



Masquerade

Melissa Jackson

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Chapter One

Lily's hips swayed in rhythm to the pounding beat of retro disco music blaring from the speakers. She sipped champagne as her eyes swept the penthouse restaurant. Three large crystal chandeliers hung from the intricately molded ceiling, the glow from them cast a romantic aura over the room. The restaurant was stunningly decorated in gold, beige, and black with touches of the Orient added for sophistication. The most impressive feature of the room, however, was the magnificent view beyond the two walls of floor to ceiling windows. The bright lights of downtown New Orleans alluded to a mystical backdrop to this evening's event, Leaumont Financial Services' annual costume ball for charity.

A delicious aroma wafted beneath her nose seducing her to return her attention back to the party. She glanced toward the buffet tables that were set up along the back wall of the spacious room. Two tables were laden with various silver trenchers of French and Cajun dishes like shrimp creole, oyster gumbo, and jambalaya. Another table, where most of the people stood in line, hosted a multitude of scrumptious desserts, including bread puddings, pies, custards, and luscious pastries.

As for the guests, well, she couldn't help but to marvel at the variety of costumes. Gangsters, cavemen, superheroes and astronauts, to name a few, crowded the dance floor while others opted for a seat at any one of the linen draped tables placed around the dance floor in the center of the restaurant. Everyone appeared to be having a glorious time. Well, nearly everyone. She had never felt so uncomfortable in her life. Even in this large crowd, she felt alone. She had arrived by herself half an hour ago and she hadn't recognized any of her friends from work. Well, that's what you get for changing your mind at the last possible moment, an inner voice berated. No one would be expecting her since she had begged off coming to the ball because she had to work at her second job. However, when she had arrived home, looked about the austere one bedroom apartment, she realized for the first time how lonesome, and isolated she had truly become. Without hesitation, she had flown into action. She would go to the ball and enjoy herself at least this once. So before she changed her mind, she called in sick at the store then hurriedly dug through her closet for the sapphire Southern Bell style dress she'd worn in a friend's wedding two years ago. Adding a fancy Mardi Gras mask and—voila, instant costume. Now, she almost regretted her spontaneous decision to come to the party. Well, almost. She did need some fun in her life. Ever since moving here a year ago, she had little time for herself much less for any hobbies or nights out with colleagues. Most of her spare time had been devoted to her second job as assistant manager of the *Mystical Bookstore*. Good ol' responsible Lily. No time for fun or play. But most especially, no time for men or relationships.

She shook herself and turned her gaze to the costumed couples on the dance floor. She watched, mesmerized as their bodies moved sensually together to a sultry blues tune. The blatant sexual undulations rekindled long dormant desires within her. She swallowed, aching to be pressed against the hardness of a male body. She wanted to be among them. Feeling, throbbing.

Tearing her eyes from the dancers, she surveyed the room seeking the one man she

ached to feel against her. Julian Leaumont, President and owner of Leaumont Financial Services. She could recognize him and his luscious body anywhere. Ah, there, across the room. And, as always, he stood amidst a small throng of adoring women.

The mere sight of him set Lily's heart aflutter. His white, ruffled shirt gaped opened at the neck revealing a small, very tantalizing expanse of his muscled chest. Her gaze traveled down. Tight black leather pants hugged his long, sinewy legs and a crimson sash circled his narrow waist. A very sexy pirate indeed. Any woman here would not mind if he plundered her heart, body, or soul. Herself included.

She smiled as he removed his feathered tricorne hat with a flourish and bowed low at the waist, his ebony hair falling over his masked face. He straightened and smiled which elicited giggles and flutters from the gaggle of women. Lily rolled her eyes. Good grief, silly women. Yet, she guessed if he had bowed over her hand, she would giggle and blush too. Julian had that effect on all women whether young or old. At six feet, he towered over the women and most of the men. Model handsome, lean muscled and a drop dead sexy smile, he gained instant attention from any room he walked into. However, Julian was more than a gorgeous face. He was a friendly, compassionate, and intelligent person. He looked out for those less fortunate, and he adored children and animals. All of the qualities she admired in a man. A wonderful man whom she had lusted for from the first moment they had met a year ago.

Lily continued to watch him. Jealousy gripped her belly as a very buxom French maid leaned over to speak in his ear. She grimaced as the maid's breasts threatened to spill from the top of her overly tight costume right in front of his admiring blue gaze.

She inhaled sharply as he tossed his head back and laughed at something the woman said. Oh, how she yearned to lick every inch of his bared neck. To bury her face in the curvature of his throat to kiss and suckle the tiny throbbing vein until both of them were hot and aching for more.

Then, suddenly, he glanced in her direction. Their eyes locked. Sparks skidded along her spine, goose bumps popped up on her arms, and her nipples hardened painfully. Her heart lurched as his hot gaze held hers, a seductive smile teasing his lips. His lips...oh, God, how she craved them on her skin, kissing every inch of her hot flesh, suckling her hard nipples until she screamed in ecstasy.

Lily shivered as his smoldering gaze slid appreciatively over her body before returning to her face. Even from this distance, she felt his eyes summoning her, luring her to him like a moth to a flame. Should she approach him? Could she afford to risk it all? Well, girl, here is your chance to make your move, to make your dream come true. It was now or never, an inner voice urged.

Now or never...

Taking a deep calming breath, she slowly crossed the room. Her heart pounded beneath her breast as she drew closer to him. Her eyes remained riveted to his. A virtual prisoner trapped in the azure depths of his sparkling eyes. She was lost. Nothing existed but the man before her. Stopping just outside the circle of admirers, she beckoned him with her eyes.

Smiling, he gracefully excused himself from the women and walked toward her.

"Dance with me," she spoke, her voice low and throaty.

"My pleasure," he said, reaching for her hand and leading her onto the dance floor. He pulled her close as a classic erotic soul song flowed from the speakers. Chest to

breast, she fit perfectly in his arms. Ah, even heaven could not feel this wonderful.

Closing her eyes, Lily pressed even closer to his solid warmth, wrapping her arms around his broad shoulders and laying her flushed cheek against his shadowed cheek. Being in his arms felt so right. She felt that she had finally come home.

Neither spoke as they swayed in a small circle. Both aware of each heartbeat, each breath, each movement of the other's body. He edged closer, if that was possible. Even through her voluminous skirt, she felt the hardness of his arousal against her belly. She gasped as her own arousal rose swift and furious. Mercy, she moaned silently, it had been so long since she had felt this way. This feeling was more intense than she could have ever imagined. She shivered as his breath blew hot across her ear, ruffling her hair. Desire knifed through her. Oh, God. She was about to explode right here on the dance floor.

Opening her eyes, she drew back from his embrace. She had to ease this horrible longing, and he was the only one who could spare her further torment and liberate her from her years of celibacy.

Deciding upon a course for which there would be no turning back, she laced her shaking fingers through his and led him from the dance floor just as the song ended.

He offered no resistance as she wove them through the crowd to a set of doors at the back of the room.

They exited the restaurant. Hurriedly, she led him to the employees' private bathroom at the end of the hall. Opening the door, she pulled him in and shut the door behind her.

Lily turned to find Julian leaning nonchalantly against the gray marble vanity. His hat tossed ceremoniously on the sink. His blue eyes twinkled mischievously behind the elaborately feathered and jewel encrusted mask.

"You have kidnapped me, ma'am. What *are* your intentions?"

His smooth velvet voice seduced her juices to flow. "To have my way with you of course," she answered as she sidled up to him. Boldly she slid her hands into the opened shirt and pushed the garment from his broad shoulders to reveal his magnificent chest. Sighing, she caressed a slow path up his strong biceps, up and over his wide shoulders then back to his muscled chest. She reveled in the strength and hardness beneath the soft feel of his flesh.

"But if you're not interested, then I'll have to leave and find a more willing specimen," she teased. God, she wanted him. She needed what only this man could to give her—pure unadulterated sex. A promise of pleasure beyond her limited experience and her wildest imagination. Reaching down, she cupped him.

She heard him suck in his breath. His cock grew beneath her palm, stretching the material of his pants. He reached out to touch her, but she forestalled his movement.

"No." She pressed his arms back to his side. "No touching me until I tell you to." She ripped off the red sash then yanked the shirt from the waistband of his pants. Tossing the garments onto the floor, she leaned forward to press her lips to the small patch of dark hair in the center of his chest. Mmm...his musky scent invaded her senses. She kissed a hot path over to one nipple and licked the tiny bud until it hardened. He moaned. Gently, she nibbled at the taut peak. Hearing his sharp intake of breath, she smiled against his skin. She must be doing something right. Apparently, those "how-to" sex books had not been such a bad investment after all. This was going to be a very gratifying experience,

she thought happily.

Encouraged, she then turned her attention to his other nipple. She felt his fingers tighten around her upper arms as she continued her suckling. His breathing sounded more labored as his desire grew. His response enflamed her own passions. Her sex swelled and trembled. She wanted him now!

No, her inner seductress interrupted. Not yet. She had to slow this down. This was her fantasy come true and she did not want to rush it. She had to make this last for as long as possible.

Lily pushed herself away from his glorious chest and sank slowly to her knees. The southern belle costume flowed around his ankles and nearly covered the tiled floor in a river of sapphire satin.

She smoothed her hands up the length of his legs toward his crotch. The leather material bulged from his heavy arousal. Licking her lips, she lifted her eyes toward his face. She had to see again how her touch affected him, but the mask shielded his emotions from her. She dared not ask him to remove his mask for fear he would request the same of her. Anonymity was best for now. He could never discover who she was because the result would be disastrous.

"Do you wish for me to find a more willing subject?" she asked hoarsely, unzipping him.

"I think not," he growled. "I am your willing captive. Do with me as you so desire, ma'am," he demanded, though it sounded more like a plea.

"Believe me, I will," she agreed, pushing his pants over his hips. Mmm...just as she had imagined, designer bikini briefs. A very snug pair of black, satin bikinis.

Gently, she smoothed her palm over the glorious ridge straining against the silky material. The heat of his desire scolded her. She licked her lips. Oh, yes, to feel his shaft throbbing deep inside her. Stretching her, filling her completely. No. She did *not* want to rush this moment.

Needing to feel the length of him, she slipped her sweat slick fingers over the top of his underwear and guided the material away from his engorged cock.

Lily gasped as she gazed upon his penis. Thick and incredibly long. The huge length of him jutted toward her, enticing her to come closer. Against her will, a hot flush crept up her neck and settled in her cheeks. Thank heavens for the mask. For, if he had seen the rosy tinge on her cheeks he would have known her to be a novice in the art of seduction since no brazen woman would blush so at the mere sight of a man's genitals.

Tentatively, she touched the bulbous head of his shaft. He jerked. His cock danced up and down hypnotically. Growing even larger, if that was possible. He was beautiful.

Braver now, she wrapped her hand around the thick base of him and stroked him slowly from base to tip and back again. He was so hard, yet velvety soft to the touch. She wanted more.

Leaning closer, she pressed a kiss to the smooth crimson head. He jerked beneath her hands, but she held him steady as she lightly grazed her wet tongue over the head. He tossed back his head and moaned. The sounds of his pleasure bouncing off the walls sent a spurt of hot desire raging through her body to settle in her sex.

She laved him slowly, luxuriating in the taste of his arousal. She drew the tip of him into her hot moist mouth, twirling her tongue around the pulsing head. Over and over. Unrelenting in her feast even as he moaned in pleasurable pain.

Cupping his balls, she drew him into her mouth. He gasped, tightening his thigh muscles around her arms. He pushed deeper, she sucked him harder. Her moans blended with his. She vaguely sensed his hands burrowing in her scalp aiding her in the rhythm. Relaxing her throat, she swallowed the entire length of him.

He cried out, thrusting his hips forward. She pulled hard as his fingers twisted in her hair. She knew he was close to coming, she could taste the saltiness of him on her tongue, and his sac drew up tight in her hand.

Releasing him, she rained wet kisses along his hipbone and down his inner thighs. She did not want the sweet torture to end just yet. She wanted him to ache with want of her.

Lily pushed herself to her feet and stepped away from him. He lay bare before her ravenous eyes. A feast of masculinity for her to savor, to devour.

"Come here," he demanded, his eyes not leaving hers, his hand outstretched.

Hypnotized, she clasped his hand. He turned her around and deftly unfastened her costume. His hands pushed the gown over her and he let it fall to the floor. She stood with her back to him, naked but for a lace bra and thong panties.

"God, you are beautiful," he murmured as he buried his face in the crook of her neck and kissed the sensitive spot behind her ear. His hands reached around to squeeze and fondle her sensitive breasts.

