

“Ah. But of course. Nothing quite like a heart bursting of unrequited love,” she said before turning to her older, obviously wealthy john, to explain Justin’s request in French.

When the old man agreed, Justin couldn’t believe that he would get paid for fulfilling a fantasy. For one night he could have Alyssa Moore. Even though it was only make-believe, Meghan looked so much like Alyssa that it was too easy to pretend.

Over the years, he returned to Paris—each time calling on Meghan. As the years progressed, both of them did well for themselves. Eventually, they no longer role-played his fantasy of fucking Alyssa Moore. With Meghan’s curiosity and questions, talk of Alyssa became the aphrodisiac for both of them. Tonight would be the end of a long running play.

Justin turned to the suite when he heard Al’s high heels on the marble floor.

When he saw her, he closed his eyes to lock the vision of her into his brain. Never had he imagined that she could look even more beautiful.

He smiled as he opened his eyes to look at her again. She was dressed in a sheer white sheath, wearing the scantiest of lace underneath. “You look better than beautiful. You know that,” he said, making his way to her as she smiled back at him.

She lifted a tiny choker with a diamond pendant. He knew the necklace had been her mother’s and it felt too, too familiar and right to be the man clasping it around her graceful neck.

Once he finished he grasped her bare shoulders and kissed the nape of her neck before she released her curls to spill down her neck.

“What I said about this only being for show ... I meant it. Baby, I really meant it,” he said, feeling like a kid before prom, nervous beyond his understanding, totally petrified of all the glory the night could contain—as well as revelations. Perhaps she’d find this part of his past distasteful. As for himself, perhaps his heart would break if she did find another lover tonight. Even if it was only for a night, he wasn’t comfortable with the thought.

She turned to him. Her blue eyes were already brimming with arousal. “I already told you. I only want you.”

He took both her hands in his and raised them to his lips. “Do you want to hear something else that I never told anyone before?” he asked.

Smiling, she nodded.

Justin took a deep breath. “What you saw the other day in my office—it’s not better than what we have right here.” He looked into her eyes, feeling that his heart couldn’t take the chance of losing her to a night of meaningless trysts.

Cradling her chin in his hand, he closed his eyes again, savoring the vision of her lovely face. “You’re going to see a lot of shit, Alyssa,” he said, then opened his eyes, pinning her with sincerity. “But none of it can ever be as good as this. You have to trust me on this one.”

Though she only gave him a puzzled look, he continued, hoping that everything would sink in. “You know how they say that lonely people—well, we tend to overeat or not eat—sleep all day or stay wide awake for years?” When she nodded, he did too before he continued. “Well, I tried to fuck my way out of the loneliness. It’s like I needed more in order to feel. It’s like it had to be kinky in order for it to be real.”

She gave him a subtle smile. “And you don’t need the kink any more? Are you saying that now you’re fulfilled?”

Wrapping her in his arms, feeling the slip of sheer white beneath his fingertips, he groaned inwardly. “What if I am? What if I’m saying that I don’t need this party in order to get off on you? What if I’m saying that you are my every fucking fetish? Can we stay in?”

Pulling away from him, she started for the door. “I don’t understand you, but everything will be fine.”

Keeping her hand in his, he pulled her back to him. “No. No. Don’t turn away.”

Justin tilted her face to look at his again. *Please, baby, you have to understand that if you leave me ... I ... I don’t know. You just can’t leave me.* He relented and tried to remain levelheaded and logical.

“Al, you look so incredible. You know that. And it’s going to be hard for me *not* to want to see you looking so incredible in someone else’s eyes. That can be a big turn on for men.”

Teasingly, she arched a brow at him. “Like knowing that somebody else wants to drive his car?”

Though he hardly felt lighthearted, he chuckled at her comparison. “Exactly,” he conceded. “I just don’t know how that would make me feel in the morning. It’s like good food or great wine—you can’t help but to want to share. But you don’t want anyone to be too greedy and leave you without your share.”

“Meghan did say that you really don’t like to share.”

“I always regret it in the end. That’s why tonight—it has to be just for show. Okay?”

“Should I remind you that we are *supposed* to be at a swingers’ convention?”

Justin kissed her softly on the lips. “Alyssa,” he said, looking her deeply in her eyes. “That would have certainly been the death of me.”

* * * *

I’m nervous. No. I’m terrified, Al thought as she looked out the limousine’s window as it rolled them out of Paris.

What am I thinking? I hated the movie Eyes Wide Shut. Well, maybe I didn't hate it. But I sure as hell didn't get it. Who do I think I am?

Trying to kill her thoughts, Al laid her head in Justin's lap. "Does my brother know about this wilder side to you?" she asked, causing him to laugh. Then she remembered that Brandon went on several trips with Justin to Paris. She always thought that guys took trips to Vegas together. She knew damned well they weren't going to Paris for the shopping.

"Right. Dumb question," she said.

"Your brother is a good guy but he's not a saint," Justin answered, stroking her hair.

"I know," she said. "And what about Keith?" she asked of her ex and immediately wished she could take the question back.

She heard Justin sigh. "Shit, Alyssa."

Raising her head from his lap, she met his remorseful gaze. "How come you never told me?"

"Alyssa, you loved the guy. Nothing I could have said would have changed that."

Alyssa knew that was true. Though she hadn't a clue as to why. She had been determined to marry Keith. She swore her love for him, never allowing herself to speak any other truth.

Had she been running from her feelings for Justin? Was she afraid that Justin would be the one to marry someone else first?

Now, was she willing to open the door for that possibility when they returned to Chicago? He *could* marry someone else. He couldn't pant after her forever.

Caressing her face, looking excruciatingly divine in his tuxedo, Justin gave her a soft look. "Keith was a prick and, believe me, we didn't hang out much. You know Brandon and I would have killed him first before letting him fuck around on you in our faces," he explained. "Whatever Keith was into—he never flaunted any of that shit in front of me. He just liked to torture me with you."

"Torture you?"

Justin nodded. "Yeah. He loved giving me play by plays of your sex life—which now I know was grossly exaggerated according to you. He liked to get very detailed. He knew it drove me fucking crazy—but he did it. Then he loved telling me about whoever else he was banging." His face clenched. "Why'd you marry him?"

And why did you make dinner plans with him next week, she chided herself. Alyssa blinked rapidly, then stared into her lap. "Why'd I marry Keith instead of you? Isn't that the real question?"

"Yeah. Yeah—that's the real question. You got an answer?"

Slowly, she let her eyes lift to meet his, again. "You never asked."

He just looked at her for a moment, silently searching her face. "And what if I were to ask right now?"

Al's heart did a drum roll. "I'd say why make it a hypothetical question when you can try asking a real one. Do you want to marry me, Justin?"

"Would you marry me, Alyssa?"

"Are you asking?"

"Will you say yes?"

She shook her head and shrugged. "I don't know. You have to ask. That's the only way either of us will ever know."

He chuckled. "It's like we've been avoiding this conversation since forever," he said, sighing. "I've wanted you since forever and now here you are. And still, in some ways, it's not enough."

