



**TRIXIE STILLETTO**

**SCARECROW &  
BETSY MCGEE**

**Book V**

**HOT  
TAMALE**

## SCARECROW & BETSY MCGEE

### BOOK V: HOT TAMALE

...He moved from her bed, then began a slow strip. Betsy gulped, feeling as if she was suddenly running a fever. Roarke was built like a fantasy, but he was real, he was here, and he was hers. Warm, hard as steel in all the right places and the fact he wanted her was becoming increasingly obvious.

The thought of begging for him wasn't a problem. In fact, Betsy couldn't wait any longer. When he started to pull the belt from his pants like he was in no hurry, Betsy took things into her own hands.

She struggled up on her knees and replaced his hands with her own. The belt whipped away from the cloth and her hands worked at his waistband. While they were busy opening the button fly, her lips were trailing a line down his flat abs. When she reached the opening and the top of his zipper, she bit lightly, then used her tongue to soothe the small mark her teeth had left. She didn't stop there, however. As she lowered the zipper tab by tab, she left wet, open-mouthed kisses over his warm flesh.

"Betsy, darling," Roarke begged, "let me love you."

"No," she breathed when she finally freed his clothing. "Let me love you. There was a time they were holding me captive when I almost didn't believe I'd ever get to do this. I want to enjoy every minute."

She buried her face against the heated skin of his groin and rubbed her nose and mouth back and forth, feeling the contrast between the hot, smooth steel of his cock and the soft, springy bed of hair. He was like a lion, full of pride and strength, and she was his mate. She wanted to show him with everything in her that she was ready for him...

# PRAISE FOR SCARECROW & BETSY MCGEE

## *Triple D*

“5 Magical Wands!...Ms. Stiletto knows how to keep just the right amount of suspense, sexual tension, and humor to make this short read well worth it.”

—Astraea, *Enchanted Ramblings*

“4 Angels!...A tasty introduction to this series. More please, Ms. Stiletto!”

—Tallyn, *Fallen Angels Reviews*

---

## *Mattress Games*

“5 Hearts!...The continued relationship of Betsy McGee and Roarke is delightful.”

—Ellen, *The Romance Studio*

---

## *Chinese Delight*

“5 Angels!...What wonderful characters: Roarke, the strong law enforcement agent, and Betsy, the single mom, who has gotten under his skin.”

—Jessica, *Fallen Angels Reviews*

## BOOKS BY TRIXIE STILLETTO

*The Blackout*  
*Body Slam*  
*The Coming*  
*Destiny's Escort*  
*The Interview*  
*Lucky's Strike*  
*The Quarterback*  
*Trixie's Treats*

### ***Scarecrow & Betsy McGee***

*Book I: Triple D*  
*Book II: Mattress Games*  
*Book III: Chinese Delight*  
*Book IV: Planes, Trains, & Betsy*  
*Book V: Hot Tamale*

### ***With T. D. McKinney***

*Eight Is Never Enough*

SCARECROW & BETSY MCGEE  
BOOK V:  
HOT TAMALE

---

BY  
TRIXIE STILLETTO

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC  
<http://www.amberquill.com>

SCARECROW & BETSY MCGEE, BOOK V: HOT TAMALE  
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

This book is a work of fiction. All names, characters, locations, and incidents are products of the author's imagination, or have been used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, locales, or events is entirely coincidental.

Amber Quill Press, LLC  
<http://www.amberquill.com>

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be transmitted or reproduced in any form, or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher, with the exception of brief excerpts used for the purposes of review.

Copyright © 2006 by Trixie Stilletto  
ISBN 1-59279-502-1  
Cover Art © 2006 Trace Edward Zaber

Layout and Formatting provided by: ElementalAlchemy.com

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*For Tom. You're the reason for everything.*

# CHAPTER 1

The sun on Betsy's back was hot. The sand was warm and soft. There were the soothing sounds of waves shushing slowly to the shore and she could hear Bobby's excited cries of delight merging with the frenetic barking of their dog in the distance.

He was safe and sound. Betsy knew no worries on that account. She felt a caress down her arm to where her elbow was bent in relaxation. The touch was soft but instantly caused heat to flare from the point where the finger pressed down through layers of skin to her nerves and into her bloodstream. From there it sped like a runaway train on a long downhill slope of track.

Betsy smiled. *Trains and amazing sex.*

She'd done that not long ago, and every time she saw a train go past or heard the sound of a lonesome whistle in the distance, the memory of that trip never failed to get her blood thrumming and her clit swelling.



## *HOT TAMALE*

But it was the touch of a warm hand on her skin and the feel of soft, hot sand beneath them that was causing her blood to heat now. He was such an attentive lover. He never failed to bring her to exquisite release. His name formed in her heart. The only name she thought of now. *Roarke.*

Betsy smiled at the thought. At New Year's she had spent the most amazing holiday of her life. She'd been with Roarke so that had made it memorable by itself. They'd stayed in a building made of ice. They should have been frozen. Instead, she had been afraid they would melt everything they touched.

But it wasn't just the memory of hot ice that made her smile. There were amazing tastes and smells imprinted on her mind.

Vodka and caviar. Betsy could almost taste them on her lips. Potatoes and fish eggs and Roarke. Oh, but what a wonder was made from two ordinary things and one extra-ordinary man. What a wonder when Roarke had taught her another level of passion she hadn't believed possible. She could feel the smile spreading across her face. Yes, New Year's would never be quite the same again. She wondered if the heat she was feeling was from the memory or something else.

*No.* She shook her head groggily. *I'm not in a building of ice. I'm on a beach now.* But the sensation was the same.

In her mind, Betsy sighed and looked into Roarke's wonderful eyes. They were warm and loving. She smiled, and before she could say a word, his lips were meeting hers, sending her spinning from groggy pleasure to hot need in seconds. He pulled her into his arms and it was as if their clothes melted away because they were skin to skin. She could feel the reassuring beat of his heart under the skin against her breast. Its rhythm matched her own.

Then she felt the warmth of his lips around her nipple as he tongued and sucked her to her first orgasm. Like always, being with Roarke was unlike anything she'd ever known or imagined. Since meeting him less

## *HOT TAMALE*

than a year ago, Betsy had wondered more than once if she was becoming addicted to sex. That thought wasn't disturbing but perplexing. After her time with her ex-husband Robert, she'd wondered if she was one of those women who simply weren't sexual. Before Roarke, Betsy would have said man-made orgasms were way over-rated.

But as her body responded just to the memory of Roarke's touch and taste, Betsy knew that wasn't the case. Betsy smiled as the heat of the dream encompassed her. She could feel Roarke's hot skin and the way his cock was growing with his own excitement. She could feel it as if it was nestled at the juncture of her thighs waiting impatiently to complete their union, as if he was actually with her, not just part of her dream.

She would be happy if she never had to wake up. It would be sheer heaven if she could stay in Roarke's embrace for the rest of her time on earth.

There was a prick on the back of her hand. It didn't hurt. It was annoying. Betsy knew dreamtime was over now and the nightmare was about to begin again.

