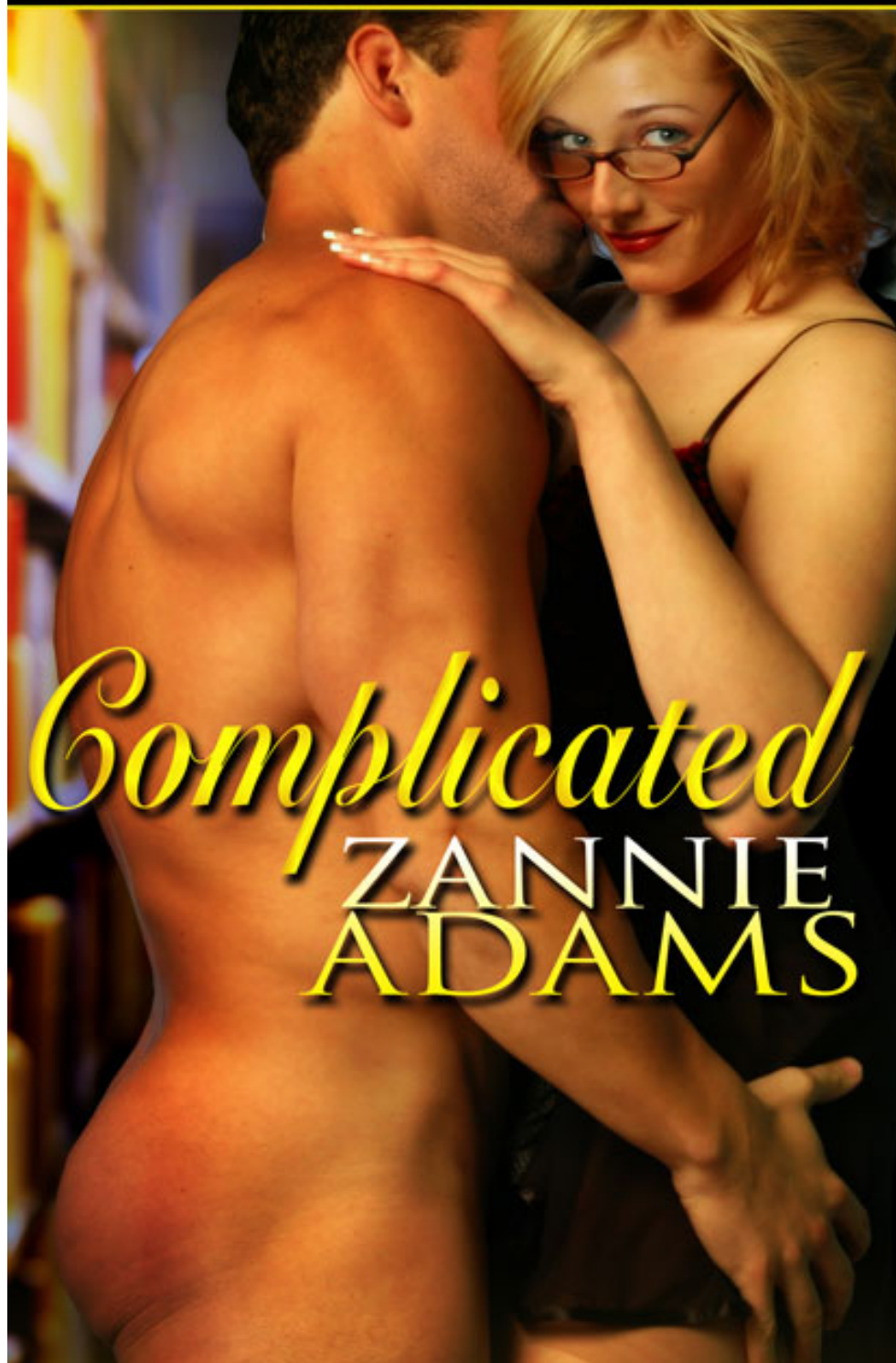


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



Complicated
ZANNIE
ADAMS

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



www.ellorascave.com

Complicated

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COMPLICATED

Zannie Adams

Dedication

For Amy.

Chapter One

Victoria Ray bit her lip as she leaned back against the stone railing of the balcony and tried to keep from whimpering. All she could see was the man in front of her, the warm press of his body trapping her in place.

One of his hands curved around the back of her head while the other cupped her breast. His thumb twirled her nipple with skillful precision, causing intoxicating tugs of pleasure to intensify between her legs.

She sucked in a harsh breath, inhaling the warm, male scent of him. He always smelled better than any man she'd ever known—masculine and faintly expensive but not with anything as obvious as cologne. His scent only heightened her arousal, leaving her off-balance from the mingling of heady sensations.

"Greg," she gasped, her fingernails digging into his shoulders through the soft fabric of his black suit. "Greg, someone will see us."

Greg looked over his shoulder at the French doors that led back into the hotel ballroom where a large crowd was celebrating the successful conclusion of the gubernatorial campaign they'd both been working on for several months. Anyone who happened to glance out through the glass panes would see Greg Stone, brother of the newly elected governor, shamelessly feeling up Victoria, a quiet university librarian who'd always kept to herself.

Lowering his hand from her breast, Greg nudged Victoria toward the corner where the balcony railing met the side of the building. There was some protection offered by the large potted palm. Not enough to hide them completely but enough to partially disguise their carnal activities.

Then he pushed her back against the railing with the length of his big, strong body and lowered his head to mouth her neck. The slight bristle on his jaw scraped against her throat deliciously and she squirmed between the railing and Greg.

When he raised his hand to fondle her nipple, she let her head fall back and moaned deep in her throat. Her pussy was a hot ache between her thighs and she had to force herself not to grind her groin against Greg's hip.

Little pants of desire and frustration were forcing their way out through her parted lips. She tangled her fingers into his dark hair to hold his head in place. "This is crazy," she managed to say, pulling on his hair in greedy insistence. "Maybe we should wait until later."

"Why?" Greg's voice was thick and textured and as sexy as anything she'd ever heard. "You looked so irresistible in there—trying to pretend you were ignoring me. I couldn't keep my hands off you any longer."

"But we agreed to be discreet." Her objections were only token—brought on by the common sense she'd inherited from her mother. Her body was pliant and eager against him. And the idea of letting him touch her like this—half-exposed on the balcony—gave her an erotic thrill she couldn't deny.

Greg lifted his head and gazed down on her with smoldering brown eyes. "We *will* be." Belying his words, one of his hands moved behind her thighs, gathering up the fabric of her skirt until he could cup the full curve of her ass. "Fuck, you look gorgeous, all hot and debauched like this. Your cheeks get so flushed and your lips so swollen. Your hair is falling out of that bun you insist on wearing and your nipples are so tight you can't even hide them beneath your prim suit."

She flushed even hotter under the possessive approval of his gaze. "Prim!" she objected, trying for a teasing pout despite the aching compulsion of her body. "It's not prim. It's vintage!" Her fitted, Forties-style gray suit was new but at the moment it was rumpled and disarranged, the knee-length skirt hiked up around her hips and the jacket falling open. "And it's not a bun—it's a chignon."

Chuckling in husky appreciation, Greg lowered his gaze to her chest, where her nipples were jutting out brazenly through the silk of her blouse. He pinched one of them through the fabric – causing her to cry out from the jolt of pleasure.

Then he reached behind her thigh to lift one of her legs and hook it around his hip, leaving her wet pussy protected only by the thin satin of her panties.

Victoria wanted him so much she was shaking but she was brutally conscious of the French doors still visible beyond the potted palm. Anyone could come out. Anyone could see the two of them in this shameless tangle of limbs.

“You’re not really going to fuck me here, are you?” she asked in a raspy voice. “What if someone catches you with your pants down? You’re supposed to be a respectable, dignified businessman.”

Despite his heated intensity, he couldn’t stifle a laugh at this. He kissed her fiercely and then murmured against her lips, “God, you’re delicious, Victoria.”

She felt an odd sensation in her chest she couldn’t quite identify but it was quickly overwhelmed by the insistent need of her body. She was in a helpless position – imprisoned between the railing and Greg’s solid body, supported only on one of her legs – but she tried to rub her pussy against him as much as she could, letting out a broken sigh of relief at the stimulation on her clit.

Greg adjusted his stance so he could slip one of his hands between her thighs. He pressed his fingers against the damp spot on her panties. “If you really don’t want to do this here, you should tell me now.”