"Yes, oh, yes," she begged, arching her back. "Take me now."

Laughter rumbled deep in his chest. "Not yet, my sweet. I wish to torture you as you did me." He ran his tongue along her shoulder as he slid his fingers down her belly to the swollen bud hidden in the folds of her womanhood. "God, you're so wet, so hot."

Lily bit her lip as he parted her dripping petals and slid two fingers easily into her. Her knees weakened and she would have fallen to the floor if not for his other strong arm encircling her waist.

Deep inside her, he probed and wriggled his fingers. "Open to me," he demanded against her ear.

Obediently, she spread her legs wider and leaned over the vanity allowing him even deeper access. She shivered as her breasts grazed the cool, marble sink. Damn, but she burned. Glancing over her shoulder, she watched him through half closed eyes as he gently stroked her raised buttocks. She groaned. His touch seared her skin and ignited her blood. Lust raged through her to settle in a pool of wet desire in the pit of her stomach. "No more please. Take me now!"

"Your wish," he answered thickly. He gripped her hips and plunged deep into her.

Tight from years of self-imposed celibacy, Lily stiffened as he filled her, completely stretching her to fit around him. The discomfort disappeared quickly, replaced by an intense need for more of him. Impatient, she ground her buttocks against his hips setting him deeper in her.

Taking her hint he began to move, slowly at first, then faster with each pump. He continued to thrust hard into her. Again and again. She fell naturally into his sexual rhythm. Arching her back, she met each plunge. Flesh slapped flesh. Their sighs and groans intermingled in a melody of pleasure.

Feeling the pressure rising inside her, Lily gripped the faucet tighter and bucked against him. Faster, deeper he pounded into her. So close...she was almost frightened with the intensity of the approaching climax. Oh, yes! She screamed as great waves of

pleasure crashed over her. Over and over the orgasms came. Never seeming to end.

Shouting his release, Julian joined her in sweet oblivion. He stiffened and pulled her roughly onto his pulsing sex, holding her tight against his groin until she milked each delicious spurt of his juice into her willing body. Then he collapsed across her glistening back, his strength gone.

Several minutes passed as they slowly and reluctantly returned to earth. A calm lethargy invaded Lily's body. She felt so alive, so free. Bar none, this had been the best sex she had ever had. Ever.

"Ah, sweetheart, that was magnificent. You're magnificent." Julian commented as his fingers caressed the sides of her breasts. He kissed the nape of her neck. Then, he whispered. "I hate to say this, but, I guess we better get dressed before someone walks in."

Disappointment twisted her belly. It couldn't be over this soon. She wanted more time with Julian. "If you insist," she sighed dramatically.

He chuckled. "Much to my dismay, I'm afraid we must. If we're caught, I can guarantee it would be front page news tomorrow morning. And I don't know about you but having my naked bum spread for all to see is not how I wish to remember this night."

She moaned as she felt him withdraw from her still hot body. The loss of him left her feeling void like a part of her soul was suddenly missing.

Tapping down the sudden sadness, Lily slowly straightened. Her body protested the movement. No doubt about it, she was going to be sore in the morning. However, a few sore muscles were worth any price just to be with Julian.

Hurriedly she dressed then turned to face him. He was leaning against the door watching her intensely. His gaze piercing, penetrating. He seemed to be looking right through her mask into her soul. Her heart raced madly. The heat rekindled deep in her belly. God, but she wanted him inside her again.

"See anything you like?" she asked, her voice low, seductive.

"Plenty," he answered, his mouth curving into a crooked smile.

She smiled back. Sashaying to him, she looked up into his shadowed face and reached around him. "You haven't seen near enough." She twisted the knob and wrenched open the door, forcing him to move out of the way.

Quickly, she glanced up and down the hallway. Thank goodness, it was deserted. Julian was right. It would not do well to be discovered in their current state of dishevelment. Her career as well as her reputation would be beyond repair.

Heedless of the danger, though, she was not done with Julian yet. She just wasn't ready to let him go. Grabbing his hand, she pulled him out of the bathroom and down the hall.

"The party's that way," he said pointing to the double doors they just passed.

"Yes, I know," was all she said.

His chuckle echoed through the hallway, as she led him farther from the crowd. Her night with him was far from over. She just had to find a more secluded spot...seeing the stairway door, she hesitated briefly before pushing it open.

"Where are we going?"

"Not afraid are you?" She teased.

"Absolutely not," he scoffed.

Lily smiled and shook her head. Letting go of his hand, she crooked her finger at

him, luring him to follow her. She grasped the handrail and ascended the stairs up toward the rooftop. She paused long enough to listen for any sounds of other people nearby. Nothing. They were alone.

They had gone only two floors when his hand on her shoulder stopped her.

She turned. The heat reflecting in his eyes spoke of his need. He pulled her into his arms and she complied without hesitation.

Cupping the nape of her neck, he held her firm as he lowered his head towards hers. Their lips met hungrily. Hot moist and unyielding. The kiss threatened to devour her body and soul. Sparks of electricity arced through her as he plunged his tongue into her mouth. She moaned. Like the pirate he portrayed, he invaded her inner recesses giving no quarter. His tongue stroked, tasted, and seduced her passions. She bent to his will. She thrust her tongue into his mouth. Growling, he crushed her to him. He ground his cock against her stomach, hard and pulsing with his need. As their tongues danced and mated in wild abandonment, he kneaded her right breast and pinched her distended nipple. She clutched at his straining shoulders. Her mind spun from his erotic assault on her senses. She felt consumed by him.

Without preamble, she jerked his pants open and pushed them down to his knees. She grasped his hot, throbbing erection. Fire shot up her arm and spread quickly into her bloodstream. Excited, she vigorously stroked him from root to crown, his cock growing harder in her hand. His mouth left hers to trail a wet path of hot kisses along her jaw to her ear. She worried for a moment he would lift her mask, but he didn't. He continued his sweet path to her ear, sucking the tender lobe into his mouth. Faster, she rubbed him. He released her lobe to moan his pleasure. His harsh, erratic breath scalded her ear. She shivered. Her desire threatened to explode.

She forced herself to break free from his embrace. Holding his gaze, she moved to the railing along the wall, lifted her skirt, and slowly removed her thong. Tossing them away, she cautiously raised her leg to the railing opposite her displaying her swollen lips to his hungry gaze. She waited with bated breath as he moved between her thighs.

He needed no invitation before entering her wet sheath. She wound her fingers through his raven hair, drew him to her breasts and held on for dear life. He licked and laved one peaked nipple. Every loving kiss brought her closer and closer to heaven.

Bucking her hips, she met his every thrust, oblivious to the rough wall rubbing against her back. In and out, fast and hard. He drove into her relentlessly. Their grunts and moans echoed in the empty stairwell, thrilling her even more.

Lily eagerly met his thrusts. Mindless with excitement, she opened herself to the all-consuming fire blazing within her loins. She squeezed her legs tight around his hips as she urged him to end this delicious torment. Faster and faster until she cried out as the tremors violently ripped through her entire body. Brilliant lights exploded beneath her lids as wave after wave orgasms overwhelmed her. Vaguely, she felt him stiffen. His shout of release muffled against her breast as he continued to pound into her dripping cunt until with one final lunge he spewed the last drop of his essence inside her. Completely drained, he collapsed against her.

Time ceased to exist as they tried to force themselves back to earth from the explosive coupling. Neither wanted nor desired to move from their intimate embrace. Though her back felt raw and the metal rail dug into her buttocks, she didn't mind. The feel of his heart beating against her skin and his harsh hot breath on her skin comforted

her. She wanted to stay within the cradle of his arms forever.

But it wasn't meant to be. The beeping of his watch reminded her their time together had come to an end.

With a soft kiss to her nipple, he raised his head to look at her. "Sweetheart, we must get back to the party. The unmasking is soon and I'll be missed," he informed her as he cupped her face. Her heart fluttered as he slid his thumbs along her cheekbones, feathering the lace fringe of her mask. She saw the urge in his eyes to remove the mask. But he said instead, "No worries. I'll see who my mystery lover is soon enough."

Lily panicked. She could not go back to the ball to be unmasked. He would then know who she was and the consequences would be tragic. She had to think of an excuse and quick. But nothing reasonable popped into her mind.

He withdrew from her and straightened his clothing. Unnerved and anxious, Lily proceeded to compose herself, all the while keeping her gaze averted from him. What was she to do?

"Come," he bade, clasping her hand and leading her back down the stairs.

Returning to the party, Julian elbowed a path through the crowd toward a small group of people near the stage area. As they drew closer, her stomach clenched. She recognized many of them. People who would recognize her.

"Wait," she shouted, yanking Julian to a halt. "I...I have to freshen up first."

Scowling, he glanced at his watch. "It's five minutes until midnight."

"I won't be long," she lied, standing on her tiptoes and kissing his lips.

"Promise?" He asked, a teasing smile pulling at the corners of his lips.

She nodded and smiled, though her heart was breaking.

He leaned closer to her ear. "Three minutes then I'm coming after you."

Lily squeezed his hand and smiled sadly. "I'll see you soon." Saying that, she turned and hurried toward the exit.

At the door, she paused to look over her shoulder. He lifted his hand and waved before turning to move toward the group. "Goodbye," she whispered, slipping through the doors.

As she quit the building and ran to her car, she called herself many times a fool. She should be happy. She had finally gotten what she had wanted most in the world. A night of hot sex and passion with the only man she had ever desired enough to risk everything for, including her morals. A night of erotic memories to last her a lifetime. But now she wasn't so sure a memory was enough any longer.

But as she climbed into her car, the reality of what she had done that evening hit her. She groaned and laid her head on the steering wheel. Oh God, what had she done? Worse yet, how would she ever face him again?

Raising her head, she started the ignition and pulled from the curb. Well, she would have to face him again. He was her boss after all.

Chapter Two

Lily glanced down at her watch for the third time in less than two minutes. “Damn it,” she swore jerking her sleeve down and tapping her toe impatiently. She was going to be late for work. Never had she been so irresponsible. At least not when it came to her job anyway.

When the elevator doors slid open, she stepped out and hurried down the corridor to the richly decorated reception area of Leaumont Financial Services.

“I see you decided to join us this morning.”

Lily visibly cringed. Great, it would be just her luck to get busted by her supervisor. Luckily, though, Dawn Walker was her friend and would not berate her too terribly.

She turned to face her. Dawn was an exquisite forty-three-year-old beauty. She was tall, model thin, and possessed long and lustrous ebony hair—with not one gray hair mind you. Disgusting really. However, what Lily envied most about her dear friend was her sweet personality and ability to light up a room upon entering it.

“Hi, Dawn, sorry I’m late,” she apologized as she moved around the mahogany desk and dropped her purse and lunch bag in the drawer. “You can’t begin to imagine what I’ve been through this morning. Anything that could have happened—did.”

Dawn’s perfectly plucked eyebrow lifted inquiringly. “That bad, huh?”

Lily frowned at her. “No. Worse.” She fell into her chair and began to count the events of her morning off on her fingers. “First my alarm didn’t go off, and then when I got into the shower I’d realized I’d forgotten to buy conditioner. Needless to say, I couldn’t pull a comb through my hair. Thirdly, as I was dressing I somehow managed to poke a hole in my very last pair of pantyhose. Then last but certainly not least, my coffee pot blew up so I haven’t had my morning coffee yet. And all of that before I left the house. Getting here, well, that’s a whole other story.”

Dawn chuckled softly. “Maybe you should have stayed home.”

“I wish I could have,” she agreed. “I could have used the sleep.”

Dawn leaned forward and propped her elbow on the desktop. “Hmm? Do tell. A hot date?”

“Only in my dreams,” she mumbled, hoping the hot flush in her belly would not rise to her face and give her away. If only she knew which of course will never happen. She just wasn’t ready to talk about her extraordinary weekend with anyone including her friends. Too many questions that she was not ready to answer.

The buzzing of the phone ringing instantly reminded her to get to work.

Dawn straightened and tugged on the tail of her gray suit jacket. “Well, I better let you get to work. If you need me, I’ll be in Margie’s office getting the scoop on the masquerade Saturday night.”

Lily swallowed hard as she reached for the phone. Margie West was the office gossipmonger. She was a veritable fount of any and all titillating information or gossip concerning office staff or if it revolved around their boss Julian Leaumont. If anyone knew of the happenings at the masque, she would know every gory detail.

A disturbing thought twisted through her, could Margie or anyone for that matter possibly know what had transpired between her and Julian? No. Impossible. Surely not...