She frowned. If only she could go back in time. She'd never try to outfox the men who had followed her home from work that night.

If only she had called Roarke. If only she hadn't tried to be a super-spy.

If only...

\* \* \*

"God damn it! How could you let this happen?" Roarke raged as he got in the face of his boss Peter Melrose.

He didn't care if he was being insubordinate. He didn't care if he got docked, suspended or even fired. But damn it, they knew what they were dealing with, and still Melrose and the higher-ups hadn't taken care of one of their own. Roarke didn't give a good damn that Betsy

## *HOT TAMALE*

wasn't officially on the payroll; she was just as important a part of the S.A.S. team as any of the lame-brained, newly-trained operatives who stood around outside Melrose's office scratching their butts and waiting for orders. Betsy had more courage, more gumption in her pinkie than any other member of S.A.S, himself included. It wasn't right they had left her hanging in the wind like a sheet on a clothesline.

"Scarecrow, calm down," Melrose replied. His voice was low, but the muscle twitching at the right side of his mouth betrayed the emotion he was keeping in check.

"Calm down? Calm down? You know what she's going through. You know..." Roarke sat down heavily in a chair that faced Melrose's desk. He was on the verge of losing it, which was something he hadn't done in all his time serving his country. He bit the inside of his cheek to keep from putting his hands over his face and giving in to tears of frustration, remorse and fear. He, too, knew what Betsy was going through. The knowledge was like a stake driving through his heart.

Melrose put his hand on his shoulder. "Yes, we know. I'm sorry, son. We couldn't do anything to prevent it. She shouldn't be in this situation. In the old days, it was an unwritten rule that families weren't to be touched. But these aren't the old days. Today's bad guys don't follow any written or unwritten rules."

"She isn't family," Roarke said miserably.

That was another cross for him to bear. She should be family. He'd known it for a long time, had been waiting for the perfect time. Well, he knew what the perfect time was. It should have been on a train going through Canada. It could have been in an icy but perfect retreat that, at the time, seemed like it was carved just for them. Hell, he should have realized the perfect time to ask her had been just a few nights ago when they'd been sitting on her couch necking, while her son played video games on the floor above them. Roarke felt the pain double inside his heart. How he wished he could go back in time. Even just forty-eight

## *HOT TAMALE*

hours.

Melrose gave him a measured look.

“Officially,” Roarke ended.

Melrose sighed. “We both know that doesn’t matter to you. It also doesn’t matter to me or to the agency.”

Roarke looked away from Melrose feeling perilously close to losing control again. “It’s my fault they found her, isn’t it?”

Melrose hesitated just long enough Roarke knew the truth.

“When she crossed the border and rescued me in Quebec...that’s when they put a big red mark on her.” It wasn’t a question.

“Yes,” Melrose answered anyway. “Don’t beat yourself up over it, though. The way things were going they’d have found her soon enough. Ever since you busted up their diamond ring by going into the Triple D Spa, the cartel has had you and her on their radar. You’ve been on the hit list.

“We thought she was safe because she wasn’t part of the agency. Now we know they’ve been watching her almost since the first. I guess the Quebec incident moved her to the top of the list.”

Roarke rubbed a hand over his face. He was exhausted. It had to be the reason his emotions felt like they were all on the surface of his skin.

For a man known throughout the government agencies as having nerves of steel and willing to take any risk to accomplish his goal, Roarke felt like he was torn in two. He wouldn’t rest, though. Not until he had Betsy back in his arms. But he also couldn’t take any chances. Not this time.

“Can you guarantee me her son is safe?”

“Yes. We’ve got him and his grandparents in a safe house guarded ’round the clock by the United States Marshals,” Melrose said. “The marshals are very motivated. They won’t let anything or anyone harm them.”

“I wish I could say the same for Betsy.”

## *HOT TAMALE*

Melrose paused. "You can't, and if you want to really help her you've got put every thing else aside and focus on what we can do. You can't go back in time and prevent this from happening."

Roarke knew Melrose was right. Having been a captive before he knew too well what she was going through and it was eating him alive. But he wouldn't let her down. Not after all the times she'd saved him. "What do we know?"

Melrose smiled. "Here's the file. Read and memorize it. I don't want any of it leaving this office. When you're done, I'm sure you'll not only be surprised at the principals, but you'll be ready to work out a plan with me to get her back home."

Melrose left Roarke and he settled down to read through the four-inch thick folder.

## CHAPTER 2

Sleep deprivation.

Whenever Betsy saw the tactic used in television shows and movies, she thought it was overdone. After all, anyone who had raised a child almost single-handed knew what real sleep deprivation was.

They had let her close her eyes once—and she'd had a wonderful, if disjointed, dream about being on a bed of ice and then on a warm beach, while Roarke made love to her—but that had been short and rudely interrupted. Now, every time her eyes closed, even a little bit, they jerked her awake. They must assume standing against a hot, hard concrete wall, while they alternately tried things like loud noises followed by shining bright lights in her eyes, then total darkness was torture. Ha.

If they wanted to torture her they should try making her watch a *Three Stooges* marathon with a bunch of nine-year-old boys or ride the Tilt-A-Whirl while a seven-year-old was heaving up a combo of cotton

## *HOT TAMALE*

candy and Slurpee. That was torture. This was just tedious.

When her head whirled like she was riding the aforementioned carnival ride, Betsy frowned. The other was a little worrisome. They were giving her something. It didn't take a genius to figure out they weren't pricking her skin every couple of hours just for the hell of it, although she didn't doubt her captors had the kind of sicko sense of humor to find that funny. Whatever drug it was, it didn't have a future on the black market or for recreational uses because the high sucked and the coming down was even worse.

Still, she supposed, things could be worse. She could have been stuck outside in the cold of a Buffalo winter. Although Roarke had showed her a few things cold weather was good for when they'd been stuck overnight north of Quebec City at New Year's. Betsy smiled. Ah, Quebec...now there's a place she'd love to visit again. She hadn't really had a chance to play tourist between running from the bad guys and the good guys while trying to stay alive.

But Quebec and being made love to on a shimmering block of clear, beautiful ice were in the past. Today she was anything but cold.

Wherever she was being held it was hot—tropical hot—so hot the concrete wall they were currently making her stand against was sweating profusely. No, wait a minute, that was her, not the concrete.

She shook her head and tried to clear her vision. She was so damn thirsty when she ran her tongue over her cracked lips all she felt was dryness.

*Roarke, please hurry. I don't know how much more I can stand.* Betsy tried to fight her way back to the beach dream and hold off the feeling of terror that was starting to edge closer and closer to her heart. She had to stay strong—mentally and physically. Because Betsy knew the only way she could survive now was by calling on all her mental reserves.

But those reserves were being stretched thin. She told herself it was

## *HOT TAMALE*

the drugs, not the worry about what they would try next. She told herself she had to hold on because Roarke would be coming to get her soon. He wouldn't let her down.

She bit her lip as a wave of terror-laced nausea rolled up inside her. She needed to hold that terror off just a little longer. One inch at a time.