Alyssa threw her thoughts into a question. "And that scares you?"

"It consumes me," he answered, his admission making her breath catch.

He brought his face to hers. "There should be a point that we get to and it's enough. I don't want to long for you for the rest of my life. And yet, something tells me that if I were to make it all official, you'd still be beyond my reach."

"But I'm here now."

"Are you? Totally and completely? I wonder. I know you, Al. Is all of this about you and STRIP? Or is all of this about you and me?" Justin sighed. "Let's forget about it now. Some things are better left unsaid."

Chapter Eight

If the fact that the limo pulled into a lane as long as several Chicago city blocks, only to curve in front of a bona fide castle wasn't enough to shock Alyssa, then the line of beautifully dressed guests stripping down to the buff was certainly enough to give her pause.

"Ladies and gentlemen—come on in and check your clothes at the door," she whispered to Justin as she watched a group of men chatting as they patiently waited in line to check their tuxedos at what otherwise would be a coat check.

"Well, what did you expect?" Justin said to her, laughing

"A fashion show, ergo clothes," she said, grateful that he led her past the streakers' long, happy-go-naked line.

Placing a hand at the small of her back, Justin steered her through chamber after chamber of people well into the swing of things.

"I told you she doesn't design clothes," he reminded her as they entered a ballroom with a vaulted, gilt alfresco ceiling with a chandelier the size of her townhouse hanging from it.

"She designs these," Justin said, picking up a pink, curved, knobby gel dildo from a passing silver platter being circulated by a Chippendale-like waiter.

Al watched him approach a distinguished looking older couple. As the woman inspected the goods on the tray, her male companion openly fondled the goods in the waiter's Lycra-sealed crotch.

I am soooo out of my element, Al thought, only to feel Justin slap the toy du jour into her open hand.

"Ooohh ... pretty," Al beamed, holding it up like an Oscar. "And, why look! It's even called 'Pretty In Pink'."

Stuffing his hands in his pockets, Justin rolled his eyes. "I can't believe she's still coming up with this stuff."

Al shrugged. "You have to admit 'Pretty In Pink' is kind of clever," she chimed, gesturing with the dildo, fisting her hand like a vagina.

They both were still laughing when they heard the Grand Dame approach them. "*Bonsoir. Bonsoir*," Meghan said, as she hungrily looked Alyssa over. Their hostess at least wore a chain with nipple clips and a butt plug much like the one Alyssa wore only nights ago. Still, her naked embrace threw Al.

When Meghan drew back she turned to kiss Justin fully and then she did the same to Al who again was surprised by the open-mouthed affection.

"You look simply edible," Meghan said, tweaking a ripened nipple. Al inhaled sharply, her nipples pushing against her sheer dress.

"Ohhh ... a virgin. And so responsive," she said to Justin. "You're even more tempting," she whispered to Al. "You will be my special guest tonight, yes?"

"No," Justin said, blocking Al from another nipple assault. "She's not on the menu."

Meghan quietly glared at Justin before laughing. "Everyone is on the menu. Otherwise, there's no need for them to be here," she snapped. Recovering her composure, she smiled and linked her arm into Justin's.

“You seem tense,” she said to him, more softly. “Perhaps you and I should go over to the bar. Alyssa should enjoy the show while I help you fetch her a drink,” she said, strolling off with Justin before Al could so much as whimper a protest.

* * * *

As they made their way to the kitchen, each of them paused, greeting guests.

Justin knew many here. He’d always feared that like them he’d be here year after year, still searching, still trying to kill his craving. But not any more; he now had Alyssa and he wasn’t in the mood for sharing.

“You’ve always been a bit stingy,” Meghan said as if reading his mind. She nodded to the bartender for a drink before turning her attention back to Justin. “But since I was playing your leading lady, it was always a bit sexy to have a man be so driven by passion that he wanted no one else to touch me.” She slid a hand down the front of his tuxedo shirt. “Since I’ve played her for years, the least you can do is let me see if I got the part just so,” she reasoned.

Justin smiled, but shook his head. “Alyssa’s never been to anything...”

“Like I don’t know,” Meghan snapped, cutting him off. “I’ve played her sweet, naïve role night after night for you. Does she *know* that you liked to pretend with me since you couldn’t have her?”

Justin shrugged. “She has an idea. Especially after seeing you.”

A wicked smile played on Meghan’s lips. “I must admit the resemblance is rather striking.” She deepened her smile and Justin knew she was fantasizing about Al. It didn’t take a woman like Meghan long to decide what she wanted.

Shrugging, she continued. “She’s a bit more pure. I find that so sensual, *n’est-ce pas*? It was hard for me to pretend to be that for you. Clean and uncorrupted. Wouldn’t you like to have it both ways—the sweet with the bitter. *La douce avec l’amer*,” she repeated huskily. She grabbed his cock. It was already hard. It had been the minute Meghan kissed Al.

“Ahhh...” she said, triumphantly lifting her chin to him. “I’m glad to see that you are willing to play nicely.”

* * * *

Alyssa wandered through a few more chambers, very aware that she was drawing attention.

Being still clothed among so many naked people proved to make her intensely desirable. Being wanted by so many proved to be a huge turn-on for her.

As she passed, she heard comments in French but she only understood the soft whispers that were in English.

“Very pretty. Her nipples are quite thick ... Is she in a show ... I can see her pussy ... Sexy ... She must be a relative ... Reminds me of Meghan, younger of course...”

She finally reached a room that was scattered with large silk pillows on the floor surrounding a platform. Al guessed this was the stage for the show that was to take place. She was alone. Really alone as she looked about the room of partners enjoying each other, lightly caressing one another as they waited for the show to begin. Many raised their eyes to her in invitation, but Al only smiled and declined by coyly shaking her head.

Al was relieved when a group of men took the stage, dressed only in high school letterman jackets. Their cocks were flaccid but free. They all looked promising with buff bodies. No one's eyes were on Al any longer. Even she found it hard to look away from the five dicks bouncing on the stage pretending to play football.

Is this it? Al wondered. If so, it was enough to at least get Al wondering what would it be like if she stripped and joined them on stage. In answer, a petite blonde dressed as a Catholic schoolgirl coyly walked across the stage. She was carrying books and dropped them.

Al rolled her eyes at the terrible acting and the clichéd scenario, even though her sex was liquefying at the classic being performed before her. The petite blonde did look quite the innocent, especially dressed in the school uniform. When she bent to retrieve her books, of course she did so exposing full, bare pussy lips and a creamy, taut ass to the "boys."

Al shifted uncomfortably, wishing she were being touched too. *Where was Justin?* She knew what would happen next in the skit and she so wanted it to be happening to her simultaneously.

On the stage, the boys begin to harass the girl, pulling her books away, rubbing their cocks, slapping her ass. She played frightened, but her nipples were erect. One of the boys took her shirt into his fist and ripped it open.

