



MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S STEAM

OVERHEATED

SEALED WITH A KISS

LILA DUBOIS

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Lila Dubois

Dedication

For TA Chase, who kept me on schedule and encouraged me to submit this story.

And for Amanda Hitchcock and the ladies at AW Watercooler for the title help, and Ange for the best beta reading around.

Chapter One

“Now stroke, good, and again, very good.” The wind carried his voice, letting it slip over the skin of her cheek, swirling in the whorls of her ears along with the cold, salted wind.

Focusing on her instructions, Helena placed the left side of her paddle in the water and pulled. The sleek orange kayak jumped over the slight wave in front of them. Thrilled by the rolling motion of moving perpendicularly over the wind-shaped waves, Helena stroked again.

The Pacific stretched out in front of her. At the horizon, still dark at this early hour, the water was grey blue, but directly against the kayak it was murky green. Behind her, Catalina Island, a busy little hub of boats and environmental research centers, crowned by the city of Avalon, sat triumphant.

When the muscles in her arms started to quiver, her biceps twitching inside the wetsuit jacket she wore, Helena turned to look over her shoulder. Behind her in the kayak’s rear seat sat her guide. Dark haired and tan with sapphire blue eyes—now hidden behind sunglasses—he appeared supremely confident, as if he were the master of the waves.

When Helena signed up for the kayak lessons and tour, she’d had two options. The first option allowed her to have her own kayak, with the guide in a separate vessel. While the freedom of that appealed to her, the idea of being alone atop the world’s largest ocean in a vessel that looked like shark food was terribly intimidating. Helena had opted for the double kayak, and was she ever glad she had.

“Getting tired?” Ocean asked.

Helena nodded.

“Rest your arms a minute and let me guide you.”

Nodding again, Helena turned to face front. Once she was sure he could not see her face, Helena rolled her eyes and grimaced at herself. Ocean O'Brian, her guide, was not only beautiful to look at, but kind, charming and easygoing. This meant that Helena had turned into a mute idiot around him. Hot guys intimidated her. She was much more comfortable with guys who were less-than-stellar looking and quiet. Men who let her be the confident one, a role she was more accustomed to playing and one that gave her control.

At this rate, she had no idea how she would make it through the week. She had to talk to him at some point. This was only her second kayaking lesson. The first was yesterday afternoon right after she brought her car over on the ferry. Today was the first full day of her ten-day vacation/mental-health break. Working as a financial planner had its perks, mostly in the salary area, but was incredibly stressful. It was easy for some of her associates to forget the money they moved around represented years of work and savings by their clients. In school, they were taught to see it as a game, but Helena never could. In every dollar she saw someone's hopes and dreams, and took prudent care of their money. Her deliberate and cautious investment strategies pushed her up the corporate ladder. The series of promotions led to a job with fewer, more significant accounts. Increased dollar value, higher profile clients with impossible demands and an ulcer had come with the promotion.

After being treated for the ulcer, Helena had taken a stand with her boss. As a result, Helena now had a junior-level planner as her assistant and a nice ten-day vacation as a "please-don't-leave" present.

The ten-day kayak training and exploration package was something she'd seen in an outdoor-vacation magazine years ago. She'd saved the article and when this vacation came up, she'd turned right around and booked her trip. With the temperature rising inside the concrete jungle of L.A., a peaceful week on an island had sounded blissful.

"Look. Three o'clock."

Helena turned her head and scanned the ocean's surface. There, bobbing just above the wave, was a seal, his head poking out from the

rolling swells. They were close enough for Helena to see his long whiskers twitch before he disappeared beneath the water.

“Was that a seal?” It was much easier to talk to him when she wasn’t looking at him.

“Sure was.”

“Isn’t this a bit far for him to be out?” *Woo-hoo!* Two sentences in a row. By the time this was over, she might be able to actually have a conversation with the man.

“Not at all. He’s probably fishing for his breakfast. Seals come into shore to lie on the rocks or under the pier when they’re tired and want to rest, but they spend most of their life under the water.”

“Do they ever go up on the beach?”

“Only if they’re sick.”

Helena scanned the horizon for more bobbing heads.

“You want to try driving again?”

Helena nodded and lifted her paddle, digging into the water. With nothing but the Pacific in front of her, it was easy to forget that there was land behind her, that there was anything in the world but the wind, water and the sun chasing the night into the western horizon.

Lost in the moment, Helena laid her paddle across her thighs. Fingers spread wide, she reached into the cold water, shivering in pleasure at its salty touch on her flesh.

Raising her hands, Helena tilted her head back, letting drops fall on her face, thanking the world for this perfect moment in the only way she could.

Ocean put one paddle in the water, controlling the roll of the kayak. Luckily the motion was automatic, prompted by years of piloting light, sleek vessels over the waves.

He was distracted by the brunette in front of him who, until this moment, had been just another client, fit and pretty, but unremarkable.

He watched, stunned, as she dipped her fingers into the water and then raised them to the sky in an offering, a prayer as primal as humanity and timeless as the ocean they sat on. She repeated the motion, her head falling farther back. The wind whipped wisps of her hair from her braid and lifted them so the sun could kiss them, turning brown to red and gold.

When she repeated the motion a ritual third time, a little ripple made its way over Ocean's skin.

Was this a sign? For her to do this so soon after they saw the seal? Did she know what he was? Was she of the sea?

She lowered her arms and picked up her paddle. He could tell from the hunch in her shoulders that she was embarrassed by what she'd done. Ocean wanted to tell her not to be embarrassed, not to doubt what had been an unpracticed and heartfelt expression of joy and thanks.

She started paddling once more, the subtle muscles in her arms flexing as she propelled them over the water. Shaking himself out of the lingering astonishment, Ocean put his paddle in the water and helped her. Something magical had just happened, and when they reached land, he intended to investigate her most thoroughly.

* * *

They paddled up beside the low floating dock a few hours later. Helena nervously held onto the edge of the cold aluminum as Ocean maneuvered himself out of the back opening and onto the dock. Once he was out, the kayak started to float away. Helena, with the paddle in one hand and the other desperately trying to hold onto the edge of the slippery dock, emitted a squeak of distress.

Ocean laughed. "Don't worry, gorgeous, I've got you."

Gorgeous? Was he talking to the kayak?

He pulled the kayak up to the dock, looped a rope through the eyelet and helped Helena out. Three hours sitting in a kayak that had acquired

half an inch of frigid ocean water in the bottom had atrophied the muscles in her legs and ass.

In a maneuver right out of a bad romantic comedy, the minute she tried to stand up on her own, Helena collapsed against Ocean.

“Oh no, I’m sorry. My legs are...broken or something.”

He laughed. “Not to worry, gorgeous, you’re just tired and a bit stiff.” After making sure she could stay upright, Ocean dipped to one knee. He wrapped his hands around her right calf, working at her leg, which was bare beneath the knee-length wetsuit pants she wore.

“What are you doing?”

“Warming you up.” His hands switched to her left calf, kneading and softening the muscle, before coming back to her right leg and thigh. One hand on the front, one hand on the back, he squeezed her flesh, manipulating the stiff muscles. “Feel any better?”

Helena, heart in her throat, staring dumbly at the top of his head, nodded. It took a moment for Ocean to look up, but when he did, he answered her dumbfounded expression with a quizzical one.

“Helena, if this makes you uncomfortable, please let me know.”

“Uncomfortable? No, not that...”

“Can you tell me what’s wrong?”

“Who says anything is wrong?”

“You’re looking at me like I’m an ax murderer.”

“Oh. I’m sorry, it’s not that at all.” Helena could have smacked herself. Why couldn’t she say something intelligent instead of answering questions with questions or stuttering useless platitudes?

“Then what’s wrong?”

“I’m just nervous.”

“I’m making you nervous?”

“Yes.”

“Like, you’re nervous I’m going feed you to the sharks when we go out tomorrow morning, or you have a boyfriend named Bruno who would break both my legs if he saw me touching you?”

His head was down, focusing on working the kinks out of her legs, but his probing question made it clear that he wanted to know if she was in a relationship. Helena knotted her fingers together in nervous excitement, flattered and unnerved by his interest. She wasn't so beautiful that every man she met wanted to sleep with her, and her painful self-doubt insisted that she'd read the signals wrong.

"I don't have a Bruno, I mean boyfriend." She wished she were a better flirt, able to whip out witty banter at a moment's notice.

"Then you're worried I'll feed you to the sharks?"

"Well I wasn't, but now I'm starting to."

Ocean threw his head back and laughed, a full-bodied sound. He laughed as if he didn't care who knew he was amused. Helena smiled, his mirth infectious, her chest and cheeks flushing with pleasure at having made him laugh.

"If I promise not to feed you to the sharks"—his eyes sparkled with amusement as he said it—"will you stop looking so worried?"

"I'll try, I just get nervous talking to pretty guys."

"Pretty?" He seemed disgusted with what she'd said, though she meant it as a compliment.

"I, um, meant handsome, not pretty."

He gifted her with a tender smile, and Helena worried that she'd just changed attraction to fraternal caring with one careless comment. It wouldn't be the first time, but she felt a deep pang of sadness at having lost his interest.

"I'm glad you think I'm handsome."

"I bet girls tell you that all the time."

"Maybe." At least he had the grace to acknowledge it. "But it's not other girl's opinions that matter right now, just yours."

There was a silky quality to his voice, a bedroom smooth that overrode her earlier conclusion that he'd lost interest in her. Ocean's manipulation of her muscles changed along with his voice, from

physical-therapist massage to lover's caress. He pushed to his feet, hands circling her hips and thighs in a slow, deliberate touch.

"You smell like the sea, and all I can think about is making love to you. I want to lick the smell of salt off every"—Ocean pressed his lips to her right ear—"inch"—he moved his mouth to her other ear—"of you."

Between the midday sun and him, she was more than warmed up. Protected from the wind by the raised pier, there was nothing to cool her. From above, the sun baked her inside the black wetsuit jacket and shorts she wore. Ocean's hands on her thighs pressed her against his wetsuit-clad body.

She was on vacation, her first one in a long time. A man she found attractive, if intimidating, had just made it clear he was interested in having sex with her.

Helena had two options. She could push away from him, make it clear she didn't find this behavior appropriate and continue her vacation. Or she could pretend to be someone else, a woman so confident that she had sexuality to burn and ate gorgeous men for breakfast. The second option terrified her, but the sun's heat combined with his presence and his touch burned away her reservations, questions, worries and doubts.

Helena shook her hair back, imagining it was a rich, flowing mane of blonde locks rather than a bedraggled brown braid.

"I want to feel you. I want you to touch me, taste me. I want to feel your body above mine, in mine." If her words were awkward and forced, her voice shaking in nerves, he had the grace to ignore it.

He pressed his lips against her cheek and smiled, letting her feel his pleasure. Those lips then traveled across her cheek. Helena started to turn her head into the kiss, but Ocean pulled away.

"No. I want to save that, save this kiss, until the perfect moment." His voice promised things she couldn't imagine, promised kisses that changed lives.

"Um, okay. I mean, yes, I want the perfect kiss too." Denied his kiss, she suddenly wanted nothing more in the world than his lips on hers.

"Come on, gorgeous, let's get you out of those clothes."

Chapter Two

Helena leaned her sweaty forehead against the bathroom wall. This was crazy, but it felt right, felt good. She had never had a one-night stand, or even really had casual sex. Helena wasn't a prude, but the idea had always made her feel dirty, as if the sex would be so tainted by the circumstances it wouldn't be satisfying. She had never understood fantasies about meeting a stranger, having sex with him and then walking away. For her, it came down to trust. She had to trust her lover, and trust was not something that could be had with a casual-sex partner. But, despite all these personal rules and society's warnings, she was willing and eager to sleep with Ocean because she trusted him.