\* \* \*

Roarke was a hundred meters outside the compound at the edge of a Mexican forest. There were five highly trained warriors with him and they had been dropped into the jungle via a fast, super quiet Army helicopter. It was a flawless mission so far and Roarke should be confident everything was going to work like they'd planned.

He wished they had an entire squadron with him able to rush the barrier and grab Betsy up. In fairness he had almost a platoon backing him up. Peter Melrose along with two surgical rated medics and a CH-47 Chinook helicopter were waiting two-and-a-half clicks north of them. They also had enough firepower to blow a good chunk of this portion of Mexico into the next decade should they need it.

Melrose, who a couple of weeks ago had been on Roarke's short list of candidates as a mole inside S.A.S., had been pretty amazing, all things considered.

After Roarke had read the file Melrose gave him, he had come up with this plan. He expected Melrose to mouth platitudes about budget constraints or wasting too much manpower for a civilian rescue. Instead, Melrose had okayed the plan and initiated the order through the chain of command to get the Ready-Alert squad, which took men from the elite special forces of each branch of the service and combined them into one super force, on the ground in Mexico. Roarke was aware what kind of effort it had taken to push the request through channels as quickly as Melrose had.

They also had the complete cooperation of the Mexican government, which had made this plan come together smooth as vodka



## *HOT TAMALE*

and caviar.

He almost groaned when he thought of vodka and caviar. What a heady experience that had been, sipping the fine liquor from Betsy's body. And the briny nectar of the caviar, shared from her tongue to his? He got hard again just thinking about it. She was the most giving and sharing lover he'd ever had. More, she was his heart.

Roarke pushed those memories from his mind when what he really wanted to do was pull them closer. But he had to concentrate. Focus on the job at hand. He thought again of the plan and the surprise he'd felt at having the entire agency back him up on this.

Roarke had figured Melrose would be content to stay back in Buffalo and coordinate the op from there, like he did most S.A.S. operations. But Melrose surprised him again by hopping the plane from Buffalo to Houston with Roarke.

Now Roarke was glad to have the backup. Still, he wished Betsy was beside him right now. He wondered what she would have said as they sat waiting and watching. He thought back to the other times they'd passed the time waiting for something to happen. Thinking about the Giannelli mattress factory brought a smile to his face and returned arousal in him.

Then there was the time when they'd stumbled onto the slavery ring running through the Chinese restaurant.

Their every adventure had brought them closer, even as they'd put away the bad guys.

That thought made his smile fade and guilt raise its head. Because of him, Betsy had gotten knocked out and put in extreme danger. Of course, compared to now, the Chinese affair had been child's play.

He should have stayed away from her after that, he told himself now. He should have stayed the hell away from her and now she'd be safe at home with Bobby.

Maybe her heart would be broken, but that was better than this

## *HOT TAMALE*

alternative.

Roarke pushed that thought from his mind. He couldn't think about his regrets, though they were numerous. It would keep him from pulling this operation off.

Roarke had never been one to believe in woo-woo things, things outside the realm of what he could see, feel and hear before meeting Betsy. He did now, even though he wasn't comfortable with their explanations. But now, staring into the compound, he knew they were close to her. He could feel her presence and her fear as clearly as he could feel the sweat popping up on his skin before sliding down his spine under his heavy Kevlar vest.

Every instinct in his body was urging him to rush in, find her and cart her to safety. Training and years of self-discipline was the only thing keeping him from doing just that.

The timing wasn't right. He couldn't risk the lives of the soldiers with him at this moment and storm the place. They were out-numbered fifty to six. Although he was tempted, he wanted to be able to get her out safely. Going in now at the height of the afternoon spelled nothing but trouble. He knew waiting was the right choice. And he knew if it were only his life on the line, he would have already been inside.

So he watched and waited with his new Ready-Alert friends and tried to project from his mind to hers that he was coming for her.

*Soon.*

Perhaps it was the heavy jungle that surrounded them. It breathed life and death like the deadly predator he knew it could become. It also exuded a power that couldn't be ignored. Instead of succumbing to any negativity he used the power to feed the pulse of his heart, as he tried to will his strength across the open area, into the building he knew held his beloved. He willed that Betsy would be able to feel his strength and to gain strength to hold on for just a little longer from his thoughts, his heart. While his psyche was busy, his outer shell was equally busy.

## *HOT TAMALE*

He noticed movement at the compound's front gate. He straightened and lifted his field glasses to verify what he was seeing. He'd been expecting this development, just not so soon in their stakeout.

He would recognize that man anywhere, even though Roarke had only seen pictures of him. He'd never seen a picture at Betsy's, but that wasn't surprising given the way the asshole had left them. What did surprise Roarke was the way he felt his temper boiling at the sight of the guy. He looked down, a bit surprised to see his gun was out and the finger was at the ready on the trigger.

One shot. That's all he needed.

Carefully, with great restraint, Roarke holstered the gun. Shooting was quick and easy. This man didn't deserve either. He deserved to be pummeled over and over, until he was screaming for mercy. Roarke smiled.

The man hidden in the vegetation twenty-five yards to his left shifted slightly, as if readying for all hell to break loose. Roarke held him still with a simple movement of his palm.

This sealed it. The intel they had was correct and now Roarke had even more of a score to settle. He tamped down his anger. He would get his payback. The idiot in his viewfinder would rue the day he'd ever hurt Betsy. Roarke would make the bastard pay.

\* \* \*

Betsy jerked at the sound of the steel door to her prison opening. She was so tired she didn't know how much longer she could stand this. She had cried all the tears she had inside for Bobby and for Roarke. She'd even cried tears for herself. She wanted to be strong, but she knew she was weakening. She tried to remember what she'd learned from watching and working on the other cases with Roarke.

When the door opened, she steeled herself to make it through the next game her captors had planned. She would stay tough because deep

## *HOT TAMALE*

inside she knew Roarke would be coming to get her. All she had to do is hang on until he got here. No matter how long it took and what these guys tried to do to her. She could cry and feel sorry for herself after Roarke got her home.

The door opened and a man was shoved inside before it was slammed shut. Betsy blinked. She couldn't be seeing what she thought she was. It had to be an illusion. But the illusion whirled on her and illusions didn't do that, did they?

"Robert? Is that you?" Betsy shook her head wondering if she was imagining things. When she opened them, she looked into the real, live face of her ex-husband. "Oh, my God, Robert, it is you."

"Betsy. God, Betsy, what have they done to you?" Robert, don't-ever-call-me-Bobby, said as he looked at her, a grimace of distaste on his tanned, sweaty face.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I'm here because you are, I'm sure," Robert said. He shook his head. "Those guys didn't have to hit me. I think they must've broken something."

Betsy made a face—one she was sure she hadn't made since Robert had been living with her and Bobby. But then she hadn't really heard a grown man whine like Robert was doing since then either. She'd almost forgotten how ridiculous it sounded.

"Let me see," she said instead of telling him to just grow a spine. She pretended to look closely at his face. As she expected, there wasn't a mark on him. "You're fine. Now tell me why you're here."

Robert shook his head. "Still the same old Betsy. If just once you'd ever showed an ounce of femininity we wouldn't have ended up splitting. I honestly don't think you know how to be a woman."