Reaching for her headset, she accidentally knocked over Dawn's paper cup of coffee and splattered the black liquid over the console into her lap. She squeaked in alarm, jumping up to swipe off the hot coffee. Too late—a dark stain was developing in the center of her skirt and her inner thighs were beginning to tingle from the slight burn. Good God, could anything else bad happen today?

* * * *

Julian slammed the phone down and pushed away from the desk. Standing, he moved to the windows and gazed out over the city. Heavy gray clouds blanketed the skyline, threatening to unleash rain and thunder upon the poor hapless people below. Dark and foreboding, very much like his mood. Since Saturday night, anyone unfortunate enough to have crossed his path earned a healthy sample of his chaotic emotions. All because of a woman. A woman he did not even know.

Once again, he felt the frustration building within him. He despised not knowing the woman's identity. Their time together had been one of the best sexual experiences of his life and he did not know one thing about her. Like her name. Shit, he had to do something. He was going to go crazy if he did not find out her identity.

"Where are you?" he breathed harshly, his eyes sweeping the view. "Damn, but I will find you. I have to find you."

At that moment, his intercom buzzed. "Mr. Leaumont?"

"Yes, Rebecca?" he answered absently.

"The Porters are holding. They want to know if you could meet with them at Brannon's restaurant at 12:30 instead of 1:00."

Julian glanced at his watch. 12:05. "Tell them I'll be there."

"Yes, sir."

Ah, back to work, he thought as he turned away from the window. Tugging his coat on, he paused long enough to place some forms in his briefcase before leaving his office.

"Rebecca," he said as he closed the door behind him and stopping at his assistant's desk. "I won't be back until late. Call John and tell him to meet me at Porter's office at 3:00 for the presentation. Please make sure Mr. Coleman's file is on my desk before you leave. I'll need that first thing in the morning. Oh, and also, get me the guest list from the party Saturday night."

Rebecca quirked a brow in question. "Sir?"

He ignored her unspoken query. "I'll see you in the morning." He turned and headed toward the elevators. After a minute, he looked up at the display and noted the elevator was stopped on the tenth floor.

Annoyed, he pressed the button again. Still the light did not move. Damn it, he was going to be late meeting with one of his biggest clients. Just when he thought he would have to hotfoot it down the fifty flights, the elevator began its ascent.

On the first floor, he raced for the front lobby. As he rounded the corner, he slammed into someone, scattering everywhere papers and files.

Aw shit, he was definitely going to be late now.

* * * *

"Oh great!" Lily huffed, glaring at the mess. She silently cursed her luck...again.

She would never get these files sorted out before Dawn's meeting. "Couldn't you have watched where you were going?" She looked up accusingly at the person responsible. Her eyes widened and her heart skidded to a halt. "Mr. Leaumont?!"

"Ms. Hedrick," he said raking a hand through his thick black hair and scowling down at the papers. "I didn't see you. I'm sorry."

"Uhm...it's okay," she stammered. Wow, he looked so good. Today, his tall, lean muscled body concealed beneath the conservative dark blue suit. His gently tousled hair framed his chiseled and obviously agitated face. Dark brows slanted low over his ice blue eyes. She itched to reach up and caress the grimace from his forehead. To kiss his lips and fold her body into his hard, hot one. Memories of their lovemaking flooded her. She could still see his jutting cock commanding her to touch him, she could taste him on her tongue, feel his hardness pulsing deep within her...Whoa! Her inner voice of sanity screamed. She had better stop her daydreaming before she moaned and came right there in front of him.

Gulping, she dropped to her knees and began gathering the strewn papers, praying he would not see her hands tremble.

He set down his briefcase and stooped to aid her. He was so close to her that his musky cologne enveloped her. Invading her senses and making her dizzy. She could not think. She could not breathe.

"Oh, no, I can get it, sir," she protested. She was not sure if she could trust herself to stop this insane impulse to throw herself in his arms. "Apparently, you were in a hurry, so..."

He looked into her eyes and grinned. She melted. His very presence shattered her composure. She envisioned leaning over and kissing his oh so luscious lips.

"Actually, I was heading for a meeting in the French Quarter." He admitted, handing her a handful of documents. "But it can wait until I help clean up this mess I created."

Absently, she stuffed the letters into a folder. "No, really, Mr. Leaumont, I can..." she attempted while reaching for a stray piece of paper. Why wouldn't he leave?

Unfortunately, he stretched for the same stray sheet she did and their heads collided with a sickeningly thud.

"Ow!" she gasped, clapping a hand to the side of her head.

"Merde!" he hissed through clenched teeth. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, as well as I can be with my brains scrambled," she replied irritably.

He chuckled, lifting his hand to touch the sore spot she was rubbing on her temple. Lily flinched from his feather touch. Not from pain, but from the swift torrent of desire his touch evoked. Her passion and want raged hot through her veins with frightening intensity. These feelings were absolutely insane.

"Yes, I'm fine. Thank you, Mr. Leaumont, for your help." She leaped to her feet.

"Julian," he said, picking up his briefcase and rising to his feet. "And no apologies. I bumped into you, remember?"

"Yes, well, I must go," Clutching the jumbled files to her chest, she gazed up into his magnetic eyes. She could get lost within the glossy depths. "Good day... Julian," she whispered. Stepping around him, she fled down the hallway. As soon as she turned the corner, she stopped and fell back against the wall. She exhaled sharply. Her heart pounded painfully in her chest. Her need and desire nearly consumed her. She felt she could expire from the lack of release right there. Would she ever get over this lust for

him? Truthfully, she doubted she ever would. He was the boss and she the employee. And unless she quit her job, there was not anything she could do to change their circumstances. There could never be anything more between them.

Resigned to reality but saddened by the tragedy of the situation, she straightened, took a deep breath, and continued down the hall.

* * * *

Bemused, Julian shook his head as he watched her figure disappear around the corner. And, boy, she had a very fine figure at that—despite the dark stain on the front of her gray skirt. Lily was the very essence of a professional businesswoman. She dressed conservatively with low-heeled shoes, and her sandy blond hair twisted up and pinned on the back of her head. She had definitely left an impression on him when he had first met her a little over a year ago when she had started working at his company. Regretfully, he had little opportunity to speak with her at any length. Not courteous of him, he knew. He had always prided himself on getting on a first name basis with each one of his employees but apparently, he had been remiss in getting to know Lily.

On his way to his car, though, he couldn't seem to get the image of Ms. Hedrick out of his mind. Especially her eyes. Even hidden behind the hideous black framed glasses, he noticed her silvery blue eyes. Intelligent, compelling, wary eyes. Beautiful. Almost like someone else...

* * * *

Disgusted, Lily tossed the armload of files into her chair. “Stupid girl,” she berated herself quietly. She had really done it now. Despite all of her resolutions, she could not stem the intense need burning inside her. By some miracle, she had stilled the impulse to turn around and run back down the hall to throw herself into his embrace. To beg him to quench the flames of desire fluttering in her belly. To feel his masterful touch and delectable lips upon her eager body... Yes, she wanted that but unfortunately, she wanted so much more. She wanted to know everything about him. His likes, dislikes, his favorite music, favorite foods, his pet peeves. Everything. She envisioned holding him, laughing with him, making wild love day and night without the hindrance of the mask. She wanted to love him and to be loved by him. As passionately and sweetly as an adolescent girl tasting true love for the first time.

But if she was truly honest with herself she fell for him over a year ago at the Christmas party. She had started her job at Leaumont Financial Services and had not as yet had the privilege of meeting Julian. Admittedly, she had heard all of the rumors regarding his prowess and presumed him to be arrogant, hedonistic, and shallow when it came to women. Her beliefs had been confirmed when she had seen his gorgeous self and equally beautiful date. But, he had proved himself to be otherwise when he had excused himself from the clique of executives and their wives to cross the boundaries of command and asked other women to dance. No one had been exempt. Old, young, pretty, unattractive—it had not mattered. He had been the perfect gentleman with a good heart. She had fallen for him in that instant.

On another occasion, she had witnessed Julian's true selflessness. While on her lunch break, she had watched Julian gift the resident bag lady with a pair of leather

gloves and container of food. She would never forget the grateful expression on the street lady's face as she had pulled the new gloves over the old frayed ones. The old lady had then favored him with a toothless grin before wandering back down the alley. No one, save her, had seen the kindness he had shown the homeless woman.

Julian had revealed to her his true inner self. He gave to people who were less fortunate. He renewed others' faith in mankind just by a small kind gesture or even a smile. Who wouldn't fall in love with a man with those fine qualities?

"Fool," she muttered. Making love with Julian had only intensified her buried feelings. Deep feelings that would never fade. Oh, God, what was she to do?

"Hello? Lily?" Dawn called over the intercom. "Do you have those files?"

"What...oh, yes, Dawn, I do. I'll bring them right in." Back to work. Maybe she could concentrate on something else besides Julian. If only for a while...

* * * *

It was nearly seven o'clock before Julian returned to his office. The meeting with the Porters had been long and exhausting. A fine example of wealthy people who were peculiar with their money. He had employed every ounce of his sales ability to convince them of the importance of preserving their wealth for their heirs. After their lunch, he had to present a retirement plan to his executive staff and with great success. Between the Porters and the executives, he had made a very lucrative commission this day. Needless to say, he was feeling damn proud of himself. Shit if he didn't love his work.

Slinging his jacket across the back of his chair, he sat down and picked up his phone to dial his favorite deli.

After hanging up the phone, he sighed heavily as he began to sort through stacks of paperwork and mail on his desk. He was in for yet another long evening.

On top of one pile, he noticed a list of names. The list of clients and employees that had been invited to the masquerade. He yanked the paper up and scanned the names. Anticipation raced through him. She had to be here on this list somewhere. His mysterious lover. He felt he was very close.

Chapter Three

By 5:30 that evening, everyone had left the office. Well, everyone save for her. Lily had to stay late to finish an important project for Dawn's meeting early the next day. She did not mind the last minute work. In fact, she welcomed it. The work kept her busy, leaving her no time to think of Julian.

"Excuse me, Miss."

She looked up and noticed a young college boy wearing the familiar *N'awlins Deli* tee-shirt standing in front of her desk. "Yes, may I help you?"

"I have a delivery for ah...Julian Leamont. I'm kinda new and I don't know where ta go." He lifted the deli bag onto her desk.

Lily's stomach tumbled to her feet. Julian was still here? He must be working late too. The two of them, here, virtually alone in the building. Suddenly an erotic image of them getting it on in his office popped into her mind.

"Miss, I gotta hurry. I have other deliveries. Can you show me the way or not?" he asked, clearly exasperated.

Before she knew what she was about, she said, "No, that's okay. I'll take it up to him." She dug into her purse and removed some money for a tip.

"Great, thanks." He said, before stuffing the five-dollar bill into his front jean pocket and trotting back down the hall toward the elevator.

Lily smiled. Her impulse may be risky, but if it worked, then she would definitely have a reason to sleep well this night. Oh, shit, she was truly a very bad girl for even thinking of this. Silently she thanked the lucky stars she had left her costume in her trunk. Tonight was going to be another night to remember. Grabbing her purse, she headed down to the garage.

* * * *

Julian dissected the list of names. He marked through the ones he was acquainted with which left only a few names he vaguely recalled but not name one popped out at him. She did not appear to be on the list at all. "Damn it to hell!" He swore viciously. Was she even real? Was he chasing a ghost?

Tired, he tossed his pen on the desk, dropped his head back against the plush headrest, and rubbed his palms over his burning eyes hoping to massage away the threatening migraine. Maybe he should put this off until tomorrow after he'd had some food and a good night's sleep.

A knock sounded at his door. Ah, must be his dinner. "Come in."

Eyes still closed, he heard the person enter. "You can put it down on the table."

"Tsk, ts, I'd prefer the desk myself."

Julian's eyes shot open. He would recognize the soft, silky voice anywhere. It was his mystery lover. She stood in the doorway dressed in the same blue satin costume holding his sandwich bag in her left hand. Her long, honey hair fell in luxurious waves down her slender back. Teasing him. Taunting him to touch the silky strands. Damn, but he itched to bury his face in the heavy tresses and lose himself in her sweet scent.

Slowly rising, he watched her glide across the room to halt a few inches from him. Silently, she reached behind her to unzip her dress. Slowly and deliberately, she pushed the material off her shoulders and let it slid down her flushed body. Gloriously naked, she stepped out of the puddle of silk and sidled closer to him.

In the dim light and the hindrance of the mask, he still could not discern details of her face. But her eyes, well, they were unique. He could literally drown in the sparkling blue pools, never wishing for salvation.

