

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

N.J. Walters
Anastasia's
Style

ELLORA'S CAVE
Quickies
Valentine
Vixens

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Anastasia's Style

ISBN # 9781419909443

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Edited by Mary Altman.

Cover art by Syneca.

Electronic book Publication: January 2007

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ANASTASIA'S STYLE

N.J. Walters



Dedication

To my husband, Gerard, who makes every day Valentine's Day.

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Dom Perignon: Chandon Champagne Corp.

Godiva Chocolates: Godiva Brands, Inc.

Honda Civic: Honda Motor Co.

Manolo Blahnik: Blahnik, Manolo Individual Spain

Chapter One



"I hate Valentine's Day," Anastasia Style muttered as she contemplated the wisdom of kicking the flat tire she was glaring at. If she hadn't been wearing her very expensive, incredibly sexy red high-heeled Manolo Blahniks, she might have attempted it.

Sighing with frustration, she reached into the stylish leather handbag she'd just retrieved from her vehicle, rummaging around until she found her cell phone. Dialing her office, she glared at the offensive piece of rubber. Of all the days to get a flat.

"Hi, Maryann." She spoke calmly even though a part of her wanted to scream. Her normally composed assistant sounded flustered on the other end. Not good. But not surprising. Valentine's Day was shaping up to be her second busiest time of the year. Only Christmas had been more frantic. As the owner and manager of Hassle-free Holidays, her holidays were anything *but* hassle-free.

"I've got a slight problem." She explained her situation to Maryann and paused while the other woman commiserated. "Call Manny's Garage for me, will you?" Her family had been using Manny's for as long as she'd been alive. "Tell him to take it back to the garage and I'll pick it up later. I can't afford to wait, so I'm going to call a cab."

She stared into the backseat of her normally reliable six-year-old Honda Civic and eyed the expensive bottle of Dom Perignon, the huge box of Godiva Chocolates and the extravagant arrangement of colorful carnations. The carnations didn't quite fit with the other two items, but that wasn't her concern. Whatever the client wanted, the client got. That was the mantra for her business.

She glanced at her watch and groaned. This day was going from bad to worse. She had to make this delivery for a very last minute—but extremely lucrative—client and get to her lawyer's office before five o'clock.

She was signing her divorce papers today.

Pushing that thought aside, she said goodbye to Maryann and punched in the number of a local taxi company. After they'd promised her they'd have a car to her location within fifteen minutes, she popped the phone into her purse and climbed back into the driver's seat to wait. It was only four o'clock, so she still had time to take care of everything and run back to her office to make sure that the rest of the deliveries had gone off without a hitch.

Luckily for her, her office was located on the first floor of the old Victorian-style house that she'd purchased a year ago, just after she and Mason had split. She bit her lip and shook her head. She didn't want to think about her soon-to-be ex-husband, but it seemed appropriate today.

Mason would have had a field day with this episode if they were still together. He'd lecture her on the fact that she should have let him buy her a new car. New to him meant expensive. Mason Style was a successful land developer who came from old money and, at thirty-five, he had taken over the family business and done more than his fair share to pad the family coffers. They'd met when she went to work for him.

It had all been so clichéd—the boss falling for the working-class secretary. She chuckled as she admired her new shoes. Okay, so she had expensive taste. But that was all right. She'd worked and paid for every luxury she had. In fact, these were her one and only real splurge in the shoe department. But with the divorce being finalized today, she'd wanted to feel confident and, yes, sexy.

Lingerie was her biggest vice. It was one of the things that she hadn't had any problem allowing Mason to buy for her. Somehow him blowing a hundred dollars on a sexy negligee that they'd both enjoy wasn't quite the same thing as allowing him to buy her a fancy car, diamonds or...whatever.

She shivered and flicked the heater up on high, even though the interior of the car wasn't that chilly. Memories assailed her.

After the wedding, her life had changed one day at a time until it barely resembled a life she recognized. It had happened so slowly, she hadn't been actually aware of it happening. She'd started dressing differently—more upscale, so as not to feel so out of place when she had lunch with the wives of some of her husband's business associates and friends or when she, heaven forbid, spent time with his mother.

This time she shuddered. Marjorie Style was a social snob in the worst way. It was all about acting appropriately, wearing the right clothing and spending time with the right sorts of people. It was only after Anastasia and Mason had married in a whirlwind affair one weekend—an event that his mother had heartily voiced her disapproval of—that Anastasia had come to realize that the right sort of people did not include her family and friends.

They'd just celebrated their first wedding anniversary when Mason began to suggest that she might want to quit work and stay home. He'd hinted that they should think about starting a family. Anastasia had awakened on that cold, dreary morning last Valentine's Day a woman of leisure, and instead of being content, she'd panicked.

The woman staring back at her from the mirror was not a happy woman. She'd tried to talk to Mason, but he'd been in a hurry to get to work and had kissed her instead. And after that, it was impossible to think about anything at all. The physical side of their relationship was the one place where they'd never had any problems. It seemed that whenever they came together, sparks flew and heat ignited within her.

She swore as she squirmed in her seat. Just thinking about her soon-to-be ex was enough to make her cream her silky red thong. Closing her eyes, she leaned back against the headrest and sighed. Whatever else could be said about the man, Mason Style was six feet of prime male.

His black hair, which always seemed to be shaggy in spite of the fact he had it cut regularly, hung to just above his shirt collar. She'd liked to run her fingers through it

when they made love. Regular workouts and his love of sports kept him physically fit. But it was his eyes that she'd first fallen for. His brows were thick and black and his eyelashes were sinfully long and dark. His eyes were a bluish-green that was almost turquoise and as clear as the tropical sea they'd swam in on their honeymoon. And they'd stared at her as if she were the most fascinating and captivatingly gorgeous woman he'd ever seen.

Anastasia groaned as she dropped her head into her hands. The movement made her smart, tailored jacket brush against her silky red camisole, which was all she was wearing beneath it. She bit her lip to stifle another groan. All these thoughts of Mason were obviously having an effect on her libido. And no wonder. She'd gone from having the best sex of her life to no sex at all for the past twelve months.

She'd known that fateful morning that she had to do something drastic. So she'd sat at the huge kitchen table in the middle of the mansion that she'd never really liked or wanted and had written him a long letter, detailing every doubt that she had. She'd poured her heart into the letter, wanting him to understand so that they could hopefully talk about things and work them out. Then she'd gone to a friend's house. She'd waited for hours for Mason to come to see her or to call. She'd made sure he'd known where she would be, but he'd never shown up. Never called.

Her clothing had arrived on the doorstep the next morning. A week later, his lawyer had contacted her.

Her fingers found the long strand of pearls that wrapped around her neck and hung almost to her waist. They were real. She'd inherited them from her Grandmother Pepperfield, a feisty redhead whom everyone said she took after. Gram had always said that pearls were always appropriate, no matter the occasion, and Anastasia had worn them almost every day since they'd come into her possession. Even as a child, she'd been fascinated by them. They'd seemed so beautiful—almost alive. She still remembered her grandmother whispering to her, telling her the story behind the pearls.

"Ana, always remember that pearls keep their luster by being worn. Never pack them away in the dark, but wear them daily as a reminder." When she'd asked her grandmother what they were supposed to remind her of, she'd replied, "Love. It's easy to forget about love in the business of living, but you shouldn't neglect it or its luster will fade." Then she'd get a faraway look in her eyes and young Anastasia would know that her grandmother was thinking about her grandfather who'd passed away before she'd been born. The love that they'd shared was legendary among the family.