The old Betsy, the woman who put up with a sniveling, cheating wimp of a husband for ten years, would have apologized for the lack Robert saw in her. Betsy wasn't that woman now. She hadn't been

## *HOT TAMALE*

since a night eight months ago when she met Roarke and proved to herself what she was capable of.

“Whatever, Robert. Why are you here? And where is here?”

Robert looked at her. She held his stare without backing down.

“We’re in Mexico. About a hundred kilometers west of Cozumel,” Robert said.

Well, that explained the humidity Betsy had felt weighing down on her like lead. It also explained why she felt drained. The last she remembered she was trying to trick the guy who was following her home from work on a cold, rainy May afternoon in Buffalo.

“What day is it?” she wondered.

“It’s Monday.”

*Damn. I’ve lost four days.* “God, I hope Bobby is okay.”

Robert looked at her. “You should’ve thought of that before you butted in on something that was none of your business.”

Betsy frowned. “Oh, cut it out, Robert. Don’t act like you care. You haven’t thought of Bobby once. Speaking of which, is this where you’ve been hiding like the rat you are all this time? What happened to your bimchette of a secretary? Did she get tired of your, let’s say, premature release in the sack-a-rini?”

Robert stalked closer to her and for a moment Betsy didn’t like the look in his eyes. It was more than the indifference she’d seen the day he’d left her and Bobby, but it almost made her shiver. His eyes looked like those of a desperate snake that knew it had to strike or get eaten.

“Look, if you know what’s good for you, you’ll give these people what they want.” He gripped her arm tightly. “They’re not going to take it easy on you just because you’re a woman and mother.”

“What are these men to you, Robert?” Betsy asked. Then it hit her. “Oh, my God, you’re a bigger idiot than I thought, aren’t you? When you left, it wasn’t for another woman. You got involved with the cartel, didn’t you?”

## *HOT TAMALE*

“Listen, bitch, don’t talk to me that way. I’m an important part of their operation. They need me. They respect me.”

Now Betsy laughed. “What a joke. They don’t respect you. No one does. They never have. You can’t respect a weasel.”

The slap knocked her head back and nearly sent her reeling. Betsy tasted blood in her mouth, where her teeth had cut the inside of her lip. But she wouldn’t give him the satisfaction of seeing that he hurt her.

“Well, Robert, that’s what I’ve come to expect from you. Any man who’d walk off and leave a great son like Bobby and wife like me is also coward enough to hit a woman who’s weakened by sleep deprivation and drugs.”

“Baby, you’re no prize. I’ve found hundreds of women down here who are ten times better looking, know the right way to treat a man and aren’t a big, homely cow too,” he snarled and raised his hand to her again.

Betsy didn’t cry out or back away. She was very proud of the scorn in her voice as she gave it right back to him. That’s another thing she owed Roarke. She knew the women she’d been last summer wouldn’t have been able to stand up to Robert. She was no longer that woman. Thank you Roarke, she said silently.

Instead, she laughed as she said, “Robert, you couldn’t find hundreds of women in a tribe of Amazons, and certainly none more beautiful than me. But then, you’re an idiot as well as an asshole.”

She was ready this time when he moved to hit her in the chops. When he got close enough and was at his most vulnerable, she raised her leg and kicked him with all her might, right in his little brain. His howl of pain as he crumpled to the floor gave her some satisfaction. She’d been a bit worried because she knew his manhood was less than remarkable in the best of situations. This wasn’t the best situation. With her eyesight a little blurry and the drugs still swimming through her bloodstream, she’d been afraid she’d miss the small target.

## *HOT TAMALE*

“That was for leaving Bobby,” she said. “And this is for stealing all the money I worked hard to earn for us.” She stepped forward and kicked him again. She was just aiming for anywhere in his midsection. When her foot sunk into soft tissue, she knew she’d hit his stomach.

“That’s also for not once giving me an orgasm in ten years of marriage. I’ve found a man who can give me fifty a day and guess what? He’s hung like a stallion and going to beat the living shit out of you when he gets here.”

Betsy started to turn away, but couldn’t resist firing one parting shot. “By the way, Robert, if I were you, I’d back off the tortillas a bit. You look like an elephant and smell like shit.”

Robert’s answer was another whimper. Betsy smiled grimly. Now she had to take care of business, and that meant finding a way out of here. She didn’t think the people holding her would be stupid enough to give Robert access to anything important, but who knew? People did the silliest things and it seemed like everyone seemed to think she had the brain of a peanut. Before she could even begin to search him, though, her cell door opened.

“Well, if it isn’t Agent McClellan,” Betsy said. “Figures you’d be involved in this little cluster fuck. How did a woman like you get past the screening processes to get into a tough organization like S.A.S? They must’ve been desperate.”

Libby McClellan, looking svelte and comfortable, smiled. A couple of men followed her and lifted Robert like he was a sack of potatoes and carried him out of the cell. McClellan waited until she and Betsy were alone before she spoke. “Hello, Betsy. I didn’t think the mental torture would work on you, but the men in charge of this operation always think women will crack.”

“Oh, you’re not in charge? That must be a blow to the ego,” Betsy replied. She wished she looked and felt as rested and comfortable as her new opponent. She’d just have to rely on her strength of will instead of

## *HOT TAMALE*

letting how the woman looked throw her.

"It's a temporary situation, I'm sure."

"You know, it seems to me if you'd stuck it out a little longer with the S.A.S., you could've moved up the ladder there. After all, Roarke thought you were a competent agent."

McClellan's smiled dropped. "Roarke. Well, him I regret. I felt sure the longer he stayed such a department rogue and loner, we'd have eventually been able to turn him to our cause."

Betsy bristled. "I think you sadly underestimate Roarke if that was your goal."

"Oh no, you see, Roarke was such a loose cannon he would've eventually been sanctioned or put in a desk job because, although our bosses like results, they also have to worry more and more about publicity nightmares."

"Roarke is not a publicity nightmare."

"Not now. But he would've become one. Instead, he hooked up with you."

"Oh, so it's my fault Roarke isn't with you?"

"Yes. He found you and you helped him get away at the Triple D. I...well, we had everything all planned out. We were going to make it all go down wrong and all look like it was Roarke's fault that it did. Instead, he looked like a freaking hero and saved the day. All because you butted in where you didn't belong."

Betsy laughed. "Were you at the Triple D? You should've come out and joined the fun."

"Idiots," McClellan said. "All they had to do was follow Scarecrow and then remove all the traps after he laid them. But no, they had to let their testosterone interfere."

Betsy shrugged. "Hey, you know how it is with men when they let their little heads do the thinking for them."

McClellan beamed at Betsy. "You are so right. Have you ever



## *HOT TAMALE*

wanted to be with a woman?”

The question, out of right field or perhaps left field, threw Betsy at first. “You mean as a lover?”

“Of course as a lover.” McClellan laughed and moved slowly towards her.

More so even than with Robert, Betsy felt like backing away—in revulsion.

“You are very attractive, you know. We could make a great team.”