He lifted his hand to her cheek, his thumb gently caressed her smiling lips. Full, luscious, lips. “Who *are* you?”

“Shh, no questions,” she said softly, laying a finger on his mouth to still his words.

Mesmerized, he watched as she leaned closer to him. She lightly touched her flaming, hot lips to his. He closed his eyes and lost himself in her soft, gentle kisses. Each sweet touch radiated delicious warmth through him. Never had he felt such an intense reaction to something as simple as a kiss from any other woman. Not this degree of desire or want or passion. He hungered for more.

Julian claimed her lips with his. Hard and demanding. He wanted to taste her very soul in that one kiss. When she responded with equal fervor, he deepened the kiss. He thrust his tongue into her mouth and savored her flavor, her essence. Before this night was out, she would be totally his.

* * * *

Lily had been frightened when she had entered Julian’s office. It had taken every ounce of courage to step through his door. Just the sight of him sitting there at his desk, his head back and eyes closed, caused her heart to skip a beat and stole her breath. His pure, classic handsomeness made her soul ache. His kindness made her weep. Here was the epitome of the man of her dreams. Her gentle, vibrant Julian. She loved him more than life itself. Her true love. Her soul mate. Her unrequited soul mate. Because after tonight, she vowed there could never be another night. The risk was too great to continue with the charade.

A pain shot through her body. Oh, Lord, how was she to survive the future without him? She could not honestly answer that question, but for tonight she would love him completely.

She melted into his hard body. His strong arms encased her, as his hot tongue caressed hers in sweet agony. He consumed her and she could not resist the invasion. This was what she had come here for. Surrendering to his will, she wrapped her arms around his neck and opened her mouth to deepen the kiss.

His lips punished and ravished hers, but she did not care. She discovered that she actually liked his roughness. It proved he desired her and wanted her desperately.

Consumed by the same fierce passion, she returned his hard kiss and nipped at his tongue as he thrust into her mouth. He shivered violently against her, pulling her tighter into his embrace.

She moaned as he gripped the hair at her nape to hold her captive as he continued his loving assault of her lips and mouth. Lust, passion, and the heat of this man devoured her entire being. Her desire for him was so great that she lost the capability to speak or to even think. She ached to get closer. She had to have more.

Lily reached down and yanked his shirt from his pants. Sliding her hands beneath the

fine cloth, she raked her nails up his spine relishing the strength of his muscled back.

He groaned, releasing her mouth. "Oh, damn, sweetheart. I can't wait."

Julian turned and swept a hand across his cluttered desk, scattering papers and folders onto the floor. Grabbing her hips, he picked her up effortlessly and plopped her rump on the desk.

"I've always fantasized making love on this desk," he admitted gruffly, as he reached down and to stroke her slick cleft.

Lily almost came right there when his burning gaze fastened on her glistening, swollen mound. "Do it."

She fumbled with his belt and ripped open his pants, freeing his engorged cock. "Oh, Julian," she whispered thickly.

Hooking her heels behind his thighs, she pulled him close and guided his rock hard cock to the opening of her throbbing core.

Needing no additional foreplay, Julian plunged hard and deep to the hilt then paused.

Lily inhaled sharply. Not from pain but from the thick invasion of him inside her. He filled her wholly, completely.

Dropping her palm behind her to brace herself, she ground her hips against his.

Julian grasped her buttocks and dug his fingers into her quivering flesh. He hissed air through his teeth as she circled her hips round and round.

"God, you're so sweet, so hot," he moaned pulling out of her slowly and then pulled her hard against him, fully seating himself within her cunt.

She took him deep. Deeper than any other man she had ever been with sexually. He fit her perfectly body and soul. He was her match, the other piece of her heart.

"So tight," he breathed as he slowly eased out of her. He stared down to where they were joined and he licked his lips. Curious by his obvious enjoyment of the view, she looked down too.

"Oh, God," she cried, seeing his thick cock disappear in her glistening, ruby lips. Reaching down, she touched the spot where they were joined. Mesmerized by the sight of their joining, she slid her fingers along her slick folds where they gripped him.

Julian moaned, never taking his eyes off of the point where she touched them. Gradually, he backed out of her, allowing her fingers to trail along his wet, heavily veined cock. As the purple crown of his penis emerged, she grasped him and halted his attempt to exit her hot pussy. "Stay." She ordered as she stroked him, slathering her own hand with the juices coating him. She released him and lifted her palm to her lips to lick the liquid from her fingers. "Mmmm."

Julian's eyes sparked hot as he watched her insert each wet finger into her mouth and suck the cum from them.

He growled, digging his fingers deep into her waist. "You keep that up, babe, and I'll lose it."

"We can't have that, now, can we?" she teased, rotating her hips to lure him an inch deeper into her aching body. She trailed her fingers down her throat to cup her left breast, rubbing her thumb over her stiff nipple.

"No. Not until I make you lose control first," he stated, pulling her hips hard to take all of his hard staff into her tight sheath. Mindless with passion, he drove into her, ramming his cock hard and deep over and over relentlessly. He gripped her buttocks hard, his fingers digging into her soft skin. But she didn't feel the pain. All she felt was pure,

unadulterated lust.

Lily held on tightly to the edge of the desk as he continued to pound into her. In and out, harder and deeper. The sounds of their lovemaking echoed in the cavernous room. She heard the erotic sucking sound of their sex, punctuated by their harsh breathing and grunts of pleasure. The desk creaked ominously beneath his powerful movement. Steadily, rhythmically, he fucked her. Her breasts jiggled hard with each commanding thrust. He was doing exactly as he promised. He would make her lose control first.

Tossing her head back, she relented to his possession, his passion. The throbbing need burned hot within her womb and cascaded through the rest of her body. A hot flush tore over her skin. Oh, damn, she couldn't take any more. She was going to burst into flames and die on the spot. Deeper, he had to go deeper. Lying back, she grasped her knees, pulling them to her chest and arched her hips to open herself wider for his thick invasion. It was all she needed.

She screamed as her body clenched hard around his cock, milking him. Brilliant lights exploded behind her closed eyelids as she came with an intensity that stole her breath and shattered her body into millions of delicious pieces. She spiraled and cascaded wildly with the force of her orgasm. She felt Julian tense and then pump furiously into her. His shout of release rang in her ears. His body jerked as he pumped and pumped his seed into her greedy cunt. He collapsed onto her heaving chest, his arms unable to support him.

She kept her eyes closed, relishing the heavy weight of him blanketing her. She breathed slowly, deeply to help calm her racing heart. His heart beat erratically against her breast. She smiled. Yes, this was heaven. This was where she was meant to be.

Reaching up, she lightly scraped her nails along his sweaty spine. He shuttered beneath her touch, but his moan told her he loved what she was doing to him.

After several minutes, he lifted onto his elbows and gazed down into her shadowed, indiscernible face. "I must be crushing you."

"No, you are perfect," she purred, caressing his shoulders.

He laughed, but pulled out of her anyway. She grunted in protest.

She watched as he crossed the room to his private bath and disappeared inside. He returned a few moments later with a wet washcloth and knelt before her still prone body. Gently, he wiped his seed from her legs and her feminine lips. "You're so beautiful." She heard him mutter before he leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the pearl hidden within her tender petals. She nearly arched off the desk as sparks of excitement streaked through her still thrumming body once again.

"As much as I'd love to feast on you, I think we need to talk first," he said, rising to his feet.

Dazed, she opened her eyes and looked at him. "Talk?"

"Yes, talk," he repeated, tossing the washcloth on the floor and holding out his hand to help her rise. "Talk about you and me."

Lily scooted off the desk and pulled her dress on. Dread filled her once again. His interrogation was about to begin and she had to get the hell out of here!

"Who are you?" he asked without preamble. He crossed his arms over his bare chest and stared down into her eyes, pinning her to the spot.

"Why is my identity so important?" She asked, her voice shaking slightly.

He gaped at her. "Besides, the obvious?"

Lily pursed her lips. By damn, how she longed to rip the mask off and confront him with the truth and confess all. This masquerade had become extremely tedious. Yet, her fear of his reaction stilled the urge. She knew exactly what would happen. His feelings regarding company relationships were common knowledge. He did not condone or tolerate mixing business and pleasure. A bad experience, so the rumor mill said. He absolutely forbade it to the point that he enacted it as a strict company policy. Abide or leave. Unfortunately, she could not leave. She just could not afford to lose her job. No, it was best for her to remain quiet about her identity and suffer in silence.

He scowled at her and dropped his hands to his hips. "Well?"

"Julian...I can't tell you," she rushed on before he could protest. "Please honor my request and let me leave now."

She hated to beg but she was without any other alternative. There was nothing more she could say.

"What if I don't want you to leave?" He asked, watching her through hooded eyes.

"Short of forcing me, I'm afraid you have no choice but to let me go," she answered sternly. She stepped around him and backed her way toward the door.

He laughed. "Force? I'm actually a very persuasive guy, I could convince you to stay."

She stopped and smiled sadly. He had made no move to follow her. His glorious, nude body aroused and begging her to go back to him. He could definitely tempt a nun to renounce her vows. "You can try but my answer is still no." Before she could change her mind, Lily opened the door and closed it firmly behind her. The symbolism of the door was not lost on her. Effectively, she had chosen to close the door on her future as well as any hope for happiness. Her heart breaking, she somehow managed to hold back a sob as she ran from the building.

* * * *

Lily cried into her pillow. The images of their lovemaking tormented her. Why had she gone to him again knowing no real relationship could develop between them? And, knowing that each time she went willingly to him that she was literally ripping her heart to shreds. Her body had betrayed her heart's deepest desire. Anyone can have sex but she knew now that love was what she had sought out the night of the ball. She had used her body in an attempt to make him love her, but in the end, she had only fallen more deeply in love with him.

Flopping onto her back, she swiped the tears rolling from the corner of her eyes. This was all her fault. All of her mental pep talks about grabbing life and memories lasting her a lifetime were a load of crap. In truth, she wanted the total package. Him. Marriage, children, forever. Now, no other man would do for her. Not now. Not ever.

But an inner voice reasoned, luck and fate were hardly ever on her side. Basically, she had two choices. She could confess to her deception with the hope that he forgave her and accepted her wholly. Or, she could remain silent and attempt to go on with her life and live it to the best she could without him.

The solution seemed obvious, but her fear of opening herself to rejection caused her to choose the simplest and cowardly way out.

Julian must never know.

Hopefully, with time, she would get over her feelings. Time and tons of hard work.

She had to squelch the love she had for him. It would do no good to continue dreaming and hoping for the fairy tale. Life was meant to go on.

Chapter Four

For the next week, Lily abided by her vow to remain busy in order to keep from dwelling on Julian. She either volunteered to work late at the office, or worked more hours at the bookstore. She did whatever she could to exhaust herself so she could sleep without any erotic dreams of him. And so far, she had failed miserably. He crept into her dreams and tormented her with his sexy mouth and roving hands.

Regardless, though, she prayed the newness would wear off and her life would return to some semblance of normalcy. The memories of their time together would eventually fade into a distant memory. Or, at least she prayed that would happen.

On Tuesday, Lily arrived early to the office. She had not intended to, but after a long night of tossing and turning and getting no sleep, she decided to quit the house and do something productive to dull the ache burning inside her. The silence of the office before the other employees arrived would give her time to gather her thoughts and composure.

"Ah, six days in a row you've not only beat the time clock but also the rooster," Dawn teased, leaning her elbows on the top of the reception desk and smiling down at her.

"Well, I've always prided myself in being punctual," she replied, flashing a sweet grin.

"Disgusting, really," Dawn retorted. "Are you aiming for employee of the year?"

Lily snorted, ignoring Dawn's taunts.

"Anyway, good thing you're here early. The big boss is scurrying around looking for a temporary replacement for Rebecca. She is sick and he needs an assistant this morning. And, since you're setting your sites on bigger things...you get the distinctive pleasure of subbing as Executive Assistant."

Lily's mouth flew open. "What?!"

"He called me needing someone to help him for a few days. I instantly thought of you." Dawn declared a brilliant smile on her lips. "You have the skills and you are a hard worker. Besides, maybe working for our hunky employer will bring you out of your recent doldrums." She winked.

"But...but can't you get someone else?" She grasped at anything that popped in her head. "I mean, thank you for the vote of confidence, but surely, I'm needed here to answer the phones."

"Nope, Crystal and Marge can handle them for a day or two. You've been aching for a change and a chance to get off the phones, well, here it is." Dawn came around the desk and pulled the shocked Lily from her chair. "Don't let this opportunity get away."

"I'm...I'm not sure this is a good idea," Lily stuttered. She had been trying so hard to avoid him, now it looked like all of her efforts were wasted. Damn it.