Now, as she ran her fingers lovingly over the long strands, she wondered. Had she done everything in her power to make her marriage work? Had she lost sight of it in the business of living? She honestly didn't know. She'd tried to call Mason several times after, both at work and at home, but he'd never answered or returned her messages. She'd even gone by the house one night and had found Marjorie there instead. Mason's mother had calmly informed her that Mason was out for dinner — with a female friend.

Anastasia had been devastated. Up until that moment, she'd held out some hope that they might reconcile and save their marriage. After that, she'd stopped avoiding Mason's lawyer and had gotten one of her own.

What had gone so wrong? She remembered the first months of their marriage. God, they'd both been so happy. They'd laughed and talked and played. They'd worked together during the week and they'd sure as heck enjoyed their weekends, spending much of it in bed together.

Her face burned as she thought about those early days of wedded bliss. Mason had been insatiable. The man could spend hours touching her...

His fingers lightly traced her leg from ankle to thigh and back down again. Slowly. Maddeningly. His fingers would never quite go high enough to touch the slick folds of her sex.

"Mason," she groaned.

He glanced up at her with a sexy grin on his face. "What?"

Picking up a pillow, she covered her face with it and screamed with frustration. When she heard his low chuckle, she gripped the pillow tight and whacked him in the head with it. Grabbing her hand, he tore her makeshift weapon from her fingers and tossed it to the floor.

Then he pounced.

He tickled her waist, which wasn't fair when she thought about it. He knew how ticklish she was there. They rolled around the huge king-sized bed until she was breathlessly begging for mercy. Mason laughed, gripped both of her hands in one of his and raised them over her head. His legs had hers trapped between them and the bulk of his body held her captive. "You know you can't rush an artist when he's working." He nibbled the line of her jaw.

"So you're an artist now, are you?"

He released his hold on her and levered himself up on his forearms. His expression was serious as he gazed down at her. "Maybe. Maybe not. But you're definitely a work of art."

"Oh, Mason." Tears pricked her eyes. He was always saying things like that to her, and no matter how many times she heard them, she had a hard time believing them. She'd grown up a thin, klutzy redhead with braces, and memories of childhood taunting still rang in her head even though she'd filled out nicely as an adult.

Taking his time, he kissed every one of the six freckles that were sprinkled across her face. She was more fortunate than many natural redheads in that her skin was mostly smooth and clear, but her husband seemed to love her freckles.

Anastasia forgot all about her childhood and her freckles as Mason brushed his lips over hers. His tongue snaked out to lick at her mouth, and when she moaned, he slipped it inside. Their breath mingled as their tongues stroked and touched. She was gasping when he withdrew and began to kiss his way down her neck, taking special care to linger over the sensitive skin at the base where it met her shoulder.

"I want to kiss and lick every square inch of your body, Ana." He continued downward, licking her collarbone, his body sliding over hers as he went lower. She could feel the tightness in his muscles, could feel the hardness of his erection against her thigh, but still he focused all his attention on her.

Her fingers curled into the thick muscles of his shoulders as he lapped at one of her swollen nipples. And when he began to suckle, she arched toward him, her nails digging deep as she tried desperately to anchor herself.

It was always this way with Mason. She sank deeper and deeper into a well of sensuality and sexuality until she thought she might drown. With him, she allowed herself to let go in a way she never had, trusting him to always catch her and hold her close when she spiraled out of control.

His hands gripped her hips, his thumbs grazing her hipbones as he left a trail of kisses down her stomach. She sucked in a breath as his tongue dipped into her bellybutton and swirled around. He caught her silver bellybutton ring with his teeth and gently pulled. Anastasia felt that tug deep in her core as if his lips had tugged on her clitoris.

Cream seeped from her slit as she shifted her legs restlessly. She stroked her hands over every inch of his flesh that she could reach—his shoulders, his biceps, his back. She loved to touch him, to feel the shift and play of his muscles as they moved beneath his flesh. His cock pulsed against her thigh and she could feel the moisture seeping from the tip, dampening her leg. She knew he wanted her as badly as she wanted him.

"God, you're incredible," he muttered against her belly as he prowled lower. "I love the fact that you're a natural redhead." He sifted his fingers through the neat thatch of curls that covered her sex. "Very sexy."

"So you wouldn't have fallen for me if I'd been a brunette?" she teased.

He sat up and glared at her, his turquoise eyes fierce in the low light of their bedroom. "I fell in love with the woman. Your intelligence, your sense of humor and your warm, giving spirit drew me to you. You're unlike anyone I've ever met, Ana."

His hand began to trace circles on her thigh. She shifted her legs wider. "You're absolutely unique and I count myself lucky the day you walked into my office to interview for the job as my assistant."

Anastasia could see the sincerity blazing from his eyes and her heart swelled. "I love you too, Mason. I'd given up believing I'd find someone who'd love me the way you do." She'd been thirty when they'd met, and after being in the dating game for well over a decade, she'd become very disillusioned with it all. In fact, she'd been on a dating hiatus, determined not to go out with anyone when she'd met him. It had taken him quite a while to break through her defenses, but he'd done it, one day at a time, simply by being himself.

He lowered himself until he was lying between her spread thighs. From the way he was settling in, he didn't plan on moving any time soon. She licked her lips in anticipation and he didn't disappoint her.

His thumbs skimmed over her damp folds, spreading them wide as he leaned closer. "Beautiful," he whispered, allowing his warm breath to flow over her heated flesh. "So pink and perfect and mine."

"Yes," she groaned as she gripped his hair and tugged him closer. She needed his tongue on her. Now.

His tongue lapped up one side and down the other. Her hips rose to meet his mouth, silently encouraging him. Beads of perspiration dotted her skin. Her breathing quickened.

Mason nipped at the swollen folds as he carefully and very slowly inserted one long, thick finger inside her. Anastasia sucked in a breath. "Mason," she moaned.

"Very tasty," he whispered as he took her distended clitoris between his lips and sucked.

She cried out, heat rushing through her veins as it rocketed toward her pussy. Digging her heels into the mattress, she lifted her hips as he inserted a second finger

inside her, pushing past the natural resistance. Her inner muscles clenched and relaxed as they accepted the invasion.

Her breathing was coming harder now as she struggled for air. Her entire body was tense. Poised for the coming explosion. She was so close. Yet he held himself steady, keeping her precariously balanced on the edge of sexual completion.

"Mason," she panted, not able to say more than his name. She wanted to scream at him to finish it, to do that one little thing that would push her over the edge into oblivion. One more flick of his tongue. One slight shift of his fingers.

Her husband lifted his head and smiled at her.

Anastasia sucked in a breath...

And barely stifled a scream when someone rapped hard on the car window. She jerked around to see a concerned male face staring at her. She came to her senses enough to realize that there was a yellow taxicab pulled ahead of her car and it was the driver who was not-so-patiently waiting for her. Needing a moment, she rolled down the window.

"You still want a ride, lady?" He was staring strangely at her.

"Yes." Her voice sounded hoarse, so she cleared her throat and tried again. "Yes. Just give me a minute."

His gruff expression softened slightly. "You okay?"

She nodded affirmative, even though she wasn't sure she'd ever be truly okay again. "Fine. I just need to gather my things."

The driver eyed the stuff in the backseat of her vehicle. "You taking all that with you?"

"Absolutely. If you can take the box with the champagne and chocolate, I'll get the flowers."

“Big Valentine’s Day celebration?” he asked as he opened the back door and hefted the box out.

“You have no idea,” she muttered as she glanced at herself in the mirror. Her face was slightly flushed, but other than that small, telltale sign, there was no other indication that she’d almost had a screaming orgasm sitting in the front seat of her car on the side of a busy street while thinking about her soon-to-be ex-husband.