“Thank you. I think,” Betsy said. “But I don’t really go for that. You know, it just isn’t my thing.”

McClellan shrugged. “Oh, well, it really doesn’t matter. They wouldn’t let me keep you for long, even if I could convince them we were lovers.”

*Well, I guess any lingering doubts as to how this is going to turn out are completely erased. Not that I had any doubts to begin with.*

“So what’s this about?” Betsy didn’t know why she was trying to keep McClellan talking. It wasn’t like she had any concrete plan to put into play. McClellan was between Betsy and the door, and it wasn’t like she could use the old kick in the balls routine to disable her.

“In its simplest terms, it’s about money,” McClellan said. “Deeper, it’s about respect. After you and Roarke busted the human smuggling ring in Amherst, he was the agency’s golden boy. There was going to be no stopping him.”

Betsy frowned. “Because you couldn’t be the agency darling, you decided to sell out your country? Your friends?”

McClellan laughed. “Oh, one thing I’m going to miss is your sense of humor. It’s so refreshing. Do you think it’s natural or that your lot in life formed it?”

Betsy was getting tired of everyone treating her like a particularly amusing house pet. “Natural, I guess.”

“That’s what I think. In answer to your question, the people at

## *HOT TAMALE*

S.A.S. aren't my friends. Anyway, where do friends get you? I'd rather have money."

Jesus, Betsy thought. Not once, no matter that she had a son and had been pretty desperate right after Robert left her, had she ever thought about selling her body to the highest bidder. Selling out your country would have never even occurred to her. McClellan, who had taken a vow and who was supposed to be all about honor, did it without a second thought.

"But we're running out of time," McClellan said. She looked at the dainty watch hanging on a gold chain around her neck.

Betsy knew the watch probably cost more than her house, but was also thinking it might be a good weapon to use against the woman in a pinch and at this moment, she was definitely in a pinch beyond belief. McClellan's next words took her mind off weapons momentarily.

"Roarke and the S.A.S. should be starting their op in just under forty-five seconds. I need to be out of here in forty."

Betsy felt a second of relief at the thought that Roarke was nearby. She hoped he had a lot of backup. But she knew, even if he had a platoon with him, this was going to have to be between her and McClellan.

"Don't let me hold you up," Betsy said.

McClellan looked nonplused and then laughed. "Damn, you're funny."

Betsy made her move just as the word "funny" left McClellan's mouth. She'd never actually punched a person there before.

"Shit, that hurts!" Betsy said looking down at her enemy on the floor, and at the copious amount of blood gushing from McClellan's nose as she held her hands up to try and stem the flow. "How in the world do men stand it?"

She tried to ignore the pain in her hand because she knew one right cross wouldn't keep McClellan down for long. She reached for the

## *HOT TAMALE*

woman's long black hair and yanked with all her might. Betsy thought the woman's scream sounded girlish, which was surprising since she'd always thought of the agent as one of those Amazons she'd been deriding Robert about.

Betsy didn't stop to rest on her laurels, though, as she dug her fingers into the woman's eyes, then stepped back, swung her leg in a high arch and nailed McClellan right in the chops. She was kind of surprised she actually managed to land a blow there. Betsy guessed all those hours trying to keep up with her aerobic exercise tape were finally paying off.

"Learned that on my *Tae-Bo for Everyone* tape," she said as she stood over the now unconscious woman. "Let's see about getting out of here so Roarke and the S.A.S. don't have to work so hard."

At that moment, there was a loud bang and the metal door to her prison fell inward with a thud, followed by Roarke dressed in black fatigues, carrying a very deadly-looking automatic weapon nestled in his arms and wearing an ammunition belt across his chest like he was Sylvester Stallone and Pierce Brosnan rolled into one.

Betsy felt her heart stop, then she was racing into his arms. He felt strong, warm and dear to her. Despite her desire to be strong and brave, she started crying like a baby.

His arms wrapped securely around her and held her tightly against him.

"You're shaking," she said, wonderingly. "Or is it me?"

"No, it's me. God, let me look at you. Are you okay? Are you hurt?" He pulled away and Betsy felt the loss clear through to her soul. Seeming to be satisfied she was okay, he tugged her back tight against him and kissed her stirringly. Against all odds she felt herself melting into him and wanted nothing more than to stay in his arms and feel his lips against hers for the rest of eternity.

"My God, darling, I'm so glad we found you. I've been desperate to

## *HOT TAMALE*

get to you. But they hurt you and someone is going to pay.”

Betsy smiled at him through her tears. “No, darling, it’s nothing. At least nothing that won’t heal in time. But I’ve got some news.”

It was hard, but she stepped from his arms. There was business to take care of first. There were three other men, also dressed in all in black, with their faces blacked out as well. One of the men held Libby McClellan, but Betsy was unhappy to see they hadn’t tied her hands. They were content to just keep hold of her arm. She started to comment on it, but Roarke’s next words shattered her thoughts.

“We’ve got to get you out of here. We have helos and help about two-and-half clicks from here. I need to get you there, so the docs can give you something to counteract whatever they gave you.”

Betsy nodded. “I don’t know what they gave me, but it seems like I’ve had it a lot.” The room was spinning wildly now and Betsy was amazed she was still upright. *Must be adrenalin counteracting the drugs.* Then she realized it wasn’t the room spinning, but that Roarke had picked her up in his arms and was now carrying her out the disabled door.

“Oh, that’s nice,” she said, her head finding its natural resting place on his shoulder. For a second she was tempted to go to sleep there in his arms. Something, though, was keeping her awake.

“It won’t be long now, darling. I promise,” Roarke whispered.

She felt the gentle caress of his lips across her forehead. It warmed her heart and her suddenly freezing body as well. Freezing...that didn’t make sense. She thought they were in Mexico.

*Mexico.* That popped her eyes open. “Roarke, Robert is here. He’s involved in this somehow,” she said on a gasp.

“We know, we know,” Roarke said. “The squad captured him clutching his jewels in the hall outside your cell. Darling, we really need to go over your methods. Surely one knee didn’t do all that damage?”

## *HOT TAMALE*

Betsy would have answered Roarke's question, but she was too busy watching the way his lips formed each word he said. He had the most beautiful mouth and lips, even when they were firmed with anger like now. She wondered if she had done something wrong, but then he smiled and she knew everything was going to be all right. She remembered when they curved in pleasure and the way their movement felt when he was nibbling at her lips or sucking on her clit. Then, they felt like pure heaven.

Thinking of heaven...that's where she went when she tasted him. Her memory was extraordinary and all she had to do was think it and she could taste the beginnings of his release again on her tongue. It was a taste she hungered for, the only one she knew would satisfy her completely.

As the drugs swirled in her bloodstream, along with the need and desire that just being near Roarke produced, Betsy felt nearly giddy. Perhaps this drug stuff wasn't so bad after all.

"You're really gorgeous, did you know that?" she asked instead. Her fingers were busy playing in the hair at the nape of his neck. "Every day since we met I've been amazed that you'd even looked twice at me. But you've made me special. I owe you everything for that alone. But more, you've taught me how to trust my heart again."