If Al didn't know it was all pretend, she would have believed the girl's frightened shrill that dulled into a moan as he fondled her nipples. *Talk about improvisation*, Al thought, unable to pull her eyes away.

When the boy started sucking her nipples, palming her full breasts in his hands, another boy stepped forward, stroking the widest cock that Al had ever seen. He pushed the suckling boy away, forcing the girl to her knees. Al couldn't help but to lick her lips as the girl wrapped her mouth around the enormous cock.

Damn, she wanted to share.

But tonight was only for show, which would be all right if Justin was there with her, feeding her *his* gorgeous cock.

Though the girl initially gagged on the girth, she eventually found a rhythm and the room was coated in silence as the audience watched her suck the cock and play with her pussy.

Before any of the other boys, fully erect now and just as impressive as the first two, could get any action, a "nun" joined the stage. In silent movie form, she broke up the scene before her and started admonishing the young players. However, blessed woman or not, she couldn't keep her eyes off the young girl's heaving breasts. In a passionate sweep, the nun began caressing and suckling her student's nipples to the boys' astonishment.

Being egged on by his friends, the boy with the biggest cock started to lift the nun's habit, exposing her ass. Slapping it, he brought his dick still wet from the young girl's mouth to the nun's pussy.

Al licked her lips and felt washed with heat. The nun's only response was to bend over deeper to lick the girl's "virginal" pussy as the young stud split her own pussy.

Several times Al closed her eyes to calm her heated arousal. Each time she opened them, a different guy was fucking the nun and another was enjoying the young girl's mouth on his cock.

Though she was parched, Al declined several drinks. She needed Justin. *Where was he?* She was dying to touch herself as she watched other couples enjoy one another.

Where ever she looked, she was being stoked with raw sex. Near the door, she caught a perfect view of the older gentleman who had fondled the waiter now spreading his companion's legs for a young, redheaded woman to lick her pussy.

Al quickly looked away, flooding with juices. She looked to the door again, hoping to see Justin, but instead watched the older man fondle his companion's breasts as they both watched the younger woman, ass in the air, suck the older woman's pussy.

When she turned away, her eyes swept the stage. The young girl was now riding a boy as the nun was suckling two cocks at once.

Overwhelmed, Al stood to leave, stepping over two women kissing and fondling each other's nipples. It was the tamest display in the room except for maybe the tall black man who had enough dick to share with three women, licking and sucking it.

As Al hurriedly fled the scene, she ran smack into Justin's chest.

"Oh my God! I need you so bad right now," she said, entwining herself around his body and kissing him passionately before noticing that Meghan was still with him.

Embarrassed but still pulsating with lust, Al clung to Justin.

"Are you enjoying the show?" Meghan asked.

Al simply nodded and Meghan gave a Gallic shrug, dragging a finger from one of Al's nipples to the other.

"I thought it was bit clichéd, but one person's cliché is another's wildest fantasy," Meghan said, swallowing as she enjoyed watching Al's body respond to her.

"My private showing is about to begin," Meghan announced. "I was telling Justin that I would love for you to be my guests."

* * * *

She's stripping me naked in a roomful of people. Justin sucked on that thought as he closed his eyes, folding into the ecstasy of Alyssa, hedonistic and lush for him.

Throughout their stay in Paris, she'd been more than anything he ever could have fantasized. She'd been curious and teasing, but thankfully willing. There were times when he was inside of her, fucking her hot and deep, and still his excruciating desire for her was unquenchable.

Now with her sweet face flushed with heat, her blue eyes hazed with lascivious need, all the past, lovely little dirty deeds were wiped clean.

Nothing would satisfy, Justin thought, stroking her insatiable body, still swathed in sheer silk. *There would always be this need.*

Justin looked down his body at the top of Al's dark, curly head. She moaned as she rubbed his chest, then licked a wet path. Patiently, he clenched down on his raw hunger to have every eye in the room watch him penetrate her slick sex—wet and creamy for his dick and no one else's.

Flicking his eyes over the gathering of five or so couples gyrating with sexual anticipation, Justin saw that several pairs of eyes were trained on Alyssa.

They should see how beautifully you come for me, he thought as her hot hands pulled his open shirt from his tux slacks.

When Al lavished wet kisses across his navel, Justin couldn't help the smile touching his face. All eyes were now locked onto the vision of his lovely Alyssa, draped in white

and stoked by white-hot lust for him. Unknowingly, she'd made him a proud man. Justin couldn't wait to reward her for it.

"I want you to fuck me right *now*," she said, trailing kisses up his body to his mouth.

Justin took a settling breath of air and wished to God that whatever preparations Meghan was making, she'd hurry. They were barely inside the guarded room and he was a just a flick away from devouring her right on the floor across the threshold.

"Soon. I promise," he said, following his declaration with a deep kiss.

When her tongue had thoroughly licked and sucked every sensitive corner of his mouth, Justin gripped her ass in his hands, grinding his stiff cock against her belly. After the week of lovemaking that they'd shared, he never dreamed it could get hotter—but it just did.

"I've always enjoyed watching lovers," Meghan's lightly accented voice only put a pause in the trance that had taken them over. The people arranged in the room like fuck-humps on large silk floor pillows only served to thicken the fog of need.

Escorted by a Fabio look-a-like, Meghan led them to her makeshift throne. She'd always liked to fuck on the floor, so the foot-high gilt platform with mounds of pillows was true to form. She often exalted the Romans and likened herself as a misplaced soul.

Unlike Meghan's stage that was like an intimate box top, dripping with flowers and candlelight, the performance stage was now gleaming bare with only a single wooden chair and a bathtub filled with steamy water.

Once they were in their places, Justin protectively cradled Alyssa, wrapping his legs around her body. "Fabio" reclined beside him with Meghan's head in his lap. The show began with a very sensual female voice-over introducing a man and woman frolicking to the stage.

Justin knew the lead actress—a "special" guest like himself for many, many years. Though she wasn't especially beautiful, her sensuality was very poignant. She drew men in because of her directness, making her a crowd favorite. However, the actor, a bald black man, was new to the game. Then again, Justin rarely noticed the men who frequented the soirees.

As the couple playfully stripped each other, Justin couldn't help but notice that Alyssa's nipples ripened, poking against the palms of his hands. Smiling, he kissed the side of her neck. No doubt about it, she was having the time of her life.

The actress smiled coyly at her leading man before introducing the real star of the show, *Pretty In Pink*. Flicking a brow at him, she offered it to him. She then sashayed voluptuous hips to the chair, took a seat and spread her legs wide open.

Justin swore he could hear Al swallow at the sight of the actress's juicy bush being flashed at them. Slowly, the stage began a slow rotation to ensure everyone got a fair view.

Once the stage returned to them, the oiled actor turned to the audience while the invisible female voice-over made the request for a couple of volunteers. Teasingly, Justin tweaked one of Al's nipples. Though she turned her face up to him and smiled, her eyes surely said no.

Of course there were plenty who were willing to lend themselves in the name of art. But the voice-over announced that it would be the queen's choice.