It wasn’t to be borne. She had to get over him. After today, Mason was a part of her past. Once her signature was on those papers, they no longer had any ties to bind them. Gathering her purse, she climbed out of the driver’s seat and locked the front door. Reaching into the back, she carefully lifted the arrangement of carnations off the seat. Pressing down the lock, she used her hip to knock the door shut and headed toward the cab, determined to put every last thought of Mason out of her head.

Chapter Two



The address that she gave the cabdriver turned out to be for a beautiful old Victorian home, very similar to her own but on a much grander scale. Situated on a large piece of land, it had a wraparound driveway that allowed the driver to pull the cab right up to the front door. Anastasia noticed that a small section of the lawn had been removed to create parking spaces, but other than that, the garden had been left intact. It might be a bit dull now, but once spring hit South Carolina, that would change. Well into the fall, the large trees would provide shade while the flowerbeds would no doubt be a riot of flowers offering color to the stately white building with its dark blue shutters. It was gorgeous.

The driver cleared his throat and she realized she was just sitting there, gawking at the building. The man was going to think she had some kind of mental problem if she didn't pull herself together. She tipped him generously as he once again helped her with her belongings, placing the box carefully on the front porch.

"You sure you'll be all right?" She could see the concern in his eyes. "Do you want me to wait for you?"

It was tempting, but the client had left specific instructions and Anastasia knew that she had some work to do to set up everything. "No, but thank you. I don't know how long I'll be."

The driver nodded and went down the steps to his cab, climbed in and drove away, giving a toot to his horn as he pulled back out onto the street. Anastasia turned her attention back to the house. A discreet sign off to the right of the door announced the

various businesses that were housed inside—a law office, an investment firm and a psychiatry practice.

Opening the door, she stepped inside. The lobby was as breathtaking as the outside of the building. Hardwood floors the color of warm honey spread before her, welcoming any visitor. An antique oak sideboard sat against one wall and she laid the flower arrangement there while she went outside and brought in the box.

When the door closed behind her for the second time, a woman was standing in one of the doorways that opened off from the foyer. “I thought I heard someone out here,” she said, smiling. “Can I help you with anything?”

Anastasia nodded. “I have a delivery for Future Investments.”

“Their office is on the top floor. Marlow’s Law Firm takes up the entire ground floor and at the moment there’s only Dr. Jacobs’ psychiatry practice on the second. The investment company has the third. Right up those stairs until you get to the top. Oh, and the owner is out seeing a client. He asked me to tell you to take a left at the top of the stairs and to go straight in the second door on the right and set everything up.”

“Left and second door on the right. Got it. Thanks.” Anastasia eyed the long staircase as the other woman disappeared back into her office. She was beginning to wish she hadn’t worn her sexy, new high-heeled shoes this afternoon. Oh well, there was nothing to be done about it. Striding forward with the box clutched tight in her arms, she started the long trek to the top.

Feeling almost like an intruder, she crept up the stairs and took a left, trying to ignore the fact that she was starting to sweat in her expensive business suit. Not to mention that her panties were still damp after that incident back in her car. No, she definitely didn’t want to think about that.

Hurrying down the hallway, she ignored the incredible crown molding and the rich, buttery yellow that covered the walls. She wanted to get this stuff set up and get out. Fortunately, this customer had paid by corporate credit card earlier today when he’d placed his last-minute order with Maryann. She didn’t even have to wait around

for him. Once she was finished, she was out of here. Her stomach knotted at the thought of what awaited her at her lawyer's office, but there was no point in putting off the inevitable.

She found the room easily and walked inside, as the door was wide open. It looked more like someone's living room than part of an office. Four tall windows were spread across the far wall, allowing her a spectacular view of the back garden. Long, white sheers hung at each one, giving the room an open, airy feeling. Anastasia lowered the box to the floor beside a large maple coffee table that sat in the center of an intimate conversation area. The sofa and chairs were covered in a rich sky blue fabric and looked very comfortable facing a lovely antique fireplace. A massive floor-to-ceiling bookcase dominated the opposite wall. The final wall had a long maple sideboard with several tasteful pieces of art hanging above it. Anastasia imagined that clients would relax in a room like this while they talked business.

Okay, she'd admired the room and gotten a much-needed breather, but she still had to get the flowers from downstairs and set up everything for the client. She glanced at her watch. It was almost half past four. She had to hurry.

She was panting slightly by the time she hurried back up the stairs again. She'd almost kicked off her shoes to make her second run, but she hadn't wanted to chance running into the client. Not the best way to make a good professional impression. And to a fairly new business like hers, reputation was everything. Every satisfied client was a potential repeat client. And that didn't even cover the possible referrals. So, as much as it pained her, she kept her shoes on.

She glanced at the sideboard, but immediately decided it was too impersonal. Reaching into the box, she pulled out a lacy, crisp white cloth and spread it over the coffee table. Two crystal flutes and the champagne came next. She'd even had the champagne on ice and the ice was still mostly frozen. Life was good. The large box of rich, sinful chocolate was placed artistically in front of the glasses. Anastasia decided that she was going to break into her own stash of imported chocolate tonight when she

could finally kick off her shoes and relax. If ever a day called for chocolate, it was this one.

The large arrangement of carnations was the finishing touch. It had surprised her that the client hadn't ordered roses, the traditional flower of Valentine's Day. She knew it wasn't because of the cost. Obviously, he hadn't skimped anywhere else. Must be the lady's preference. And Anastasia could easily understand that. Carnations lasted longer than roses.

Satisfied, she stood back and admired the table arrangement. Some lady was going to get a wonderful surprise this evening. Wiping her damp palms on her skirt, she glanced at her watch. It was almost five o'clock. If she called ahead and told her lawyer that she was on the way, she could probably still get those papers signed today.

She reached for her purse and the empty box, turned toward the door and froze. There was a man leaning against the doorframe, watching her. Her eyes flew to his face and the purse and box fell to the floor with a thump.

"Hello, Ana."

Mason watched his wife with avid interest. She looked even better than she had a year ago, and that was saying something. Ana had always looked fantastic. "Not going to say hello?" He kept his tone mild when what he really wanted to do was grab her into his arms and never let her go. He didn't dare move from his place in front of the door. By blocking the entrance, she wouldn't be able to run until he'd talked to her.

As he watched, she seemed to collect herself. "Hello, Mason. I wasn't expecting to see you here." She gave him a tight, polite smile. It was the same one she always gave his mother. He had a lot of talking to do and he had to do it fast.

"This is my office."

Her mouth dropped open in shock. "I don't understand. Don't you work for Style Investment Corp. anymore?" As if realizing she'd shown more interest than was wise, she drew herself up tall. "Not that it's any of my business."

"Of course it's your business." He straightened away from the doorframe, trying to ease the ache that coursed through his body. His wife was here with him after all these long, lonely months.

She shook her head. "After I sign those papers today, nothing you do is my business just as nothing I do is yours." Her eyes narrowed. "You ordered this, didn't you?"

He shrugged. "Guilty."

Her face paled and she grabbed her purse, abandoning the box. "I'll get out of your way before you guest arrives."

Pain rocked him as he realized the conclusion she'd drawn. He supposed he couldn't blame her. "You're the guest, Ana," he whispered.

If possible, her face paled even more. She reached out a hand to steady herself against the arm of the sofa. "I don't understand."

He took a step into the room and froze when she took a step away from him. This wasn't going well at all, but then he'd known it wouldn't be easy. Not after all this time. But he hadn't become successful in business by being a quitter. "I wanted to talk to you. Needed to explain some things to you."

"I think it's a little too late for that, don't you?" She rubbed her hands over her arms as if she were cold. He recognized the symptom. He'd been cold since the night he'd come home to find her gone.