It didn't have anything to do with the fact that he was gorgeous.

Ruefully amused at her own prissy justifications, Helena stripped out of the wetsuit. She was in the ladies' room in Ocean's Tours headquarters for the business. Stripped down to the swimsuit she wore underneath, Helena pulled on the sweat pants she'd worn that morning. At four a.m. when she got dressed, the sweat suit had seemed like a good idea, protection against the morning chill, but now it was simply too hot.

Tying the sleeves of the hooded sweatshirt around her waist, Helena slipped her feet into flip-flops and opened the door.

Ocean stood behind the small counter, a binder open in front of him and the phone stuck between his shoulder and ear. He wore a pair of knee-length board shorts and a T-shirt with the company logo on the back.

“Now then, did you want the full Kayak Explorer tour or did you want daily lessons?”

As he listened to the response, Helena made her way around to the front of the counter, grinning when she saw the gold wire frame glasses perched on his nose. Smiling, she leaned across the counter and touched the tip of her finger to the thin piece of wire over the bridge of his nose, the glasses making him more approachable, giving her the courage to flirt. Ocean captured her hand and slid her finger into his mouth. Helena’s thigh muscles gave a quick tremble as he sucked the tip of her captured finger before turning his head and biting the pad of skin at the base of her thumb. He was clearly the better flirt.

He released her hand. “Absolutely. We can do that. I look forward to seeing you then.” Eyes on her, Ocean ended the call. “Are you ready to go?”

Helena nodded, her tingling hand and the reality of what she was about to do making her mute.

Ocean scooped up a duffle bag and came around the counter, placing one hand on her back and leading her out the front door. Helena waited in the bright sunlight for him to close down and lock up the building. When he came out into the light, she was struck again by his pretty-boy looks.

He wore his dark hair long. The majority fell to his ears, cut in soft layers, allowing locks to drift forward in front of his eyes.

He ran his fingers through one side, scooping it behind his ear. Almost immediately, most of it fell forward again. In the sunlight, his hair picked up hints of russet, not the uniform black it had appeared that morning.

His eyes were blue. Ocean blue. Helena slipped her fingers into his when he held out his hand. The small hotel where Helena was staying was near the dock, probably the reason why her vacation package included accommodations there. It was not to the hotel, but to Ocean’s truck, that they headed. After opening her door, Ocean slung his bag into the back and climbed in.

Helena leaned back against the seat and closed her eyes.

Ocean stuffed the key into the ignition and started the car, taking his eyes off Helena long enough to back out of the parking lot and turn onto the main road. Her eyes were closed, her head resting against the back of the seat. She might have looked relaxed if you didn't notice the faint tightness around her eyes and the nervous motion of her fingers, pleating and smoothing the fabric of her sweats. He found her nervousness adorable, her brave attempts at femme fatale endearing, but now it was time to see how much she would take, how far she would go.

"Take off your sweats."

"Why?" she asked.

"Please."

Eyes still closed, she braced her feet on the floor and lifted her hips, slipping the pants and knotted hoody down and off. She let them pool on the floorboard. Helena crossed her lightly tanned, satiny soft and smooth legs, drawing his attention to her best feature.

Hello, legs.

Ocean took in her long stems and forced himself to focus on the road, shooting glances at her out of the corner of his eye. Her suit had bikini-style bottoms but the material of the top extended down her waist to meet them, making it look like a single piece. She'd been hiding those under the clothing, but now, wearing only her bikini bottom, her secret was out.

The built-in underwire of the top hugged and lifted her breasts, offering them up for Ocean's viewing pleasure. The suit was a simple dark green with silver stitching, the color of lush leaves near a rainforest pool. Her skin glowed a pale cream in contrast.

Ocean breathed deep, keeping his attention on the road. He was a leg man, and those were a truly exemplary set. He imagined them wrapped around his body as he rode her, and nearly crashed the car. He needed to slow down. They had all day and night to play, no reason to get too excited now.

“Open your eyes,” he whispered, voice rough from arousal. “Helena.”

Her wide eyes had a doe-like softness to them, at odds with her flirting body language. She was beautiful, magic, utterly unique.

“All right, gorgeous, I want you to turn in your seat. Put your back against the door and swing one leg up and onto my lap. Leave the other on the floor.”

In the warm cabin of the truck, Helena obeyed, turning and placing her left leg across his lap, slipping her foot between his knees and the steering wheel. She drew her other leg in close to the seat.

Ocean, eyes still on the road, wrapped his right hand around her calf and slid his palm up her leg to her thigh. Her skin was smooth under his hard palm. He pressed his fingertips into her exposed inner thigh, massaging it as he had on the dock, but this massage had no pretense of physical therapy. It was purely sexual.

Her other leg fell to the side, splaying her open, only a thin barrier of stretch fabric interrupting his view of her sex. His palm traveled back down her leg, even moving under the steering wheel so he could cup her foot, pressing his fingertips into the arch.

He pulled off the road into a parking lot. At one end a small dock stretched out, with other small docks sticking out the sides like evenly spaced tree branches, a stately sailboat docked in each slip.

Tall masts with furled sails speared up, and endless lace patterns of white ropes glittered against the blue sky.

“You live on a boat?”

“A sail boat. A thirty-one foot Catalina 310 to be precise.”

“Which one is it?”

“I’ll take you to meet her.”

Ocean jumped out of the truck, grabbed his bag and came around to her side of the truck. He opened the door and held out a hand.

“Just a second, let me get my pants.” She was blushing, trying to hide it by reaching down for her sweats.

“No, leave them.”

“I can’t just walk to the boat in my—”

“Yes, you can.” He smiled, making it a challenge.

Helena fished her shoes out from under the sweats and slid on the flip-flops, leaving the pants behind. Her flush might have been from embarrassment, but he didn’t think so. To him it looked like arousal. Placing her hand in his, she hopped out of the truck. Ocean gifted her with another smile as they passed out of the parking lot and onto the dock. Made of smooth, tight-fitting planks, it was unlike the rough and uneven boardwalk-style docks. This was a real dock, a working dock.

“So you can live on these little boats?”

“Not comfortably, no.” Ocean smiled as he said it and Helena laughed. “One of the back rooms down at the office is full of my stuff. I sank my life savings into her. Someday I’ll need an apartment, but for now it is just me and Moira.” He gestured to their left.

Sitting calm and pretty in the green water was a sleek white lady. “Moira” was written out in navy script on the side. The sails were down, strapped to the arms by coverings.

“Your boat is very pretty.” Helena’s comment was cautious, as if she wasn’t sure what kind of compliment was appropriate. Non-boat people were often unnerved by the personification of the vessels.

“She is, isn’t she?” He loved his boat, and it was apparent in his voice. “Come on, let me introduce you.”

They moved down the short pier running along the left side of the boat. Ocean moved in front of her onto the platform at the back of the boat and swung open the thigh-high door which gave access to the cockpit.

Ocean held her hand tight in his as he guided her onto the ship and through the little door. One step down had them standing in a comfortable seating area where the captain’s chair was situated. Helena looked around curiously, and Ocean took advantage of her distraction to slip his hands around her waist, fingertips sneaking under the waistband to press against her bare hips.

“Helena,” he whispered in her ear, “I would like you to meet Moira. Moira, this beautiful creature is Helena, who has already proven herself a lover of the ocean.”

Ocean laced their fingers together once more and led her to the door to the cabin. It was blessedly cool below deck, the light maple-colored paneling and the white and navy décor giving the room a welcoming feel. The minute they stepped inside Ocean remembered he wasn’t exactly ready for guests.

“Just stay here for a minute while I go clean up the berth.”

“The what?”

“Bedroom.”

Less than ten steps had Ocean at the door to the bedroom, which he opened a crack and squeezed in, not wanting her to see the mess inside. Helena craned her head to see past him, but Ocean slammed the door shut, leaving her in the cluttered cabin while he dealt with the truly disastrous berth.

Helena smiled as the door closed. She liked that he was messy, it made him much less perfect and the situation less surreal. She’d been suffering from regrets and nerves in the car on the way here, but they were drowned out by her arousal. Ocean made her feel beautiful, sexy. The way he looked at her did more for her self-confidence than dozens of compliments from a different man. Nothing had really happened in the truck, she was wearing a bathing suit after all, but the way he’d ordered her to strip and change position so he could play with her made it seem more sexual than some of the technical sex she’d had with previous lovers. It was almost kinky, and with him she felt sexy enough to enjoy kinky.

Pulling her braid over one shoulder, she tugged out the rubber band and fumbled to get the strands separated. Saltwater spray, like high-intensity gel, had glued the hair to itself. Grimacing at the texture, she scrubbed her fingers along her scalp.

She made her way to the low bench that wrapped along one wall of the cabin. The multitude of throw pillows made the otherwise plain seating look lush and inviting, and she plucked up a few pillows along with a faux fur throw.

Chuckling the pillows to one end of the seating, she held up the blanket. It was a lopsided oval rather than square. She rubbed it against her cheek. Layers and layers of downy hair made the fur unbelievably soft. Jerking it away from her face, she curled her lip. Ugh. Not fake fur. Real fur. It seemed out of character for him to own a fur blanket, but then again, she had only known him for eighteen hours.

Resolved to talk politics *after* they had some yummy sex, she folded the blanket, and not wanting it staring at her, reached down and lifted the seat bottoms. Several of them opened but most were already full—some with essentials like canned goods and paper towels, others with life jackets and miscellaneous boat paraphernalia. When she lifted one seat to reveal a cubby full of sleeping bags, she tucked the blanket down between them. Satisfied, she made her way back to the space she had cleared, sitting and arranging herself carefully.

This was going to be fun. No, it was going to be more than fun, it was going to be hot and sexy and amazing. She wouldn't worry about her belly pudge or the fact that one boob was slightly larger than the other. She'd made a choice, the choice to have a once-in-a-lifetime vacation fling with a gorgeous man who was inexplicably attracted to her.

A smile playing over her lips, she waited for her lover.

Ocean found one last sock hidden in the folds of the sheet and stuffed it into the drawer built into the platform of the bed. As he knelt to force the overstuffed drawer closed, a dark shiver skipped down his back. A moment later, every inch of his flesh stood up in goose bumps. *His skin.*

He jerked to his feet, but could go no farther, a creepy-crawly sensation on his human skin telling him that another held his skin. Icy fear settled in his belly as his breathing became quick.

He shouldn't have left it out, or should have remembered it was just sitting there, but no one ever came on his boat, the island a tight-knit community with a low crime rate. Besides, one would have to believe in magic and faerie tales to understand the importance of his skin, and most humans had closed their minds to magic so he'd relaxed his guard.

There was only one logical culprit. Helena.

He knew she was magic, knew because she'd preformed an ocean ritual in the kayak that morning, raising the water to the sky three times. He was so entranced by this he'd never stopped to consider that her apparent knowledge of magic might mean she knew the truth about him and had come to capture him. He assumed she was of the ocean, hiding in a human skin as he was. He'd hoped to spend time with her, get to know her, and then reveal what he was, hoping his revelation would prompt her to do the same.

But now it appeared she did know what he was. Perhaps she was a witch. If so, his skin was probably gone from the boat, transported to a hiding spot by magic. Even if it were on the boat, he would have a hard time finding it.

The curse of his people dictated that once caught by others the skin would be hidden from his people's eyes. Most humans hid the skins anyway, in case the magic preventing the captured creature from seeing their skin were to fail.