Without delaying her guests' pleasure, Meghan made an indifferent pick. She was already taking her pleasure, deep-throating "Fabio", all the while with her eyes daring Al to join her.

Justin's heart sighed in relief, feeling her body press even more into his. "Good girl," he whispered into her ear.

* * * *

Though her heart truly only wanted Justin, Al's pussy begged to be fucked by any handy object. She wanted to take care of herself, but Justin held her wrists tightly in one of his large hands, keeping her hands just a finger away from her craving pussy.

When Alyssa tried to take her eyes away from the couples on the stage, Justin's other hand gripped her chin and turned her face back to the delectable scene of sexual gratification. Jealous and burning with need, Al watched the female volunteer sucking the actor's thick black cock while the male volunteer used his fingers, stroking the actress's juices from her pussy.

Teasingly, the voice-over entreated, "What's the matter? Don't you like the taste of pussy? Don't be shy," first in French and then in English. As if he'd been waiting for a formal dinner invitation, the short, handsome man dropped between the actress's legs and sucked her full pussy lips like a starved man.

Alyssa shut her eyes, fearing she'd come without the feel of Justin's dick in her throbbing pussy. With a touch of playfulness, he whispered, "I thought you could handle this. Remember this is what you wanted tonight. Just think, we *could* be tasting each other right now. But..." he took a deep sigh. "We're here, instead. Only for show."

* * * *

Since the moment Al reconnected with him at the party, Justin proudly wore his happiness in seeing others lust after her. Sure, he talked a good game. *Only for show.* However, the bulge steadily stiffening against the small of her back told Al otherwise.

"*You know you want me,*" Al wanted to whisper back at him. "*Right here and right now.*" But why tell him that when she could show him?

Twisting a smile on her lips, Alyssa rose from her warm nest between Justin's hard thighs. Turning away from the stage, she stood with her pussy in Justin's face. The action on the stage was too hot for any one to notice her moment of daring. The voice-over had just reminded Mr. Lucky Volunteer Guy not to forget about the real star of the show, Pretty In Pink. He was much obliged to fuck the star with it, pulling her leg to his shoulder as he worked the toy in and out of her pussy while he still took sweet licks of her juices and tiny taps at her clit with his thumb.

Though she pretended to keep her eyes on the stage, Meghan was watching Alyssa, her eyes encouraging her. The Grande Dame was still torturing poor "Fabio" with what had to be the longest blow job ever. Whenever the poor guy got close to coming, Meghan grasped the base of his shaft and squeezed, pulling her hot mouth away and lightly smacking the head of his penis.

Even though she enjoyed the eye candy, Al had a little torturous tryst of her own to get on with. As she pulled her dress up to her waist, exposing her wet, clingy lace g-string to Justin, Al now had a perfect view of the audience.

Her direct line of vision featured a round woman climbing onto the lap of a lanky man and engulfing him with her sex, riding him hard. Slowly Al slipped off her panties with a little help from Justin, who seemed transfixed on her pussy as he helped her roll the scant cloth from her body and step out of it. Immediately, his hands went to palm her ass cheeks, pulling her sex to his nose.

The subtle touch of his lips to her clit made Al's head snap. Once she leveled her head again, she was rewarded a new view—the lanky man was now entering a petite redhead's ass. The round woman still rallied him on, kneeling behind him and tonguing his balls.

Justin's hot tongue darted into her wet folds. Al turned her head, and got a new view. This one was tame in comparison, just two women, one full-breasted, the other practically androgynous, both taking turns enjoying suckling and teasing each other's nipples.

Pulling her to straddle his lap, Justin hands pawed down Al's body all the while helping her get rid of her dress.

Ooooh... Her pussy could sing cradling his cock between her engorged lips, even though it was still caught in his tuxedo pants. With her hands moving in double time, Al unsnapped, unzipped and released, gasping at the feel of his cock's heat slipping against her dewy pussy.

"Pinch her nipples, Justin. They are so beautiful," Meghan said, pausing mid-lick of "Fabio's" cock.

Obedying her, Justin more than pinched. He tongued and licked and sucked until Al was bucking against his hard-on.

Not wanting to miss a moment, Meghan abandoned poor Fab and knelt beside Justin and Al.

"I want to watch you make her come," she said, lifting a rolling moan from both of them. But Justin shook his head.

"Make her come," Meghan repeated, confusion obvious in her voice.

Again he shook his head in refusal.

Frustrated and determined to find relief even if she had to do it herself, Al pushed away from Justin, reclining to her back, spreading her legs before him.

Meghan reached out and grasped Al's nipples in each of her hands.

Oooohh ... it was good. Meghan pinched lightly, her eyes smiling at Alyssa. Bending over her, Meghan pressed her full breasts against Al's small mounds. "Feels good, no?" she asked. Before Al could answer, Justin pushed Meghan away.

Al's breath caught as he took position between her bent knees. Holding his cock in his hand, waiting at her pulsing entrance, he gave her a heated look.

"Is this what you want?" he asked, rubbing his hard cockhead against her clit.

"Yes," she panted. "Only you," she pleaded, nodding her head frantically.

Al pulled her legs up to her chest and Justin entered hard and fast. He was pumping her pussy in a jamming rhythm that was so good, Al could feel the pressure of tears hot behind her eyes. He moaned several blessings as he fucked her with Meghan's face avidly watching his dick dip in and out of Al's creamy pot.

Just when she thought that she was all wrung out from constant stimulation, Al's eyes caught Fabio grabbing Meghan by the hair and steering her to finish the job. In one gulp, she downed him. His dick disappeared before Al's eyes.

Working Al's clit with his thumb as his dick worked her pussy, Justin slowed his pace but kept the hard slapping slam of his cock in her pussy. It would only be a few more sweet moments before she came. Her pussy clenching around him, she felt him nearing orgasm. A few pumps more and he cried out, releasing his seed into her body.

Collapsing on his side, Justin pulled her wilted body into his and kissed her temple.

"I love you," he said, so clearly that Alyssa knew she couldn't pretend to have missed it, no matter how much his frank admissions continued to scare her.

* * * *

There were definite rewards to having friends who just happened to live in castles.

Though Alyssa had only known Meghan one day, it was hard not to feel connected to the sex goddess. Meghan genuinely wanted nothing more than to see all of her friends drowning in excessive pleasure.

For the time being, she and Justin were wallowing in glee as they camped out on silk pallets, sharing a feast of wine, cheese, fruit and savories in what was called the Gorge chamber.

No sex allowed in here.

"It is not proper to eat and fuck, no? I just think some things are pleasurable enough by themselves. Share food, yes. Then, share sex," she clarified to them as she left Justin and Al to their picnic.

It had been an hour of nibbling and smiling at each other. Alyssa was still naked. Had she wanted to dress again, she wouldn't know where to find her dress. To her amazement, she never felt more comfortable and wrapped in warmth.

"Look at you sitting over there all smug and pleased with yourself. What are you smiling about?" Al said, reaching for the bottle of red wine and pouring some into the huge cut crystal goblets for each of them.