Victoria tried to think. And she realized her anxiety wasn’t true reluctance. In fact, it only heightened the naughty thrill of the situation.

“Don’t you dare stop now,” she whispered, wrapping her arms around him and holding on tightly.

He chuckled again – an exquisite, husky sound that sent vibrations all through her body – as he tucked his fingers past the delicate satin of her panties and into her intimate folds.

She nearly cried out again in rich pleasure but managed to suppress the sound by biting her lower lip.

"Fuck, you're so wet." He explored her arousal, parting the flesh to expose her drenched entrance and then rubbing circles against her swollen clit.

Victoria almost choked as the sensations intensified. He was hard and hot and big against her and she breathed him in with every strained breath.

He was fully aroused now. She could feel the tight bulge at the front of his pants pressing into her middle. But he'd always been patient and his caresses were neither rushed nor clumsy.

Her spine almost bent backwards when he lifted her thigh even more so he could slide two fingers into her slick channel. At her desperately hitched breath, he murmured, "You like that?"

"Mm-hmm," she mumbled, biting down on her lip. An orgasm was already collecting at her center, just from the way her clinging inner walls had to stretch around the penetration of his fingers.

"You want me to fuck you with my fingers?"

"Mm-hmm." She was afraid to release her lip for fear she'd start screaming and rouse the attention of the party inside. She could hear music and the vague murmur of laughter and conversation. It was all happening just beyond those French doors.

Greg started to pump his fingers inside her, moving them easily in her slippery pussy. Her skirt was hiked up around her waist now, leaving her legs bare except for her thigh-high stockings.

She dug her high heel into the back of his legs, trying to get it even higher to give his fingers better access.

"How's that?" Greg asked, his hot brown eyes never leaving her flushed, twisting face.

It felt so good she was afraid to open her mouth, lest anyone hear how close she was to climax. "Mm."

"What was that?" Greg curled his fingers inside her, expertly finding her G-spot.

"Mm, mm, mm," she forced out, clenching her eyes as tightly shut as her mouth.

"Did you want me to stop?" His fingers, now wet with her juices, grew still inside her.

Victoria nearly wailed in frustration. "Stop teasing," she gritted, clawing at the back of his shoulders through the fabric of his expensive suit. "Fuck, I want to come."

He started moving his fingers again, sliding and stretching her pulsing channel and firmly connecting with her G-spot. The stimulation gathered into a deep pressure below her belly and made her moan.

"You want to come like this?" Greg murmured, his thick voice as erotic as his touch. "Half-naked and splayed on the balcony, where anyone could see you. All they'd have to do is step outside. You want that?"

It was true. They weren't hidden. They could be caught at any time. And the knowledge sent thrills of anxious pleasure jolting down to her pussy. "Yeah," she gasped, her head lolling back helplessly as she let him pleasure her in the mild autumn air. "Yeah, yeah."

"You want them to see you like this? To see how hot and sexy and wild you are beneath your quiet demeanor."

Everyone thought Victoria was proper, boring, bookish, a little bit shy. The stereotypical librarian.

Everyone but Greg.

She was so close to coming now her body was tensing up in preparation. She clung to him desperately and tried to hump his hand. "Yeah, please, please, yeah!"

"That's right, baby," Greg said, his voice growing hoarse and his body nearly as tight as hers was. "Show them. Show them all. Show them how hard you can come."

She was nearly sobbing as the pressure finally shattered and she came all around his fingers. The pleasure pulsed in delicious waves as her body shook and spasmed in clumsy abandon. She had to bury her face in Greg's chest to smother the loud sounds of her release.

Before she'd barely come down, Greg had pulled her head back and kissed her—rough and deep. She whimpered into his mouth, her pussy still clinging tightly to his fingers.

He was pressing the bulge of his arousal against her middle in small urgent thrusts—a sign of how much he'd lost his characteristic control. The evidence of this was thrilling, almost as thrilling as the delicious fear of being caught.

But before their mouths had parted a new series of sounds wafted out from the ballroom.

Both of them knew what those sounds meant.

Greg's brother—the governor elect—was about to give a speech.

Which meant Greg needed to get back inside or someone would come looking for him.

Letting out a desperate groan, Greg released her mouth, removed his fingers from between her legs and took a step back, leaving Victoria feeling cold and half-unsatisfied.

"Damn it," he muttered, closing his eyes and breathing deeply in what she knew was an attempt to get himself under control.

Victoria pulled down her wrinkled skirt and rubbed her thighs together to dispel the empty ache at her center. She buttoned her jacket and tried to smooth out some of the wrinkles before she tucked stray blonde strands of her hair behind her ears. "We can finish up right after the speeches," she suggested, feeling kind of guilty that she'd had an orgasm when Greg definitely had not.

He nodded. "I've reserved a room upstairs." He glanced back at the French doors. "Why don't you go out first, since you're in better shape than I am?"

"All right." Victoria was flushed, ruffled and shaky—which she never would have considered good shape—but at least she wasn't sporting a hard-on like poor Greg. She stepped over and gave him a light kiss. "Sorry. You shouldn't have wasted so much time on me."

Despite his frustration, Greg chuckled warmly against her skin. "It wasn't time wasted. And I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

This caused another one of those odd sensations in her chest and she felt compelled to hide her face from him as she ducked discreetly back into the ballroom.

She and Greg Stone had met several months ago through his brother's political campaign. She'd been immediately attracted to him but had never dreamed she'd get the chance to act on the attraction.

She was just a normal librarian—smart and basically attractive but nothing special. And Greg was one of the most eligible men around.

Until one night in campaign headquarters when they'd been working late alone. By that time, Victoria had relaxed with him and she'd talked and smiled more than normal. She'd teased him about the other single female volunteers, all of whom were making obvious plays for him. Then Greg had hauled her against him into an unexpected kiss. They'd ended up fucking against the wall and then on the desk and then on the desk again. As he'd been pounding into her, holding her legs up against his shoulders, making her frantically babble his name, Victoria had realized that maybe Greg was attracted to her too.

They'd both agreed they didn't want a relationship. Neither was interested in the complications that a serious, romantic relationship would entail. Both of them were content with their lives as they were. Sex was all they wanted from each other. So

they'd been having a discreet affair for the last three months—fucking a couple times a week and enjoying it completely.

Victoria had secretly been worried that the end of the election might signal the end of their affair. And she wasn't ready for that to happen.

So it was a relief that Greg had reserved a room in the hotel tonight.

She didn't want to marry him and have his babies.

She just wanted to keep fucking him for as long as she could.

* * * * *

An hour later, she slid the key he'd given her into the lock of the hotel room and stepped into the entryway of the luxurious room.

As soon as the door shut behind her, Greg pounced.

He must have been waiting because it took him less than thirty seconds to get her pressed back against the wall. His kiss was hungry and his embrace hard and demanding.

Victoria responded immediately, something thrilling inside her at this evidence of his urgency. Her mouth and hands were just as insistent as his were and soon they were both equally eager and aroused.

They stumbled over toward the bed, still kissing and groping each other. After a lot of fumbling, Victoria managed to push Greg's suit jacket off over his shoulders but he wouldn't release his hold on her ass to let the jacket fall to the floor.

Realizing through her hot haze that she could take him inside her sooner if they managed to get some of their clothes off, Victoria gave up on the jacket and bent her leg up behind her. She tried to pull off her high heel but it had a Mary Jane strap and wouldn't slide off over her arch.

She gave a frustrated huff that ended as a grunt when he claimed her mouth in another hard kiss. This time, he threw her off balance and they both tumbled onto the bed.

She landed on her back, her bottom halfway off the edge of the mattress. Giving up on her shoes, she instead fumbled between their bodies in an attempt to unfasten his pants.

He was fully erect – his arousal tight in his trousers. And she was just as aroused as he was, her pussy wet and aching between her legs.

While she worked on the front of his pants, Greg grabbed fistfuls of her skirt and hiked it up over her hips until it was bunched around her waist. With her legs freed from the straight skirt, she wrapped them tightly around his hips, still wearing her stockings and shoes.

She released a victorious exclamation when she finally managed to free his cock from his trousers. It was hard, warm and heavy in her hands. She loosened her legs around him to give him some room to position himself between her thighs.