"Well, I'm certain it's a very good idea. Now, go get 'em." Dawn said sternly.

Reluctant and terrified, she retrieved her belongings and headed for the elevator. This was going to be a very long and difficult day.

In the executive secretary's office, Lily took her time putting her things away and trying to delay her meeting with Julian. Her knees literally knocked, she was so nervous. She had to compose herself before entering his office. He does not know, he does not

know, she kept repeating over and over in her mind. He could not possibly identify her as his masked lover. Could he?

Straightening her suit jacket, she took a deep breath and walked into his office.

Her eyes, hungry for the sight of him, sought him out. He was seated behind his massive and cluttered desk. His jacket was tossed over his chair and his shirt sleeves were rolled to his elbows.

She couldn't help but to smile at his harried appearance. His black hair stood up in places apparently from constant finger combing. He looked absolutely charming, and somewhat vulnerable.

Delicately, she cleared her throat to get his attention.

He looked up briefly and waved her in. "Yes, come in. I'll be right with you, Lily."

She closed the door and stepped further into the room. She waited several minutes for him to address her all the while frightened that her shaking legs would cause her to crumble to the floor thus making an utter fool of herself.

"Sorry about that," he apologized pushing up from his desk. "I'm getting together some last minute notes before my next meeting."

His big lopsided smile curled her toes. "I understand, Mr. Leaumont."

"I'm sorry about the short notice, but Rebecca is sick and I need help." He explained, as he leaned his hip against his desk. "I have an executive meeting this afternoon that's crucial. Most of the presentation is complete, but I have some last minute information that needs to get typed in the reports, then copied and bound."

"I would welcome the opportunity to help you Mr. Leaumont," she said.

"It's Julian, remember?"

She nodded. "Where would you like me to start?"

He handed her the files and proceeded to give her instructions on what he needed. "I need these by 10:00."

"Yes, sir," she said as she took the files from his hands. Her fingers accidentally brushed against his. Her breath hitched painfully in her lungs as millions of tiny electric pulses raced erratically up her arm. Surprised by the intensity of the simple touch, she nearly dropped the files. Oh shit, she thought, not again.

Not wanting a repeat of their previous file incident, she crushed the files to her chest and mentally attempted to gather her wits. Working with him was definitely going to be one kind of hell. "I'll get right to it." She turned and hurried from the office. Not once did she look at him for fear he would see her reaction to their touch in her own eyes.

* * * *

Julian had not been immune to her touch either. He stood staring after her. There was something about her that was familiar. Could she...? He shook his head hard. Naw, he was just over sensitive to any female's touch at the moment. His high stress level and week long self-induced abstinence had him on edge.

"Damn it!" He cursed as he stormed back to his chair and attempted to get some more work accomplished. Damn her and her hold over him

* * * *

Exhausted from his intense three hour meeting with the President and executives at

Bolton Industry, Julian returned to his office, tossed his briefcase and jacket on nearby chair and crashed on his leather sofa. Throwing his arm over his eyes, he sighed heavily. All of his late nights, early mornings, and hard work had been worth the hassle. He'd succeeded in obtaining management of their retirement portfolio.

"Mr. Leaumont?" Lily's voice called over the speakerphone.

"Yes, Lily?"

"There is someone here to see you. She doesn't have an appointment, but she insists that you will see her anyway." Lily answered, her tone betraying her aggravation.

Perturbed himself, Julian sat up and walked to his desk. "Who is she?"

"A Ms. Fontain."

Julian started. "Kristen is here?" He asked with surprise. Talk about a blast from the past. What did she want now? "Well, send her in."

The door opened and in walked his old college girlfriend Kristen Fontain. And by damn, if she didn't look as fine as she did when they were hot and heavy in college. He couldn't help but to admire her glorious body as she sashayed toward him, her long sable hair and her bountiful breasts swinging gently with each bouncing step. He had to admit that she looked as fine today as she did from her high profile modeling days.

"Julian, darling," she said huskily as she rounded the desk and hugged him tight. She pressed her breasts against his chest and kissed his neck. God, that turned him on.

"How long has it been?" she asked when she released him and stepped back.

Julian lifted his brows in surprise by her unintentionally rhetorical question. Too long by the feel of his growing cock. Clearing his throat, he answered, "Two years I believe. I was in New York for a conference."

"Yes, that's right. Two years too long if you ask me, Jules," she purred as she clasped his hands and led him to the sofa. She pulled him down next to her and smiled.

"What brings you to New Orleans?" He asked, attempting to lead their visit into a more comfortable area of discussion.

"Press junkets," she said with a dramatic sigh. "My new line of kissable lipstick is about to go to market thus I must make my appearances."

He clucked his tongue. "Poor Kristen, what atrocious sacrifices you must make for the company."

"Yes, the veritable sacrificial virgin," she winked, smiling. "Anyway, the reason I stopped by was to invite you to dinner tonight. Please say yes so as to save me from the horrors of eating with my PR associate."

"That bad, eh?" He laughed when rolled her eyes.

"No, worse. Please, pretty please." She said in her best southern drawl.

"Oh, the things we southern gentlemen must do to save the demoiselles. Of course, I'll dine with you. Just name the time and place."

"Julian, you're the one who knows all of the best places."

"Okay, how about the *Creole Lounge*? Remember my old college buddy Brendan Collier?" At her nod, he continued, "He owns that restaurant. Classy and chic. You'll love it."

"Sounds heavenly. I've been dying for some good ole Creole cooking." She moaned as she rubbed her stomach.

Julian could not prevent his eyes from watching her rub herself. Lightning sparked through his body. "I'll pick you up at 7:00." He croaked as he rose to his feet.

“Seven o’clock it is,” she agreed, taking his extended hand. He escorted her out of his office and led her to the elevator. When the doors closed, he turned to Lily. “Lily, would you call the *Creole Lounge* and make reservations for two for 7:30?”

“Yes, sir,” she answered, picking up the phone.

“Thanks,” he said, then returned to his office to finish up some work before leaving. He reminded himself that he was only having dinner with an old friend. Yet, he felt that something more was on the plate for this evening. The question was whether he wanted the “more” with Kristen when he truly lusted for his mystery woman.

* * * *

Lily hung up the phone with a heavy heart. She couldn’t believe Julian was going to spend the entire evening with that...that...woman. How could he? How could he even consider having sex with her or anyone else, especially after experiencing the most explosive and most erotic sex the two of them had together? Surely, he had not forgotten about her so soon.

But, then again, she had resolved to stop their insane relationship and go on with her life while Julian lamented their affair forever. Oh good God, had she actually expected Julian to wait for her? To love her always? To stop living? Sadly, she HAD expected him to always wait for her, to remember her forever.

“Idiot,” she whispered, slamming her pen down. Julian was not some insipid man who would sit and wait for anyone. He was a hot blooded man filled with life and energy. His sexual nature would not allow him to abstain too long. But, did he have to choose to be with *her*? A woman no mere mortal could compete with? A woman whose image and obvious sexuality could easily overshadow any memory of his masked lover.

Lily dropped her head into her hands and groaned. What was she going to do?

Three hours later, she was still contemplating her course of action, when Julian exited his office.

“Hey, Lily, I’m leaving. Here are some files I need you to go through to proofread and edit for me.” He stated as he paused by her desk to hand her the stack of files. “Do you need anything before I leave?”

“No, sir.” She answered shaking her head and pushing her glasses back up to the bridge of her nose. “I hope you have a lovely evening.”

“I plan to,” he stated with a wink. “I’ll see you in the morning. Goodnight.”

“Bye,” she responded watching him head for the elevator. He was gone. Gone off to have a nice dinner with his old girlfriend and then possibly back to his place for “dessert.”

Depressed and saddened to her soul, she left the office and headed home. Home alone.

The commute was long and tiring. So, after changing into something comfortable and eating a light supper, Lily settled in front of the television to watch the entertainment news and go through the files Julian had given her. She could not help but to smile as she flipped through the files, Julian’s handwriting was truly atrocious. Lucky for her, she had a talent for reading chicken scribble.

An hour later, she opened the last folder and pulled out a spreadsheet. “What’s this?” she muttered as she flipped through the sheets. They contained only names. Next to many of the names were notations and checks in Julian’s handwriting. As she read further,

realization dawned on her. It was the list of attendees to the masquerade ball.

Curious, she read the notes. He was searching the list for someone. Wait...could he be searching for her? Her eyes furiously scanned the sheet. Yes! Obviously, he was. Shocked, she laid the folder down. He was attempting to discover her identity. He wanted to know who his masked lover was. He had to care about her to go to such extremes. Most men wouldn't have bothered to search for a woman who disappeared without a trace. They would have shrugged and gone on to the next willing woman. But even the nicest guy had limits. Sexual frustration could lead them to stray from their true heart's desire.

She had to go to him. She had to stop him from screwing that bimbo and making the biggest mistake of his life. Glancing at the clock, she swore. It was almost 8:00. They would be finishing up dinner soon, and then they'd be off to one of their places. Sprinting into action, she picked up the phone and called the *Creole Lounge* to get directions. Scribbling down the address, she raced to her bedroom to change. What to wear? She slid on a tight black skirt and slid on her pink, silk lingerie shirt. She stepped into the bathroom to freshen up her makeup and brush her hair. Sliding her feet into a pair of black strappy heels, she grabbed her purse and headed for her car. Glancing at her watch, she saw that it was 8:30. She prayed they had not left the restaurant yet.

A half hour later, Lily arrived at the restaurant. She drove around the nearby parking deck, until she spied his sleek black sports car. She turned her own ancient sedan into a shadowed parking space across the way—not too close, but close enough that she would see them clearly when they returned to his car. Luckily for her, the parking deck was deserted giving her an unobstructed view.

When she saw them, she'd...she'd what? What would she do once she saw them? Damn it! She couldn't just rush in there and confront him. Shit, she didn't have a clue what to say or do. What possible excuse could she give to get him away from *her*?

But she had no time to think, because at that moment they exited the elevator and headed toward his car. In the semi-darkness, Julian walked Kristen to the passenger side and reached to open the door. Kristen slid between his arm and the car door, sliding her arms around his neck and drawing his head down toward hers.

Lily watched in horror and dread as the hussy kissed Julian. For a brief moment, he seemed to hesitate, but he gave in to her seduction. With one arm he pulled her hard into his body, but with his other arm, he grasped her neck and deepened the kiss. Kristen clawed at his back as she lifted one gorgeous, long leg, hooking it around his lean hip and pulled his groin into her crotch. She ground her pelvis hard against his, rubbing his cock through the material of their clothing.

Even from the distance, Lily heard their moans of passion. Reluctantly, she found herself fascinated by their display. She had never personally seen two people have sex, and admittedly, she found it highly arousing. Two beautiful people groping and grinding against one another turned her on. Licking her lips, she continued to watch.

Julian grasped her thigh as he licked his way down her neck to the opened v-neck of her blouse. He nipped and licked the valley between her breasts as his hand kneaded its way around to her buttocks. Kristen pulled down her blouse to free her luscious round breasts. Julian used his free hand to fondle her left breast while he suckled the other and fingered her ass. As Kristen's moans increased, he lowered her leg to the ground while he continued his tasty exploration down her body. On his knees before her, he raised her

skirt and tore the lacy thongs from her. Leaning in, he slowly and languorously lapped at her cunt and nipped the hidden bud.

Lily groaned as she watched Kristen writhe in pleasure. She had first hand knowledge of the wicked things Julian could do with his talented tongue. Her own cunt throbbed and swelled as she absorbed the delightful sights and sounds enveloping her. Leaning back, she spread her legs and reached down to rub her own clit as she watched.

It seemed he could not get enough of her, he lapped and licked and nipped until Kristen screamed in ecstasy. She begged him to stop. Yet, he did not stop. She could tell that he relished her orgasmic euphoria.

Lily slowly rubbed her finger through her moist folds as she gazed blurredly at the trembling woman Julian devoured. Suddenly, Kristen pulled him up into her embrace to kiss him soundly while she groped for his pants zipper. Swiftly, she switched their positions and pushed him against the car. She was not gentle as she yanked his pants and briefs down, releasing his erect penis. She grasped him firmly and took his full length into her mouth.

Lily gasped as the woman vigorously sucked on Julian. His head tossed back in throes of rapture and his moans reverberated off the walls. He buried his hands in Kristen's sable tresses and helped her take all of him in her mouth. The faster the woman sucked him, the faster Lily rubbed herself. Within minutes all of them came in noisy, glorious release.