"It was pretty hot—you and Meghan," Justin said, smirking and flicking a brow at her.

Al licked her lips. "You liked that, huh?" she said huskily.

He shrugged his massive shoulder. "I wouldn't mind if it played as the Movie of the Week for the rest of my life. I'd be sure to tune in," he admitted, rolling over to his back and clasping his hands behind his head.

Too bad about the no-mixing food with sex rule. The only thing that Al could imagine looking better than Justin's bare chest spread before her would be her licking sweetened crème fraîche from it.

"Did you like it?" he asked.

Biting down on her lip and blushing, Al flipped her hair from her face. "It was pretty hot," she said softly, watching his cock begin to harden against his thigh.

Justin took a deep breath. "Over the years, I was beginning to believe that Meghan was more into the fantasy of me finally having sex with you than I was."

"She does look a lot like me. It's kind of ... kinky," Al said, wrinkling her nose.

"Well, she was the closest that I ever got to you for many years. Except for the accent, of course," he said, reaching for his goblet and taking a sip of wine.

"But of course," Al said, faking a French accent before popping a grape into her mouth.

He gave her a dirty smile. “I *definitely* prefer the American version,” he said, inching his hand up her thigh, sucking in a breath when he touched her aroused wet sex. “Have you ever had fantasies about being with a woman?”

Al licked her lips again, sighing when Justin pulled his hand back. “Tonight?” she asked and he nodded. “Many, many, many, quickie-fantasies involving girl-on-girl action.”

“And are you the girl on top?”

Al flicked him a heated glance. “I’m the one with her legs spread wide open.”

Justin growled his satisfaction with her answer and cupped his dick in his hand as it stretched to full length and girth. “You could fulfill that fantasy tonight—if you really wanted to.”

Leaning over their cashmere blanket, Al brought her nose to his. “Hey, what happened to ‘we’re only here for the show’?”

He gave her a quick, liquefying kiss. “It may have been an unfair call on my part,” he said, trailing his finger back to her pussy. “I’ve seen the way all of this obviously turns you on. I witnessed it. Damn, you were practically on fire and so wet,” he said, shaking his head blissfully then kissing her again.

Al let her finger trail his shaft and he groaned, deepening their kiss. “It makes me hard as hell seeing you so turned on,” he said. “Mmmmm ... you’re sopping wet,” he whispered against her lips and then dipped his finger into her sex.

Closing her inner thighs around his hand, Al tried to subtly grind her clit against the warmth of his groping hand.

“Tell me the truth,” he said, taking a tiny bite of her bottom lip. “Would you like me to ask Meghan to lick your pussy?” he asked, his voice so low and thick with arousal that Al almost missed the question.

Softly, she nodded her head and he grinned at her, flicking his thumb ever too, too lightly against her throbbing bud. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you, Alyssa? You want Meghan to suck your pussy,” he said, suddenly rising, his cock standing erect and proud as he pulled her to her feet and swept her into his arms.

Slowly but confidently he moved on with the mission, making his way to Meghan’s room.

“If she is as good at eating pussy as she is at sucking cock, you’re in for a treat, baby,” he whispered into her ear as they entered the room, making Al’s skin pebble with sensitivity.

* * * *

Obviously intent on making the most of her evening, Meghan was surrounded by three studs, each seemingly younger, firmer, and hotter than the next.

Though relegated to foot massage duty, “Fabio” wore a content expression on his chiseled face as he worshipped Meghan’s petite feet. Caressing them as if they alone could get the job done, he groaned pleasurably with delight before taking her toes to his mouth.

Justin rolled his eyes at the scene. *What man reduced himself to sucking toes when there was plenty of pussy to be stroked, sucked and fucked?*

Naturally, Justin held greater respect for the guy holding Meghan’s legs open as he licked and licked and licked her pussy. It was the way she best liked oral sex—slow,

languid, long-tonguing. However, the guy getting his dick pulled between Meghan's moaning lips was the only position that Justin would be willing to play in any sexual tryst. Sure, he liked sucking toes and pussy—especially with an appreciative lady. But when it came to sharing, he always had to be the guy on top.

Catching a glimpse of him standing before her throne of pillows, holding Al in his arms, Meghan moved her mouth from the lucky guy's cock.

"I was wondering when you two would be back," she said, flicking her hands and pushing the three men away. Obediently, the gentlemen assumed submissive positions of standing with their legs spread, hands clasped behind their backs, cocks erect and seemingly aimed at their mistress.

Thinking them all chumps, Justin shook his head as he stepped forward. "I brought you a present," he said, arching a brow as he laid Alyssa—beautifully wrapped in evident arousal—beside Meghan.

"A well-deserved one," Meghan said, her eyes gleaming down at Al's body.

Running her hands over Alyssa's flushed skin, Meghan licked her lips. "She was just as much my fantasy as yours," she said to Justin before returning a concerned caressing glance to Al, who was so enraptured in want that she was panting to be fucked.

Meghan tsked as she shook her head. "Look at her, *pauvre, pauvre, petite bébé*." Spreading Al's silky legs, she told Justin in French how beautiful his Alyssa was. Her admission that Al was indeed his made his dick swell.

"Cherish this one," she ordered Justin.

Running a finger along Al's shaved pussy, Meghan smiled at Al's easy reception of pleasure. Meghan flicked a glance at the stud who had been enjoying eating Meghan's pussy before Justin's interruption.

"Ramone, do you want to watch me kiss this pretty little pussy? Do you want to watch me be a naughty girl and lick it?" Before he could answer, Meghan flattened her tongue against Al's tight anus then dragged her wet tongue up to her clit.

Justin's cock ached at the sight of such beauty. *Meghan's dark curly head between Al's ivory legs*. Al's dark curls shivered as her head writhed back and forth on the brocade silk pillow. A smile touched the side of his mouth. One thing that he'd learned was that his Al hated being teased.

Lifting her head, but keeping her thumb pressed against Alyssa's clit, Meghan looked at Justin. The heat burning in her eyes was hotter than he'd ever seen. If it hadn't been Alyssa who was solely responsible for creating such desire, he would have been jealous. Instead, he was swathed in Meghan's heat and engulfed by Al's tiny cries begging for release from him and him only.

"You should help me," Meghan said, her mature breasts heaving with excitement. "Hold her."

Justin knelt behind Alyssa with his knees on either side of her head. Turning first to look at him, grabbing his heart with her eyes, Alyssa licked her lips straining for his cock.

Leaning forward with his cock moving alongside her face, Justin palmed her breasts in his hands. Her skin was hot to the touch and his dick jerked in reflex.

"Look how beautiful you are, baby. Look how good you make us feel," he whispered to her. Her eyes panned the scene of the studs standing over her, their dicks hard and begging with pre-cum glistening at each tip.

She moaned, looking then at Meghan between her legs, stroking her thumb over her pussy as she licked her lips. Justin watched as the glorious flush on Al's face heightened as the understanding sunk in that she was the star of so much eroticism.