He was farther off the bed than she was, bracing himself with his feet on the floor. It couldn't have been a comfortable position but he was too caught up in lust to care. He used his hand to align himself at her entrance, his eyes raking over her flushed, eager face and her sprawled body in her disarranged clothes. "You ready for me?"

"God, yeah!"

She tightened her legs around him, her heels digging into his ass as he moved her panties aside and pushed his erection into the wet pliancy of her body.

She sucked in a sharp breath of relief at the thick, tight penetration but she didn't have time to adjust to the sensations before he pulled back and pitched his hips forward again.

"Oh God!" she cried out as the force of his thrust shook the bed, jiggled her body, sent jolts of pleasure shooting out from the connection.

He reared up on straightened arms – his hands firmly planted on the bed on either side of her shoulders – and then thrust again, leveraging up on the in-stroke.

“Fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck!” She was babbling and her voice growing increasingly loud. But she couldn’t help it. Overwhelmed by the sight of the tense, primal expression on his handsome face above her, Victoria fell headlong toward climax, spiraling faster on each strong stroke of his cock.

Greg made a throaty sound—maybe pleasure, maybe frustration—and adjusted his stance to give himself more leverage. He was still mostly dressed in his sophisticated suit and tie, a fact that made the whole thing even hotter for Victoria.

She’d never seen Greg like this before. He was a mature, cultivated, well-respected man and he’d always treated her with a teasing kind of care and appreciation.

He’d never been this wild. This out of control. Like an animal, his expression almost feral as he drove himself into her.

Soon she was crying out helplessly as her pleasure began to overwhelm her. Her head tossed desperately on the bedding as she clawed lines down the back of his jacket.

Greg paused with an agonized grunt, buried deep inside her. “Is it too hard?” he gritted out. There was perspiration beading on his forehead and at his hairline and the line of his jaw was so tightly clenched she could see the tension in the muscles of his face.

“No,” she choked out, trying to pump her hips to get him moving again. “It’s so good. Don’t stop!”

He made a sound that was almost like a growl and pitched his hips forward again.

“Yeah!” she gasped, her spine arching instinctively off the bed. She was sweating beneath her blouse and jacket and was still trying to dig her heels into his ass for more stability. “Hard! Fast!”

Greg picked up his speed until the bed was shaking wildly, the headboard banging against the wall and the springs squeaking in loud resistance. Victoria’s whole body was bouncing, her breasts jiggling and her clit getting delicious, indirect stimulation.

She stopped trying to smother the sounds of her carnal response. She cried out in loud, frustrated abandon as he worked her up toward climax. Every time she tossed her head, more of her hair slipped out of her once neat chignon.

"Fuck, baby," he muttered, grunting as he concentrated on every hard thrust. "You feel so good."

She whimpered in response. Then gave a sob of pleasure on his next stroke in.

"Can you get your legs higher?" His voice was strained and his hot gaze so possessive she might as well be naked.

She tightened her thighs and managed to get her heels even higher up his back. The move caused him to sink into her even deeper.

"Fuck. Fuck, baby, that's so good."

Victoria was afraid she would melt from pleasure, heat and a self-conscious kind of pride. She'd been quiet and bookish all of her life, competent and committed to her career. She'd dated on and off but nothing particularly exciting. Everyone had always treated her like the shy girl-next-door.

She'd never dreamed she could make a man look and sound the way Greg did at the moment.

Like he might swallow her whole.

He continued his strong, rhythmic thrusts, although he was now just pushing inside her without pulling out very far.

The intense sensations, the erratic bouncing of the bed, the feel of his hot, heavy body above her and the knowledge of how far he was out of control all combined to send Victoria mounting even higher toward a shattering orgasm.

Her loud cries turned into harsh, choppy sobs as all the muscles in her body tightened. "Oh God! Oh God! Greg! Oh, oh!"

"That's right, baby." He gave a few last rough pushes inside her. "Come for me."

She came, her body freezing in an involuntary arch before the spasms of pleasure sliced through her.

Greg pushed against the contractions of her pussy and forced out a series of low, rough exclamations as his own tension finally released as well.

They both came hard, leaving them breathless and exhausted as they finally collapsed in a heap of limbs and damp clothing.

"Wow," Victoria croaked, buried beneath Greg's warm weight.

"Yeah." He was panting against her neck, occasionally pressing his lips softly against her skin.

"I guess winning an election makes you horny." Her words were light in an attempt to find the pleasant balance that had always sustained their casual, sexual relationship.

"Something like that."

Victoria winced as he moved above her. Her back was stiff, her thigh muscles were sore and her pussy would be raw after that kind of sex.

Evidently sensing her discomfort, Greg lifted up and slowly pulled his softening cock out of her wet, sensitive channel.

She couldn't stifle a moan as she straightened her legs and tried to sit up.

"All right?" he asked, his observant eyes watching her closely.

"Yep." When she managed to sit up, she had to close her eyes at the resulting dizziness. After a moment she recovered and looked down at her damp, crushed outfit. "My poor suit."

He chuckled and stood up. Since his trousers were halfway off already, he let them fall to the floor and then stepped out of them with his shoes. Pulling off his tie and jacket, he headed toward the bathroom. "It looks pretty good to me."

"Smug bastard," she said without any heat. "You could have at least let me take off my shoes before you fucked me like that."

She heard the water running in the bathroom before he came out wearing just his boxers.

He was a well-built man with broad shoulders, fine arms and tight belly. The dark hair on his chest tapered down into an irresistible line that disappeared into his waistband. She discreetly leered at him as he came back over to the bed.

He grinned, his smile crinkling his rugged face. "What are you complaining about? You're not the one who's going to have bruises on his back from those damned heels of yours."

He was teasing but Victoria stood up and peered at his back. The skin had reddened into angry streaks where she'd dug her heels into his flesh. "Oh. I'm sorry."

Greg just chuckled and stretched out on the bed, looked pleased, sated and relaxed. "I'm not."

She stood beside the bed, fidgeting with her wrinkled clothes, suddenly a little awkward. She rubbed her thighs together inconspicuously, feeling kind of sloppy from what was left of Greg's semen between her legs.

They'd used condoms at the beginning but now they relied on Victoria's birth control, since neither was fucking anyone else.

She went to the bathroom—to clean herself up a little and to ease her strange awkwardness.

When she returned, Greg was propped up on one elbow, obviously waiting for her. "Why don't you spend the night?" he suggested, glancing at the clock on the nightstand. "It's almost two. And you look tired."

Victoria swallowed and tried to think quickly. Their relationship was just about sex. They'd never spent the night together. And his invitation made her heart race with nerves. Not because she thought he had ulterior motives—she knew he was just being friendly and generous—but because she was always careful to avoid anything that would make her treat their relationship as something deeper than it was.

They were both happy with casual sex. But she had to work very hard for it not to get complicated—at least, as far as her feelings were concerned.

But Victoria was tired. And the big bed—especially with Greg’s handsome, nearly naked form in it—looked incredibly inviting. And for some reason she really wanted to stay the night with him.

“Well,” she began, fiddling with one of the buttons on her jacket.

Greg stretched a hand toward her in invitation, grinning at her beguilingly.

She relented without any more of a struggle, letting him pull her down into the bed beside him. She giggled, resisting as he tried to roll her into an embrace. “You can at least let me take off my shoes *now*.”

Greg grumbled under his breath but relented, contenting himself with leering at her as she bent up each leg in turn and unbuckled her shoes, dropping them over the side of the bed.

When she started to take off her lace-topped thigh-highs, he propped himself up on one elbow and objected, “Leave them on.”

She raised her eyebrows. “What exactly do you have in mind? A man of your advanced years shouldn’t strain himself, you know.”

He just laughed and gently stroked his fingers along the line of her leg.

Victoria was thirty-one. Greg was forty-three. She liked to tease him about the difference in their ages—knowing he wasn’t a bit insecure and would never be hurt or offended by it.

Greg was the most confident, self-contained, mature man she’d ever met. It was nice not to have to worry about wounding a delicate male ego, which she’d had to stress about in every previous relationship.

He moved above her and nudged her up so he could pull off the jacket of her vintage suit. Then he started to work on the tiny buttons of her pink silk blouse.

She relaxed and let him undress her. And only after he'd removed her skirt, leaving her in just stockings and her matching bra and panty set, did she say, "Seriously, though. You were rather, er, vigorous before. I'm not sure I'm up for any more thrusting tonight."