Kristen slowly raised herself, and wiped the essence of him from her lips. She smiled, rubbing her breasts against his chest. She leaned forward and whispered something in his ear. A startled expression crossed his face. He scowled, shaking his head. He said something as he disengaged her arms from around his neck. Though she couldn't hear their conversation from the distance, Lily could tell that Kristen was none too happy by whatever Julian had said.

Angered, Kristen jerked her skirt down then reached for her purse. She called him a foul name before stomping away. Lily was stunned by the sudden turn of events. What had he said?

She watched as Julian rubbed his hand down his face and set about righting his clothing. His grimace hinted at his still semi hard condition. He was in dire need of relief. Seeing her opportunity, she slipped on the mask and exited the car.

Purposefully, she walked around his car and stopped before him.

Shocked, he just stared down into her shadowed face. "What...?"

"Shh," she whispered, reaching for his zipper. "Let me take care of your problem."

He sighed and leaned back as she slid her hands in his pants and caressed his firm buttocks. She pulled him closer, relishing the feel of his erection against her stomach. "Yes." She moaned as she slid her hand along his buttock, lightly rimming his anus before touching his heavy balls. He was so hot, his skin nearly scorched her. His musky scent set her heart to pounding and her limbs quivering. She burned with the need to be consumed by him. She had to have him. Now.

Withdrawing her hands, she stepped back and lifted her skirt. Her spent juices glittered among her curls. She grinned as he licked his lips and reached for her. He grabbed her hips and lifted her easily onto the front fender of his car. "Fuck me, Julian," she demanded as she spread her legs wider.

"Oh, yes," he said as pulled her rear closer to the edge so he could slip into her juicy

cunt and bury himself within her in one swift stroke. Both of them moaned. The magic of their joining shocked the two of them for one brief moment. Lily cupped his face and stared into his lust glazed eyes. All of the love she had for him flooded her soul. She wanted to cry from the want, the need to be devoured completely by him. "Love me," she begged before kissing him soundly and tightening her inner muscles around him.

He answered her plea by inching out of her and then pounded hard back into her sheath. She groaned, leaning back on the cold hood and arching her back for deeper access. He roughly grabbed her hips and put her legs over his shoulders then buried himself even deeper into her luscious wetness. But he didn't stop. Like a madman possessed, he continually thrust into her over and over his balls slamming against her butt cheeks. The noisy and slurping sounds of flesh slapping together heightened her pleasure tenfold.

Lily went wild from his rough lovemaking. He was like an animal and she loved it. Untamed, wild, intent on seeking ultimate sexual release. Taking whatever they wanted mindlessly with no thought except for reaching that crest of orgasmic glee. She loved it. She loved him.

Consumed by waves of lustful bliss, she vaguely heard him yell his release and felt the swell of his cock just before the hot gush of his essence exploding into her. The intensity of his orgasm shook her to her core. But he did not stop his urgent thrusting. Not until he knew she was thoroughly satisfied. Only a truly awesome lover would consider his partner's pleasure. And he did not disappoint her. Her own brilliant, mindless climax enveloped her, stealing her breath and curling her toes. The universe spun out of control as she rode the ecstatic vortex of pleasure. Overwhelming her senses and threatening to send her into unconsciousness.

"Yessss," he grunted as he rammed hard into her until the last of her cries ceased. He collapsed on top her completely exhausted.

Several minutes passed before either of them moved a muscle. Each of them content in the other's comforting embrace. Lily relished the feel of his hard, sweaty body blanketing her. But alas, the cold hardness of the hood dug into her back. "Julian," she whispered, lightly nudging his shoulder.

He seemed to sense her distress for he lifted himself off of her and pulled out of her tight sheath. "Sorry baby," he said as he helped her to a sitting position.

She smiled, reaching up to readjust the slightly tilted mask. "No worries, lover," she said, scooting off the car and down the front of his body. She raked her nails lightly down his back and cupped his buttocks. "You were worth every bit of the discomfort."

He hissed, pulling her into his embrace and lowering his head to kiss her. His lips were hot and demanding upon her swollen ones. His tongue hungrily devoured her mouth, tasting, demanding. His conquest of her mouth, body, and heart were complete. She loved him absolute and would always until the end of time.

In the distance, a horn honked and someone laughed. The invasion of reality and their circumstances instantly drove them apart. "We've got to get out of here," he said as he caressed her soft back. "I don't want anyone to see how beautiful you are in all of your glory."

She laughed gently. "You're such a gentleman."

They dressed hurriedly. Lily turned to him. "So, what do you have in mind for us to do now?"

He smiled crookedly and folded his arms across his chest. "Oh, I could think of a hundred things to do with you."

"Well, I guess we better get started." She teased, sashaying to him and running her fingers lightly along his cheek. "Where you go I'll follow."

"Come then," he urged reaching up and gathering her hand in his. He led her to the passenger side of his car and helped her in. When he slid into his seat, she turned to him. "So, where are you taking me?"

He grinned. "I thought about my place. A bit of privacy is needed for what I have planned for you." He winked as he switched the car on and backed out.

Lily shivered. What did he have planned? Apprehension nibbled at her gut. Not from fear per se, but from the unknown. Even though she had recently developed an adventurous spirit, she was still a babe in the woods when it came to sexual intrigues. Well, she was pretty sure that by night's end, she would have new insight to the wonders and intimacy of sex between a man and woman.

Chapter Five

Neither spoke as they drove the few miles to his penthouse apartment. He parked in his reserved space, cut the engine and then turned to her. "God, you're so beautiful. Can you at least give me a name? It's damn hard to talk or make love to a phantom."

Lily's heart dropped. "I thought we had this conversation once before."

He chuckled. "True, but since you won't let me see your face, can't I at least have a name? Any name? When I'm about to come, I ache to yell your name, but I haven't one to do so. And if I make one up, you'd probably get offended."

"Ah, yes, I see your point," she admitted as she quickly searched her mind for a name. Instantly, she uttered her middle name. "Belle...call me Belle."

"See. That wasn't too hard." He smiled, then sobered. "You chose a beautiful name. Belle."

Though it wasn't her formal name, the way he said it was like a whisper across her skin. "Come, Julian. The night is wasting."

He grasped her hand and raised it to his lips. He pressed a warm, soothing kiss to her knuckles. "Follow me."

He opened the door and stepped out of the car and moved around to her side. She placed her palm in his as he assisted her from the car. Still holding hands, he led her to the elevators. Inside, he depressed the top foremost button and turned to her. "Come here." He ordered, crooking a finger at her.

Smiling, she stepped into his embrace and wrapped her arms around his waist. Lifting her lips to his, she succumbed to his possessive and demanding kiss. His firm lips teased and taunted hers. With just one touch, this man could definitely melt her bones, she thought as he pulled her closer. She angled her head to gain more access to his mouth. She swept her tongue into his mouth to drink in his masculine sweetness. Hot sparks of desire raced through her body, scorching her blood and sensitizing her flesh. She couldn't get enough of his mouth, of his hands, of his body. She had to have all of him.

The swish of the elevator doors opening jolted her back to the present. Reluctantly, she broke the kiss and pressed a hand to her breast. "Whew, baby, you sure know how to make a girl burn."

He chuckled softly as he clasped her hand again and pulled her into the elegant foyer and opened his door. Once inside she stood open mouthed as she glanced around her at the opulent surroundings. The living area was decorated in warm tones with Italian marble floors studded with antique Persian rugs. A bank of windows opened out onto the light studded New Orleans skyline. Along another wall was a man's dream entertainment center complete with flat screen plasma television and surround sound system. A mocha, leather sectional sofa dominated the area. Its sheer lushness induced her to burrow herself deep within its lavish comfort and allow it to envelope her in a cocoon of heavenly luxury. The suite was all man. All Julian.

"Go ahead and make yourself comfortable while I fix us something to drink," he invited as he moved over to the bar. "Wine?"

"Yes, please," she answered as she moved further into the room. She touched the

sofa and ran her hand along the back as she rounded it and sat down. It was as soft and cushiony as she knew it would be.

"Here you are, Belle," he said, handing her the glass and taking a seat next to her. "To us," he stated as he tapped his glass to hers.

"To us," she repeated, taking a sip of the red liquid. The wine slipped down her throat and into her belly, warming and relaxing her. She shifted to curl herself against his chest. Beneath her cheek she could feel his warmth and his strength. She could hear the gentle beating of his heart and his deep, even breathing. He was so alive, so vital. Loving the feel of his closeness, she closed her eyes and absorbed his comforting essence.

Silence descended. Neither spoke. They enjoyed their wine and enjoyed just being near one another. Oh, yes, she thought, I could definitely get used to this. Here, snuggled within his arms. Being near him. Touching him. She was finally home.

* * * *

Her soft body cuddled against his induced a deep sense of contentment. She felt so right within his arms. Perfect in fact. None of his past lovers had ever affected him to this degree. Usually, he enjoyed the mind-blowing release of sexual tension, but he always left their bed with a feeling of emptiness and frustration. He was tired of the one night stands and the clingy, desperate women intent on digging their greedy claws into him and his money. He wanted someone who excited and thrilled him both in and out of bed. A woman who was intelligent and fun, yet compassionate, resilient, and mature. Above all, she must love him and only him unconditionally. She must accept him as he was. Could "Belle" be the *One*? He knew absolutely nothing about her, his mysterious lover. Despite her extraordinary sexual appetite and adventurous spirit, he sensed her innocence and sweetness. She was new to this game of seduction. Not that he was complaining by any means. He actually liked the idea of her lack of experience. However, the question was why she chose to play the game? And better yet, why with him?

He recalled the night of the masked ball and the first moment he had laid eyes on her. He had been playing court to Julia Winthrop when he had felt someone watching him. Curious, he had looked up and spied her across the room. Even from the distance, her eyes caressed his skin as she leisurely swept his body from head to toe. Her desire clearly evident to him as their eyes had met and held. Awareness had sparked within him and he cock had responded instantly. When she had beckoned him to dance, he had been lost. And he had been floundering since then. He could not get her out of his thoughts or out of his blood. That had been proven tonight when he had tried to fuck Kristen.

He had been aching and frustrated for days and he had needed some soul-shattering release. Kristen had offered him that chance. And, oh God, her tongue had been wicked. She knew how to please a man with her mouth, but even she could not keep "Belle's" image from intruding upon his pleasure. He had discovered he could not fuck Kristen and be satisfied when all he wanted was "Belle." Of course, Kristen had told him in no uncertain terms what he could do with his dick. There were plenty of men who would love to screw her good and hard, she had declared. Of this he had no doubt. Kristen had a remarkable talent for finding her next sex partner. His rejection would be forgotten as soon as she lured her next unsuspecting victim into her bed. He chuckled.

Belle shifted to look up at him. "What's so funny?"

"Nothing important." He answered as he set his empty glass on the side table then

turned to her. "I have a question for you, though."

"You do?" she purred, running her fingers along his thigh. Her touch caused thousands of tiny sensations to spider through his body and pool in his groin.

He cleared his throat against the rising tide of desire. Damn, but it was difficult to concentrate when she touched him. "Why were you at the restaurant? Were you following me?"

Her fingers stilled on his leg and she visibly stiffened. She dropped her gaze and did not answer right away. "The truth?"

He nodded.

"I...was on my way home when I saw you and her. She was so beautiful and hot. You both looked so perfect together. Jealousy consumed me." She straightened to set her wine glass on the coffee table then got to her feet. She strode to the windows and gazed out into the darkness.

"So, you decided to park and watch?" Excitement lanced through him. She had been jealous? That was an emotion that people experienced if they cared for another. There might be hope yet.

"Yes, but I hadn't expected you two...to...um," she stuttered, knotting her fingers together and refusing to look at him.

He laughed. "Truthfully, I hadn't expected to get it on right there in the parking deck either."

She laughed and he found he loved the sound.

"Did you get wet watching us?" he asked softly, leaning back into the corner of the sofa and spreading his legs wider to lessen the strain on his growing cock. "Did you touch yourself as I licked her and made her come?"

"Oh, yes," she sighed softly. She slowly turned to face him, pressing her back against the glass.

"Show me," he commanded, his blood humming with anticipation.

Belle hesitated for but a moment before slowly lifting her hands to pull her blouse off and unhook her bra. She slid her hands up her body to cup her breasts. She rubbed and pinched her nipples into stiff peaks. Her moans enveloped him, stirring his juices into a boil. His cock hardened more, straining painfully against the material of his pants. He hurt so bad. Bad enough to race across the room and rip her clothes from her body so he could thrust into her tight wetness. Hot and hard until he died from sheer bliss of their orgasms. No. He had to restrain his urges for now. This time he wanted to watch her pleasure herself.