Turning her face, Alyssa licked what she could reach of his cock. Throwing his head back, Justin groaned, his cry a command to Meghan to partake of Al's sweet flesh.

Meghan's hot mouth clamped down on Al's pussy. Jerking forward, Al's head lifted from the pillows, but Justin softly caught her hair in his hands and pulled her head back between his legs, holding her steady as Meghan continued her laving of Alyssa's clit.

"Soooo good," Alyssa moaned, her eyes peering down her body to watch Meghan suck her pussy. Gripping Meghan's dark curls in her hands, she closed her eyes and turned to lick at Justin's cock again.

His muscles were corded in his neck and his cock was practically bursting to fuck her sweet wet pussy. "Damn, you look good," he moaned. "So sexy," he half-whispered to her and half-whispered to himself.

Justin couldn't help but move his cock closer and let her suck the head between her lips. "You like that, don't you? Your pussy getting licked with my dick in your mouth?" he asked, rocking his hips to push his cockhead against her full lips as she sucked and caressed him with her tongue.

Moaning, she continued to massage his dick with her lips. Justin watched Meghan pause to spread Alyssa's legs even wider, speaking nasty French to Al's pussy as she did so.

In a quick sweep, Meghan smacked her hand against Alyssa's sensitive flesh. Al's mouth snapped from Justin's cock and her whole body tightened, her face squeezed in a silent scream of pleasure.

"Naughty, naughty, pussy. Making me wait so long," Meghan scolded, giving Al's pussy another slap. "Come, Ramone. Kneel behind me," Meghan said. Hurriedly, the man obeyed, kneeling behind Meghan and stroking his long, thin curved cock against her.

"Yes, yes, fuck me, Ramone," Meghan commanded, pushing her sex back at him. Ramone gripped her hips and plunged into her, fucking her.

Returning her attention to Alyssa, Meghan sucked her pussy harder. Stroking his dick, Justin watched as she sucked Al and fingered Al's tight anus. *A few minutes more*, his body told him. That was about all he could take.

In a shock wave of pleasure, Alyssa came. Her body jolted with tremors, though it didn't stop Meghan from giving her pussy a few more sweet licks.

Impatient and now a man that Justin could respect, "Fabio" stepped forward, grabbed Ramone by the shoulder and threw him off Meghan. Roughly, Fabio flipped Meghan to her back.

"You bitch," he groaned, spreading her legs and lifting her ankles to his shoulders. Before Meghan could protest and regain command, he was fucking her so good and hard, she was too overcome with sensation to care.

Still gripping her hair in his hand, Justin guided his dick in and out of Alyssa's mouth. "That's it ... suck it, baby. You are so goddamned sexy," he moaned, watching her take him down her throat.

"Make me come," he commanded, sliding down into her heat, increasing his pace as he got closer to his release. His balls tightened at the feel of his cock touching the back of her throat.

“Ah, Alyssa ... ah, baby,” he whispered, coming in her mouth. Flipping to her belly, Alyssa savored every drop of his semen. The sight of her body stretched out before him as she started to clean drops from inside his thighs and from his balls made his dick start to harden again.

Though he knew could have fucked her all night, once she'd thoroughly licked him clean, he collapsed beside her, caressing her head against his chest, falling into a blissful sleep.

Chapter Nine

Though it was the third time he'd asked since their plane landed, Justin figured that he'd venture the question again. "Are you okay?"

Again, Al shrugged, making him sigh as he shook his head. *What now, Al? What can possibly get in the way of us now?*

He felt her soft eyes on him and wished to God that he could show himself unaffected. *Hey, you don't want to talk to me after fucking my brains out for a full week straight? No problem.*

With dread, Justin pulled his car up to her house.

Damn ... damn ... damn. He truly hadn't a clue as to what to say. Clearly, "I love you" had been the wrong thing to say. Yet, it was the only thing his heart *could* say. *"I love you, Alyssa. I want to be with you. Don't let this end."* But he couldn't bear to bring himself to say those words again and hear the booming silence that would follow.

Once he'd unloaded the last of her bags into her living room, Justin took one last shot. "So, everything is all right?" he asked.

Busying her hands with shuffling through the mail and her mind with ignoring him, she didn't even bother to look at him with her reply. "I guess I'm just anxious to get back to the shop."

Justin cast his eyes to the ceiling and gave a hollow laugh. "Was the company that bad?"

Continuing to sort through the pile of circulars and envelopes, she lifted a shoulder. "The company was delightful."

Walking over to her, Justin blew out a breath.

Damn ... damn ... damn ... but I want you, he thought, his body tense with need. After all, it'd been a whole fifteen hours since he was last inside her. He sucked in a breath as he lifted the last of her sorting from her hands.

"How about dinner tonight?" he suggested, putting the mail aside.

Quickly she stepped away from him and moved swiftly from the living room back to the foyer. "Oh ... gee..." she began, and Justin could not believe what he was hearing.

"Gee"? What the fuck!

Grinning in utter bewilderment, he shook his head. "'Gee'?" he asked, but she only shook her head. "Did I do something wrong?"

"Of course not. I've been gone a week..." she began insistently.

"You've been gone a whole week and the whole world didn't cave in." Justin cut her off, not wanting to be haunted later by any of her lame excuses. He could deal with the rejection. *Fuck, it would hurt. It would damn near kill him—but to make up bullshit and try to feed it to him?*

That would indeed be the end of him.

"I have a lot of things to catch up on," she hedged, moving away from him again.

"It's a boutique, not a retail chain operation," Justin replied, following her, wanting nothing more than to stay with her and make love to her again and again.

Don't do this, Al.

"Even if it's just a boutique, it's mine," she shot at him.

“Are you sure about that? Last time I checked the lease, it had my name on it.”

“Well, I wouldn’t want to waste your hard-earned money.”

Justin shook his head and gathered his thoughts. “Is this about Meghan?”

“No,” she answered, finally looking into his eyes.

Silently, he searched and searched her gaze, seeing the fear in them and wanting to make it go away.

“It was a gift to you,” he said, never more hurt because he couldn’t ease her doubts and even more hurt realizing that his love wasn’t enough to make her feel safe enough to free fall.

Looking away from him, she sighed. “I just want to get back to work. I don’t need any distractions,” she told him, folding her arms across her chest. “It’s going to take a lot of long hours to get that lease in my name.”

“You’re pushing me away,” he said, unable to watch her continue to do it.

“Yeah. I am.”

He laughed, though her admission cut right through him. “You don’t have to do that,” he said, shaking his head at her.

“Yes, I do,” she said softly, staring out the window.

He shook his head again. “No—you don’t. All you have to do is ask me to leave and I’ll go,” he said, already turning for the door.

“Justin?” she called out to his back.

He paused only slightly turning his head in profile. “Alyssa,” he said, feeling her name explode inside him.

“No regrets,” she said.

Justin nodded and felt himself lurch inside. “Yeah. No regrets.”

Chapter Ten

So what. He was right. The store hadn't collapsed or been swept away. If anything, it never looked better.