He gave a huff of amusement and mouthed her breast softly through the satin of her bra. "That's all right," he murmured. "I'm not going to be *up* for anything for a while anyway."

"Then what are you doing?" She arched up as he suckled her nipple through the damp fabric, her body responding immediately despite the powerful orgasm she'd just had.

"Amusing myself before bedtime."

She couldn't help but giggle at his dry tone but she didn't argue anymore. He took off her bra and worked over her breasts for a while until she was breathless and newly aroused. Then he slowly made his way down to her belly and spent some time kissing and stroking it.

Her belly wasn't as flat as she'd like it to be but he didn't seem to mind. He mouthed the soft flesh with gentle skill until he'd reached the waistband of her panties.

"Greg," she groaned, closing her eyes and tossing her head back and forth against the pillow. "Greg, can you... I need..."

She parted her thighs and gave a harsh sigh of relief when she felt him nuzzle between her legs. He mouthed her intimate flesh through the satin of her panties until the fabric was moist and Victoria was moaning in sensual torment.

He spread her thighs farther apart and used his tongue to stroke open her folds through her panties. Then he closed his lips around her clit, finding it even through the barrier of the fabric.

He sucked, the additional stimulation from the wet satin making the whole thing even more pleasurable.

Victoria wriggled in response to the sensations and stared down at his head between her thighs. Saw his thick dark hair, flecked slightly with gray. Saw his mouth against the white satin of her panties.

She came with a long, lingering moan and then felt a warm flush of satisfaction spread over her entire body.

"Thank you," she murmured as he pulled himself up and stretched out beside her again.

"You're welcome." He settled her against him, his arm tucked snugly around her. "Men of my advanced years tend to be pretty good at that."

Victoria had been so relaxed she was on the verge of drifting into sleep but at this she opened her eyes to check his expression.

When she saw he was grinning at her, she grinned back. "Men of your advanced years tend to be good at *everything*."

She saw his expression change. Realized with a thrill that he genuinely appreciated the compliment.

It was nice—that she had pleased him. That she *could* please him. Even though a year ago she would have insisted he was far beyond her grasp.

And it was nice to cuddle up beside him like this and play with the coarse hair on his chest.

It was nice to hear his breathing slow down after he reached over to turn off the light.

And it was nice to feel the heat of his body as the darkness of the room surrounded them.

It was nice to fall asleep beside him.

And it was ironic that she hadn't known this was something she'd been missing for the last three months.

* * * * *

She woke up slowly – first recognizing that she was unusually warm and cozy, then feeling a big, solid body beside her, then realizing that the skin of her cheek was clinging hotly to someone else’s skin and finally hearing the slow breathing of the man beside her.

Greg. It was Greg beside her. She’d slept with him all night and was still snuggled up against his side.

He was still asleep. Victoria had never seen him asleep before so she opened her eyes and lifted her head.

His face looked younger with his features relaxed from sleep and the shadow of the dark growth of the beginnings of a beard was more obvious than usual. He needed to shave. And his dark eyelashes looked oddly fragile against the skin under his eyes.

She was just about to peek under the sheet to see if he had a morning hard-on when he opened his eyes and caught her.

“Good morning,” she said, covering quickly by pretending she was tucking the sheet more securely around his chest.

“Hi.” He gave her a perplexed smile. “What were you doing?”

“Nothing,” she lied. Looking desperately for a distraction, she asked, “What time is it anyway?”

When she saw the time, her focus shifted dramatically.

“Shit!” She jumped out of bed, conscious that she was naked except for her little satin panties. Her body wasn’t bad—curvier than she would have preferred but certainly nothing to sneer at. But she wasn’t used to parading around without any clothes on. Ignoring the flicker of self-consciousness, she said, “I’m late. I have to teach a class at eight o’clock.”

Greg looked lazily over at the clock. “Wow. Is it already seven-forty? I must have slept like the dead.”

"Me too." Frantically trying to rehearse the time remaining, Victoria realized she'd have no time for a shower. It would take almost fifteen minutes to get over to the university, which left her five minutes to get dressed. "Damn it. We should have set the alarm."

"Sorry about that. What class do you have to teach at eight?"

Victoria flung back the sheet, grabbing at her bra when she found it. "A library class," she explained impatiently, clumsily trying to fasten the hooks on her bra. "On how to use the library."

Greg looked genuinely curious. "You mean they don't know?"

She'd found her blouse on the floor and was buttoning it as quickly as she could. "Most freshmen are clueless. They don't even know how to find books—much less periodicals and academic journals and—" She broke off as she stepped into her straight skirt and zipped it up.

She still had her stockings on, so she wouldn't have to mess with those. She ran over to the mirror and gave a shocked squeak at what she saw. "Help! Why didn't you tell me I looked so horrible?" Her mascara had smudged a little, one of her cheeks was bright red from being pressed up against Greg all night and her hair was a disaster.

"I thought you looked pretty good."

She snorted, almost choking as she splashed water onto her face. "That's either an outrageous lie or else a sign of some perverse impulse men have to see their women looking well-fucked and exhausted."

She bit her lip as she dried her face, glad she was out of sight of the bed. She hadn't meant to say "their women" as if she were implying she was *his* woman.

She checked her face again, not having the time to spare to beat herself up for such a minor slip. One side of her face was still redder than the other but that would hopefully fade in a few minutes. Her face was scrubbed clean but it was better than before.

She scrambled over to her purse, which she'd dropped on the floor in their frantic stumble toward the bed last night. As she grabbed a comb, Greg said, "Nothing perverse about it."

"What?" She glanced over at him distractedly as she tugged the comb through her tangled hair.

"Enjoying the sight of my woman well-fucked," he explained.

Her mouth dropped open and she stared at him, almost diverted from her urgent rush to get dressed.

He looked rather well-fucked himself—lazy and content, stretched out on the bed, with rumpled dark hair and that delicious five-o'clock shadow. Victoria had to fight the urge to crawl back in bed with him.

"What?" he asked, his forehead wrinkling in confusion. Clearly he didn't place any of the significance that she had on the "his woman" thing.

"Nothing," she bit out, taking her long blonde hair and knotting it up in a sloppy chignon. She took her wire-framed glasses out of the case in her purse and put them on. Then studied herself in the mirror as she pulled on the jacket to her suit. "How do I look?"

"Like a librarian," Greg said with a smile. "Like a librarian who has just been tumbled in the back room."

She scowled at him.

"And you should probably put on your shoes," he added.

"Shit!" She'd almost forgotten and had to dig under the bed to find one that had been kicked under it.

It was seven-forty-seven when she picked up her purse again. "All right. I have to go. I'm already going to be late."

"You should be all right. Don't rush too much and have an accident."

There was something oddly sweet in the remark that Victoria didn't have time to process fully. But she went over and gave him a quick kiss on the mouth—an impulse she never would have acted on had she been thinking more clearly. "Okay. Bye. I had a good time last night."

"Me too." Greg's voice had grown warmer and more textured. "I'll give you a call later."

Victoria flew out the door, ignoring the strange confusion she felt in the much more understandable flurry of the rush to get to work on time.

She never should have spent the night with him.

* * * * *

"So who is he?"

Victoria turned around at the sound of the teasing, ironic voice. She'd been pouring herself a cup of coffee in the break room, needing it after her mad race to the university earlier this morning and her distracted attempt to teach the library class.

Her effort to instruct the freshmen with her typical calm reserve had been woefully unsuccessful.

"Who is whom?" she asked with a skeptical arch of her eyebrows.

Jeanie snickered. She was an attractive woman with an ever-changing hair color and a bohemian taste in clothes. Today her hair was relatively discreet—brown with a few streaks of purple—and she was wearing a broomstick-skirt with an ethic print. "Don't try to intimidate me with your snotty use of grammar. Who is he?"

Victoria had always liked Jeanie, despite the way the woman always teased her about being uptight and wearing prissy clothes. "You'll have to be more specific."

"You're holding out on me. I've suspected something for a while but now I know for sure. You're wearing the same outfit you wore yesterday and you ran into work a few minutes late looking like you'd barely managed to get dressed. And every time you move a certain way, you wince."

Victoria frowned, doing her best to keep her dignified façade. But when she turned on her heel, she stretched her sore thigh muscle and couldn't help but suck in a sharp breath.

"See," Jeanie exclaimed victoriously. "You got fucked good last night and I want to know who he is."