Roarke smiled down at her. It was the wrong place and the wrong time, but he didn't care.

"It's not me who's special," he said. "It's you, darling. You."

He sealed his vow with a kiss, but, after a moment, realized she wasn't responding. He felt as if his heart was dying until he felt her pulse. It was faint but still there. At that point, everything else ceased to matter. He raced the remaining distance to the helos, praying every step of the way.

## CHAPTER 3

Roarke strode into the hospital room, shut and locked the door behind him. Betsy smiled at him, all the while wishing she didn't look like she'd been run over several times by a large truck. Being just the tiniest bit vain, she'd asked the nurse to give her a mirror and a brush after the doctor, Roarke and Mr. Melrose had left her earlier. Now she wished she hadn't because she couldn't pretend she looked better than she felt, and she felt like warmed over dog doo-doo.

The room was nice, though, and she knew she wasn't in a traditional hospital but a large house on a small Gulf of Mexico island that had been appropriated by the military. The entire island was a base and the nurse told her it was currently being used for rehabilitating soldiers injured fighting the war on terror. She felt a little weird that she was here since she was neither military nor someone special enough to warrant such extraordinary treatment.

But seeing Roarke looking at her with such love in his eyes made

## *HOT TAMALE*

her forget all about her misgivings.

“What did the doctor tell you after you guys left?” she asked, hiding her arms under the hospital blanket. There were bruises along the inside of her elbows and the back of her hand where Robert’s pals had been none to careful sticking their needles. That bothered her more than anything else. She was deathly afraid she’d already contacted something not easily cured with antibiotic from the needles themselves.

“The doctor said you have a very strong constitution for such a beautiful woman and that we’re lucky to have you as part of the S.A.S. team,” Roarke said, moving to stand beside her bed.

“He did not!” Betsy exclaimed.

“He did. Are you questioning my integrity?”

“Never,” Betsy said, serious now. “You’re an honorable man and my hero.”

“That’s better.” Roarke lowered the metal railing and sat on the edge of the bed. He reached under the covers and took her hand in his. “Truthfully, the doctor said he wants to keep you one more night and then we can take you home.”

Betsy sighed happily. Mr. Melrose and Roarke had arranged for a video phone hookup so she could see and talk to Bobby, who was safe and sound with Betsy’s parents in a house south of Buffalo. They were having fun, but Betsy had seen the worry in her parents’ eyes and heard Bobby’s tears in his voice when the picture went fuzzy.

She desperately needed to put her arms around her son and try to explain what had happened with his father.

But she needed Roarke to hold her in his arms more. That would probably have to wait until they got back to Buffalo, though.

Vainly, she hoped when it did happen, it would be after she’d spent some quality time at a beauty salon.

“Home.” She sighed, partly from the thought of it, mostly from the fact Roarke had started tenderly massaging the sore muscles in her

## *HOT TAMALE*

hands and arms. "That sounds so good. I can't tell you how good."

"I know. It sounds good to me as well. I'd like nothing better than to be carrying you upstairs to your nice, comfortable bed."

Betsy smiled, battling back tears. It seemed she was crying so much lately. It was probably just a natural reaction to all the things she'd been through. At least that's what she hoped. Since she didn't want him to think she was whining, she decided to go for straight humor.

"Well, there are no stairs here, but I do have a big, soft bed." She tried to wiggle her eyebrows in an attempt at vampish seductress. She was afraid it was coming off looking like a reject from a car wreck. For an instant Betsy wished she looked like Libby McClellan or some other svelte, beautiful woman.

"Believe me, that's something that hasn't gone unnoticed."

Before she could respond, he was stretched beside her. The mattress dipped a bit with his weight, but he was careful not to lean against any of her injuries. He lined up their lips and started kissing her. Not the careful busses he'd been giving her, those personal yet distant touches of a brother or a caregiver to a sick child. No, finally, he was kissing her the way she'd dreamed about when she was being held.

When his tongue traced across her bottom lip asking entry, she willingly opened, needing the taste and touch of him as deep inside her as possible. As their tongues danced, Betsy wanted more. It had seemed an eternity since he'd held her in his arms with desire running the show. Like a starving woman, who had smelled the feast, but had been denied a taste, she was desperate to have it now.

"Please, Roarke," she begged shamelessly when he pulled his mouth from hers. They were only separated by scant millimeters, but Betsy felt bereft.

"I want to do more than please you," he whispered. "But..."

"What?" she asked, the need for him raging through her blood and her body.



## *HOT TAMALE*

"I don't want to hurt you." He laughed. It sounded hollow. "God, I'm not worthy. I never wanted to hurt you, yet it seems that's all I've done since the first time we met. You should be cherished, and all I can think about is my own selfish pleasure."

Betsy frowned. Obviously her man was feeling guilty. She wasn't going to stand for it.

"What will hurt is if you don't make love to me." She understood he might be thinking he'd somehow failed, but she wasn't going to stand for it. He couldn't have prevented what happened to her any more than she could have. She had realized that while she'd been here.

The solemn look on his face told Betsy it was time for straight talk. He was touching her still, which was good, but it was with reverence and tenderness. She wanted desire and tenderness, and perhaps a little urgency. God knew she was urgent to feel him thrusting deep inside her.

"Roarke, do you think I'm a capable person?" she asked, as if speaking to a particularly dense child.

"Capable? No. I think you're amazing," he said. "I've never met anyone who can do what you do. You're a wonderful mother, a great agent and an even better partner. No matter what curves life has thrown you, you step up and do what needs to be done with flair and passion. You are a natural, a wonder woman."

Betsy smiled. "Thank you."

"But, until you met me, your life was normal. Now it's dangerous. I can't begin to tell you what it felt like when I learned the cartel had taken you. I thought of what I would do, how I would tell Bobby what had happened." Roarke's voice broke on the last part.

Betsy could feel the pain and despair in his heart as surely as if it was in her own.

He took a deep shuddering breath. "I want you to know if things hadn't worked out, if I hadn't been able to get to you in time, I'd have

## *HOT TAMALE*

moved everything in the heavens and earth to make sure Bobby was taken care of.”

Betsy felt as if her heart was bursting. She felt awed and a little overwhelmed. She also didn’t want to read something into Roarke’s words he didn’t mean.

But how could she not? It had been an emotional few days for them. Though she wasn’t feeling a hundred percent yet, she wasn’t still so addled she couldn’t understand what he was saying.

“Are you saying you want Bobby?” her voice sounded shaky. She realized more than her voice was shaky. She didn’t know what Roarke’s answer was going to be. Honestly, she didn’t know if she was ready for his answer. What if she’d been horribly wrong about what he was trying to tell her? What if she was wrong about everything?

What if she wasn’t?

Was she ready for everything with Roarke? Could she risk her son’s heart as well as her own?

Roarke smiled. He reached up with his index finger and caught the tear she hadn’t even realized was trailing down her cheek.

“Don’t cry, baby. Please don’t cry. I’ve wanted him in my life from the first time I met him. Hell, he’s part of you. How could any man not want that?” He took another deep breath as if what he had to say next was even harder than what he had already said.