Truth be told, that first morning back, Alyssa almost passed right by the shop. Yes, the pink and black store awning was still there, but the window display was actually displayed. It looked phenomenal; it was like seeing an old friend who'd just had a major, complete makeover.

The black silk curtains that framed the window were gone. In their place, Carly had stenciled gold-leaf fleur de lis onto the window.

Talk about a facelift—everything looked so bright. Sunshine seemed magnetized to her windows and hers alone.

Instead of the tall palm trees fanned against the windowpanes, there were three velvet hangers, draped with the best of their French goods.

Could it be me, or does the store look ... what's the word ... Al thought ... inviting? How come I didn't think of this?

Alyssa's hands shook as she put her key into the lock. Would she recognize her own boutique?

Nope. Hell no. This is not my store, Al thought as she stepped into the store.

This store is much better than my store.

Not that there had been major changes. Just adjustments that, individually, were ever so slight. The sheer curtains over the dressing stalls were now replaced by the heavier black silk ones that had framed the window.

Al could have kicked herself for not thinking of that. *No woman wants to undress in a room with a sheer handkerchief for a door.*

The potted palms were now cleverly lined like a tree-lined street curb, blocking the view of the three stalls from the floor, giving shoppers even more privacy.

When Alyssa flipped on the satellite radio, sounds of bossa nova music poured through the speakers like crashing sea waves sweeping the shoreline of an exotic beach.

Not the usual Lilith girly stuff that Al had usually played. This music was definitely more sensual, encouraging a woman to get in touch with her seductive side—the one that used to flirt—the one who wore flowers in her hair and only dated younger men.

When Carly arrived an hour later, Al could see that she was itching to know what Al thought about the changes. However, the glow on Carly's face couldn't possibly have come from moving a few plants around.

"You're glowing," Al said, surprised that she could hear envy in her voice.

"Me?" Carly asked, blushing.

The girl was blushing. Carly didn't blush. The girl didn't even smile; she smirked.

"You're shamelessly happy," Alyssa accused.

"I can be happy," she said, shrugging. "You should try it."

"I would, but I have bills and salaries to pay," Al said coldly. *Damn ... I'm the one who should be glowing.*

The door chimed and their first customers walked in, with her brother bringing up the rear of the procession of women.

Glancing at the door, before melting into a genuine smile that Al had rarely seen on her, Carly fluttered her fingers at Brandon.

Immediately, Al headed for her office, giving her brother a pointed look that said he had better goddamn follow her.

“*Bonjour*, kiddo,” he said, slumping into a chair across from her desk.

Alyssa folded her arms over her chest and smiled down at him. “Are you fucking her?”

“Some things aren’t for your ears, Alyssa. And so what if I am?”

“She’s my employee.”

His pager went off and he sighed. “I’ve fucked many an employee in my day. Surprising, isn’t it?” he said while checking the number on his pager. “What’s with you? Did you come back with a croissant twisted up your ass? You just got back from Paris, for God’s sake.”

Al just stared at him. It was just like him to always make some big slam dunk while she was barely tipping the net.

“I’m gonna find out either from you or from Justin.”

Alyssa parked behind her desk and started shuffling papers. “I’ve been gone for a week and I have a lot to do. I know it’s not open-heart surgery or a brain transplant but it’s what I do,” she said, knowing that the last bit was really for Justin, but since he wasn’t there, Brandon would have to fill in as her bitch-slap post.

“And you do it well. Why the pissed-off attitude?”

“I want you to stop seeing her,” Al said. It was only Carly. He’d get over her in a day. She’d be over him in an hour.

“Okay.”

Stunned that he would agree so quickly, Al looked up from her invoices. “So, you will?”

He laughed. “No, I won’t. You want me to stop seeing her. I meant, okay, I hear ya. But it’s not gonna happen.”

Al slammed her hand down on the desk and gave an inward wince.

That move had always looked effective on TV.

“I have work to do.”

“Yeah. I wouldn’t want to make you miss count on those butt plugs,” he said, matching her irritation as he rose from his chair to leave.

* * * *

Because she was clearly into submissive, self-inflicted torture, Alyssa dropped in on her father—rather Magda—because her father would never in his life buy a loft in the West Loop. Dr. Moore was a Gold Coast brownstone kind of man. He collected French antiques and took full advantage of being centrally located in the heart of the One Magnificent Mile by taking his morning run along Oak Street Beach, picking up mantle pieces from Lalique. He wore Brooks Brothers and was a member of the Lyric Opera. He hated Blue Man Group.

That was then. This is now.

“Alyssa! What a surprise! Honey, Alyssa’s here,” Michelle, Magda’s lover, greeted her at the garage-like front door of the loft.

Magda met Michelle at an art exhibit hosted annually by the city. Magda, who hated modernism and actually owned a Renoir, was relieved to learn that Michelle, with whom she'd been chatting for several minutes, was not a fan of the artist. It was a relief not to have to lie and claim that she understood how a mosaic of pigeon droppings was art.

Knocking back a double, the intake of white wine and trying to figure out how the hell to describe six warehouse floors of said art (the pigeon poop being labeled by critics as the best of the bunch), Michelle was writing a story for the city newspaper.

"But really, I was trying to figure out what Magda had going on underneath that dress. They say you can always tell by the size of a man's—excuse me—girl's hands," Michelle had told Al when they first met.

Several years later, Dr. Moore shifted from brownstone to loft, from Renoir to a newfound appreciation for abstract expressionism, from French antiques to a few scatterings of retro IKEA.

Breezing in from the kitchen and bringing the scent of curry and cilantro with her, Magda, dressed down in jeans and CK tee shirt, greeted her daughter. *"Bonjour! How was the trip?"*

"It was wonderful," Al said, feeling a pang because she wished that was a lie. It'd be easier if it hadn't been so wonderful. It'd be easier if a week with Justin Taylor had been more like a week wandering around in a desert only to land in the pit fire of hell.

But it hadn't been hell at all. It had been sheer heaven and she knew she was a sick fool to let go of it.

Still, far better to be safe and prosperous. She had her boutique to think about. She would never allow herself to again be the woman that she'd been with Keith—weak and dependent. Easily breakable with one swift blow from the wind.

"So, what's with the face?" Michelle asked, taking a seat beside Al on the sofa. "You don't look like a girl who just arrived from Paris. Did you and Justin have a good time?"

"We had a very, very good time. I just have a lot of work to do after being gone for a week."

"For heaven's sake, Alyssa. It's only a boutique. You were in Paris for only a week," Magda said, trailing back to the kitchen.

"I'm really tired of everyone belittling what I do," Al said to Michelle, who patted her hand.

"No one's belittling what you do. We're just concerned about everything that you don't do."

"Like?"

"Eat. Sleep," Michelle said.

"I eat. I sleep."

"Have mad, passionate, crazy love affairs," Magda called out from the kitchen, kicking up a deep blush on Michelle's face.

"Why does everyone keep assuming that I don't?" Al said, regarding the ceiling. "I told you that Justin and I had a very, very good time," she unnecessarily shouted out to Magda because she was again returning from her curry on the stove.