Realizing it was useless to deny it, Victoria took a long sip of coffee and relented. "Maybe I did. But I'm not about to tell you who it was."

"You have to! I don't have any excitement myself — there's only so much excitement to be found in four cats. Who is it? Is it someone at work? Jason?"

Victoria snorted inelegantly at the thought of fucking the rather nerdy twenty-five-year-old who worked in the rare-books room of the university library. "Give me a little credit. I really can't tell you, Jeanie. I'm not just being mean. We're trying to keep it quiet."

Jeanie looked disappointed but she didn't complain. Just said, "Well, at least tell me about it. Are you in love? Is this why I've caught you smiling goofily for the last two months."

"What?" Victoria gasped, offended by the very idea. "I have *not* smiled goofily. And I'm definitely not in love. It's just sex. Totally casual. We have a good time, fuck a couple times a week and then go on with our lives. It's the perfect relationship."

"I wouldn't have pegged you as that cynical. Don't you want to fall in love?"

"Maybe." Victoria shrugged. "But not now. Every relationship I've been in has been ridiculously complicated and — no matter what happens — I'm always the one who ends up getting hurt. I'm sick of messing with it. I might want to settle down and get married sometime in the future. But not now. This is much easier and less complicated and neither of us is going to get hurt."

"You think?"

"Yes. We agreed from the beginning it was just about sex. We don't share our deepest secrets, we don't talk about our childhoods, we don't spill our guts or anything. We have a few laughs and then we fuck. There are far too many complications for anything more."

Jeanie was leaning forward, obviously intrigued. "Like what?"

"Like family things," Victoria said vaguely, thinking of Greg's brother who'd just been elected governor. "And we're at different stages in life."

"He's eighteen, isn't he? Is he a student?" Jeanie demanded with a malicious smile.

Victoria rolled her eyes. "No! He's older. And our lifestyles are really different." That was definitely true. Greg's family had a long history of influence and power in the state and generations of Stones had contributed to the family wealth. His brother had always been in the limelight—on the news, in magazines, at every important event in the city—although Greg was more private. She really knew very little about him, except he'd had a wife who had died seven or eight years ago.

She only knew that because she remembered hearing about it shortly after she'd moved to the city, having just got a job as a research librarian at the university.

"Is he a swinger?"

"Stop it," Victoria objected. "You're not going to get it out of me by being stupid. I like my life the way it is. I don't want complications. I just want some good sex occasionally and that's what I'm getting from him."

"Is it really that good?"

To her disgust, Victoria felt herself blushing. "It's the best sex I've ever had. I've always dated guys my own age and they're either clueless, selfish or too eager."

"This guy isn't eager?"

Victoria vividly remembered Greg's hot urgency last night and felt her whole body flush.

"Damn. I'm jealous. You're getting hot just thinking about this guy."

"I am not," Victoria insisted, pulling herself together. "Anyway, he has plenty of experience. And he's patient, takes his time, knows what he's doing. It's the best sex of my life. Plus, I don't have to worry about annoying complications or getting hurt."

Jeanie looked skeptical again. "I guess so. But if I were having a fling with this skillful, patient hunk of a man, I might want to do a little more than fuck him."

Victoria shook her head. "I'm not saying I don't like him. But I'm not about to fall in love. There's no reason things have to be as complicated as people make them." She finished off her coffee and poured herself another cup.

"Who would have thought little-miss-prim-and-proper would be having a sordid affair." Jeanie looked delighted at the thought.

Victoria frowned. "It's not sordid. And I'm not as traditional as everything thinks."

She was traditional in a lot of ways—at least, she always had been. She had a quiet upbringing, her life had revolved around school and her family and her social circle had always been small. She hadn't lost her virginity until she'd been twenty-two years old.

She'd thought she'd been in love with that guy but he'd moved on a few months later.

About a year ago, Victoria had taken a long look at her life and decided it was all right, but kind of boring. Since then, she'd been trying to take a few more risks, to try some different things. She'd taken a vacation to the Caribbean six months ago by herself. And she'd volunteered to work on a political campaign she never would have bothered with before.

Then she'd met Greg. And she'd done the most irresponsible, spontaneous thing in all thirty-one years of her life.

And she was loving it.

"I'm having a good time," she said at last. "And for once I'm not making it complicated."

“All right. All right.” Jeanie muttered under her breath. “But sometimes complications are fun.”

* * * * *

That afternoon, Victoria was heading back to her office when she noticed that no one was behind the checkout desk and two female students were waiting with books in their hands. The work-study student usually handled checkouts but Victoria walked over to the desk and smiled a greeting at the students.

“Sorry you had to wait. Did you want to check those out?”

The taller girl handed the books to Victoria. The girl looked like a freshman, although sometimes it was hard to tell the difference. She was young and pretty – with dark hair, brown eyes and a slim figure. Something about the line of her jaw struck Victoria as familiar.

Instead of returning her smile, the girl just stared at her intently, her eyes taking in the wrinkled vintage suit, the small glasses and the Mary Jane heels. “Are you Victoria Ray?”

Victoria blinked. “Yes. I am. Can I help you?”

The girl’s blank stare transformed into a glare of cold resentment. “You must be the bitch who’s fucking my dad.”

Victoria’s mouth dropped open.

Her life had just gotten complicated.

Chapter Two

"I'm not mad at her," Victoria insisted, pushing her hair behind her ear distractedly. It was long—falling down to the middle of her back—and she was used to pulling it back in a chignon. She'd let it down when she was finally able to take a shower after work and she hadn't had time to put it back up before Greg had stopped by her apartment.

He'd never been to her apartment before. But after getting the nearly incoherent message she'd left him this afternoon, he'd evidently decided it would be wise to stop by on his way home.

"I just don't want her to be mad at *me*." Victoria was wearing a clingy bathrobe, which was more than she'd been wearing last night. But she still felt self-conscious and undressed next to Greg in his expensive gray business suit and red tie.

"She's not mad at you," Greg began, reaching out to put a conciliatory hand on her shoulder.

She jerked away from his touch, unable to explain her defensive reaction. "She called me a bitch. There was nothing ambiguous about it."

Greg's mouth twisted and he pushed a hand through his dark hair in obvious frustration. "She was upset. It's not personal."

"It felt personal to me," Victoria snapped, "I'm the one who's fucking her dad!"

She couldn't read Greg's expression. He stared at her, something tense and reluctant in his brown eyes.

He looked so handsome and affluent and mature—nothing like the boys she used to date. And she had a horrible suspicion about what he was going to say to her now.

She didn't want to hear it—didn't want to hear him tell her they had to end their affair because his daughter couldn't accept it.

But she also didn't want all of the complications this new development would inevitably bring.

With a choked sound in her throat, she turned on her heel and paced into the main room of her apartment. She headed over to her desk and pretended to sort a pile of books, although she couldn't even read the titles printed on their spines.

Her eyes burned and her throat ached. And she didn't understand how her casual fling had turned into this mess in less than two hours.

"Victoria," Greg said, following her into the room and standing behind her when she didn't turn around. "Let's at least talk about it."

"What's to talk about?" Her voice was shriller than she'd intended and it only got shriller as she added, "I didn't even know you *had* a daughter."

She'd probably heard he had a daughter—years ago when the name Greg Stone meant nothing to her—but she'd never made the connection in the last three months.

"I wasn't hiding her from you," he said softly. "We just never talked about that kind of thing."

"I know." Swallowing hard, she controlled her expression and turned around. "I'm not blaming you or anything. It was just really upsetting. She...she *hated* me. I've always been a normal, harmless librarian. I'm not used to people hating me."

She'd always been quiet, smart and a little aloof. But mostly harmless—keeping her opinions to herself. She didn't like direct confrontation. And meeting Greg's daughter had totally thrown her off-balance.

"She doesn't hate you," Greg insisted, holding her by the shoulders. "I'm serious. She's upset. She found out on her own and thinks I've been hiding it from her. I guess I have. But how exactly was I supposed to tell her..." His voice trailed off and he shook

his head. "She's angrier with me than with you. Ever since her mom died, I'm all she's had."

"How did she even find out?" She'd always known Greg wouldn't have told his daughter intentionally.

You didn't tell your daughter that you were having meaningless sex with a woman twelve years younger than you.

"I guess she has a friend who works the front desk at the hotel." Greg closed his eyes and tugged at his hair. "Last night."