One of her hands left her breast to caress a path down her stomach, hip, and thigh. She spread her legs, the black skirt hitched higher to display more of her glorious legs and her thong. Her hand reached beneath the skirt to rub along her cunt. She moaned softly as she slid her fingers along her pussy.

Julian marveled at her beauty. Her heightened sense of arousal glowed vibrantly upon her silky, white flesh. Her musky smell permeated the room, invading his nostrils and firing his loins.

He could not take his eyes off of her as she slipped her two fingers inside her dripping cunt, her hips thrusting forward to deepen her thrusts. He instantly hardened to the point of pain. Reaching down, he unbuttoned his pants and freed his engorged cock. Without taking his eyes off of her, he grasped the thick base of his hot cock and stroked

himself slowly. Through half-lidded eyes, he noticed her watching him too. He smiled lazily. He rather enjoyed having her watch him touch himself. He pulled his cock tighter and harder in response to her impassioned gaze and soft moans. She fucked her cunt in time with his strokes. He stroked faster. His cock swelled and purpled as his orgasm threatened to erupt. With his other hand, he cupped his heavy balls and pumped his organ faster and faster. Dimly, he heard the suction of her juices as she thrust faster. Her moans escalated to a frenzied pitch. "Are you about to come, my love?" he asked, his voice thick. He was so close to expelling himself and he wanted them to come together.

"Oh, yesss..." she sighed as she continued to plunge her fingers deep within her pussy while squeezing her nipple. "Come, Julian. Now!"

He obeyed. He shouted hoarsely, his hips rising off the sofa as the fury of his orgasm rocketed to the surface. Tossing back his head, his semen shot up and over his furiously beating hand. His ejaculation seemed to go on forever. Dimly, he heard her moan his name as she came. He opened his eyes to see her collapse to the floor.

Damn, but she was incredible!

* * * *

Lily lay panting on the floor. Her limbs shaking and her breath labored. Never had masturbation been so gratifying or mind numbing. All thanks to Julian. When he had pulled out his penis and started rubbing himself, she had lost it. Never had she seen anything as sexy or as erotic as Julian's own hand palming his beautiful cock. But it was his eyes that had sent her over the edge of sanity. His piercing gaze watched her, caressed her. Who would have thought that a pair of searing blue eyes could make her explode?

"Why are you smiling? Or, should I even ask?"

Lily opened her eyes and glanced at his prone figure sprawled on the sofa. His flaccid penis nestled among the glistening pubic hairs. "Oh, you may ask, but I'll never tell." She answered saucily. Coming to all fours, she crawled across the floor toward him. "But I may show you."

He quirked a brow at her. "Please feel free to enlighten me." He spread his legs as she crawled to a stop between them.

Lily ran her hands up along his strong thighs, passing briefly over his swelling cock and on up his muscular chest. He was so gorgeous. Perfectly formed in all of the right and important places. Never had she seen or touched such a beautiful man. She relished the experience to know him, to love him completely. She was indeed the luckiest woman on earth. And, she would thank him properly.

She rubbed his nipples into hard peaks as she kissed his tight stomach. She smiled as his skin quivered beneath her lips.

"Oh, Belle," he groaned, "Take me in your mouth."

"I'd love to," she whispered, pressing a soft kiss on tip of his dick.

He jerked and nearly came off the sofa. Reaching for his waistband, she pulled the hot, damp material off his hips allowing her fingers to graze his firm butt. Grasping him at the base, she held him steady as she leaned over to leisurely lick the purple bulbous head. She twirled her tongue around and around the crown until he hissed through gritted teeth. Opening her mouth, she slipped her lips over him, swallowing his length. God, he tasted heavenly. Salty and pure male.

"Suck me hard," he begged, his fingers entwining within her hair. His hips bucked to

push himself deeper into her throat.

Lily sucked hard as she pulled back up his cock. Releasing him, she licked a juicy path up and down his hot, pulsing dick before reclaiming him within the velvety depths of her mouth. His moans increased as he thrust deep into her throat. She sucked harder and faster. Her head bobbed furiously up and down the length of him. He swelled even more and she knew he was about to come. His fingers curled hard into her scalp as the tide of passion began to sweep him under. His shout of release was quickly followed by a hot, salty, jet of semen. She swallowed and swallowed every drop of his essence, too greedy to allow any part of him to escape her eager mouth.

She lapped at him then pressed soft kisses on the tip. His breathing harsh in the silent room as he struggled to gain some semblance of equilibrium. She knew he was truly satisfied. "Hmm, you tasted divine." She seductively raised her flushed body up his chest to kiss his chin, then his lips. Pressing her sensitive, swollen breast against his hairy chest, she sucked his lower lips into her mouth. "Do you taste yourself on my lips?"

He swept his tongue along her lips and swallowed. "Oh, yes."

Wanting, no needing to feel him against her, she yanked his shirt off his shoulders and tossed it aside.

"Now it's your turn, darling," he announced, flipping her onto her back and pressing her into the soft cushions. "I'm going to make you come so hard, you'll scream for mercy before passing out."

"You may try, if you wish," she sighed as she wiggled her groin against his tight stomach. "Make me scream."

Julian lowered his head to gently nip at her breast while his hand caressed the sensitive skin along her ribcage.

He bunched her skirt up higher to reveal her glistening, swollen pussy. Lowering his head, he lapped her juicy petals from anus to clit. Lightning arced through her blood. If it hadn't been for his hand across her stomach, she would have jerked off the sofa.

Like a man starving, he laved at her lips and toyed with the stiff peak of her clit. She hissed as the intense vibrations radiated up her body. She groaned as her nipples stiffened to painful points. Needing to elevate her pleasure, Lily pinched and slapped her nipples as Julian bit and nibbled at her clit. Her mind went blank and her body quivered uncontrollably from the unbelievable sensations gripping her body.

"Harder," she commanded of him as she gloried in his ministrations. She wanted to come in his mouth.

Julian obeyed without question. His fingers pulled her labia apart as he thrust his tongue deep inside her. He tongue fucked her hard and deep as his finger rubbed her clit.

"Ohhhh..." she moaned, close to the pinnacle of a cataclysmic orgasm. Fire and light exploded within her. Her inner muscles violently clasped and gripped his tongue as the orgasm ceased her. She screamed. She was going to die, she thought, just as the world around her went black.

* * * *

Julian grinned as he reluctantly tore his mouth from her pulsing, wet cunt. He licked his lips. Mmmm, she tasted so sweet.

He glanced up her glistening body to her flushed face. Her breathing was erratic and shallow, her chest heaving as she grasped for air. He had done well, he knew. She had

experienced a climax like no other. One of those full bodied, mind-altering orgasms that one never forgets. Or who gave it to them. She would forever remember this moment and that he had been the one to give her the greatest pleasure she had ever known.

But, he was not about to stop now. His own painful erection demanded its own dynamic climax.

Rising to his knees, he caressed her quaking thighs, spreading them even farther apart. He gripped his cock and bathed the swollen tip with the spent juices saturating her red hot slit.

"Belle," Julian groaned as he slowly penetrated her moist, throbbing heat. He buried himself deep in her. God, she felt so good, he thought as he willed himself to remain still. He was afraid if he moved he'd burst. He ached to go slow. To make this last forever. His very being pulsed with the need to possess her. Fully, completely. To tear away the barrier that separated them. The false façade that hid her face from him. He wished to gaze upon her sweetness and see himself reflected within the glittering blue pools of her eyes. He wished to caress her cheeks, nose, brows, and forehead. To feel her. To know that she was real.

She wrapped her legs around his hips, bucked against him urging him to move, to make her burn. "Julian, please," she begged, digging her nails into his waist and her heels into his tight buttocks.

His arms shook as he maintained control over his rising need. Damn, she was so tight, so hot and dripping sweet juices.

Slowly, he withdrew and thrust again. Grinding his hips against her pubes, he watched her face. Her need and desire reflected in her beautifully flushed features. She squished her eyelids closed, and sighed softly. She tossed her head side to side as if in denial of the all-consuming passion taking control of her body. She was close to coming. Her felt her clench around him, trapping him deep within her slick cunt.

Her entire being jerked beneath him as she edged closer and closer to another cataclysmic orgasm. Her nails dug deep into his back, he hissed from the odd combination of pleasure and pain she caused him. Damn, but she was hot and she was driving him to the brink of madness! He felt the tremors within her grow and intensify. Oh, yes, he ached to push her over that very edge of all reason and sanity, towards that endless road of heavenly bliss. A journey both of them were guaranteed to enjoy.

"Faster, Julian. Faster! Harder!" she cried, bucking against him hard. Slamming her clit along the base of his cock, she rocked his world and he returned the favor.

While he plunged relentlessly into her tender pussy, Lily grappled with the delicious sensations coursing through her. Delirious with need, she reached between them to rub her swollen, pulsing clit. She groaned louder as she stroked herself furiously. Her head tossed back in ecstasy.

"God, babe," Julian whispered harshly above her. His eyes transfixed by her hand stroking herself. His composure amazed her. How could he control his thrusts while she thrashed about like a wild animal beneath him? Well, it was time to set the beast free!

Sliding her hands along his firm, sweaty butt, she pulled them apart. With one finger, she rimmed his puckered hole then inserted it into his ass.

"Damn!" he shouted. His attempt at steady control disappeared as she fucked his ass. Never had anyone touched him so. And, by damn, it felt good!

Grasping her hips in a painful grip, he slammed hard into her. Over and over. In and

out. No gentleness. Just animalistic mating. He rammed and slammed into her, his thick sacs banging hard against her ass. Her breasts bounced wildly in time to his pounding. She thrust her hips to meet him as she held on to the sofa back for dear life.

He couldn't hold back... "Belle!" he shouted as his cock swelled and exploded within her tight pussy.

Lily sobbed as climatic orgasm seized her vagina muscles. Lights burst in an array of fireworks behind her closed eyelids. Her body felt like it was splitting in two pieces as he plunged deep into her to expend the last of his seed.

Finally, unable to hold himself upright, he collapsed on top of her quivering and sweat slicked body.

* * * *

Something along the edge of her consciousness pulled her from her sleep. Reluctantly, she opened her eyes. The room was aglow with soft lamplight, while the world outside the windows reflected the darkness of the pre-dawn hour.

Disoriented, she struggled to recall her surroundings. Oh, yes, how could she have forgotten, even for one moment? She was at Julian's place.

Beneath her cheek, she heard the gentle beat of his heart and the rise of his chest as he breathed deeply. His left arm circled her naked waist, and his other hand clasped hers and held it to his stomach. A comfortable, loving embrace of lovers. She could stay here forever. But, alas, reality would not allow for it. She had to get home. Get more sleep before going to work.

Gently, she disentangled herself from his arms and slid off the sofa. Quietly, she dressed, and let herself out of the apartment.

As she waited for the elevator, she had time to study her reflection in the glass-enclosed entryway. She looked like a well-loved woman. Beautiful, exotic, and content. Oh, yes, most definitely content. She smiled slightly. Julian had done this to her. He was fully responsible for the new Lily. And she loved the change, and she loved him.

The elevator doors opened and she stepped inside. Reaching up, she removed the mask, the smile still plastered on her face. He was a fabulous lover and the times they had together will be remembered forever.

Exiting the building, Lily opted to hail a cab home. The long day and pleasurable evening left her tired and bleary-eyed. She would worry about her car later. Sleep was the only thing she cared about at this moment. Yawning, she climbed into the cab and relayed her address.

When she arrived home, she fell across the bed still fully dressed. She was asleep as soon as her eyes closed. Julian's smiling face and deliciously aroused body were the last fleeting images dancing in her mind before exhaustion claimed her.

Chapter Six

The Unmasking

The next morning, Lily dragged herself into work. The couple of hours of sleep she managed to get had been in no way sufficient. Today was going to be hell getting through.

In a daze, she had managed somehow to get ready and then get to work. No small feat considering her car was still in the parking deck or possibly towed off somewhere. She called a cab and had him take her to the parking deck. Luckily, her car was exactly where she had left it.

Thanking the heavens for small favors, she paid the cabbie and then hopped in her own car. Several minutes later, she pulled into her parking slot and then she hurried upstairs to Julian's office. She prayed he would not be in yet to allow her time to gather her composure and sanity before having to face him.

Unfortunately, her luck did not extend to Julian. The doors to his office were wide open and he was already in his office hard at work. Damn it.

She surreptitiously peaked through the door. He looked so good, so refreshed. How could that be possible? He couldn't have gotten any more sleep than she had last night. Lily shook her head in astonishment. Men were definitely amazing creatures when it came to sex and lack of the need for sleep. Sheesh!