"I didn't know where you were," he blurted out. Not exactly the way he'd intended to begin, but now that he'd started, he forged ahead. "I came home from work with your favorite Chinese takeout and chocolates, ready to talk about whatever had been bothering you that morning. And you were gone."

"I left a letter." Her cheeks were pink with indignation. "I was expecting you to read it and show up at Jenny's house to get me. You were the one who didn't show."

"I didn't get the letter. Didn't even know about it until two days ago. I thought that you'd just left me."

Her eyebrows drew together as she frowned. He wanted to smooth the wrinkles and kiss her until the last year was nothing but a bad memory. "That's not possible."

Taking a chance, he took a step toward her. This time she didn't move away but stood her ground. "It is when you consider that my mother came by and read it first." He let that tidbit of information sink in.

"Oh. My. God." She swayed. "I think I need to sit down." She practically slid onto the sofa. "Even she wouldn't go that far."

"Your suitcases were gone and the dresser drawers were wide open. Seems she packed your clothes and sent them to you. I waited by the phone all night long, drinking scotch and hoping. I fell into a stupor just before dawn."

"I can't believe she hated me that much." She shook her head as if she couldn't quite assimilate what she was hearing.

"I can't believe she hated me that much." Ana's expressive blue eyes flew to his face. "You made me happier than I've ever been in my life. I've been only half living for the past year."

She flew to her feet. "Just a second, buddy. I tried to call you the next day at home and work and you wouldn't take my calls."

He winced. "I was hung over the next day and not answering the phone. And, to be honest, I was too damn angry at you for leaving me to listen to anything you had to say at that point." It wasn't one of his prouder moments.

"That's fine, but what about the days following?" She marched over to him and poked him in the chest with her finger. Damn, she looked magnificent in her prim beige business suit with the red camisole peeking out from between the lapels. She tried to hide her passionate nature from the world, but he'd recognized it from the first moment he'd met her. His fingers itched to release all that red hair that she kept coiled up in an intricate knot at the back of her head and to slip open the buttons of her jacket.

"That was my own stubborn temper," he freely admitted. "I felt that I'd been wronged and I wanted to hurt you back."

She rubbed her hand over her breastbone. "You succeeded."

"And for that, I'll always be sorry." It still shamed him that he'd acted that way. "Then I got the letter from your lawyer and it seemed that there was no hope."

Her eyes widened. "But your lawyer contacted me first."

He closed his eyes as another wave of pain washed over him. "Mother didn't mention that bit of mischief." Mason opened his eyes and rubbed his hand across the back of his neck. "I really thought that you wanted to talk to me because you wanted a divorce, and I put off the inevitable until there was no way to deny it any longer."

"This is unbelievable." She looked as bewildered and hurt as he had several days ago when he'd finally found out the truth. "Why did she tell you? Why now, with the divorce all but final?"

His laugh was bitter. "Mother has fallen in love, and she didn't realize until it was too late that he was a retired cop who now runs his own security company and not a member of her rich set of friends. She met him at a party and he was wearing a tuxedo and mingling with the guests. She didn't realize he was working security at the time. They saw each other a few more times and the rest is history."

"But what does that have to do with our situation?" She licked her lips and Mason barely stifled a groan. He wanted to lick her lips and, indeed, the rest of her body. His cock hardened and he shifted his stance to try to hide his growing erection.

"It seems she got a guilty conscience and confessed what she'd done to him. Ron got very angry with her and demanded that she tell me everything. She was more afraid of losing him than she was of alienating me." He shook his head. After all these years, he still didn't understand the woman who'd given birth to him. "In the end, it was Ron who came to see me. He handed me the letter you'd left and told me what my mother had done. I haven't spoken with her since and don't know if I ever will."

"That's so sad." Ana shook her head. "What's even sadder is that if we'd been able to communicate better in the first place, she wouldn't have been able to destroy our marriage." Biting her lower lip, she turned her head away.

"Is it destroyed?" Taking a chance that she would reject him outright, Mason cupped her cheek and used his thumb to tilt her face upward until she was staring right at him.

"I'm supposed to sign divorce papers today," she whispered, her voice none too steady as he lowered his face toward her.

"You don't have to sign." His lips brushed hers and that slight contact went straight to his groin. His cock flexed against his zipper, demanding release. "We can start again. Here. Now." He licked at her lower lip, tracing the fullness. Damn, she tasted sweet. Intoxicating.

She sucked in a breath and slowly shifted away from him. "The old problems still remain. I'm never going to fit easily into your life."

"Sweet Ana, I don't fit into my life, and that's why I've changed it."

She frowned. "What do you mean?"

He motioned around the room. "This company and the entire building are mine. I sold my share of the family company and started my own, which of course didn't please my mother at all. I also sold the house. It was too damn lonely without you." The last year had been filled with long, empty nights where he'd lie in their bed, aching to hold her in his arms.

"That's not what I heard."

He could tell she wished she hadn't said anything, but now was the time to get everything out into the open if they were going to have a chance at saving their marriage. "What did you hear?"

She toyed with the pearls around her neck like she always did when she was nervous or feeling insecure. "I stopped by the house one night and your mother said you were out to dinner with a lady friend."

He frowned, searching his memory. "When was that?"

"About two weeks after we split."

He thought for a second and finally remembered. "I did have dinner with a friend. I hired Peggy Jamieson to be my lawyer. We were discussing my case. It was just after I'd gotten the letter from your lawyer."

Mason reached out and tugged Ana into his arms. She came reluctantly, but she didn't fight him or demand he release her. "We've both changed in the past year. And I think it's for the better. You're running a successful business yourself."

"I like it." He could hear the defensiveness in her voice and see it in her posture as she straightened her shoulders. He was responsible for that. He'd spent a year married to this amazing woman and never once realized how uncomfortable she was with the life they'd had. Hell, he'd been uncomfortable himself, but he'd grown up with it and had just accepted it. The fact that Ana was so different from anything he'd ever known was part of what had drawn him to her.

"I think it's amazing. Less than a year and already you're the buzz around town."

"What have you heard?"

He shrugged, not wanting to admit that he'd watched her company's progress with interest and pride. "A lot of CEOs are singing your praises, saying you saved their butts on birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas..." She laughed as he'd intended and he drank in the sound like a parched man getting a reprieve after a year in the desert.

"We offer a complete yearly package where the company will take care of any and all holiday obligations. We tailor it to each client and allow them to have as little or as much input into the arrangements as possible."

"Like I said, it's pretty amazing."

Abruptly, her demeanor changed and she took a step toward the door. "I don't know if this is such a good idea, Mason."

His gut clenched. "It's an excellent idea. I still love you. That has never changed." He plunged onward. "And you love me. We owe it to ourselves to give our marriage another shot."

Chapter Three



Anastasia gulped in air. This couldn't be happening. She'd been planning to sign divorce papers today and, instead, here was her husband asking for a reconciliation. She still could hardly believe everything he'd told her, except, knowing Marjorie Style like she did, she could easily believe every word of it. It was too much like a bad soap opera to be anything but true.

"Ana?" Her fingers tangled in her strand of pearls and she closed her eyes tight. Mason was the only other person besides her grandmother who called her Ana. And seeing as her grandmother had been deceased since Anastasia's first year of college, she hadn't heard that name in a year.

God, she needed to think. Her entire world had been shaken. The last year of her life need not have happened. Yet there were many things she didn't regret about it—like her new business, for one thing. But she'd missed her husband every single day of the past year. She couldn't believe he'd gone to the trouble of ordering her favorite flowers and chocolates.

Her eyes popped open. "Does Maryann know about this?"

"Your assistant?" He shook his head. "No. I just asked that the owner take care of this personally." He laughed. "She charged me extra."