"Oh."

"It will take her a little time to adjust. But I've talked to her and I'll talk to her again. She's not a child anymore. And she has to know I've not lived like a monk since her mom died."

Victoria groaned in mortification and turned around again to face the pile of books on her desk.

She could imagine very vividly how Greg's daughter must feel. What she must think of Victoria. How she must resent her.

Victoria couldn't believe she'd turned into this woman.

"I'm not going to come between you and your daughter," she said, her voice oddly hoarse.

"You won't. We would have needed to work this out anyway—no matter who I happened to be with." He took a step forward until he was pressed against her back. Wrapping his arms around her, he murmured, "Nothing needs to change between you and me."

Victoria gave an undignified snort, even as she instinctively relaxed back into his strong embrace. He felt so big and warm and solid behind her and he smelled so incredible—masculine and faintly expensive. "It *has* changed. I never thought of you as a father before."

"I am a father," he admitted, rubbing his jaw against her cheek. He was bristly again, as he always was in the evenings. She loved the way it felt when his rough skin scraped against hers. "But I've been one for as long as you've known me. And this has never been about who we are when we're not together."

It was true. And it was oddly freeing at the same time it felt like a kick in the gut.

This was just physical. Just sex.

And it didn't matter who Greg was when they weren't fucking—whether he had a family she hadn't known about, what he was like at work, what he did on Saturdays, whether he liked to watch sports on TV.

None of that mattered, any more than her life mattered to him.

All that had ever mattered was the sex.

That was what both of them had agreed to.

That was what she'd wanted.

And the strange ache of loss in her belly was completely irrational.

"Right."

He kissed her jaw. Then the side of her throat. And one of his hands moved up to her breast.

"Greg, I don't really feel like it tonight."

His hand moved back down to her waist but he didn't remove his arms from around her.

"I'm not being bitchy or anything. I was just really upset earlier and don't feel sexy tonight."

"Okay," Greg said.

She waited, somehow sure that he'd withdraw, that he was going to end this after all. What he wanted from her was sex and—if he couldn't get it when he wanted—why would he even bother?

He was silent for a long moment, during which she could hear her heart pounding in her chest.

Finally he said, "Do you want to spend the weekend with me?"

Victoria stiffened and looked over her shoulder to stare at him in astonishment.

Greg frowned, looking a little uncomfortable at her obvious shock. "I just thought maybe it would give you time to adjust. You could come to my place."

She almost choked. "To your place? With your daughter?"

"Fuck, no," Greg said hoarsely. "She's in college! She's lived in the dorms for two years. Besides, she's going on a weekend trip. I have the place to myself."

This news reassured Victoria and she was immediately tempted to accept. Spending the weekend with Greg—just the two of them—sounded like heaven.

But going to his place might change things. Might make everything more complicated.

She needed to be honest with herself. And that kind of weekend had the potential to raise expectations in her that could never materialize.

But he didn't want to end this. And he wanted to spend the weekend with her.

She wanted to spend the weekend with him.

She'd just need to be careful and realistic about the whole thing.

"Okay," she agreed, her voice cracking a little.

"Good." He brushed his lips against her loose, blonde hair and inhaled deeply, as if he was smelling it.

It caused the most inexplicable sensation in Victoria's belly—half-thrill and half-terror.

"You should wear your hair down more often," he added, finally releasing his hold on her waist. "It's beautiful."

"Thanks." She smiled despite herself. "Sorry I kind of freaked out."

"I'm sorry you had to learn about my daughter that way. She's a little spoiled but she's a nice girl. She'll come around."

Victoria showed him to the door, feeling exhausted, confused and kind of fluttery.

She got even flutterier when Greg stood in the doorway staring at her before she closed the door.

His look was so intent, so deep, that she squirmed and finally asked, "What?"

Greg shook his head slowly. "Victoria, there's nothing harmless about you."

She swung the door shut in a panic.

Then spent the rest of the evening trying to figure out what he'd meant.

* * * * *

On Friday evening, she showed up at his house—a gorgeous, colonial-style residence in one of the exclusive areas outside the city. She was armed with her weekend bag and a no-nonsense attitude.

She was going to enjoy this relationship for what it was—great sex with a desirable man—and not let any other complications get in the way.

She'd spent her whole life over-thinking things, talking herself out of taking any risks. And she wasn't going to do that now.

There was nothing wrong with good, simple sex. She was going to indulge in it when it was offered.

They ate dinner and had sex Friday night. Then they slept in late and spent a leisurely Saturday morning in bed, drinking coffee and having sex again with slow, easy languor. It was after noon when they finally managed to get up.

Greg went to take a shower while Victoria went into the kitchen to find something to eat.

As long as they'd been in bed, Victoria had felt safe and comfortable. A bed was a bed, whether it was in a hotel or in Greg's home.

But the rest of the house made her nervous. There were family photos she was afraid to look at, books lying around that Greg must read in his spare time, unexpected details like an aquarium full of tropical fish and a half-finished list in the kitchen that looked like things he was reminding himself to get at the store.

Greg lived here every day. It felt private, domestic, intimate.

But it didn't feel safe. Partly because this was the rest of Greg's life that she had no claim to. And partly because she couldn't get his daughter out of her mind—the girl had lived here too and probably stopped by quite often to say hi to her dad or do her laundry for free.

Who knew how often Greg's daughter had opened this refrigerator door and peered inside, just like Victoria was doing now.

When she heard a sound behind her, she gasped and whirled around.

"What?" Greg demanded, frowning at her. His hair was still damp and he was wearing a pair of black sweat pants riding low on his lean hips. "You look like you were expecting a burglar."

"Sorry. I thought you were still in the shower." Victoria flushed a little and turned back around to stare into the refrigerator again.

When his arm twined around her from behind, she stiffened.

"Why are you so uptight?"

He sounded completely relaxed and comfortable—as if he had no worries in the world. As if he weren't uncertain about their relationship the way she was. As if it didn't matter to him that she was here in the kitchen of his house. As if it weren't an intrusion into his domestic world.

Irrationally, his relaxed attitude annoyed Victoria. He clearly had no idea how she was feeling. Scowling, she pulled out of his grasp and poured herself a glass of orange juice.

"Victoria, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. I'm starving. Do you have anything to eat?"

"I can make waffles." He grabbed a big bowl from the baker's rack and walked by her to put it on the counter. As he did, he gave the back of her cashmere tank a teasing tug down. It had been riding up, exposing a strip of skin around her middle, where her top didn't quite reach her matching shorts.

"Waffles would be good." She smiled at him, feeling bad for being so grumpy. It wasn't his fault she was so on edge. She reminded herself that his daughter was out of town for the weekend and they had the house to themselves. "Do you want some orange juice?"

"Sure." He lazily started mixing ingredients, looking adorably incongruous doing such a domestic chore. He was so masculine—with his broad shoulders, strong back and the darkly shadowed lower half of his face. It seemed impossible that he'd be making her waffles.

"You need to shave."

His eyebrows lifted suggestively. "I thought maybe you like it when I don't."

Wrinkling her nose, she lied, "As if I'd like to feel like you're taking sandpaper to my poor skin."

His lips twitched knowingly. "Right."

Since he was looking far too smug, she sniffed, "You've got flour on your chest."

He glanced down and shrugged.

Putting down her glass with a giggle, she went over and brushed it off for him. Her fingers ran over the hair on his chest. She'd always thought she'd prefer artificially smooth male chests. But she'd been crazy. Nothing was sexier than this course, dark hair. It wasn't too thick or unsightly. Just enough to add the most enticing kind of texture to the smooth planes and rippled muscles.

"I think you got it," Greg murmured, his voice a little thicker than normal. He'd almost stopped stirring the batter.

"Right." Her hand lingered on his chest, her fingers irresistibly drawn to the rough feel of him. Her gaze drifted up to his face but his eyes were so hot and intense she turned immediately away, looking out the window over the kitchen sink.

The window looked out over the large side yard, where Victoria caught sight of a man peering in their direction.

She squeaked in alarm and ducked out of sight before she had time to process the reflex.

"What the fuck...?" Greg glanced out the window and added, "That's just the gardener. What's wrong with you?"

"I'm sorry." Victoria hid her mortified face behind her hands. "I didn't think. I just saw him and reacted. I didn't think you'd want anyone to see me here or anything..."