His people were known to be physically beautiful and skilled lovers. That combined with the fact that once bound by the theft of their skin, his people were unwaveringly loyal to the thief, meant they were prized as husbands and wives. There had been a time when so many females had been captured, taken as loyal, beautiful wives by human men, that they'd faced extinction.

If he wanted his skin back he had only two choices. He could kill the one who had taken it. Most chose continued enslavement over committing such an act. They were creatures bound to the earth and sea. The taking of a life for anything other than food or defense was one of the most reprehensible crimes.

Or he could coax her into giving it back, please her until she returned it. Despite his nervous fear at having been trapped, he couldn't help but like the idea of coaxing his skin from her. If he chose this path he would be completely under her control, giving himself to her until she was satisfied.

The theft of a skin was powerful, uncertain magic. Having never been in this position before, Ocean couldn't know how it would affect him, or her. He needed his skin back. Knowing he could not go to the sea as long as she held it frightened him, so he forced himself not to think about it. Instead he focused on how he would get it back. This brought a smile to his face. She was shy, uncertain of her own appeal, and he wanted her. Despite the fact that she'd stolen his skin, he still wanted her. He'd been enthralled by her before she took his skin. Now they were bound by magic.

He would get his skin back, and he would enjoy doing it.

Chapter Three

When the door opened, Helena sucked in her belly, wanting to make sure she looked attractive. She sat with her long legs crossed, pillows mounded on either side of her, one hand on her thigh and the other arm stretched along the back of the bench.

He was gorgeous, just gorgeous, all dark intensity and playful charm. Her desire for him sparked uncharacteristically hard and quick, the urge to touch him so strong her fingertips tingled with it.

Ocean stood framed in the doorway, his gaze glued to her. His steps were slow and measured as he advanced toward her. The closer he got, the shorter Helena's breaths became and the tighter the knots of desire in her belly drew.

Frightened by the intensity of her reaction, Helena closed her eyes, practicing deep breathing until the inexplicably acute desire receded, leaving her feeling more like herself. Then again, maybe that was a bad idea, because when she opened her eyes Ocean was standing right next to her. The reality of him and what they were going to do had her trembling with nerves.

Ocean dropped to his knees beside her, his steady gaze moving over her. Her left leg was crossed over her right, her left foot dangling bare and vulnerable before him. He cupped her foot in both hands and pressed tender kisses to it.

Helena's mouth opened in surprise. She'd come here expecting hot sweaty sex, not tenderness.

"What will please you?" he asked.

“What, what do you mean?”

“I want to pleasure you,” he whispered against the skin of her ankle.

“I, uh, I mean, I just thought we were going to have sex.” His sudden intensity and odd requests were a little unnerving.

“Just sex? Is that your deepest desire?” He continued kissing her foot and ankle, giving it all the care and attention of a jeweler with a perfectly faceted diamond.

“What do you mean just sex? What were you thinking?” She tried to act cool, pretending that men worshiped her feet every day, but inside she was quivering.

Ocean shook his head at her questions and slid his hand up the inside of her left leg, lifting it so that her legs were no longer crossed. Slowly he spread her knees and inched between them. His wide palms and long fingers settled on her thighs, kneading softly.

“I want to please you, to please you more than anyone else ever has.”

“Is this like, um, some kinky sex fantasy or something?” Her façade of worldly sex goddess was melting like ice cream in the sun.

Ocean growled, actually growled, in frustration. “You are of the sea. You proved that this morning. Why are you pretending you don’t know what power you hold over me?”

“Power? I hold no power over you.” What was he talking about?

“You do. I’m all yours, until you decide to free me.”

“You are?” Was he serious or was this some sort of game? He’d changed from playful and smiling to grimly serious, and she wasn’t sure she liked it.

Ocean bowed his head, and when he spoke again, his voice was tight. “What do you want? I’ve offered you everything, all you need to do is tell me what you want. Are you toying with me?”

Bewildered, Helena cradled his face in her hands. “I’m really not sure what you’re talking about or what you want from me, but I can see I’m doing it wrong. I don’t mean to make you unhappy.” She hated herself for

screwing this up. She should have known she wasn't cut out for this. He seemed to be playing a game that she didn't have the rules to.

He cupped her cheeks so their postures mirrored each other. "Can it be you truly don't know what you've done?" His fingers were as gentle as his voice, stroking her cheeks.

"Ocean, maybe you had better explain, because you're making me nervous."

"You have—" A hard shudder ran over his body. He took a deep breath and tried again. "The magic—" His teeth clamped closed, cutting off the last word.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes." He shook his head, then kissed her foot once more. "I was going to explain something, but I guess I can't, so we're going to stick to the original plan. All I need to be well is for you to tell me your darkest desires, let me be the canvas on which we paint your fantasies."

"Ocean, are you serious? Is this what you wanted? To, uh, know my sexual fantasies?" Helena felt like a novice swimmer who'd decided to tackle the English Channel. She was trying to understand, to play along, but felt woefully out of her depth.

"Yes, we will play them together, you and I. In that way, I will please you."

His words sent a shiver of longing down her spine. What he was offering was her greatest fantasy, a lover who would experiment with her, play with her, let her try every dark desire of her heart.

When she didn't answer he asked, "Are you embarrassed to share these fantasies with me?"

"Well, yes."

"Why?"

"Because fantasies are private things." Her protests were growing weaker. She wanted what he was offering, wanted it like a dieter wants chocolate, but years of personal reserve kept her protesting long past the

time when there was any truth to her protests. She wanted him to coax it from her so that she could maintain some distance from her fantasies.

"Some are, but others are meant to be played out, meant to be lived. I want to know those."

Helena could feel the flush on her cheeks and chest. "Maybe, but we did just meet..." Sex was one thing, admitting she wanted to be spanked was another.

"I understand." Ocean rose and pulled out a drawer refrigerator in the galley opposite the seating arrangement. Taking out a half-full bottle of white wine, he poured a glass.

Helena had closed her legs when he stood, so Ocean knelt beside her, offering up the glass. She smiled in true amusement at him.

"Do you really think one glass of wine is going to get me to admit that...?"

"Yes?"

"Never mind."

"Drink then, please."

"Aren't you going to have any?" she asked between sips.

"No."

"I don't want to drink alone. You should have some too."

As if he were a marionette wielded by a clumsy puppeteer, Ocean clambered to his feet and jerked over to the wine bottle, the neck of the bottle clacking against the glass as he poured. When he returned to her side and dropped to his knees, Helena looked down at him in alarm.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, I just didn't know what it would be like if you ordered..."

"Ocean, please, you're starting to scare me a little. Are you sure you're okay?"

"I am. I will be."

When Ocean's hand came around the back of her neck, Helena jumped a little, but he only massaged her. Now that they were quiet, she could hear the ocean, could smell the salt of their skin. Ever so slowly,

her head tipped forward, allowing him access to her shoulders. Her eyes drooped closed. Beside her, she felt him shift, and moved easily when he laid her down on her belly. Placing her glass of wine on the floor, she sighed as his fingers began to dig into the muscles of her back.

“Tell me, gorgeous, what dark secrets you keep.”

The sweet tingle of wine and the smell of sun and salt aroused her, the warm kiss of his voice lulled her and her own longings seduced her, and she gave in to his desire for him and what he offered.

“I’ve fantasized about almost everything,” she admitted in a rush.

“Positions? Toys?”

“Yes and yes. The most exiting thing that has happened to me is sex in a shower, and even that wasn’t good because I was worried we would slip and fall.”

“If you want to have sex in water, I’ll take you into the ocean, holding you there so the waves force your body onto mine, and every inch of your skin is caressed by the water. When I thrust, you will take the ocean into you.”

Helena could not, would not stop the small moan that escaped her at his words.

“You would like that?”

“Oh yes.”

“What else? Tell me.”

“Spanking. I’ve always wanted to be spanked, but it seems so silly to say out loud, and I’m too tall. I wouldn’t fit on a man’s lap.”

Ocean’s hands had been kneading along her ribs, but now they slid to her ass. He dug his knuckles in, working the muscles, before cupping the globes in his hands.

“You will fit over my lap.” He hooked his fingers in the waistband of her suit. “And you will take your punishment”—he pulled her suit down, exposing her bottom but not removing it—“like a good girl.”

Helena’s breath sped up, and she let out an excited little yelp as his bare hands settled on her ass.

“That is one fantasy, gorgeous, are there others?”

Helena knew she should keep quiet, knew that if she got to live out even one fantasy with this man it would be delicious, but the touch of his hands and the silk of his voice made her crave more, made her greedy for it.

“I always wanted to, you know, in public.”

“Have sex in public?”

“Not exactly. I wanted to show myself off, or have someone show me off, to make other people want me.”

“Hmmm, then you will be naked on deck. You will sunbathe naked and show off this creamy flesh for any and all who walk by.”

“But it’s illegal, we might get—”

“No, we won’t, and yes, you will.”

* * *

“Take off the top.”

“But someone might see,” Helena protested.

“I know. Do it.”

Helena slid the straps off her shoulders and pulled her arms free, her eagerness belying her protests. The suit still clung to her, tight and compressing around her breasts.

“I won’t tell you again.”

Breathing hard, the hot salt air rough in her lungs, she curled her fingers over the top of the suit and pushed it down. Her breasts popped free, her nipples puckered from arousal and the scrape of fabric over the pink peaks.

“Good. Now the rest.”

With a surreptitious look around, Helena hooked her thumbs in the suit once again and wiggled it down her body, catching the bottoms and pulling them off at the same time. She reveled in this forbidden action, in the dark pleasure of knowing that at any time someone could come along

and see her, all of her, know the secrets of her body and maybe even long for her, want to touch and caress her.

She was pulled from her reverie by Ocean's hand on her cheek. She straightened, unashamedly naked before him.

"Sometimes a fantasy isn't what we would have hoped, and is too frightening to be lived. If this isn't truly what you want, if this isn't what will please you best, then let us go below to act out one of your other desires." He was giving her an out, making sure she was okay with what was happening. She was absurdly grateful for that, as it bolstered her courage.

"This"—she stretched, arching her body back, feeling the sun along every inch of skin—"is exactly what I want."

"Good." Ocean took a definitive step back and looked her over. So lost was she in the spell of what he was doing, of what they were doing, that she forgot how self-conscious she was about her body. The fears and doubts which normally crippled her and made the first undressing with a new partner torturous were absent.

"Your belly and breasts are fair."

"That's because I keep them covered up outside."

"That must be remedied." Ocean moved past her and came back a moment later with a large beach towel, which he spread out near the prow.

Hips swaying, body slick with proof of her arousal, Helena stretched herself out on the towel. Lying on her back, she rested one arm over her eyes and let the other stretch out beside her. Her legs naturally fell open and the cool wind off the water touched her sex, which was so swollen and wet that the labia had parted.

Startled, Helena crossed her legs, hiding herself. *No*. She would not hide herself. Slowly and deliberately, she uncrossed her legs, even spreading them slightly.

She felt the thud of footsteps as Ocean moved up beside her.

"Are you comfortable?" His voice was warm and rich and perfect.

“Yes.”

He lifted her arm away from her face and slid a pair of dark sunglasses onto her nose. “You’re beautiful.”

“Yes.” With him she was, the sincerity of his voice making her believe it, if only as part of the fantasy.

Ocean stretched out beside her, propped on one arm. The sun beat down and sweat dewed on her skin. Her nipples relaxed into full pink circles.

A new voice broke into their peaceful sunbathing. “Oh my God, Ocean. Look at what you have.”

Helena learned in that instant that “my heart stopped” was more than just a phrase.

“Lucky boy,” a second voice called out.

Helena jerked upright, heart restarting with a painful thud, and peered through the dark glasses at the two men standing on the dock.