"Good," she retorted.

He sobered again. "There's nothing that I wouldn't pay to have another chance with you, Ana. What do you say?" He slowly walked toward her and held out his hand. "Please."

Her mind was urging her to stop and think, but her body and her emotions were screaming at her to throw herself into his arms. She stared at him. Really looked at him. He looked different than he had a year ago. The lines at the corners of his eyes were a little deeper and there was a sprinkle of gray at his temples. She could see the strain on his face and knew then that he'd suffered as much during their separation as she had.

He was also dressed more casually than she was used to seeing him. Gone was the three-piece, very expensive suit. In its place he wore casual black dress pants and a silk shirt with the sleeves turned back to just below his elbows. The color was a turquoise that matched his eyes and looked fantastic with his black hair. The watch she'd bought for him was strapped to his wrist. She admired his broad, large hand with the light dusting of hair on the back. So strong, but always so gentle with her.

He was close enough for her to smell his cologne, and it sent her senses reeling. Her nipples were puckered tight beneath her conservative jacket and her panties were damp as her core softened in anticipation. After an entire year, she still wanted him. But not just because of the fantastic sex.

She missed waking up in the morning with his hands already roaming over her skin. She missed quiet breakfasts on the weekend where they shared the paper and read each other interesting stories. She missed their jaunts out into the country, shopping at interesting antique and junk shops and stopping at a quaint restaurant for lunch. She missed being hugged after a day of work. During the past year, there had been many times she would have loved to have had his opinion on something work related.

Like a video in her brain, scenes replayed in her head, reminding her of all that had been right in their marriage. What had mostly been wrong was their inability to communicate, and she was as guilty of that as he was. She'd never understood why a rich, handsome man had been so determined to have her as his wife and had always been waiting for something to go wrong with her fairy-tale marriage. Her insecurities had enabled her mother-in-law to drive a wedge between her and Mason. She hadn't wanted to rock the boat with his family. And look where that had gotten her.

"Ana." He brushed his hand over the side of her face. "My beautiful wife."

She knew he was going to kiss her and went up on her toes to meet him. With the help of her high-heeled shoes, she didn't have far to reach. The first kiss he'd given her had been lethal. This one was devastating.

There was no tentative searching this time, but an explosion of two lovers who had been apart for months and were now starved for the touch and taste of one another. His tongue slid easily past her parted lips and claimed the dark, moist cavern of her mouth. She moaned as he searched out every crevice and cranny before returning to duel with her tongue. He withdrew and she clutched his hair with her hands, allowing her fingers to sift through the dark, shaggy locks as she plunged her tongue into his mouth. He sucked on it lightly, sending a jolt of desire straight to her core. Cream slid from her channel, dampening her panties further.

Mason's hands gripped her ass, tugging her closer. His erection was thick and hard and she rubbed her aching pussy over it, shamelessly seeking his heat. She could feel his heart pounding against her chest as his fingers dug into her behind, grinding her against him.

It was too much. It wasn't enough.

He tore his mouth from hers and rained kisses across her jaw to her ear. Teeth nipped at her earlobe. She gasped as her body vibrated with a need that had been suppressed for an entire year. Yes, she'd pleased herself, but a battery-operated boyfriend was no substitute for the real thing.

"Let me have you, Ana," he said, his voice ragged with need. "It's been too long."

The sensible voice in her head that urged caution fell silent beneath the clamoring of her heart. "Yes," she breathed.

His hands immediately slid from her behind up to her waist before slipping around to the front. Nimble fingers had her coat buttons open in a flash and then the jacket was being pushed from her shoulders and down her arms to land in a heap at her feet.

"You are so damn sexy." His voice was rough as he traced the lace-trimmed camisole, which clung to her breasts. She'd chosen the red one this morning in honor of Valentine's Day, in spite of the fact that she hadn't been looking forward to it. She figured it would give her the boost she needed to get through the day. Now she was glad she'd worn it.

His large hands looked rough next to the delicate material. She knew he could rip it with barely any effort, but she also knew he wouldn't. Instead he'd take his time, slowly driving her mad. Her pussy contracted and she felt a trickle of moisture between her thighs. His thumbs came up to trace the outline of her areolas through the fragile fabric. Her scalp tightened and began to tingle. No, he definitely wasn't going to be rushed.

"Mason," she cried out as he caught her distended nipples between his thumbs and forefingers and gently tugged.

"Hmm," he absently replied as he watched her.

"I want you now." She covered his hands with hers, pressing them tighter over the mounds of her breasts.

"Always impatient." She could hear the pleasure in his reply as he lowered his head. He shifted their hands out of his way and then covered one of her silk-clad nipples with a hot, open-mouthed kiss. Anastasia almost purred, the heat was so exquisite.

His hands molded her hips before shifting behind her. She heard the rasp of a zipper and then her skirt was falling down her thighs to land at her feet. Mason raised his head, his eyes hot and lustful as he stared at her half-naked body.

Her camisole ended just above her bellybutton and a matching red bikini thong covered her mound. It left a strip of her belly naked and his gaze went straight to her bellybutton ring.

He inserted his pinky finger into the ring and tugged gently. "I forgot just how fucking sexy this is." His rough language excited her. It was so unusual for him to lose his composure that she relished it.

Giving her bellybutton ring one more tug, he released it and held out his hand to her. She took it and he helped her step away from the tangle of her skirt.

His eyes moved lower over her legs – which were encased in thigh-high stockings – all the way to her red high-heeled shoes. A grin flitted across his face. “Those are what you women call ‘fuck-me’ shoes, aren’t they?”

She nodded, unable to speak.

“You came to the right man then, because I plan to eat your hot pussy until you come and then I’m going to fuck you until you scream with pleasure.”

Her knees grew weak at his words.

She needed to see him, to feel his flesh against hers. “You’ve got on too much clothing.” Raising her hands, she slid them over his chest, reveling in the play of muscles as she undid one button at a time until his chest was exposed. Her fingers sifted through his chest hair and brushed across his flat, brown nipples, making him shudder. Leaning forward, she flicked her tongue over one disk, drawing a groan of pleasure from him.

He tugged at the hem of her camisole, shoving it upward. Anastasia stepped back long enough for him to draw the garment over her head. The rasp of the material against her nipples was almost painful, they ached so badly. The long string of pearls hung between her breasts and fell all the way to her waist. Mason picked up the end of the long strand and rolled it between his thick fingers.

Her chest rose and fell rapidly as breathing became harder.

Holding the pearls with two hands, he draped them over one of her breasts, tucking them beneath a plump mound. She bit her lip as he slowly rolled them over her breast, brushing her nipple as he did so. Then he did the same thing with the other one. Her nipples were impossibly tight.

“You never did let me give you any jewelry other than your wedding ring.” His tone was light, almost conversational, but she tensed. They’d been over this ground many times before.

"I don't need fancy jewelry."

"I know *you* don't need it," he replied gently. "But maybe I do." He rolled the pearls over her nipple again and her entire body jerked with need. "I bought you something that I hope you'll wear."

She started to protest, but he placed one finger over her lips. The strand of pearls in his hand felt warm against her mouth. "I only want you to wear them for me. I promise you that they weren't expensive."

Now she was curious. She nodded her head and he leaned down and kissed her. "Thank you." She saw the pleasure in his eyes and realized that maybe she had been a bit unreasonable about him buying her presents. She'd been so conscious of not wanting his family and friends to think she'd married him for his money that she'd denied him the basic pleasure of buying her the occasional gift. She saw that now.