Betsy felt her breath hitch as well. It couldn’t be good if he was this worried.

“But?” she asked softly.

“But, hell, Betsy, what kind of a father would I make? I couldn’t even protect you, who I love with all my heart. How can I protect Bobby?”

Betsy frowned. “Roarke, being a parent isn’t just about protection. Hell, I’m not looking for protection. Neither is Bobby.”

Roarke shook his head. “That’s what a man is supposed to do for

## *HOT TAMALE*

the people he loves. Protection, that's what it's all about."

Betsy started to feel her dander rising. How could a man be such an intelligent person, brave and loyal, loving...and an idiot at the same time?

She started to use logic, then decided that wasn't what Roarke needed. So she did the next best thing. She took her hand and moved it away from his waist up his chest until it was near his head. Then she drew back and slapped him once hard.

"What the hell was that for?"

She knew he wasn't hurt. His complaint had been more for form than anything.

"I'm trying to knock some sense into that rock-headed skull of yours. Look, Roarke, I was taking care of Bobby and myself long before you came into our lives. I'm going to say this one more time. We...don't...need...protection. Got it?"

Roarke laughed.

"This isn't funny, Roarke, I mean it."

He laughed again, then turned them over so she was lying completely underneath him. Even though he was completely dressed and she was covered in a blanket and the hateful hospital gown there was no doubting what his intentions were. She could see it in his eyes and feel it in the way his cock throbbed against her.

"I know you mean it, darling. But let me finish."

"Oh," Betsy said. The feel of him against her was enticing as always, but the scent of him was driving her insane. When she'd been at her lowest point while being held by McClellan and her goons, Betsy had wondered if she would ever get to smell him again. His scent—soap, water and Roarke—was like an aphrodisiac for her soul.

She licked her lips in anticipation of getting to taste him, and his eyes narrowed as he watched. She felt her nipples thrust against the plain cotton of her gown and her clit swell in readiness. When his lips

## *HOT TAMALE*

joined hers and their tongues touched, Betsy felt as if she was finally, completely healed. She would have been happy staying just like that for the rest of their lives. Much too soon for Betsy's liking, he pulled back and rested his forehead against hers.

"I know you don't need protection, but I need to do it, for both you and Bobby," he said.

Betsy opened her mouth to refute him and stopped as his words filtered through her mind.

"You're so capable, so amazing that you scare the hell out of me, lady. Believe me, that's not something I say or think often."

"Oh." Betsy didn't know what else to say.

"'Oh' is right," he said. "Before you ran into me at the Triple D, I wasn't a man who knew fear."

"And now?"

"Now I know fear. I also know incredible delight, satisfaction and complete happiness."

"Oh, Roarke..." Betsy felt herself melting from the inside out.

Roarke smiled. "Now, ma'am, will you let me worry about protecting you and your son?"

Betsy smiled mischievously. "Well, maybe."

"Just maybe?"

"You see, I think maybe I need to be convinced of your stamina to do the job. You know, you can't be a lightweight to handle a woman like me and an active nine-year-old."

Roarke grinned. This one was anything but tender. In fact, it was so roguish that she felt every nerve ending in her body raise up in revolt and head south.

"Lightweight, huh? I beg to differ," he said. "No, I take that back. Soon you'll be begging."

He moved from her bed, then began a slow strip. Betsy gulped, feeling as if she was suddenly running a fever. Roarke was built like a

## *HOT TAMALE*

fantasy, but he was real, he was here, and he was hers. Warm, hard as steel in all the right places and the fact he wanted her was becoming increasingly obvious.

The thought of begging for him wasn't a problem. In fact, Betsy couldn't wait any longer. When he started to pull the belt from his pants like he was in no hurry, Betsy took things into her own hands.

She struggled up on her knees and replaced his hands with her own. The belt whipped away from the cloth and her hands worked at his waistband. While they were busy opening the button fly, her lips were trailing a line down his flat abs. When she reached the opening and the top of his zipper, she bit lightly, then used her tongue to soothe the small mark her teeth had left. She didn't stop there, however. As she lowered the zipper tab by tab, she left wet, open-mouthed kisses over his warm flesh.

"Betsy, darling," Roarke begged, "let me love you."

"No," she breathed when she finally freed his clothing. "Let me love you. There was a time they were holding me captive when I almost didn't believe I'd ever get to do this. I want to enjoy every minute."

She buried her face against the heated skin of his groin and rubbed her nose and mouth back and forth, feeling the contrast between the hot, smooth steel of his cock and the soft, springy bed of hair. He was like a lion, full of pride and strength, and she was his mate. She wanted to show him with everything in her that she was ready for him.

So she loved him using her hands and her mouth, tracing the length of his cock and the breadth of his balls. She had learned him well over their months together and knew just when he was getting close to his release, so she stopped just before leading him over the edge. Instead of being impatient, it was as if Roarke, too, wanted to string out their loving as long as possible.

When she finally rested on her haunches and looked up at him, she

## *HOT TAMALE*

could see how wet his penis was with a combination of her saliva and his pre-come. What made her gasp was the predatory look stamped on his face.

“Having fun, darling?”

“Honestly, yes,” she answered on a laugh. “Would you like to join me?”

\* \* \*

Roarke moved before the sentence was complete. “Absolutely.” He pulled the gown off her and pushed her until she was flat on her back. He spread her legs and just looked at her for a moment.

“You are so gorgeous,” he said as he brushed his fingers over the curls covering her mound. When he felt the evidence of her desire that was weeping steadily past her lips, his smile was brilliant. He could tell she was ready and desperate for his penetration.

“I swear I love your heat,” he whispered, content to just massage her with his fingers, slippery from her juices. “Sometimes, when I’m alone at night in my bed, I close my eyes and can almost feel you on my fingers and my tongue. Hot, utterly delicious. My Betsy.”

\* \* \*

Betsy shivered, but not from any cold or medical problem. Her only problem was a driving need to have him come inside her. When two of his fingers slipped past her lips and drummed against her hard, growing clit she moaned in delight. She wanted more. She needed to feel his hard rod pushed in her to the hilt, but perhaps this would hold her until he was ready. Especially if he touched her throbbing clit again. As if reading her mind, his fingers plucked her like she was a violin. Her reaction was a noise that started deep in her throat and rushed out on a moan.

“That’s it, my darling, come for me,” he whispered. “Let me feel your dew coating my hand. Don’t hold anything back.”

## *HOT TAMALE*

Betsy shook her head, feeling the words fighting their way out over the labored breaths struggling to work their way from her lungs. “No. Want you inside me,” she was finally able to gasp.

He smiled and moved to kiss her. She felt his fingers slip out of her and they were immediately replaced with his strong, hot cock. They both sighed when he was buried as deep as possible inside her. She could feel his trembling underneath her fingers and where her pussy walls clenched him. Betsy closed her eyes against the wave of desire and love she felt rolling over her.

When he began thrusting slowly, Betsy savored every rasp and thrill of his body against hers. She knew it would have taken only one mistake and she wouldn’t have been alive today to enjoy this or to be with him.