“Hello, lovely. My goodness, look at that hair color. I would just die for those highlights.”

It took Helena a moment to realize the well-dressed gentlemen ogling her were probably not all that interested in her as a sex object.

“Mark, Jon,” Ocean responded easily, his eyes still focused on her breasts. There was an awkward pause as Helena, Mark and Jon all waited for him to perform introductions.

“Stop staring at me and introduce us,” she hissed at him. “Oh my God, I am naked.” Her clothes were out of reach, so she settled for drawing her knees up and wrapping her arms around them.

With an odd growling noise, Ocean turned to look at Mark and Jon. “Gentlemen, this is Helena. Helena, meet Mark and Jon. They own the pretty lady across the way.” He nodded at the ship with blue sails docked across from them.

“Only woman I’ve ever been inside,” one quipped.

That startled a laugh out of Helena.

“Now if only our pretty Ocean were sunbathing with you.” Mark sighed.

“Darling girl, you really shouldn’t let him talk you into putting on a show unless he is going to also,” John added.

Helena smiled. “I’m glad you think I’m enough to be a show.”

“Of course, look at that. I even glimpsed some pussy and it actually looked nice.”

Men I don’t know are talking about my vagina, and I am turned on by it.

“Thank you, and you’re right. Maybe Ocean should strip too.”

Beside her, Ocean smiled, but it was pained. “Those two have been trying to get me naked since we met.”

“Damn right,” John shouted.

“Well, why don’t you oblige them?” Helena grinned as she said it. Ocean looked at her, full-blown panic in his eyes.

He leaned closer and whispered in her ear. “We have a problem. I’m hard from looking at you.”

His words made Helena tingle all over. “I’m glad.”

“It means if you force me to strip, they will really get a show.”

His use of the word force startled her, turning it from something sexy to something degrading. “I was just teasing.”

“If you want me to, I’ll strip.”

“Ocean, don’t be silly, if you don’t want to, nothing I say will make you—”

“I will if you really want me to.”

Helena leaned away. “Clearly you don’t, so why say you will?”

“To please you.”

Helena was losing track of the times he had said this. It was time to test their game. “Stand up.”

Ocean rose immediately at her order, the muscles in his jaw clenching as he stared out at the horizon.

“Take off your shirt.” Helena spoke loud enough for the men on the dock to hear.

“Oh blessed day, what is this? Can it be I finally get to see more of Mr. Ocean? Jon, are you seeing this?”

“Shhh, you’re distracting me.”

Ocean grabbed the back of his shirt and pulled it off.

“Throw it in the water.” Helena’s voice was strong and sure. The nervous, unsure stuttering gone. Either he had truly been duped and her innocence and hesitant manner were all an act, a façade to cover the fact that she was an evil witch bent on enslaving him, or the magic of the skin was working on her too.

Contact with a skin, even if it was only for a moment, brought out hidden strengths in those who touched it. When human storytellers spoke of his people, they attributed the newfound virtues and strengths of the one who’d captured the skin to the surge of confidence brought on by possessing a beautiful lover. They did not know that the skin itself had power and worked that magic on anyone who had exposure to it. Helena was growing bolder, more confident, less bound by worries of what others would think of her.

He tossed his shirt, the fabric floating gently on the surface of the ocean.

“Come here.”

Ocean stepped closer to Helena.

“Do you trust me?” she asked.

He did...and he didn’t. He still didn’t know what she was or why she’d taken his skin. But he wanted her, craved her, and believed that her desire for him was real also. He didn’t yet fully trust her as a person, but as a lover he did. “I will do what it takes to please you.”

“I don’t understand you, Ocean, but I want to please you too.” She rested one hand on his thigh. “I don’t want you to do something you’re

uncomfortable with, even if it would please me best. I want you to trust me, the same way I trust you.”

Looking down at her adorably earnest face, he could not bring himself to believe she was a witch. He smiled down at her and she relaxed, gifting him with a wicked grin, the magic of his skin bringing the hidden sex kitten to the surface.

“Face me, stand in front of me.” Bare-chested and barefoot, he did as she ordered, his legs on either side of hers. Helena held out her hands. Hesitantly, Ocean grabbed them, bracing her as she slid her legs out from between his and curled them under herself so she was kneeling.

“My God, you wicked girl. I hope you are about to do what I think you are about to do,” Mark said.

She carefully undid the laces of his board shorts, and when the waistband was loosened, eased them down. Ocean sucked in a breath as she freed his cock. He watched her examine him, her rapid breathing betraying her excitement. She moistened her lips with her tongue and he imagined his cock in her mouth, the fantasy vivid and pungent.

Helena placed her hands on his naked hips.

“Please,” he whispered.

“Please what?” Her fingers made soft circles on his flesh. “Please what?” she asked again.

Helpless, Ocean just shook his head. Helena leaned in and blew across the tip of his cock. “Tell me, Ocean. Answer me.” The magic worked them, pushing them into roles of dominant and submissive, not imposing on their will, merely magnifying inclinations that were already there.

At her order his words escaped him in a rush of barely formed thoughts and desires. “Please touch me, please tease me. Please put your hands on my ass and stroke my balls and play with my cock and put it in your hot mouth and please don’t show them my cock or let them watch if you are going to suck me but please keep playing with me.”

Ocean stumbled to silence. The magic was growing stronger, her orders more powerful, his desire to obey them more pronounced. Helena

slid her hands from his hips back around to grab his ass. She dug her fingers in and the men on the dock cheered and whistled. Helena leaned to the side, brushing his cock along her cheek. The tip buried in the softness of her hair, and she licked the sensitive flesh of his belly. He jerked in her hold, his hands fisted at his sides, body ridged with excitement. Helena tightened her fingers on his ass and then pulled, separating the cheeks, exposing him, making him vulnerable as she turned her head to the side and blew on his cock. Her breath was hot and wet, a torturously delicate touch.

Though she'd barely touched him, Ocean was ready to explode. He wanted to be in her, now. As if she agreed, Helena pulled his shorts up and fastened them loosely.

"You cruel bitch. To take him away just as you were getting to the good part."

Helena grabbed Ocean's arm and pulled herself up. "Sorry, boys. He's mine."

With a cheerful smile at them, Helena slid her hand down his arm, lacing their fingers together, and led the way from the deck into the cabin. After the glaring bright light and oppressive heat, the dark interior felt like a liquid cool embrace. Here the sun's harsh rays were filtered through a large skylight and the cool colors soothed after the harsh white of topside.

Helena dropped his arm, brow furrowing in worry.

"I hope what I did up there wasn't too much." This was the real Helena shining through the magic.

"Did it please you?" he asked, wondering if the spell had somehow made her do something she didn't want.

"That's not the point."

"It is the point. The only point."

"What would please *me* is for you to tell me if what I did up there was too much. Did I upset you?" She seemed truly worried, fingers twisting together in front of her.

Ocean smiled, easing her worry. "No. It felt good, dirty."

"It did, didn't it." She blushed as she admitted this, her skin glowing from the recent brush with the sun.

For him one of the most arousing parts of the whole episode had been her genuine concern for what he wanted. "I told you what I didn't want and you didn't do it, despite knowing you have the power to force me."

"As much as we seem to be playing that I'm the dominant party, I think we both know that I couldn't make you do anything you don't wish."

Ocean simply shook his head, shifting from foot to foot. As he did, the loosely tied shorts gave up their hold and slid down to his knees. Without a word, he stepped out of them and reached for her. When his fingers brushed her arm, the slow smolder of their joint arousal erupted into flame.

His hands curled tight and bruising around her, one on her neck and the other across her shoulders. Her hands tangled in his hair. Between them, his cock felt hot and large, its stiff length pressing into her soft belly.

Ocean's lips had gone to her throat, pressing frantic kisses there, but now he pressed his lips to hers. In contrast to the harsh and needy holds they had on one another, the kiss was gentle and hesitant. Only after their mouths became softly acquainted did he change the kiss, put strength and desire into it, forcing her head back as his tongue eased between her teeth, demanding entrance to her body.

"I want you," he moaned against her throat. "I want you here and now and hard."

"Yes. Yes. Do it now."

Ocean pushed Helena up against a wall, her order turning his desire into a compulsion.

"Legs," he demanded, wrapping them around his waist when she lifted them. "Protection?" he belatedly asked.

"I'm on the pill, and I'm clean."

"Me too." He also wasn't human, and couldn't contract human diseases.

Shifting his grip higher up her thighs, he slammed inside her.

If Helena'd been any less aroused, any drier, it would have hurt her. As it was the thrust had buried him so completely that Ocean shivered in pleasure.

Hands on her ass, Ocean leaned his forehead against the wall beside her, frowning as a faint voice echoed in his head. Was it possible that...

Chapter Four

Pinned to the wall, Helena waited for him to start thrusting, but he just held her and breathed.

His head lifted from the wall. "I can hear you."

"Huh?" Why was he talking at a time like this?

"I can hear you."

"You couldn't hear me before?" If he had hearing problems, later would be a good time to discuss them. Now would be a good time for fucking.

Ocean's face had been pale, almost stunned, but now the coloring came back and he grinned, a truly wicked grin. "Whatever you are now, you were of the ocean at some point."

"Ocean, what are you—?"

Lightning fast, he withdrew and slammed into her again.

"Oh my—"

And again he slammed into her. Beyond speech, Helena dug her fingers into his shoulders, her thigh muscles tight against his hips.

Please don't stop, don't slow down, make me feel that you would die without me.

Again and again, his body rocked into hers. The rhythm was slower than the jackhammer thrusts most men degenerated into and each stroke rubbed her in all the right places.

Helena felt her orgasm condensing in her belly, like a pot beginning to boil or a wave building deep in the ocean. As it grew, Helena's head thrashed side to side. She was near frantic with it.

"Hold on," Ocean whispered, placing his head alongside hers to stop her frantic thrashing. Wild and terribly aroused, Helena turned her face into his neck, panting into his sweaty flesh as his thrusts pressed her sweat-slicked back against the wall.

Once, twice, and on the third stroke the wave broke. Helena threw her head back and gritted her teeth as an orgasm so profound it was painful racked her body. She was used to the small flutterings from vibrator-induced orgasms. This was the same sensation magnified a thousand times. She clutched around his cock so hard he stilled within her, allowing her clenching body to feed upon him.

Just when she felt it would end, felt it would subside, Ocean jerked out of her, hitched her quivering body higher on the wall and slammed into her a final time.

Helena screamed.

* * *

Several eons later, Helena roused herself enough to look around. She was stretched out on the bench seating. Ocean was nowhere in sight. Helena inched to the edge of the bench and looked over. Ocean's big body was sprawled on the floor.

"You alive?"

Ocean grunted in response.

"I think I might be dead," Helena confessed, her voice thick with lazy satisfaction.

"I thought for a second you were." His voice was muffled by the carpet, his face squashed against the floor.

"That orgasm was so good that I passed out." Helena steadied her head on one hand and marveled. "I seriously passed out. I mean, I've

read about that happening, but I always figured it happened to people who did Tantric sex or something like that.”

“No Tantric sex here.”

“You must be some sort of sex god.”

“Or sex slave.”

“Huh?”

“Never mind.” Ocean finally shifted, sitting up and propping his back against the bench. “Are you hungry?”

“Embarrassingly so.”

“Don’t be embarrassed. We burned a ton of calories and we need fuel.”

“I’ll help you cook.”

“I’m too tired to cook.” With that, Ocean crawled across the floor and rummaged through the pocket of his duffle bag. His position on hands and knees gave her a truly lovely view of his nicely toned ass. If the angle were a little bit different, she might be able to see what hung between the muscled thighs.