He spread the pearl strands wide so that they framed her breasts, brushing against the outside of the two plump mounds. She looked down at herself, shocked and aroused by the erotic picture she presented. Her nipples were flushed red and her breasts rose and fell with every breath she took. The material of her panties was dark with moisture and the scent of her arousal wafted in the air around her. The thin string of the thong was pressed tight between the cheeks of her ass, making her feel even more exposed. Her legs appeared impossibly long in her high heels. She felt sexy and beautiful and just a touch naughty.

She jumped, her gaze flying back to his face as he stroked both her nipples before reaching into his pocket. His hand was fisted when he pulled it out. She waited, holding her breath, unsure of what to expect. His fingers uncurled slowly to reveal two strands of colored stones.

"Earrings?" She couldn't quite tell.

"Nipple clamps." Those two words sent another gush of pleasure rocketing through her. She'd never tried anything like that before, although she'd always wondered about

them. Mason waited patiently while she picked one up and examined it before placing it back in the palm of his hand.

“May I?” His deep voice was as seductive as a touch and she nodded.

He started with her right breast, plumping her nipple between his thumb and forefinger. When he was satisfied, he gently clamped the strand of stones to her nipple. She jerked at the slight pain, more like a pinch really, that shot through her breast. As it faded, he flicked the strand of stones with his finger. She hissed in a breath as her pussy contracted. Ohmigod, that felt incredible.

While she was still trying to come to grips with how it felt, he did the same to the other one. Although she knew what to expect this time, that didn't diminish the slight pinch followed by the flood of pleasure. She gave a little shimmy, making the stones shake.

Mason was watching her, satisfaction on his face as he kicked off his shoes and yanked off his socks. His belt and pants and underwear quickly followed until he was naked in front of her. His cock was thick with need, its bulbous head bobbing toward her as she stared. She licked her lip and he groaned, then laughed. “Not yet,” he said. “I told you I was going to eat you until you came.”

He prowled toward her and she took a step backward. A male animal in his prime, he wanted his mate and nothing would stand in his way. Sex had always been hot between them, but this was something different, something more elemental. She felt different too. More alive, more primal. She wanted to entice him until he lost control and fucked her until they both screamed with pleasure.

“Put your hands on the back of the sofa and spread your legs.”

A quick glance showed her that the back of the sofa was just behind her. Placing her palms on the top, she slid her legs apart. It wasn't easy, considering the four-inch heels she was wearing.

He didn't stop until he was so close that his erection pressed against her stomach. Her pussy clenched in demand, but she knew that he wasn't going to fuck her yet.

Leaning down, he kissed her slowly but thoroughly. The man knew how to kiss. Her thighs quivered and her toes curled in her shoes.

When he stepped away, her pearls were in his hand. While she'd been dazed after their kiss, he'd slid them over her neck. He gave her a wicked grin before lowering himself to his knees in front of her. Her fingers dug into the fabric of the sofa for support as he laid the necklace on the floor within easy reach.

Tracing the red triangle of material with his fingers, he slipped them between her legs, grazing over the heated flesh beneath. Anastasia groaned as more cream trickled from beneath the band of her panties to roll slowly down her inner thigh.

He continued exploring and froze when he encountered her naked ass and the string of her thong. When they'd been together, she'd only worn bikini panties. She hissed out a breath when he traced the thin red band nestled between her ass cheeks. "I love your new taste in underwear, my sweet."

"They don't show panty lines through my skirt," she blurted out. God, she was losing her mind if that was all she could think about.

Mason laughed. "I can see how that would work." His fingers continued their maddening rhythm up and down the crease of her behind. "It also makes it easier for me to touch you, to stroke you. Do you have any idea what a turn-on it is to know that's what you're wearing under your skirt?"

She shook her head.

"I'm going to be hard all the time now. Very uncomfortable." He gave her a pitiful look. "You'll have to make it up to me."

He shoved the string out of his way and traced one finger over the tight hole of her ass. Then he reached out and grasped the thin red string with both hands and tugged. It gave easily and he pushed the remains of her thong down one leg, letting it fall around her ankle.

Gripping the pearls, he brought the strand between her legs and pulled it tight against her heated flesh. Anastasia felt as if her pussy was on fire as he began to tug the

strand gently back and forth between her spread legs. The round pearls stimulated the puckered opening of her ass as well as the slick folds of her labia and her swollen clitoris.

Tension tugged at her. Muscles in her legs and arms tensed as she shifted. That caused the jeweled nipple clamps to sway. Beads of perspiration broke out on her body. Breathing was difficult.

Then Mason leaned between her thighs and stroked his tongue over the swollen folds of her sex. Up one side and down the other and then around again. His tongue pressed the pearls into her flesh.

Her knees threatened to give, but she locked them tight. She wanted more of this. More of Mason. The sight of his dark head buried between her thighs, intent only on her pleasure, pushed her arousal almost to its peak.

She still loved this man. No matter what their problems. No matter what had happened in the past. She loved him. What they had was worth a second chance. Worth fighting for.

His tongue pressed against her clitoris as he slipped a thick finger inside her pussy. Her entire body clenched. "Come for me, Ana," he commanded just before he sucked her clit into his mouth. He curled his finger forward and stroked her sweet spot as he withdrew.

For Anastasia, it was too much. The contractions started deep in her core and she cried out his name as they vibrated out to encompass her entire body. Cream gushed from within her as her inner muscles clamped down hard on his finger.

Mason continued to suck and stroke her with his tongue as her body heaved and shook. Finally her legs gave out and she began to crumple. He caught her easily and lowered her to the floor. His strong arms wrapped around her, holding her so tight she could feel the frantic pounding of his heart against her cheek.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath as emotion threatened to overwhelm her. Her breathing began to slow and her body calmed slightly. But she was still incredibly aroused, still felt empty inside.

Only Mason could take that empty feeling away.

Pushing away, she smiled up at him. He was sitting back on his haunches, his body covered with a light sheen of sweat. Strands of his hair were stuck to his forehead and his lips were damp with the evidence of her desire. She shuddered as he licked his lips. His eyes, always so expressive, were filled with a potent combination of love and lust.

“Give me the pearls.” He seemed startled by her demand, but handed them over to her without hesitation. She eyed his cock and chuckled when it flexed toward her. A sense of feminine power filled her as she leaned forward.

Chapter Four



Mason sucked in a breath as Ana shifted closer to him. He licked his lips again, savoring the taste of her orgasm. She tasted just as he remembered – musky, yet sweet. He'd awoken from dreams many nights the past year hard and craving her unique flavor. He still could barely believe that she was here with him. That she'd allowed him to strip her naked and pleasure her.

Kneeling in front of him, naked except for the jeweled nipple clamps swinging from her ample breasts, her stockings and shoes, she was the embodiment of every fantasy that had crossed through his dreams, both waking and sleeping, over the past year. Even when he'd been hurt and furious when he'd thought that she'd left him without a word, he still wanted her, still loved her. When he'd finally read the letter his mother's boyfriend had reluctantly handed over to him, he realized he'd been an angry fool and made up his mind to do everything in his power to win her back.

Her lush, thick red hair was coiled at the back of her head, making her long neck appear fragile. As she bent forward, he could see the vulnerable nape and wanted to nibble it. He felt her breath on the head of his cock. Every muscle in his body was pulled tight in anticipation. He could feel the liquid seeping from the tip. He wouldn't be able to hold out for long.

She blew gently, laughing softly when he shuddered. Her light laughter rocked him to his core. He hadn't expected to ever hear that beautiful sound again. "Witch," he muttered.

She glanced up at him, her blue eyes twinkling with mischief. "You ain't seen nothing yet." She curled her tongue around the bulbous head before lowering her

mouth over the top and sucking. His hips jerked forward, but she was already moving on.