As she put away her things, her phone buzzed. "Yes sir?"

"I have some things for you. Would you please come in my office?"

"I'll be right in." She hung up and grabbed her notebook and pen. Taking a deep breath, she entered his office.

"Ah, good morning, Lily." He greeted upon seeing her in the doorway. "Come in and have a seat."

She smiled weakly, her stomach in knots. How odd it was that when she wore the mask she was a totally different woman. The strong woman she had always dreamed to be. Unafraid, alluring, and confident in her sexuality. But dressed in her normal, everyday wear, she was an insipid, self-conscious Jane Doe. Briefly, she wondered if she suffered from some form of schizophrenia.

"How about some coffee to get us started?" he asked, shuffling the files on his desk.

"If you wish," she said softly, turning toward the small bar.

"What? Wait!"

Startled by his outburst, Lily jumped and stared wide-eyed at him. He gaped intensely at her. A very odd expression twisted his face.

A few seconds passed before he shook his head as if to clear it. "You...just reminded me of someone I know."

Panic swept through her. Oh, shit. Had he subconsciously made the connection between her and his mystery lover? Had he recognized her voice? Good grief, she hadn't thought of that? "I...I'll be right back with the coffee." She squeaked as she swiftly exited the office and fled down the hall to the executive restroom. She paced in front of the vanity. What was she to do? He was bound to figure her out before the end of the day.

He was not a stupid man.

On the other hand, she was not stupid either. She would just have to be extra careful that was all.

Feeling somewhat better, she retrieved them a carafe of coffee and returned to his office.

He was still behind his desk pouring over his printouts and making notations. "Thanks, Lily," he said upon seeing her enter the office.

He reached to take the hot cup from her stiff fingers. The warmth of his slight touch shattered her convictions. Hot currents of electricity blazed up her arm and flashed throughout her body. She jumped, inadvertently spilling a few drops of hot coffee into his lap. He swore loudly, scrambling to his feet. His face contoured from pain and he gasped for air as the scolding liquid bled through his pants to the tender flesh beneath.

Horried, Lily fell to her knees and proceeded to wipe the liquid from his crotch. "Oh, my God! Julian, I'm so sorry!" she declared. Vigorously, she rubbed the coffee stained area. "I'll pay for the dry cleaning or the doctor bill. I swear I will!"

When he said nothing, she looked up. She fully expected outrage or anger reflecting in his eyes; however, she was surprised to see a curious if somewhat surprised expression on his face.

In an instant, realization slammed into her. He knew. He had finally discovered her secret betrayal.

He reached down and pulled her to her feet. He stared down into her flushed, panic-stricken face, caressing her with his gaze. Slowly, as if from a dream, she watched him reach up to remove the clamp from her hair. Her golden locks fell into a shimmering curtain around her shoulders.

"I've finally found you," he whispered in awe.

Lily swallowed hard. The charade was over. Her stomach clenched in trepidation and fear. Deep down, though, she was also relieved. All of the secrets and the lies had been tearing her asunder. Now it was all over. Or was it? What would he do to her now?

* * * *

Julian wavered between anger, hurt, betrayal, and relief. He could not believe that his mystery lover was none other than Lily Hedrick, his company's switchboard operator. He stared at her. Her blue eyes, full lips, porcelain skin and honey gold hair. How could he not have recognized her? Yes, she had always dressed and groomed herself in the ultimate corporate image, but no one could ignore the passionate aura vibrating around her unassuming appearance. Any male who took the time to observe her would have seen it. She was beautiful and he had blind fool to not have 'seen' the real, passionate woman hidden beneath the guise.

Entranced, he ran his fingers along her cheek, jaw, and then to her luscious lips. She sighed in obvious delight to his soft touch. He cupped her cheek, loving the silky skin against his palm. His mystery lover was as lovely as he knew she would be. Even more so. He caught her eyes. Beautiful, terrified eyes. He ached to comfort her. To tell her to not be afraid. All would be well now. But, the words never passed his lips, as he lowered his mouth to claim hers. All he wanted to do was touch her, feel her. To know that she was real and she was here in his arms.

Wrapping his arms around her back he pulled her into his body. She trembled,

resisted momentarily, and then melted against him.

* * * *

The kiss was gentle, soft. Yet, it contained within it the promise of love and intimacy. She never would have guessed that something as simple as a kiss could enslave your heart and soul.

His tongue parted her lips and swept inside her mouth. Their kiss deepened, their tongues flicking and playing with one another as their passion grew. Lily wrapped her arms around his shoulders and pulled herself into his hard form. She ached to feel his hot skin against her breasts. To feel his coarse chest hairs rub her nipples.

As he made love to her mouth, his hands deftly removed her suit jacket and unbuttoned her blouse then slipped it off her shoulders. His hands gently stroked her shoulders and back. Each touch of his fingers shooting hot swirls of desire through her body.

She sighed softly when his skilled hands divested her of her confining bra.

He left her lips to continue kissing a languorous path along her jaw and down her throat.

Repositioning himself, he kneeled down before her. He kneaded and languidly licked every inch of her swollen breasts. His tongue flicked and teased her left nipple as his finger and thumb tugged on the other. Pain and pleasure mingled, heightening her excitement and her need.

Lily groaned, lacing her hands through his rich dark hair. Dizzy with desire, she leaned her hip against the desk to steady her shaking legs.

He laved and nipped her breasts until she nearly swooned from the intense throbbing of her cunt. She arched her hips, rubbing herself against his chest.

Cognizant to her need, he rose to his feet and returned his attention to her mouth. Deftly, he unzipped her skirt and allowed it to fall to the floor. Easily, he lifted her and set her on the desk's edge. Stepping between her legs, he ground his crotch into her core. Her wetness leaked through the material of his pants, his cock instinctively pressing for freedom to invade her femininity.

"Julian, please," she begged, grabbing his shoulders and hooking her heels around his thighs. Her hands flew to the waistband of his pants and swiftly freed him. "Oh, yes," she breathed. Her hot juices flowed thickly just by looking upon his thick, engorged cock standing high against his taunt stomach.

She had to touch him. To feel him. His strength, his vitality. One hand stroked him while the other rolled his heavy sacs in her palm. For a moment, she wondered at the mystery of the male physique. He was soft, yet hard as stone, and hot to the touch. An enigma of contradictions that only added to the pleasure of sexual intimacy. She had to have him inside her. Filling her completely and alleviating the hunger her pussy craved.

Wiggling her butt closer to the edge, she pulled him toward the wet center of her wide open legs.

"Do you feel how wet I am for you?" she asked hoarsely, gazing up into his lust glistened eyes.

"Yes," he hissed softly, reaching out to cup her breasts.

"Then take me. Fill me. Fuck me" she said, letting him go so she could lie back on the desk.

Julian leaned over her and kissed her smooth stomach. He kissed and nipped his way to her silky, bikini panties. Sliding his fingers beneath the band, he tugged off the offending material. He lowered his head to kiss her soft, brown thatch blanketing her swollen and glistening clit.

Not able to resist tasting her, he pulled her plump nether lips apart. Leisurely, he licked her. Over and over, he ate of her juices as his finger circled and caressed her clit. He drove her mindless with pleasure. She writhed and wiggled before his delicious ministrations.

Her desire grew to dizzying heights. She nearly screamed when he inserted his tongue deep into her cunt. His harsh breathing breezed across her sensitive nub, pushing her almost to the edge of all reason.

She begged, she pleaded for him to continue, to stop, to end the insanity. But he refused to oblige her. His fingers dug into her hips as he relentlessly rammed into her. Hot tingles shot through her as she inched ever closer to orgasm. Briefly, she almost feared the phenomenal pressure building within her. The effect his vigorous tongue fucking swirled to a frenzied crescendo. But as she was about to allow the orgasm to crash over her, he stopped his foreplay.

"No, my sweet," he growled, rising up and peering down into her glazed eyes. "I want you to come with me. I want you to come hard, surrounding me, squeezing me. Loving me."

"Oh, God, yessss," she agreed, spreading her legs wider, her cream streaming out of her to pool on the desk.

He positioned himself at her entrance and rubbed the head of his penis up and down her slit, spreading her juices over him.

Lily arched, beckoning his invasion. He obliged. Slowly, he eased into her, inch by excruciating inch until he was firmly and completely seated within her moist, tight sheath. He filled her wholly and soulfully. Not only was she near to bursting with a volcanic orgasm, but her heart was bursting with love for him.

She squeezed him as he began to move in and out of her slick passage. Rhythmically, he pumped into her, his hands holding her waist steady.

Opening her eyes, Lily saw him staring down where they were joined. Julian licked his lips as he watched himself slide in and out of her creamy cunt. She could tell he was enthralled by the image. She only wished she could see too.

As passion and heat built higher, all conscious thought was forgotten. Only pure pleasure remained.

Suddenly, he quickened his movement. He pounded hard and furiously into her, his fingers digging into her flesh as the impending climax neared eruption.

Lily raised her hips up to meet each thrust, greedily seeking her own release. Now!

With one last hard squeeze, she drove them both toward mindlessly into that vortex of sexual fulfillment. Brilliant lights exploded within her. Both of them groaned harshly as they rode the waves of bliss as the climatic orgasms flooded them. Drowning all sense of reality and tossing them into a world of absolute oneness, completion, and love.

* * * *

"Tell me why," he said, turning his head to look at her. His cock hardened again upon spying her disheveled appearance. "Tell me why. Why the masquerade, the

pretense?”

He waited as she grappled with the question. Her fear obvious, yet he did not know why.

Time for the truth. “Because I wanted to be with you but you enacted that damn company policy prohibiting dating,” she spat as she scrambled to her feet and glared down at him.

“What are you talking about?” he asked, clearly exasperated.

She paused, before saying softly, “I did not want to lose my job.”

“Lily, what are you talking about?” he stated, his brows knitted above troubled eyes. “Don’t be ridiculous. You’re not going to lose your job.”

Her eyes widened. “Well, I can’t continue to work here after...after this,” she swept her arms over him reclining so gloriously naked over his desk. “I wouldn’t be able to endure coming to work everyday knowing what we had and not being able to...” her voice trailed off.

“Not able to...touch me, kiss me, or love me?” he finished for her.

“Yes. No. I don’t know,” she groaned miserably as she dropped her gaze from his and strode away from his tempting body.

Julian smiled. She was so adorable, pacing the floor naked while nibbling her swollen lips. Even though, he wanted her to suffer a little of what she had put him through, he knew he had to alleviate her worry.

“If the others found out what happened between us, my life here would become unbearable and I may not be able to get another decent job. Oh, God,” she moaned.

“Lily, sweetheart, come here,” he bade, holding out his hand.

Against her better judgment, she slid her hand into his grasp. She looked into his sparkling blue eyes and waited.

“You’re right. It’s too risky for both of us if you worked here. So the only solution is for you to accept another position.”

Lily’s heart shattered into a million places. Her worst nightmare had come true. He was tossing her out. She had gambled and lost. She not only lost her job and security, but she had also lost Julian. She pressed her fist to her breast to still the pain and hurt. But the gesture was utterly useless. Tears flooded her vision. What was to become of her? How was she to live? How was she to live with Julian? Her future looked terribly dark and lonely.

“You’ll just have to accept the position as my wife and live happily ever after.”

It took a few seconds for his words to penetrate her pain. “Wh...what?” she stammered.

“Be my wife. I hear the fringe benefits are excellent.” He grinned, winking.

“But...why?” she asked, her heart blossoming with the possibility of what he was offering her.

He lifted his hand to her face and brushed an errant curl from her cheek and answered her seriously, “Because I love you, Lily.” He stared deep into her eyes and waited. His emotions laid out for her to see.

Disbelief and shock gripped her. He loved her? Could it be true? Could her fondest dream of winning Julian’s love have come true? Needing to know, she gazed deep into his eyes. The eyes never lied. There. His love for her shone through bathing her in its warmth. He loved her!

Lily leaned close, her lips inches from his. “Mr. Leaumont, I regret to inform you that I must resign my position as receptionist with Leaumont Financial Services I have accepted another position as wife to the love of my life.”

He cupped her face and drew her in fierce kiss, before sweeping her high into his arms and swinging her around. Their laughter echoed down the hall, causing many heads to turn to the closed presidential door and wonder what secrets lay within the room.

The End

About the Author:

Melissa Jackson is a writer and photographer living in the beautiful foothills of the North Carolina Mountains. When she is not writing romances, she enjoys traveling, photography, and spending time with family and friends.

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