“For the love of God, woman, give me a minute.”

“What? Oh no, please tell me I didn’t say that out loud.”

“About my tight ass and wanting to see my poor abused cock? Yeah, I heard that.”

Helena pressed her face into a pillow. She’d always been a post-sex chatterer. Apparently really good sex only made her more loquacious.

There was a thunk as Ocean resumed his place on the floor with his back against the bench. Helena unburied her face to watch him dial. From this angle, she had a quarter view of his profile. The square edge of his jaw and soft fringe of his lashes made him seem both capable and vulnerable.

Ocean’s hand lifted and, without looking, he reached over his shoulder and stroked her cheek. The gesture was so tender that Helena felt almost teary. She didn’t expect to be treated tenderly by the man who had just fucked her into a coma. Bitter experience had taught her men

saw women as either saints or whores. If they labeled you a saint, any expression of sexual need was seen as dirty and wrong. If you were labeled a whore, you couldn't expect any tenderness or sweetness from them and expressing a desire for those things was usually met with derision. With a trembling heart and terrifyingly exposed emotions, Helena turned and pressed her lips to his fingers. He pressed back slightly, stroking her lower lip with one finger, and then withdrew his hand.

When Ocean ended the call, Helena realized she hadn't heard what he said.

"Er, what did you just do? Sorry, I spaced out for a while."

"I just ordered pizza."

"Yum, but not exactly great for you."

"Please tell me you aren't also a health-food junkie." He turned to look at her. "A stress puppy and a health-food junkie, oh the horror. I might have to toss you overboard."

"I am not a stress puppy and I am just watching my weight."

"Not another one. All you girls have fallen for Hollywood's hype about your body. You, gorgeous, have a rockin' body."

"Thanks, but I could—"

"Enough." He kissed her. "You are gorgeous. Anything you say that implies otherwise will earn you a spanking."

Helena shivered in arousal and Ocean grinned. When he leaned in, Helena turned her head, expecting a kiss, but Ocean veered away to whisper in her ear. "I just want you to know that I am going to spank you anyway. I'm going to take your long lean body and turn it over my knee, because you are such a naughty girl."

Helena bit her lower lip and closed her eyes as her imagination took the information and ran wild. Lips still near her ear, Ocean chuckled. "Gotcha."

Slowly, and with an exaggerated groan, Ocean got to his feet. Helena sat up, glad she was not a guy so her sudden arousal was easy to hide.

Then again, she was getting a sneaking feeling Ocean knew what she wanted and wouldn't be fooled by her pretense.

"So, gorgeous, what is it you do that has turned you into such a stress puppy?" Ocean held out a hand and pulled her up. Trying to appear unembarrassed by her nakedness—which seemed woefully late in arriving considering her public display earlier—Helena answered. She explained her job as Ocean found a T-shirt for her to wear, handing it to her as they took turns using the small bathroom.

Thirty minutes later, a loud whistle had Ocean going topside wearing the board shorts he had pulled on. He returned with an extra large pizza and a pack of Coke. They dug in, comfortably seated at the small, built-in dinette. The topic moved from her work to his and Ocean soon had her in stitches with the antics of some of his clients. By the time they finished, it was midafternoon and they decided to go topside for more sunbathing.

Before they moved topside, Ocean pulled her T-shirt off. On deck, Ocean spread out a beach towel for her. The strange sexual confidence of a few hours ago returned and Helena shot Ocean a seductive smile as she made her way to the blanket. There she stretched out on her back, arms above her head, one knee bent, coyly hiding her sex.

Ocean lay face down beside her, and for several moments they simply basked in the sun like the sated beasts they were.

"Oh no, I forgot sunscreen." Helena sat up, peering at Ocean through the dark glasses he provided. "Do you have any?"

He opened one eye and gave her a slow once-over. "I'll get some."

Helena lay back and waited. When Ocean returned, there was a thickness to the air around him, and the tense set to his shoulders told her their play was about to begin again.

Ocean straddled her hips, forcing her bent knee flat. "Give me your right arm."

Helena lifted and extended her arm as Ocean poured sunscreen into his palm. Helena shivered as he placed hands coated in cool sunscreen

on her wrist. From wrist to shoulder, he worked the lotion into her skin, the scent of coconut strong in the heated air.

When he finished, Ocean carefully replaced her arm in its position above her head and started in on the other, giving it the same treatment.

He left no part of her body unattended, swiping fingers over her cheeks, nose and forehead, kneading her upper chest, causing her to squirm as he massaged her ticklish belly.

When every inch of skin above her waist was covered, save her breasts, Ocean leaned down and blew on her nipples. His breath, like the air around them, was hot and so had no effect. With a disapproving noise, Ocean grabbed the bottle of sunscreen. Holding it upside down, he squeezed and a large dollop of the still-cold cream landed right on her nipple.

Helena yelped. The sound cut off as he gave the other peak the same treatment.

One large palm covered each breast, pressing the cold into her skin. Her nipples beaded up hard and Ocean rumbled with pleasure. His fingers slid through the creamy pools melting down her breasts and plucked on the hard buds.

“Oh yes, yes, yes. Do that again.”

Ocean obeyed, pinching the flesh between his fingers and lifting. Coated as they were, the pebbled tips slid through his fingers, forced between the viselike pressure of his fingertips. When first the right and then the left peak finally slid from his grip with a pinch, Helena moaned in pleasure, her fingers wrapped around his forearms, nails digging into him.

Slowly he worked the sunscreen into her breasts, kneading the soft mounds, molding and shaping them with hands rough from his work. When the lotion was gone, he repeated the nipple pinch, the hold now lasting longer as her body had absorbed much of the sunscreen. As he squeezed hard and lifted her breasts away from her body by their tender peaks, Helena’s hips moved helplessly beneath Ocean.

“Ah, ah, ah, gorgeous, stay still, I’ll be down there soon.”

Beyond words, Helena nodded, her hips stilling as her nipples slipped free of his pinching grip.

Ocean flipped around, still straddling her belly, presenting her with a view of his wide golden back. Hands once more filled with sunscreen lifted each leg, working the lotion into her skin, not missing one inch, from the soles of her feet to the outside of her hips. As he lowered her legs he bent them at the knee, so when he was done they fell open, mercilessly exposing her sex.

Please, touch me, she thought, touch me and please me and make me whole. Make it dirty and sweet and lovely.

Ocean finished smoothing lotion up the inside of her thighs. His hands inched closer and closer to her sex.

Finally he placed four fingertips along each lip of her sex and carefully separated them, exposing her soft pink core.

“Your pussy is gorgeous. Just like you.”

Helena gulped. She had never had a man talk about her sex, at least in any direct manner.

“It is true. The lips are nice and long, and when you are aroused, like you are right now, they puff up fat and pink, inviting me to explore.” The fingers near the top of her sex pulled a little bit more, opening her up wider at the top. “And there’s my pretty girl. Your clit is beautiful, a thing of artistry. I haven’t even touched her yet and she is poking out of the hood to see me.”

Helena slid her hands up and down his back as he spoke, wanting him to know how much she was enjoying his words.

Ocean continued to verbally love her sex as if he knew what her caressing hand meant.

“You are all deep pink inside with a soft pearl white cream. Your body is ready for mine again, calling out to me.”

Changing his hold, Ocean now kept her sex open with the index and middle finger of one hand, leaving the other hand free to explore her depths.

"I want you to clench, show me how wet and ready you are. Yes, that's it, good girl. Now stay clenched tight while I work my finger inside you."

Helena dug her nails into his back as her sex squeezed tight. Her heart was pounding so loud in her head that she almost couldn't hear him. Later, she would be embarrassed, but right now her molten arousal burned away any thoughts of embarrassment.

"Good, good. Oh yeah. Gorgeous, you are perfect, soft and wet and hot. You are so tight and pretty like this. Can you feel me inside you? I think you can. Do you want me to touch your clit?"

She lifted her hips, telling him without words that she did, she did want him to touch her.

"No, no. I won't let you get away with that. Do you want me to touch your clit?"

Helena rubbed her hands on his back. She didn't want to talk, afraid that the sound of her voice, her plain, familiar voice, would break the spell woven by his deep, dark words.

Ocean gave one of her labia a punishing pinch. "Answer me, gorgeous."

"Yes, yes, I want you to touch my clit." She rushed the words out, her voice breathy and deep, different enough from her normal speaking voice that she could almost imagine it was not her talking, but some confident and secure woman.

"Tell me how."

"I want you to stroke it and lick it and...and maybe pinch it."

"Good girl."

She watched his torso descend, felt the rush of his breath against her wet sex, and then his tongue was on her, lapping her clit. His fingers kept her sex spread wide so his tongue found no hindrance as it traveled from her clit to her entrance and back again. The touch was soft and encompassing, each stroke swiping every inch.

He pulled back and Helena followed him with her hips, pushing up against the cage of his legs.

“More, more, more.”

His face descended immediately and she could feel him smiling against the inside of her sex. “As my lady commands.”

His lips took her clit between them and pressed gently. Helena sighed. With any other man she would have feared he would stop too soon and leave her unsatisfied, but Ocean would not. She let herself relax into the sensation.

With her clit surrounded by his lips, he stroked the little captured peak with the tip of his tongue. The touch was precise, the nerve endings so overwhelmed that her thigh muscles quivered and Helena bit her lower lip in response.

She was close, so close, just a bit harder sensation and she would—

Ocean slid the index and middle finger of each hand into her, filling her with four of his strong, thick digits. Helena yelped at the sudden invasion and then moaned.

It was the best of everything to have her sex so completely full and her clit so perfectly licked. His tongue kept up its relentless and precise assault, the rhythm never varying, making sure the orgasm built but never peaked. She was in stasis, dangling off a precipice, held between falling and flight by his command and her desire.

Then it happened. His lips were replaced by his teeth, biting into her clit, the pain turned to pleasure by the ferocity of her orgasm.

Nails sunk deep into his back, Helena screamed her satisfaction to the sky.

Chapter Five

“Helena. Gorgeous, I’m starting to worry. Wake up.”

There was a soft touch against her face and then something moved inside her sex. Helena opened her eyes with a sigh of residual pleasure.

“You...made...me...pass out...again.”

“Gorgeous, I am convinced it has more to do with the strength of your passion than it does with me.”

“Nuh-uh, you...amazing.”

“I just know what you like.” Ocean still had two fingers inside her and he slowly thrust them in and out of her orgasm-tight sex. Helena felt her eyes roll back in her head as her hips lifted in response.

“You’re practically a mind reader.” She gasped.

Ocean turned his head sharply to look at her, his smiling face gone serious. Uncomfortable at his close scrutiny, she wiggled her hips, planning to move away, but he hooked his fingers inside her, holding her still.

With a sigh, his face softened and he leaned down for a kiss. Confused and worried about the look he’d given her, Moira kept her lips unmoving against his. He gentled her with pecks on the corners of her lips and the tip of her nose, even rubbing his nose against hers in a cold weather kiss. Helena remembered the Eskimo kiss from her childhood and when she smiled at the memory, he took her lips again. This time she allowed him entrance, his tongue tasting the space between her bottom lip and teeth. She sighed into his mouth and he breathed in, and when his breath escaped into her, she willingly took it in, sharing the air.

His fingers slipped out of her with a parting rub to her clit, and Helena bit down on his lower lip.

“Like that?” Ocean asked.

“Yes, but I’m a little sore.”

“I hope you’re not too sore. Remember what I said comes next.”

Her breath hitched. “A spanking.”

He kissed her shoulder. “Among other things.” Leaning up on one elbow, he smiled at her. “Do you realize you just had a screaming orgasm outside where anyone could see?”