"So, why are you here instead of with him continuing to have a very, very good time?"

"I had work to do."

"So, why are you here?" Michelle asked, truly confused.

“Because I just got back and I thought you’d want to know that I arrived okay,” Al shot back at her, though the force of the answer was for Magda.

“So, why didn’t you just call?” Michelle said.

“From Justin’s place, or while you were at your place with Justin ... or, while you were on your way to see Justin or he was on his way to see you ... or...” Madga went on, deepening the line drawn in the sand.

“Because a very, very good time doesn’t make a relationship,” Al huffed, throwing herself to her feet.

Michelle gave her a sympathetic smile. “No. But a lifetime of friendship is a good place to start.”

“I knew Keith all of my life,” Al pointed out, folding her arms across her chest.

Magda laughed, shaking her wigged head. “And what did you know about him all of your life? He was the Eddie Haskell of the bunch and you married him.”

“I loved him.”

“You were afraid of Justin’s love for you,” Magda said, nailing Alyssa’s heart to her ribcage. “I know what that kind of thing looks like. You’re so afraid of the right thing you do everything to avoid choosing it.”

For a moment, Al gave in to the truth. But her heart was used to the lie. “That’s ridiculous.”

Magda shrugged. “I was married to your mother for twenty years. It’s not ridiculous. It’s an unfortunate dilemma that many fail to figure out in their lives,” she said, wrapping her arms around Al’s shoulders. “It is a frightening thing to go after what you want. But you only have this one chance to do it.”

“I’ve gotta go,” Al said, pushing away from the embrace. “I’m meeting Keith for dinner.”

Magda let out a sharp guffaw. “I never thought I’d say this but *good*. Maybe you can begin to live your life by letting go of him and all the damage that he did.”

“It’s just dinner, Magda.”

“Well, Alyssa, this is just your life. Just yours. No one else’s.”

* * * *

Knowing that it wouldn’t be Alyssa standing at his door, wanting his forgiveness and love, Justin closed his eyes from the fantasy before opening it.

“Jesus. You look five hundred times worse than she does,” Brandon said, pushing past Justin and making himself look at him.

“Shouldn’t you be at the hospital?” Justin asked. Brandon was dressed in jeans and t-shirt—unusual, even when he wasn’t working.

“Contrary to popular belief and reruns of ER—we don’t live at the hospital,” he answered, grinning with news but pausing a moment to take in Justin’s gloominess. “What happened in Paris? I thought you were the romantic one and here I am sweeping the girl of my fucking dreams off her feet.”

Catching the puzzled look on Justin’s face, with a flourish, Brandon presented a brilliant engagement ring from his back pocket.

“I came to ask you if you’d be my best man.”

“Don’t you think that you should ask her first?”

Brandon chuckled with arrogant disbelief. "Come on," he said, spreading his arms open. "It's in the bag."

Justin couldn't argue with that. A woman would be a fool to say no to his intelligent, lovable, good-humored, loyal, successful best friend.

"Do I know the lucky lady?" he asked.

"As a matter of fact, you do," Brandon said, but paused. He let out a big sigh, followed by an equally broad grin. "Carly," he answered.

Justin didn't even laugh. To him, it was a bad joke that was best forgotten and never spoken of again. "Shit. Quit fucking around. Tell me who she is, really."

"Carly."

Justin stared at Brandon and wondered if it was true about those with book sense often being the ones drained of common sense.

"I could have brought you a whore back from Paris as a souvenir if I'd known that Carly was your idea of a dream girl."

Unaffected, Brandon shrugged. "I'm serious."

Justin shook his head and laughed. "Brandon, she came over here two nights before I was set to leave for Paris and begged to blow my dick. She didn't give a shit that I wanted Alyssa, not her."

"I'm marrying her. And so what? Everybody's got a past."

"Hers spreads over several volumes."

"Well, so does mine. And, so does yours and yet I'm not saying much about you taking my sister to Paris so that you could sleep with her."

"It was your idea," Justin retorted.

"That's not the point. The point is that we're adults. We've all made choices," Brandon said, taking a seat on the sofa. The ring glinted from his fingertips. "I love Carly. She loves me," he said, staring at the ring.

"And, it's as simple as that," Justin said, knowing just how right his friend was.

"Yep, it's just as simple as that."

* * * *

So, at least I came to my senses about Keith, Al thought, proud of the fact that she didn't even bother to cancel her dinner with Keith.

For once, let him be the one sitting alone and disappointed.

But she should have known better. Keith was not the kind of man to take being stood up lightly. Bracing herself for the blow, she went downstairs to open the door to whatever she had coming to her.

Al blinked, surprised and much too giddy to see Justin's beautiful person before her.

God, he looked good. His suit was creased, reflecting what a long day he'd had. His hair was just a bit tousled.

Had he been worried?

He was holding a folded document, offering it to her.

"I only wanted it because it was a part of you," he said.

Taking it from his hands, Al read the papers. Her heart clutched when she realized that she was reading the lease to her boutique.

He bought it. The building, that sunny corner ... he bought it.

And he's giving it to me, she realized, reading her name as owner.

“I don’t want the boutique. I never needed an investment. I just wanted you.”

“But...”

He stepped through the door. His body sheltered her but dared her to tell him no. “I love you. What more do you need to know, Al?”

“I’m not just some...” Al sighed. “You can’t just buy me, Justin.”

“I love you.”

Placing her hands on his chest, she wished that she hadn’t touched him. The man simply felt too good.

“It’s not that simple.”

“It is.”

“No...”

“It is,” he said lifting her to him.

His kiss was too perfect. *How can it be so right?* The fit of his body so snug. *How can it be a match?*

This is Justin. This is me...

“I love you,” Al murmured into his mouth.

Breaking the touch of his lips to hers, he smiled down at her. “Say it again.”

“I love you,” she said closing her eyes, letting her whole body drink up those three little words.

“Again,” he moaned, licking into her mouth.

“I love you. I love you. I love you. I love you,” Al chanted, letting it all go and letting the words flow with her fears disappearing on the pending joy ... she let it all it flow right into Justin’s waiting heart.

The End

About the Author:

Newly single again, Nikki Sparks shares her Chicago bungalow with her two best friends and her toddler daughter.

Between running a wedding design business, playing chauffeur for her daughter’s ballet classes and play dates, and standing in as den mother for her two roommates, plus feeding the “house zoo” of two cats, three dogs and one ever-changing goldfish, Nikki somehow finds enough time to crank out ten pages a day.

She has written over thirty romances, never dreaming that she’d actually write for more than just kicks. After much encouragement from her friends, she chose Stripped as her first submission. Stripped is her first published work.

Forever a city girly-girl at heart, when she’s not working on a wedding or a book, or reading Chicka Chicka Boom Boom for the one-hundred and eighty-seventh time to her daughter, she’s out on the town hanging with the girls, flirting with the boys, raising all kinds of mischief, and mixing a lot of naughty with nice.

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