Soon, though, there was no room in her mind or heart for fear about what might have been. The thrust and parry of their bodies separating and merging in a mating transcended any she had ever known. When she finally reached her release, she looked in his eyes and knew he had touched her soul. No matter what, she would never be the same.

\* \* \*

The sun on Betsy’s back was hot, but the heat wasn’t overwhelming. Betsy smiled. The sand was warm and soft.

The hand stroking slowly down her bare spine, rubbing warm oil on her supple skin was strong and arousing. It knew the exact spot to press or to soothe. Her moan started deep inside and was as unstoppable as the rising tide of desire.

The kisses that followed the hands were open mouthed. When she opened her eyes and turned over, she met the beautiful dark gaze of her soul-mate.

“Hello,” she said.

His reply was kissing her deeply, twining his tongue around her own. She caught her breath. She knew he was giving her a preview of

## *HOT TAMALE*

what that tongue would do later tonight in their room when he performed cunnilingus on her.

The hands that had been stroking her spine moved over her breasts. He didn't release them from the confines of her swimsuit.

More's the pity, Betsy thought. Still he circled her nipples with precise dedication and soon they were thrusting against the stretchy material of the suit. When he plucked at them she nearly cried out at the feelings racing through her.

Finally he separated their lips. Betsy wanted to sob at the sense of loss. She had been close to coming with only a kiss and his touch on her breasts. Eventually, her breathing slowed and she was able to think about something other than the way this man could make her feel.

There were the soothing sounds of waves shushing slowly to the shore and a child's cries of delight in the distance.

Betsy smiled as she realized where they were. Roarke had brought her and Bobby to the beaches of Acapulco for a vacation. It had been a dream that was quickly taking the place of the nightmare she'd experienced the last time she was in Mexico.

The cries she'd heard in her subconscious now took on a clearer tone. Bobby was yelling and Patches was barking frenetically at the birds and the surf. Bobby and Roarke had become best buddies in the weeks since the Cozumel adventure. Betsy was thrilled at how close they had become. Thrilled and terrified at the same time.

"What are you thinking?" Roarke's voice was soft and comfortable as it rumbled against the skin of her fingers resting on his face.

"I'm thinking about you, Robert and Bobby," Betsy replied.

"I'm sorry the bastard and McClellan got away," he said, frowning.

"I'm sorry too." Betsy paused and turned her head to watch Bobby playing in the surf. "I wouldn't have wanted Bobby to go through a long, drawn out trial learning that his father is a traitor but..."

"But you wanted Robert to get what he deserved?"



## *HOT TAMALE*

“Yes. How could I have ever been so wrong about him? At one point in my life I thought he was the perfect husband and father. He was a dentist, for Christ’s sake, not a spy.”

Roarke tilted her face back to him and kissed her softly on her lips. “This is not your fault. You didn’t drive Robert to do anything.”

“I know. Just like you aren’t the reason McClellan turned into a rat looking for the easiest way to make a buck.”

Roarke frowned. “No. I can’t believe she told you that she was thinking she could turn me into betraying my oath to my country.”

“Yes. She said once we hooked up at the Triple D, you changed. She said she thought about trying once to get you to flip on the mattress factory job, but you were so focused on me that she knew it was a waste of time. Were you that focused on me?”

Betsy kind of expected Roarke to squirm a little on this and she certainly didn’t expect a straight answer. She knew how she felt about him, and she thought she knew how he felt about her. The question was did he know? She held her breath as she waited to see what he said.

“I think so. I’ve never, as Melrose would say, played well with others on the job. When I signed up for the S.A.S., my boss at the FBI had written me up so many times for breaking the rules that he was glad when I transferred. Right after 911 they were so intent on getting people for the agency, they didn’t mind my reputation. Hell, I didn’t mind my reputation.”

“And after the Triple D?” Betsy asked.

Roarke chuckled and lowered his lips to brush hers again. She realized they were on a public beach and her son was playing in the water only a short distance away, but she longed for this teasing to stop and the real play to begin. She was hungry for Roarke. So hungry she was ready to throw caution to the wind, push him over on his back and ride him to ecstasy in the sun. She managed to keep from doing that...barely.

## *HOT TAMALE*

She couldn't manage not to touch him, though and she did, putting the tips of her fingers against his chest in the spot where his tantric heart was, looking deep in his eyes. He touched her in the same spot, midway on her breast bone, his fingers warm against the sun-warmed skin of her cleavage left bare by the top part of her bathing suit.

"After Triple D, I felt as if I'd never want to work again without you at my side," he murmured.

Betsy felt the joy hum through her as his tongue brushed across her lips. She opened her mouth and let her tongue dance a playful duel with his. The kiss quickly spun hotter and hotter, until there was a thump and a wet, plastic Frisbee landed between them.

"Saved by child and dog," Betsy said, feeling as if she had just run a marathon. "I thought they were man's best friends."

"Oh, they are. But no one ever claimed they had the best timing. Speaking of timing, you wait until tonight when they're asleep," Roarke countered. The gleam of sexual need was bright in his eyes. "I've got something to show you about expanding time. I read recently if a person times it right they can give their partner layered orgasms. It's supposed to be like having one gigantic thrill ride."

"Layered, huh? I don't know if I can survive that," she said on a half groan.

His smile was roguish and knowing. "Oh, I think you'll survive. In fact, I'll insist on it."

She leaned forward ready for round two and damn their audience, but he moved, grabbing the Frisbee and standing up. He grinned down at Betsy and then said, "Later" before sending the Frisbee flying and running off to play with boy and dog.

Betsy sat up, too, and watched, feeling her heart lighten at the sight.

Roarke already had Bobby up on his strong shoulders and was holding the Frisbee high in the air, causing Patches to jump like he hadn't since his puppy days. The sun glowed on the dark hair and vital

### ***HOT TAMALE***

strength of the man, while Bobby's wet hair looked like newly cut wheat. She sighed.

Life had never been fuller.

TO BE CONTINUED...

## **TRIXIE STILLETTO**

“Life is a smorgasbord of men. I believe in diving in like a starving woman hitting an all-you-can-eat buffet!

“Seriously, I love men and have been fortunate enough to work, and play (thank God) with some of the most intriguing ones on this fair earth. There’s a little piece of each one in every hero I create. I’ve had all manner of odd jobs, such as waitress, cook and bottle washer for an all-night dive, truck driver, and, of course, writer. I write erotic romances because it’s much more fun to keep the bedroom door wide open.

“My philosophy in life is simple. Love what you do and who you’re with and they’ll love you in return. Come and join me as I dive into the next delicious dessert.”

# AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

## THE GOLD STANDARD IN PUBLISHING

QUALITY BOOKS  
IN BOTH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC FORMATS

ACTION/ADVENTURE

SUSPENSE/THRILLER

SCIENCE FICTION

PARANORMAL

ROMANCE

MYSTERY

EROTICA

HORROR

WESTERN

FANTASY

MAINSTREAM

HISTORICAL

YOUNG ADULT

NON-FICTION

**BUY DIRECT AND SAVE**  
<http://www.amberquill.com>