With a jolt, Helena looked at the darkening sky, the dock, the other boats and the sea beyond, which appeared orange in the light of the now-setting sun. Wide-eyed, she turned to Ocean, who threw his head back and roared with laughter.

“Shhhh!” As Ocean rolled onto his back, Helena scrambled after him, slapping her hand over his mouth and pressing herself up against his side to hide her nakedness. Ocean’s laughter, now silent, was a rumble in his chest.

“I am so embarrassed.”

Ocean took her hand and kissed the palm. “No you’re not.”

“Yes, I am!”

“No, my gorgeous exhibitionist. You are not.”

Helena tucked her head to hide her smile. He was right. Her initial horror was more of a conditioned response than any true embarrassment. “I’ve never been like this before.”

“It doesn’t matter. Today is about you and what will please you best.”

“Someday will you tell me why you keep saying that?”

Ocean kissed her wrist again but said no more.

* * *

Freshly scrubbed and wearing one of Ocean's T-shirts, Helena sat on the bench, waiting for Ocean to get out of the shower. She felt like a sated beast. She was aware of muscles in her legs, lower abdomen and groin that had not been exercised in an embarrassingly long time.

Her body was loose from the orgasms and she felt very well loved.

Loved.

During that last orgasm, in the pure moment of freedom it provided, some small part of her marveled that she trusted this man enough to let go completely. The way he touched her spoke to her in a way she had not known before.

Their affair should be nothing more than a vacation fling between consenting adults with minimal true emotional involvement, but he'd kissed her like he meant it.

She wanted to know everything about him. Did he have any brothers or sisters? What were his favorite color, food, movie and band? Chocolate chip or oatmeal cookies? She hoped it was oatmeal as she had a great oatmeal cookie recipe she could make for him. What did he look like when he slept and did he wake up fast or slow?

Hugging her knees to her chest, Helena tried to suppress the emotions prompting the curiosity. She was a grown woman; she could have sex without falling in love. But that was what this felt like. Love.

Disgusted with herself, Helena pressed her forehead hard into her upraised knees. Great sex coupled with tenderness and she was in love. Was she really so simple?

After all, what did she know about Ocean? So many things he did and said were mysteries.

But as much as she fought it, there was a lightness in her heart, a quick trip of anticipation every time she thought of him. For God's sake, she was thinking of baking for him. She wondered if the feminist majority would kick her out for losing her cool.

It couldn't be helped. She'd fallen in love.

"You okay, gorgeous?" Ocean stood outside the bathroom door, a towel around his waist. She wanted to lick the water drop from his chest.

“Helena... Helena? Are you there?”

“Hmmm?”

“Daydreaming?”

“Dreaming of something.”

“Are you flirting with me?”

“I’m trying.”

He walked over and kissed her lightly. “You’re succeeding. But I thought you were too sore and that’s why I had to shower alone.”

Pretending a blush wasn’t heating her cheeks, she responded, “I am sore, but flirting is fun.”

“Flirting can get naughty girls into trouble.”

Helena shivered.

“But first I think we need to eat again. How do you feel about cold pizza?”

“I love it.”

“You may turn out to be the perfect woman.”

Standing at the small counter, they ate cold pizza out of the box, silent but for gentle teasing about inconsequential things. Belly full, Helena felt drowsy and longed for a quick nap. Setting down the half a slice of pizza she held, she moved against Ocean. He unhesitatingly opened his arm to tuck her against his side so she could rest her head on his shoulder. Closing her eyes, she drifted, soaking up this companionable touch with as much pleasure as she had the lover’s touch.

When he finished, he guided them to the bench seating.

“Bed,” Helena mumbled.

“Hmm?”

“Want bed.”

“I’m saving that.”

“M’kay.”

Ocean arranged pillows so he could lean back against the armrest at the end of the seating arrangement. Once he was in place, he pulled Helena down on top of him, front to front, her head pillowed on his chest, his arms around her.

Rubbing her cheek on his skin, which smelled of soap and ocean, Helena closed her eyes and willed herself to just breathe, to just *be*. She loved him, and in this moment, secure in his tender arms, she could believe he loved her too.

* * *

Hours later Helena woke with a shiver. She didn't know how long she'd been asleep but her internal clock said it was late, past midnight. When she shivered again, Helena realized the cold had woken her. She still lay cradled against Ocean's chest, but now one of his arms was flung above his head and the other dangled at his side, leaving her without the warmth of his embrace.

Still misty eyed with sleep, even as goose bumps dotted the skin of her legs, Helena crawled down the bench, searching for the compartment where she had stored the little blanket. Carefully and as quietly as possible, she lifted the seats, finding the right compartment on her third try.

Reaching down into the dark, she felt around for the blanket. She stifled a yelp as her hand pressed against something soft and *warm*. Helena retracted her hand and took a deep breath. That was impossible. It was cold in the boat, situated as it was on top of the water, and the nylon sleeping bags the throw was stuffed between had both been cool to the touch. Shaking her head at her own foolishness, Helena reached in again and pulled out the throw before she could analyze its disturbing warmth.

Crawling backwards, she snuggled down against Ocean's chest once more. When he moved restlessly, Helena tugged the blanket farther up, covering the portion of his chest she wasn't lying on.

Quick as a snake strike, Ocean seized the throw from her, ripping it from her and sliding from beneath her.

“Ocean, what—?”

Ocean wrapped the hand not holding the blanket around her arm, fingers digging in painfully, dragging her up.

“You touched the skin to me, I am free of you.” Ocean’s face was contorted in a parody of handsomeness. His beautiful eyes and cheekbones blazed with the fire of his anger.

“Please, you are hurting me. Let go.”

“Do you care that being denied my skin is a form of torture?”

What was he talking about? Ocean was accusing her of something she didn’t understand, his grip on her arm painful enough to send a bolt of adrenaline through her.

“Let go of me. Now.”

“How did you find out what I was? Who told you about my skin?”

Helena had been mentally rehearsing the moves from her self-defense class but at his words, she paused. “Ocean, listen to me, are you okay? Do you have pills you need to take or something?”

“You know what you did, you know what I am. It is too great a coincidence that you performed an ocean rite this morning and stole my skin the moment you stepped onto the boat.”

“I didn’t steal anything. Let go of my arm.”

He released her. “My kind have been known to kill when their skin was finally returned.”

Unbidden, a sound of fear escaped her lips.

“But then I look at you, and even now I can hear your heart beat, can feel your determination, your bravery and your fear. I have my skin. Why do I still feel enslaved by you?” His words were beautiful and sad, but spoken in angry tones.

“Ocean, Ocean, please explain what you are talking about. I don’t understand. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“You already have.” With that, he climbed the stairs out of the cabin.

Something was about to happen, Helena could feel it. She climbed the stairs only a few paces behind him. Ocean stood in the cockpit, near the rear railing.

“What—?” Helena bit back the rest of her questions when Ocean turned to her. He was beautiful under the summer moon. Powerful and wild, he was naked before her in the moonlight.

Turning his gaze from hers, Ocean slowly held up the blanket between his hands. The light breeze coming off the water made it look as if the blanket were moving all on its own.

Eyes now closed, Ocean brought the bare side of the fur to his chest, wrapping his arms around it and hugging it to his heart. Two steps had him through the little swinging door.

The words to call him back, to stop him, rose in her mind but she remained silent.

With one final glance at her, Ocean stepped off the back of the boat and tumbled into the night-blackened water.

“Ocean!” With a scream, she scrambled to the rear of the boat, kneeling on the small ledge, her knees slipping on the damp platform. “Ocean!” She scanned the surface of the water in vain. The night wind rippled the inky black water and the reflected moonlight illuminated the unbroken surface.

“Oh no, Ocean, where are you?” Helena forced herself to be still, forced herself to wait and watch. Over the thrumming of her heart, she heard water lapping against the hull, the muted canvas snap of the furled sails and the bark of seals.

It had been over two minutes. It was possible he was still under the water, able to hold his breath this long, but she was afraid for him.

Should she go in after him? Helena was a strong swimmer but had never been trained in search and rescue. She didn’t know if she could get him out of the water if she found him. Helena moved to sit on the rear platform, her legs dangling over the side. Sucking in a breath as her bare thighs and bottom came into contact with the chilly ledge, Helena peered into the water.

A head popped out of the water. It was not a human head. Helena yelped and drew her feet up and back as the seal barked at her.

“Go away!” she shouted, not wanting the creature near the boat as she sat here waiting for Ocean. Then something else occurred to her. Maybe the seal had come to tell her Ocean was there, under the water, and needed her help. Weren’t seals known for helping humans? Or was that dolphins?

Before she could decide if the seal’s appearance meant she should jump in, it appeared directly under her dangling feet, its cold, wet nose and whiskers pressing into the sole of her right foot. With a yelp, Helena scrambled up, her frantic movements almost upsetting her balance and sending her down on top of the seal.

Back pressed against the railing, Helena fisted shaking hands, tears filling her eyes.

“Do I need to go in and look for him?” Curling her arms around her torso, she started to shake. “Why did he jump in the water? What does he think I stole? Why does he say I hurt him?” Tears slipped down her cheeks. “I love him.”

The seal’s head was still above the water and cocked to the side. Wiping her tears, Helena looked at the seal and slowly straightened. The seal was listening to her...understanding her?

“I must be losing my mind...” As if in a trance, Helena stepped to the edge once more. The seal tracked her movement.

“How...?”

The seal disappeared under the waves and propelled itself up onto the platform with Helena. Hands knotted in the T-shirt she wore, Helena pushed open the little door with her hip and backed into the main cockpit. The seal followed her, advancing across the deck with an odd rolling motion, its body large and ungainly out of the water.

When she stopped the seal did also.

Knowing she was insane, knowing it was madness and impossible and her grief and fear talking, Helena spoke to the seal.

“Ocean?”

The seal laid its head down on the deck and closed its eyes. In the next breath, the air around its long brown body shivered, and Helena's legs trembled as the aura tugged at her. She grabbed the back of the captain's chair as the pull increased, the feeling similar to standing knee-deep in the surf as a wave is drawn back to sea.

The seal's body was obscured by a thick blue mist, which hung for a moment and then started to dissipate, slipping away with the breeze, releasing what lay beneath.

Ocean lay still against the deck, his naked body speckled with water. He propped his upper body up on one elbow before lifting his head to look at Helena.

The sob she'd been holding in escaped. She stumbled toward him, falling to her knees at his side. Ocean knelt, letting her run trembling fingers over his face, chest and neck.

"Ocean, what are you?"

He cupped her face. "You really don't know?"

"No."

"Come on. It's time to explain."

Chapter Six

Ocean emerged from the bathroom where he'd hung the "blanket" to dry. Helena sat cross-legged on the bench, a mug of tea in her cold, trembling hands.

"Do you want anything else? Do you need more tea?" Ocean asked.

"No."

Ocean went into the tiny kitchenette and lifted his own cup, resting his towel-wrapped hips back against the counter, legs crossed at the ankle.

"You want answers."

"Please."

"Before I begin, let me ask you something. You truly had no idea what I was?"

Helena gripped her cup tighter as a flare of anger thawed her shock. "I told you already that I didn't."

"Fine. I'm sorry."

"Ocean, just tell me, what are you?"

"I'm a Selkie."

"Selkie?"

"One of the Sea Folk."

"Sea Folk?" Helena had reverted to answering questions with questions.

"The Sea Folk, the Sirens and the Selkie. Creatures who are half human, half animal."

“Wait, I feel like I know this.” Helena struggled to recall an old memory, glad to have something to focus on besides the fact that she’d seen Ocean turn from seal to human.

“There are legends, most fiction rather than fact about the Selkie. You may have heard one.”