Bending down even further, she traced a large blue, pulsing vein all the way to the base. He could tell she was having trouble reaching while both of them were kneeling, so he levered himself up further on his knees to give her a better angle.

“It would be even better if you could stand up.” It was difficult, but he dragged himself to his feet. Now it was his turn to grip the back of the sofa for support.

“Perfect,” she replied as she leaned in and traced his scrotum with her tongue before gently tugging one of his balls into her mouth and sucking. The warmth of her mouth surrounded him as she tongued him.

Now that he was standing, he had a better view of her—the delicate curve of her back, the soft globes of her behind as she bent forward, her stocking-clad legs with those killer red shoes. He hissed and a bead of perspiration trickled down the side of his forehead as she released him and nuzzled his testicles.

Then she picked up the pearls.

Holding the long strand in her hands, she rolled it up his turgid shaft and then back down again. Heat pounded through his veins and his cock flexed toward her as if asking for more. And she gave it.

She repeated her actions several times before slowly wrapping the strand around his erection. Staring up at him, she began to pull the pearls upward. The action caused them to tighten slightly even as they rolled up and off, stroking the sensitive tip.

“Ana,” he groaned. He was surprised that he could still speak. Lust more powerful than anything he’d ever felt for her before fired his blood, demanding he fuck her hard and fast and lay claim to her body and soul.

She wrapped the pearls around the base of his cock again and then she lowered her red, swollen lips over the bulbous head, sucking it into her mouth. As she sucked his length deep, she tugged the pearl strands up and down the lower half of his shaft.

His hands dug into the back of the sofa. He was surprised he hadn't driven his fingers through the damn fabric. This was erotic torture at its finest. He couldn't take much more. Never wanted it to end.

His testicles were drawing up tight as she pulled her head back and twined her tongue around the top again, dragging it across the slit. "You taste good." Her low, husky voice and her warm breath almost shattered him. "Hot and salty and all male." He sucked in a breath and sought control.

The pearls rolled up his length and then back down again. Up. Down. Up. Down. His control shattered. Reaching down, he yanked her to her feet. The pearls dangled from his cock. His mouth captured hers. Conquered it. Owned it.

She whimpered as he thrust his tongue in, mimicking the sex act. His hands roamed down her shoulders to the small of her back as he gathered her close. Gripping her hips, he tilted them upward, grinding her pelvis against his erection. They both groaned when the pearls rolled up his shaft and stimulated her clit at the same time.

Her hands were tangled in his hair, holding him close. He loved the sting of her nails as they grazed his scalp. She was as desperate for this as he was.

Mason pulled back, licking at her lips. What lipstick she'd had on was long gone and some of her mascara had smudged. Her few freckles stood out against her flushed skin. She looked earthy and sensual as she parted her lips and moaned.

His hands tangled in her hair, and he grabbed the end of the jeweled pick that held the intricate knot and tugged. The hair ornament came free and he tossed it onto the sofa as her hair tumbled down around her shoulders in a fiery curtain. With the stones of the nipple clamps shimmering against her milky white breasts and her hair wild and free, she looked like a pagan goddess.

And she was his.

It took all his willpower, but he stepped away from the sofa and slowly unwound the pearls from his erection. He gritted his teeth against the pleasure that was bordering

on pain. Spreading the strand wide, he slid it over her head and let it fall between her breasts. Then he turned her so that her back was against his chest.

Reaching around her sides, he smoothed his hands over her torso, stopping just below the undersides of her breasts.

Anastasia shifted restlessly. Her pussy ached to be filled. She'd been so close to coming again while she'd been sucking Mason's cock, sliding it in and out of her mouth. She wanted him to come in her mouth, wanted him to lose control in that way, but she understood why he'd pulled away.

He wanted to be inside her when he came. And she wanted that too. They'd been apart for so long it was almost as if this was their first time.

The pearls were heavy around her neck and the nipple clamps felt even tighter. She could feel his hands just below her breasts. Almost touching her, but not quite. His cock was nestled against the crease of her behind and she arched back against him, settling it even firmer between the globes of her ass. The high-heeled shoes made it harder for her to stand, but they made her feel sexier. Somehow with the shoes and thigh-high stockings on, she felt more naked than if she'd been wearing nothing at all.

He moved his hands ever-so slightly. His fingers began to slowly trace the sides of her breasts. With each stroke, he shifted his touch slightly closer to her nipples. She undulated her hips and he groaned.

He jerked and his fingers brushed her nipples, causing the jeweled strings to swing. Anastasia cried out. Her core melted as her vagina contracted, sending cream flowing from her slit.

"Mason!" she cried. He buried his face in the curve of her shoulder, shoving her hair to one side so that he could nip the tender skin between his teeth. She sucked in a breath and whimpered as he bit harder. It was going to leave a mark. He was marking her. Claiming her as his. She hadn't had a hickey since high school, but the gesture was primal. Exciting.

"Tell me what you want."

"You," she managed to gasp out as his hands shifted lower on her belly. She spread her legs in anticipation.

"What do you want me to do?" His finger toyed with her bellybutton ring as his hands moved still lower.

"Fuck me, Mason." She grabbed his hand and tugged it between her thighs, crying out when he plunged two fingers into her core and withdrew them just as quickly. Her back felt cold when he stepped away.

"Bend over and grab the edge of the sofa. I want to see your pretty little ass in the air and your legs spread wide."

She gasped as his rough demand sent even more heat to her pussy. She could picture herself like that and wanted it as much as he did.

She leaned forward, braced her hands on the sofa and bent low until her forehead was touching the fabric. She knew that pushed her ass high into the air. Ever-so slowly, she shifted her legs apart. The pearls dangled from her neck toward the floor. Her breasts felt heavy as they hung suspended in air, the added weight of the nipple clamps adding to her sensual pleasure. "I'm waiting," she purred. She might be the one bent over the sofa, but she sensed it was Mason who was closer to the breaking point.

His hands clamped down hard on her hips as he wedged his own hips between her thighs, pushing them even wider. The thick head of his cock squeezed just inside her slit. Mason gave a rough groan and stilled. "You're so tight."

"It's been a year," she gasped as he pushed himself another inch deeper.

"For me too."

She knew that he wanted no doubts left in her mind and she believed him. Mason had never lied to her and she had never lied to him. What they had done was not tell each other everything they should have.

All thought of their failed marriage fled when he suddenly thrust himself deep. He didn't stop until he was seated to the hilt. His face fell against her back as he sucked air into his lungs.

Her thighs quivered and her legs trembled. She couldn't stay in this position much longer. "Hurry," she whispered.

Gentle kisses feathered down her spine as he stood upright behind her. Banding one forearm around her waist to hold her tight, he pulled back until only the tip of his cock was still inside. He thrust hard and deep before withdrawing almost all the way again. He did this again and again. His hips moved quicker and quicker until he was pounding his cock into her.

Her feet left the floor several times, but he held her steady in his iron grip. Time lost all meaning. There was only the sound of their gasps and moans and the slap of their flesh as they joined together again and again. The smell of sex surrounded them. Her breasts jiggled with each thrust, sending a shaft of pleasure pulsing to her core.

She felt as if she were burning from the inside out. Her vagina contracted. Her muscles tightened. Her scalp tingled and her toes curled. His fingers slipped between her thighs, feathering over her distended clitoris. She exploded.

Anastasia cried out her husband's name as he drove his cock home one final time. Pleasure suffused her from head to foot. Her name poured from his lips as his hips jerked. She could feel the spurt of warmth within her as he came and she cried out again.

Shivers racked her body as she tried to breathe. Her lungs sucked in much-needed air as her legs finally gave out. But she didn't fall. Mason held her tight, wrapping both arms around her waist. Her forehead rested against the back of the sofa.