Greg pulled her hands down so he could look her in the eyes. "You're being absurd. Yes, for a lot of reasons it's been easier to keep this thing discreet. But I didn't sneak you here in the trunk of my car. You can relax."

"Yeah." She mentally shook herself off and told herself to stop acting like a fool. "I guess I'm still a little anxious," she admitted. "After..."

"I know." He went back to stirring the waffle batter. "But it's just us this weekend. I thought we were having a good time."

"We were." She tugged her tank top down toward her shorts again. Then she slanted him a teasing look. "I think I was admiring your chest hair."

His warm chuckle in response made Victoria feel rather tingly.

They ate waffles, fruit and hot chocolate and sat around for a long time talking about books they both had read. Victoria lost track of time and was shocked to see it was after two o'clock when she got up to put the dishes in the sink.

She felt his eyes on her from behind and hoped she didn't look too unappealing. Her hair was falling messily over her back and shoulders and her little cashmere shorts—part of the slate blue pajama set that had taken far too much out of her last

paycheck—were riding up a little. She wished her legs were longer and slimmer. And she was worried about what the back of her thighs looked like.

She turned around, knowing her breasts were good and hoping that would cover for any other physical flaws.

His eyes were crawling over her body possessively and he didn't seem to notice anything wrong with what he was seeing.

"Are you horny again already? I thought men slowed down in their forties."

He frowned at her disapprovingly. "If you weren't interested in such indulgences, you shouldn't tempt me by going around wearing next to nothing and looking so incredibly sexy."

She had to bite off her instinctive response, which had been to squeak, "Really?" Instead, she laughed as she rinsed off their dishes. "You're crazy. I'm a mess."

"Did you want to take a shower?"

She would have been offended except she could tell he mostly wanted to invite himself into the shower with her.

"I don't think so. I'm pretty comfortable like this. I was actually thinking I might go back to bed."

She felt more secure in bed. And she certainly wasn't going to object to any more of those indulgences he'd alluded to before.

Greg seemed quite pleased with this decision and they headed back to the bedroom. They had a playful scuffle as he tried to take her clothes off while she made a pretense at resisting.

He swung her into bed and lowered himself over her, holding her in place as he kissed her. She moaned deep in her throat and gave up her lighthearted struggle. He'd pinned down her arms so she couldn't get them around him so she wrapped her legs around him instead.

"Oh baby," he murmured, still nipping at her lips. "So good. So sweet."

She whimpered as she rocked her groin against him, feeling him start to harden against her.

She loved how heavy he was on top of her, loved how hot he became—like he was burning with some kind of inward intensity.

She squeezed her thighs around his hips, holding him as tightly as she could. When he kissed her again, she opened under the pressure of his mouth. His tongue slid against hers with possessive insistence and she could still taste chocolate on his lips.

Then the phone rang and she jerked in surprise.

With a frustrated groan, Greg released her mouth and rolled over to check the caller ID.

Evidently it was someone important. He murmured, “Sorry,” and answered the phone.

At least he didn’t leave the room.

Victoria turned over so that her back was to him and tried not to listen to the one-sided conversation that clearly had something to do with his work.

She curled in on herself and told herself not to overreact. It was no big deal. Just a phone call. But it felt like yet another sign of how much of a life Greg possessed—a life that had nothing to do with her.

It shouldn’t matter. They were just having sex.

But she couldn’t stop dwelling on it.

When he hung up, she felt him roll over and stare at her back.

“You got tense again.” It was a statement. His tone was matter-of-fact and resigned.

“No, I didn’t,” she lied. “I was just waiting for you to hang up.” She made herself turn over onto her back and smile at him.

“Sorry. I had to take it.”

“It’s fine.”

He shook his head, clearly not believing her. “Flip over.”

She gaped at him. "What?"

"Flip over." His mouth twitched slightly at her baffled expression. "Onto your stomach."

She frowned as she did as he instructed. "I might have been a little uptight but I don't deserve a spanking."

He chuckled as he pulled himself up to sit beside her. "We'll save that for later."

Before she could respond, she felt his strong hands on her shoulders. She sucked in a breath as he began to knead her tight muscles.

"You don't have to do that." Her words weren't particularly convincing because they were followed by a hoarse moan of pleasure when he found a particularly tense muscle at the back of her neck and pushed into it with his thumbs.

He ignored her, concentrating on the massage as he skillfully worked over her neck and upper back. Soon she felt limp and boneless and she couldn't hold back the most ridiculous groans of gratification as her body relaxed under his skillful hands.

"That's good," she said thickly, when she started to feel guilty about taking advantage of his generosity. "I'm okay now — Oh God!"

His strong fingers had moved down to the small of her back and he gave that area the same attention he'd given the upper part. "Good?" She didn't have the energy to lift her head to look but she could hear a smug smile in his voice.

She didn't care. She'd never had a massage like this in her life. Her body felt like it was melting into the mattress.

He pushed up the bottom edge of her tank top so he could work over her bare flesh. And she didn't object when he gently pulled her soft shorts down over her hips and ass and then slid them off her legs completely.

He kneaded the muscles of her bottom and upper thighs and the sensual pleasure deepened into a vague ache below her belly.

Greg massaged his way down to her ankles and then took each foot in turn, pressing into the ball and the arch with such skillful pressure she moaned in helpless response. Waves of relaxation washed over her body with a deeper pleasure swelling up at its heels. "Oh God! So good. Yeah, right there. Oh God!"

"Turn over," he said at last, releasing her foot. It dropped to the mattress with a flop, since she didn't have the energy to hold it up on her own.

She turned over obediently, not even self-conscious even though she was naked except for her tank top.

Greg massaged the muscles on the upper side of her thighs until he'd reached her pelvis.

She saw him staring down at her groin—at the trimmed strip of hair and the folds of flesh that hid her pussy. But he didn't touch her there. Just pushed up her top until she'd raised her arms to let him pull it off.

The massage had shifted into something different when he began to knead the soft, heavy swells of her breasts. She was still moaning—low and hoarse—but it was as much from the pulsing of her growing arousal as it was from the delicious softening of her muscles.

He took his time, alternating between squeezing and brushing the stiff peaks of her nipples with the hard texture of his hand.

She was wet now. Her eyes were clenched shut and she couldn't keep from arching up into his hands.

"Greg!" she gasped at last, the one word almost a plea.

He let go of her breasts and moved back down her body, finally reaching the place he'd passed over before. He nudged her thighs apart and she spread them for him willingly. He slid his fingertips along the warm, swollen flesh, exposing her pussy to his view.

Victoria bent her arms up beside her head, hiding her face against her shoulder.

She let out a shuddering breath when he slid two of his fingers into her slippery channel, massaging her inner walls with the same attention he'd given the rest of her.

One of her legs bent up with a jerk and she huffed out a sound of pleasure.

"Mm," she mewled, trying not to jerk her hips against his hand. "My clit. I need..."

His thumb closed down on her aching clit and her whole body tightened in response.

"Oh baby," Greg rasped, "You're so gorgeous."

Her orgasm was so close she wanted to claw at the bed. But she managed to choke out, "Liar."

He chuckled—but his voice sounded rather strained as he said, "Don't force it, baby. Take a deep breath." His fingers pumped inside her and his thumb slowly rubbed circles over her clit.

She had no idea why he was telling her that but she was too far gone to argue. She forced herself to take a deep breath and felt the pleasure surging forward as she exhaled.

"God!" she cried out on her next inhale, managing to release another slow breath.

This time her climax spiraled up so hard she felt her vision darken. She choked on the spasms of pleasure as her pussy clenched ruthlessly around Greg's fingers.

He sustained his massage until the last of her contractions faded.

Victoria's body went limp as she desperately tried to catch her breath and she lay in a debauched, sated, naked sprawl.

"Wow!"

Greg gave a huff of amusement and stretched out beside her, propped up on a couple of pillows. "Not bad, huh?"

"Wow," Victoria said again, staring up blankly at the ceiling. "Why didn't I know to breathe like that before? How did you get so good at this?"

"I must be naturally talented." His voice was dry and amused.

She looked over at him. Despite his tone, there was a sheen of perspiration on his forehead and she could see his erection through the loose fabric of his sweat pants.

She gave him a naughty smile and hauled her relaxed body up until she was able to grab at his waistband. "Now it's your turn. I'll have you know I'm pretty talented myself."