“No, family history, and there were stories my grandmother used to tell. I—I can’t remember what she said about Selkies, but I know I heard her speak of them, and the Sirens. She said they were known as the Sea Folk.” If this was a coincidence it was an eerie one, but the other option, that their meeting was one of design or fate, was almost frightening.

“Gorgeous, what happened in the story?”

“My grandmother’s grandmother disappeared. She had three children and when the youngest was six she disappeared, leaving her family behind. The youngest child, my grandmother’s mother, said that her mother came back and visited her over the years, but only at times when her father was away. The rest of the family said she was imagining things, and when she talked of the sea people everyone said it was her imagination, her way of explaining why her mother abandoned her.”

“She found her skin,” Ocean said, providing the end of the story.

“Then it was true, my family story?”

“Yes, it sounds as if you are born of a Selkie.”

Helena looked down into her cup, frowning as she reorganized her understanding in a manner that dealt with the fact that there was far more to the world than meets the eye. “You’re not human.”

“Yes and no. I have both human and seal bodies.”

“The blanket?”

“Is my seal skin.”

“Did I do something wrong when I touched it?”

“When you hid it—”

“I didn’t hide it, all I did was put it away in the bench because I thought it was creepy that you had a dead animal blanket.”

Ocean laughed ruefully. "And here I thought you were another sea creature, a Siren perhaps."

"Why would you think that?"

"This morning, when we were in the kayaks, you thanked the sun for rising. It is a blessing often used among the sea peoples."

"I did?"

"You did. Three times you lifted the water to the sky and let both water and sun kiss your face. It is powerful magic, old magic."

"Am I a Selkie? Like you?"

"You would know if you were. You would have been able to change from human to Selkie from the time you were a child. Even if you didn't know what you were, a longing for the water would have brought you to the ocean and you would have changed."

"But someone in my past was."

"Yes, it's in your blood."

"I had no idea" A terrible thought occurred to her. She had to look away, compose herself for a moment. "Is that why you had sex with me? Because you thought I was a Siren?"

"No. I had sex with you because you are gorgeous, but yes, I found you much more attractive once I saw you perform the blessing."

"Oh."

"Helena..."

"You didn't finish."

"Finish what?" he asked.

"What happened when I moved the skin?"

"When you took the skin it gave you power over me. The Selkies were a gift to the world, a gift that could be harnessed by humans, the skin a built-in weakness they could exploit, though it is hard on the Selkie. We crave the water and are only satisfied when we enter the water in seal form at least once a day. Without our skin we cannot change forms."

"It was only in the bench."

"I know, but I could have looked right at it, and as long you'd taken it from me and moved it, I would not have seen it."

"Then how do Selkies get their skin back?"

"There are two options for a Selkie to get his skin back. The first is to kill the person who took it. The other is to coax them into giving it to you, to try and pleasure them in whatever way is appropriate, so well that they would return it to you."

"So this has all been a lie." Heartsick, she set down her cup and rose, moving to the door and opening it so the cool night air flooded in.

"There is something else you should know."

"What else could there be?"

"I can read your mind."

At this she whirled, wide-eyed in shock. Ocean's face was serious.

"When? Why? How?"

"After the first time we had sex. Long ago a member of my family made a deal with a witch, if any of us were ever taken, we would be given the gift of sight into the mind of the one who held us prisoner, so we might always please them and be freed sooner."

"Everything between us has been a lie."

"No, everything has been the truth."

"But you only made love to me because you had no choice."

"It is true that I was compelled to obey you at times. There is magic in the skin which worked on both of us, magnifying what we felt."

She remembered the aggressive spike of arousal she'd felt when he first walked out of the bulkhead, right after she'd moved his skin.

"There is something in your blood that called to me, as I suspect something in me called to you," Ocean said, taking her in his arms.

"I just thought I wanted you because you're hot."

For the first time since changing, Ocean laughed in real amusement, holding Helena to his chest, both their bodies shaking with it.

"I can't believe I said that out loud."

Ocean kissed her neck. "You're awfully cute, gorgeous." He backed her up against the wall. The smile was back in his eyes as his lips descended on hers. The kiss was pure and long, lips fitting and molding together. When they broke the kiss, he rested his forehead on hers and it was so tender, tears slipped down Helena's face.

"I heard what you said when I was in my seal form," Ocean whispered against her cheek.

"The part where I said I love you?"

"Yes. And it made me very happy, because even as I tried to swim out to sea, I felt I was being called back to you. All day I've been drawn to you. I thought it was the skin, but I think that was only part of it."

Helena was shaking from the emotional impact of his words. Cradled in his arms, her tender heart supported by his loving embrace of her body, Helena was helpless to stop herself from falling a little more in love with him as he spoke.

"I love you." He went on. "You're kind, thoughtful, shy at times and exhibitionist at other, driven, successful and gorgeous. How could I not love you?"

"I love you," she repeated, wishing she had the beautiful speeches and perfect words to give him, but settling for a heartfelt confession.

Slipping her fingers into his hair, Helena kissed him, and with the kiss she told him she loved him and thanked him for loving her.

When he picked her up, Helena kissed any part of him she could reach. He laid her down on his bed and her sigh of pleasure turned into a gasp as he stripped the shirt off. Hands and lips set to work on her breasts and nipples.

When he thrust inside her it was perfect, and his strokes were long and slow so they didn't have to stop kissing. At her peak, when a cry of pleasure tore her mouth from his, Ocean held her, grounded her, and then she did the same for him as a few long strokes brought him to his completion, her hands stroking through his hair as he buried his head in her neck.

* * *

It was nearing dawn before they stirred. They'd slept, tangled in each other, breathing each other's breath.

They kissed awake and then lay facing each other, still but for the occasional stroking of hair or soft touch of a finger to a lip.

Kissing Ocean's fingertip, Helena smiled. "I think I'm going to demand a refund."

He smiled in return. "I might just give it to you, though I do intend to drag you back into a kayak so we can explore the water together, but this time I won't be in the kayak with you. I'll accompany you as the seal."

"That would be amazing."

"There's something we need to take care of first."

"What?"

"Well, yesterday I would have spanked you because I could hear that you secretly wanted it and had fantasized about it. Since I can't read your mind any longer, I'm just going to spank you for being bad and stealing my skin."

As his grin grew wicked, Helena's eyes widened and with a yelp, she rolled off the bed. Ocean chased her, catching her, stealing a kiss and then releasing her. The chase led them out of the cabin and onto the deck.

When he caught her for the last time, there was no fear, only anticipation. He lifted her and stepped over the side, hurtling them both into the water. Safely wrapped in his arms, Helena knew she was home.

About the Author

Lila moved to Southern California where she obtained her degree in anthropology and currently resides in Hollywood, which provides an endless supply of exciting evenings and writing ideas. Having spent extensive time in France, Egypt and Turkey Lila speaks five languages, none of them (including English) fluently.

She has neither husband nor cats but there are some piranhas living in a fish tank behind her couch.

Visit her at www.liladubois.com.

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

Marielle's Marshal

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Available now at Samhain Publishing

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

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

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

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Marielle's Marshal*:

Marielle.

Even the name sent a snake of longing through him, not to mention the memory of her plump lips. That led him to thinking about tongues and that made his trousers way too damn tight. He knew if he bedded her, the obsession would wane. Unfortunately for him, it wasn't the time to be bedding any woman. Much less Marielle—the woman who apparently wanted to be a thorn in his side.

He needed to keep moving and get to the way station. Head down, he walked, not slowing down one bit for her, yet she kept up. After two hours, his respect for the stubborn teacher notched up a bit. He sweated buckets in the heat and he'd grown up in the Arizona Territory. He figured she was likely from the East with her slight Southern drawl.

Spying a clump of bushes perfect for a rest, Ramsey sat, drank a bit of the water and waited. She caught up to him in less than fifteen

minutes. A small vee of sweat sat between her breasts. Ramsey had the insane urge to lick the salty spot.

"I told you not to come."

She shrugged and sat next to him on the dusty ground. "Consider me a poor listener."

Ramsey snorted. "That's an understatement." He doubted the woman had ever listened to anyone in her life.

"May I have a bit of your water?"

"You didn't bring any with you?" That was about the dumbest thing he'd ever heard. Who went walking in the desert without water?

"Did you want me to leave Mrs. Philpot alone with no water and no food?" She raised one eyebrow.

"No, I expected you to stay put with her." Ramsey wished he had tied Marielle to the tree Mrs. Philpot slept under. Marielle at his mercy made his skin pebble with desire. Could he not think about fucking her every two seconds?

Obviously not, dammit.

"I don't always do what's expected of me."

"I can see that." What he wanted to do was turn her over his knee. Instead, he handed her his canteen. "You're going to give some man a hell of an interesting ride."

"What makes you think I haven't already?"

She took a swig of water and a trickle slid down her chin. Ramsey watched its progress, wishing his tongue could follow. After putting the cap on, she handed it back to him.

"Thank you, Mr. Whitfield." Her voice was even huskier than usual from the desert heat.

"Ramsey." He licked his lips. "Call me Ramsey or Ram."

One of her eyebrows went up along with the corner of her mouth. "Ram? I like that. Please call me Marielle."

He suddenly realized what she'd said about giving a man a ride. The image of her riding him danced across his mind, causing his sleeping dick to wake with a growl.

“How is it that you’re out here all by yourself?” He gestured to the desert. “It’s dangerous out here, even for a man.”

She narrowed her eyes. “You seem to be doing all right by yourself.”

“I’m a man.”

“I noticed.” Her gaze traveled up and down his body, igniting him like a burning stick. Ram didn’t think Marielle knew how much she was risking.

“You took a lot of chances with your life today.” He pointed at her head. “You’re damn lucky Pete has lousy aim.”

“At least I did something to try to save us.” She leaned in close with an accusing gaze. “Unlike you.”

Son of a bitch. The woman didn’t want to understand the danger she was in. It was time to teach her a lesson so she wouldn’t take such chances, and maybe send her back to the stagecoach to leave the work of rescuing to a man.

He cupped her face and kissed her. It wasn’t a gentle kiss. Instead of punishing her, it was sweet torture for him. She tasted of lemon and Arizona heat and woman. Her lips plumped beneath his, moved languidly in a dance she apparently knew. Her small hands crept up his shoulders to his neck, tangling in his hair. She moaned as the two of them slid off the rock together onto the dusty ground. His body sprawled on top of her, covering her completely.

Oh what a mouth. She opened for him and he dove deep, tongues sliding and rasping against each other. Hot, wet, fierce. His hand crept down to cup one unfettered breast, a happy surprise. She must’ve ditched her corset when she changed. The ripe nipple pushed against his palm even as his cock pushed against her pussy. Blood thundered through him, heating him to an almost unbearable fever.

The lesson was turning into something else altogether, and Ram didn’t seem to be able to control it. His body had taken over.

She wrenched her mouth away. “Ram, I...”

“Marielle, darlin’, you taste like sunshine.” He nibbled his way along her jaw, alternately licking and nipping at her smooth skin. She hissed in a breath when he reached her ear.

“Sensitive?” He ran his tongue along the shell of her ear.

Marielle grabbed his hair and yanked. He almost protested, but the feel of her breasts against his chest felt too good. Her pussy made a perfect home for his burgeoning cock. As he rocked against her, she moaned and pulled his hair again.

Ramsey licked his way down her neck, sucking, biting and kissing, while their lower halves teased and tempted each other. His hands shook as he unbuttoned her shirt to get to her breasts. Thank God they weren't the tiny buttons from her traveling suit or he'd have ripped them off.