As her body began to relax again, she became painfully aware of her awkward position and moaned. Mason stood immediately and pulled his softened erection from her. Her inner muscles contracted as if trying to keep him from leaving. They both groaned.

He lifted her into his arms and carried her over to the sofa, not relinquishing his hold on her as he lowered them both to the cushioned seat. Ever-so carefully, he removed both nipple clamps and tossed them onto the coffee table. Leaning down, he laved both reddened tips. "I shouldn't have left them on so long the first time."

"They're fine. Just a little tender, is all." The pearls were warm and heavy around her neck, reminding her of their legacy of love. "Do you really think we have a chance to make a go of our marriage?"

His turquoise eyes were dead serious as he brushed several long strands of red hair over her shoulder. "I really do."

She snuggled closer to him and his arms flexed possessively around her. "I do too," she whispered as she nuzzled the hair on his chest and allowed her body to rest against his. For the first time in a year, everything in her world felt right again.

Epilogue



Anastasia opened her mouth and Mason slid a piece of dark chocolate past her lips. She closed her eyes and savored the burst of flavor on her tongue. “Mmm,” she groaned. “This is amazing.”

He laughed. “You sound like a woman having an orgasm.”

“Hey, eating good chocolate isn’t far off,” she teased. She was leaning back against the plush sofa cushions, watching the flames dance in the fireplace and feeling totally relaxed and sated. Wearing only Mason’s turquoise shirt and her pearls, she wiggled her naked toes. She’d stripped off the shoes and stockings a few minutes before and her feet were extremely grateful.

After they’d both recovered sufficiently, they’d each tugged on a piece of clothing. Anastasia had dug out her cell phone and called her lawyer’s office. While Mason had watched, his eyes hooded, she’d apologized for missing her appointment and then informed her lawyer that she wouldn’t be signing divorce papers today or any day soon.

Then she’d called Maryann, who’d been out making one final delivery for the day. Everything was done and they actually didn’t have any large projects for several weeks. There were a few minor client requests such as birthday and anniversary surprises, but nothing large like Valentine’s Day. Once she’d assured her assistant that she was fine but would be late coming into the office tomorrow, she tossed her cell phone on the table and settled back to stare at the man in front of her.

Her husband looked handsome and incredibly sexy wearing only his pants, which he’d tugged on and zipped but hadn’t buttoned. His shaggy black hair was sticking off

in places and he had a sleepy, satisfied look in his eyes. She watched him as he deftly opened the champagne and poured some of the golden liquid into the two crystal flutes. Picking them both up, he sat down beside her on the edge of the sofa and handed her one of the glasses.

She took a sip and almost groaned again. This was definitely the height of luxury. Champagne, sinfully rich chocolates and fantastic sex. What woman could ask for more?

Obviously, *she* could. "So where do we go from here?"

He took a sip from his glass, and the delicate stem appeared fragile in his large hands. Laying the flute on the coffee table, he took hers from her hands and laid it beside his. She twined her fingers together almost nervously, which was ridiculous when she thought about it. This was her husband. Granted, they hadn't spent any time together in the past year, but he was still the man she'd married.

Except, the last twelve months had changed them both.

"We start at the beginning." He took her hands in his, lifted them to his mouth and placed a kiss on each knuckle. Heat radiated up her arms and her nipples puckered against the silky shirt she wore. "We can take it slow if you want. Spend some time getting to know each other again. Or..." He broke off and took a deep breath before continuing. "We can move in together while we're searching for a new house—one we both feel comfortable living in."

Anastasia realized that Mason was putting her in the driver's seat intentionally. It had been his mother who'd sabotaged their marriage—with help from both of them—and this was his way of making amends.

"Which one would you prefer?" She licked her lips, which were suddenly very dry.

"I want us to live together again as man and wife. If I hadn't been so damn stubborn, then our marriage wouldn't have broken down like it did." He raked his fingers through his hair. "And honey, now that I've got you back, I'm not going to lose you again."

She shivered at his possessive tone. Her body, starved for him for so long, was becoming aroused again. "We were both stubborn." Her voice was low and husky and Mason's eyes narrowed as he watched her.

"I won't argue with that." A slow smile crossed his face as he twined his finger around a lock of her red hair and tugged her toward him. She went willingly, her lips parting.

His kiss was soft—a gentle exploration so at odds with the hot glow in his eyes. He tasted of chocolate and champagne. She imagined that she did too. The rich flavors combined with his natural male essence to create an intoxicating taste. One she couldn't get enough of.

Before the kiss could get out of hand, he pulled back, tucking a lock of her hair behind her ear. His fingers grazed the sensitive skin of her neck, raising goose bumps on her arms. "What will it be?"

Knowing this was what she wanted, she dove in with both feet. "You can move into my place with me while we look for a new house."

This time his mouth was hot and hard and hungry as it descended on hers. His tongue thrust deep. Claiming her. Inciting her. She was so lost in their kiss she'd didn't even realize that he'd unbuttoned her shirt until he peeled back the edges and the cool air hit her breasts, causing her nipples to pucker even tighter. Her legs shifted restlessly against the cushions as her pussy contracted.

She tugged her lips from his, gasping slightly as she stroked his shoulders, his broad chest and his flat, muscled stomach. His erection tented the front of his pants and she couldn't resist touching him. It was awkward with the fabric in the way, so she pulled down the zipper and was rewarded when his cock practically jumped into her hand.

She jerked when something cool hit her skin. Mason laughed, champagne flute in hand. Pale, golden liquid dribbled between her breasts. "Lie back," he instructed. She

gave his shaft one long, hard stroke, which elicited a satisfactory groan, before relaxing against the cushions.

With his free hand, he offered her another chocolate. When she took it into her mouth, she purposely sucked on the tips of his fingers. Two could play the seduction game.

Mason chuckled as he tilted the glass and a few drops of champagne filled her bellybutton. Leaning down, he sipped the liquid, making sure to tug on her bellybutton ring.

The familiar heat surged through her blood, setting her body on fire. Her muscles ached slightly after the unusual activity of the afternoon, but it was a good hurt. The kind that made you feel vibrantly alive and well loved. But those minor twinges faded as the folds of her pussy became slick and warm.

But it was her heart that seemed swollen in her chest, making it hard to breathe. She loved this man so much and had suppressed that feeling for almost a year. "I love you." The words came out as a whisper, so she said them again, this time stronger. "I love you, Mason."

He raised his head from her stomach and just stared at her, his features tight and his eyes haunted. "I love you, Ana. You can't begin to imagine how much. I can't believe I almost lost you, almost let you go."

His mouth shifted lower, his large hands parting her thighs.

"I love Valentine's Day," Anastasia Style moaned as her husband buried his face between her thighs and proceeded to love her senseless.

About the Author

N.J. Walters worked at a bookstore for several years and one day had the idea that she would like to quit her job, sell everything she owned, leave her hometown and write romance novels in a place where no one knew her. And she did. Two years later, she went back to the same bookstore and settled in for another seven years.

Although she was still fairly young, that was when the mid-life crisis set in. Happily married to the love of her life, with his encouragement (more like, "For God's sake, quit the job and just write!") she gave notice at her job on a Friday morning. On Sunday afternoon, she received a tentative acceptance for her first erotic romance novel, *Annabelle Lee*, and life would never be the same.

N.J. has always been a voracious reader of romance novels, and now she spends her days writing novels of her own. Vampires, dragons, time-travelers, seductive handymen and next-door neighbors with smoldering good looks all vie for her attention. And she doesn't mind a bit. It's a tough life, but someone's got to live it.

N.J. welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

Tell Us What You Think

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at Comments@EllorasCave.com.

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