He kissed each inch of exposed skin, his breath coming in pants at the anticipation of seeing the breasts he was currently cupping in his hands. When the shirt gaped open, he was entranced by the sight of the creamy skin with light pink areolas topped by richer pink nipples that begged for his mouth.

“Oh, honey, those are the most beautiful pair of tits I've seen in a very long time.”

She raised one eyebrow. “I'm going to take that as a compliment.”

“It was, believe me.” His mouth actually watered as he lowered his head and took a nipple into his mouth. Sweet like cream, he sucked her, biting the peak.

“Ah, God, yes.” She arched forward, thrusting the breast farther into his mouth.

Marielle's hand crept down and pulled at his behind while she pushed up against him.

“I need more.”

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

Hunk of Burnin' Love

© 2007 Veronica Wilde

Available now at Samhain Publishing

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

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

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

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Hunk of Burnin' Love*:

Every summer the carnival came to town, perching on the edge of the beach like a loud, multicolored monster of whirling rides and cheap prizes. Vanessa hadn't been there in years, namely because Landon had always made fun of it. *Childish* and *stupid*, he called it. Yet now it seemed like fun—cheap, bawdy fun. As she walked through the straw-covered grounds, the electronic song of the merry-go-round and the screams of joy from the rollercoaster overwhelmed her. She could smell fried dough and cotton candy and everywhere she looked someone was trying to shoot moving bottles or stumbling off the Tilt-A-Whirl.

Yes, it all sparkled before her like a vulgar, roaring gem. Suddenly she realized how much she had missed out on this summer by staying home and moping over Landon. Well, that was going to change—starting

tonight. She was wearing a short red cotton dress that showed off her tan legs and her long black hair was loose; the appreciative glances of passing men told her she looked good. So what if she was alone? Feeling adventurous, she headed down to the auditorium where glossy posters advertised the Celebrity Star Revue.

She paid for her ticket and slipped down a dark hall leading backstage. "Hi, I'm Vanessa Reeves," she told the security guard. "Mr...." Her confidence died as she realized she had never learned the impersonator's real name. "Elvis invited me to come see him tonight. He told me to come backstage."

"Did he now." The man looked her up and down with a sly smile. "Go down that hall there. Second door on the right."

"Thank you so much." Even without directions, she would have known which dressing room was his. A booming rendition of "Burning Love" was blaring through the door. She knocked.

Was that a "come in" she heard? She tried the knob and stepped in—and found herself staring at a naked man.

Her first impression was of smooth, tanned muscle. He was in his mid-to-late twenties, just over six feet tall with the broad shoulders and narrow hips of a model. That flawless sun-browned skin just seemed to go on and on, rippling from perfectly carved pectoral muscles down to a sculpted abdomen and continuing into long, hard-muscled legs. But as if magnetized, Vanessa's eyes were drawn to the center of his body, where an impressively thick, long cock was growing hard under her gaze. A wave of shock and heat swept over her and she quickly dragged her attention up to the man's face.

Silky black hair framed one of the most handsome faces she'd ever seen. Ice-blue eyes blazed at her in outrage.

"Oh God, I'm sorry," she gasped. Heart pounding, she began to back out.

"Sorry?" the guy yelled, grabbing a towel to cover himself. "Haven't you ever heard of knocking?"

"I *did* knock," she said hotly. "I thought you said to come in. Look, I'm sorry. The guard said this was the Elvis impersonator's room."

It was obvious now that the portly, silver-haired impersonator she had met at the cemetery was nowhere around. Her face was burning pink with embarrassment—and her body was flushed with reactive lust at seeing such gorgeous, naked masculinity.

He snapped off the boom box, cutting off the Elvis song mid-tune. As he wrapped the towel around his narrow hips, his gaze traveled up and down her body. “Looking for Elvis, are you?”

“Yes.” Despite her flustered state, she couldn’t help noticing just how fine he looked in the towel. With his wide shoulders and sculpted torso, he could have stepped out of an underwear commercial. “Look, I’m really sorry. I was at the cemetery today and met him—”

“You met Elvis at the cemetery?” A mocking white smile crept across his tanned face. “Was he eating a peanut butter and banana sandwich? Did he say, *Thank you, thank you very much?*”

She scowled. “Look, I happen to be a big Elvis fan. So while I’m sorry I walked in on you—well, naked—I’m not going to let you mock his memory.”

Somehow her indignation unlocked his true smile. He grinned more genuinely and came toward her. “That makes two of us. T.J. Woodard here—a huge fan of the King.”

She mustered a friendly smile, as if he wasn’t standing before her with just a white towel tenting over that impressive manhood. As if the image of his enticingly stiff cock wasn’t flashing repeatedly in her mind no matter how hard she tried to think of something innocent. “Vanessa Reeves. Thanks for being so nice about the mix-up.”

T.J. adjusted his towel as he walked closer. For a moment she stiffened with anticipation. But he only pushed the door shut behind her.

Her heart began to race with a nervousness that wasn’t entirely unpleasant.

“So,” she said lamely. “Do you work here as part of the crew?”

Those blue eyes were mesmerizing her with their erotic speculation. With every moment that passed, it was becoming harder to remember the Elvis impersonator she had come here to see.

“Yeah, I work the lights.” His gaze was growing more interested, yet calculating too as he took in her short red dress, then returned to her face. “So how about I get you the best seat in the house?”

“Okay...” A devious hint rode his smile but she wasn’t sure how to decipher it.

He leaned closer. “Just on one condition.”

Something fluttered inside her stomach. She nodded in a daze.

“You have to give me the best kiss I’ve ever had in my life.” His lips were full and sexy and she couldn’t help but notice how pink they were against his tan. “Deal?”

She swallowed nervously. “Deal,” she promised, her voice barely a whisper, and extended her hand.

T.J. took her hand in one meaningful squeeze. Then he let go of his towel.

Unable to stop herself, her gaze fell down his broad golden-brown chest to the eight-inch rod stiffening between his legs. It rose up like a velvet colossus, straining toward her with undisguised lust.

A helpless, animal heat swept through her like wildfire. All the frustration and yearning of this sexless summer collected between her legs in one trembling, demanding ache.

“I...” Her voice was shaking as she tried to assert control over the situation. She hadn’t even had a date in months and now here she was under the spell of a naked stranger. Normally she would never do something like this, no matter how sexy the man. Yet she only leaned back against the door as T.J. took her skirt and pushed it up her thighs. Taking his cock in his hand, he rubbed its swollen head back and forth over her panties. Vanessa closed her eyes and succumbed to the moment, feeling the heat of his skin press through the satin.

“You still haven’t kissed me yet,” he whispered.

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

Samhain Publishing Presents
Midsummer Night's Steam
24 Sizzling ebooks
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Duty wars with affection when Racor's greatest spy must decide who to trust, the evidence against her sexy suspects, or her heart?

A Scorching Seduction

© 2007 Marie Harte

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

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

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

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

Blackberry Pie

© 2007 Bonnie Dee

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

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

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

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

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

Catching a Buzz

© 2007 Ally Blue

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

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

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

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

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

Full Disclosure

© 2007 Mary Wine

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

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

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

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

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

Does a full moon really cause naughty behavior?

Bad Moon Rising

© 2007 Leeanne Kenedy

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

Wrong.

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

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

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

Beyond the Tears

© 2007 Michelle Cary

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

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

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

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

Is their passion real, or only a mirage?

La Mirage

© 2007 Jennifer Colgan

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

Invited to spend the night in lush accommodations, passion flares between Savanna and Ben who have suppressed their hidden desires long enough. A single touch ignites an unforgettable night in each other's arms, but the next day, when La Mirage mysteriously disappears, they're left to wonder, is their newfound intimacy real or nothing more than a trick of the summer heat?

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

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

Take Me

© 2007 Mackenzie McKade

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

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

It's payback time.

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

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

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

Fijian Fling

© 2007 Sami Lee

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

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

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

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

Honeymoon Castaways

© 2007 Dawn Halliday

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

Cat, Dave and Andreas find themselves stranded on an uninhabited Caribbean island. Though she's never thought of him as more than a friend, Cat finds herself connecting to Andreas in a way she never

expected and is shocked and aroused to learn that her husband feels the same way. Together, the three of them discover a heat and passion uninhibited by the conventions of society. But will they ever be rescued? And what will happen to their unusual relationship once they return home?

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

Two men and a bottle of nut cream...

Nut Cream

© 2007 Jade Buchanan

Nut [nuht] noun, verb.

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

2. Slang, Vulgar – a testis.

Cream [kreem] noun.

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

2. Slang, Vulgar – to have an orgasm.

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

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

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

Fantasmagorical

© 2007 Annmarie McKenna

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

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

But what if Evan isn't interested in more than the fling she signed up for? Or worse, what if she can't handle two men who are into each other too? Gabe and Lance have one week to convince Evan that the three of them belong together...and they'll use every bit of seduction in their arsenal to make sure when the fantasy ends, their reality together will only just be beginning.

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

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

Hunk of Burnin' Love

© 2007 Veronica Wilde

Summer should mean hot men and toe-curling sex—at least that's what Vanessa believes, but a bad break-up has left her spending her

summer nights alone. Then her sex life erupts into flames when she meets two very different Elvis impersonators on the same night. One is a sexy young musician who gets her all shook up in a steamy midnight swim. The other is a graying older man who looks just a little too much like Elvis Presley for comfort.

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

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

Chastity Cuthbert is determined to bring love and romance to the Last Frontier.

Ladies! Meet Red Hot Alaskan Men

© 2007 Nancy Lindquist

Chastity Cuthbert is in love with love. Its too bad that she's so busy working on everyone else's happily ever after that there's no time left to work on hers. Her company, The Alaskan Connection, matches single women with sexy Alaskan hunks. Business is booming. Until Dave Wellington drags his personal vendetta against outsiders right to her doorstep.

Dave Wellington, Mayor of Smithfield, Alaska won't allow Chastity's cadre of red-lipped floozies to take over his town. A she-bitch from the lower forty-eight broke his brother's heart and no one else is gonna go through that. Not if he can help it. Besides, Smithfield is welcoming tourists for the first time. The male residents need to keep their minds on business. Not sex.

Determined to change Chastity's mind, he travels to Chicago to talk her out of her plan. Chas is so pissed off at the sexy mayor that she forgets her "no one-night stands" motto. Right into Dave's bed.

Now she has to travel to Smithfield and face him. She's strong. She can face Dave again. Just because she snuck out of his hotel room in the middle of the night doesn't mean she's a big ole chicken. Right?

Warning: This book contains hot naked Alaskan guys, all looking for love. Read it at your own risk. I am not responsible for any sudden urges to go to the Last Frontier, nor travel costs incurred. Oh, and there's explicit sex too.

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

One Night on a Balcony

© 2007 Samantha Lucas

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

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

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

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

Sometimes the truth is the greatest aphrodisiac.

Liaisons in Jubilee

© 2007 Jamie Craig

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

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

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

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

Second Wind

© 2007 Dee S. Knight

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

A city girl like her would never fit in on his ranch, but a weekend in Dallas? Yes, Ma'am, she'll do just fine. Little does he expect a ride wilder

than with any bull. She grabs hold of his heart and his hottest fantasies and holds on tight.

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

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

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

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

Custom Ride

© 2007 K.A. Mitchell

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

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

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

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

Skin to Skin

© 2007 Dionne Galace

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

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

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

Hot summer nights make people do crazy things.

Spontaneous

© 2007 Karen Erickson

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

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

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

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

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

Knotty Girl

© 2007 Maggie Casper

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

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

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

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

Marielle's Marshal

© 2007 Beth Williamson

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

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

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

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

Taboo Desires

© 2007 Amanda Young

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

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

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

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