He opened his mouth to respond but was distracted by her pulling down his pants. She made short work of them, tossing them over the side of the bed. Then she positioned herself between his legs and slid her hands up his thighs.

His cock was fully erect, leaning up toward his lower belly. She took it in her hands, sliding her fingers along the warm, firm flesh.

He let out a husky groan that hitched in his throat when she lowered her mouth to lick a line up the shaft. She teased him for a minute—flicking her tongue along the head, gently squeezing his balls, following one of the veins with her lips—until his thighs and belly were visibly tense and he was clenching his fingers in the bedding.

Then she took him fully in her mouth, wrapping her fingers around the base of his cock and squeezing to match the suction of her mouth. Every time she hollowed out her cheeks, she felt him make an involuntary thrust up.

His visceral reaction was exhilarating and a new arousal started to throb between her legs.

"Yes," Greg hissed, one of his hands moving to tangle in her hair. "Oh baby, yes."

She was more turned on than ever as he fisted his hand in her hair, gently guiding the bobbing of her head.

She loved to see him like this. Loved that she could make him feel this way.

"Fuck, baby, you're killing me," he rasped, jerking his head to the side as he visibly tried to restrain his urge to thrust.

She mumbled around his cock. It filled her mouth—firm and salty and absolutely intimate. She wasn't an expert at giving blowjobs but she figured she was doing all

right. She wasn't sure what to do with her tongue but she tried to twirl it a little as she sucked.

When she slanted her eyes up, she saw he was staring down at where his cock disappeared into her mouth.

She gave a muffled moan and squirmed her bottom, trying to ease the ache of her pussy.

"Fuck. Oh fuck." Greg took a strained breath and then suddenly pulled her head up so that his erection slipped out of her mouth.

"Hey! I thought I was doing good."

"You were doing better than good," he said hoarsely, pulling her up toward him and arranging her until she was straddling his hips. "But you're turned on again too. So I figured we could both enjoy it."

"I was enjoying—" Her objection was cut off when she felt his fingers exploring her wet pussy.

"Maybe you'll enjoy this more."

He lifted his cock to line it up at her entrance and then she lowered herself until he was sheathed inside her. The penetration was tight and substantial and Victoria's head fell back at the sensations.

She braced her hands on his shoulders, folding her legs more comfortably around his hips. She wasn't used to being on top and so she felt a little strange and uncertain. His cock seemed enormous inside her at this angle. And she was overly conscious of the extra flesh on her thighs.

Greg pulled her head down into a kiss then. And the kiss distracted Victoria from her self-consciousness. She began to rock over him, using her thighs to raise and lower her body until she'd established a satisfying rhythm.

They broke off the kiss as she started to move more purposefully above him. The stimulation was delicious and, since she was in control of the motion, she knew it wouldn't take her long to come.

Then she became aware of Greg's hand, stroking along the crease of her ass. His fingers explored even more intimately until she felt one of his fingertips pushing against the tight entrance behind her pussy.

At the unexpected pressure, Victoria's spine stiffened into a dramatic arc. "Ah!" she gasped, her cheeks burning as she felt the sustained pressure on such a vulnerable spot. "What—"

"You don't like that?" Greg eased his finger back until it was just barely rubbing the clenched entrance.

"I don't know," she admitted, her voice strangled by both desire and anxiety. "I've never..."

She'd never wanted to try anything like it before. But something about the intense sensation of his exploring finger and the thrill of such vulnerability made her want to feel him that way.

"Can I try?" Greg pressed again on her back passage when she wriggled on his cock. "You might like it."

"Um, okay."

Her heart was hammering wildly but she could already feel her orgasm swelling up from the slide of his erection inside her. She reestablished her steady rhythm above him and tried not to think too much about what his finger was doing at the moment.

But she couldn't help but feel it. Pressing with gentle persistence against the tight barrier.

Until the momentum of her motion and the pressure of his finger loosened the clenched muscle and allowed him access.

His finger was still slightly slick from her juices and it slid in fairly easily. She was so tight she could feel every centimeter of the penetration and her skin blazed with a resulting heat.

"How's that?" Greg's voice was hoarse and erotic as he guided her motion with his free hand and gently eased his finger inside her.

Completely inside her — where fingers shouldn't be.

Victoria's head fell back and she couldn't keep her eyes open. She felt torn between the conflicting penetrations — both intense, both sensuous but utterly different. "Oh God!"

She was almost mortified by how incredibly good it felt.

"Is that good?" he asked.

She could tell he was genuinely asking but she couldn't seem to form any words. The growing pressure at her center was so deep and intense she didn't dare to open her mouth.

"Baby, you need to tell me if you don't like it." His finger pulled out about halfway, reducing the intimate stimulation.

She couldn't bear for it to end.

"No!" she cried, levering her hips down in an attempt to regain the penetration. "Don't stop!"

When she felt his finger slide back in, she let out a little sob of relief, her fingernails clawing at his bare shoulders with an instinctive need to feel as much of him as she could.

"So you *do* like it?"

"Yeah," she huffed, accelerating her rhythm as her orgasm demanded completion. "Yeah, yeah."

She kept her eyes closed, too embarrassed by her eagerness to look him in the eye.

She'd never known she could want something like this.

Want it so much.

"That's right, baby," Greg murmured in husky encouragement. "Just like that."

"Uh-huh," she grunted, her body tightening as she bounced over him even more erratically. "Uh-huh."

"Do you like to feel me inside you like this?"

He was inside her all the way—the thick substance of his cock buried in her pussy and the penetration of his finger rubbing against her most intimate passage. It was the most heady, intense, raw sensation she could remember.

She never wanted it to end and was afraid it never would.

"Uh-huh, uh-huh." Her grunts were guttural and animalistic but she couldn't keep herself from making them. Her climax built up with torturous power but wouldn't break.

"You're going to come so hard. Aren't you?" Greg's free hand clenched around the soft flesh of her hip. "Fuck, Victoria, you're beautiful."

She made a sound like a strangled sob and jerked over him as frantically as she could, her breasts jiggling against her chest and her hair falling all over her face.

"That's right, baby. Let it go."

She wanted to. She was dying to. The erotic momentum had turned into sensual torment. She needed to come. She was working as hard as she could to chase her release—sweating now and blazing red, her lungs burning from the effort.

She released a few desperate sobs, her fingernails gouging into the skin of his shoulders.

"Look at me," he demanded—his voice starting to sound strained. "Open your eyes."

It took some effort but she managed to pry them open.

She saw his damp, handsome face twisted with concentration and exertion. His brown eyes were hot and primal and his lips pressed so tightly together they were almost white.

His body was tight too. He was obviously on the edge of his control.

The knowledge that he was so far gone—for her, because of what they were doing together—caused her pleasure to surge forward in a wave.

But it still didn't break.

Her mouth fell open in a silent scream of frustration but she couldn't tear her eyes away from his.

His finger and cock were still sliding inside her, the conflicting sensations both delicious and torturous. Then he said, "You're killing me, baby. Try to rub your clit."

It was an obvious thing to do. Her clit had been pulsing with aching need the whole time. She just hadn't felt capable of letting go of his shoulder to reach down.

Now she did.

She released the brutal grip of one hand and brought it down with a jerk to the swollen folds of her flesh. She rubbed clumsily at her clit, the third source of stimulation immediately vying with the other two.

She'd lost her rhythm and balance completely and writhed frantically as she chased down her orgasm.

"There you go," he rasped. "Let go. Oh fuck, baby, look at me."

Her eyes had fallen shut again but she obeyed his directions.

When she met the feral intensity of his gaze, all the deep tension inside her finally shattered.

She screamed with the waves of release, her body jerking and clenching above, around, all over him.

“Oh fuck!” Greg gasped as both of her channels clamped down in tight spasms around him. For the first time, he lost control of his body and his pelvis started to thrust up into her contractions.

Then his back arched up and he froze for a moment before a wash of relief transformed his face.

She was coming down as he climaxed so she could feel the pulsing of his cock inside her.

He’d fought to keep his finger in place as her contracting muscles threatened to force out the penetration.

But he finally slid it out as her body relaxed above him.

They were both sweating and gasping. And Victoria was so drained and sated she could barely stay upright. Her face, lungs and throat were burning and her pussy felt sensitive and sore.

She let him help as she pulled off him, his slick cock sliding out of her body with a slurping sound.

Then she collapsed on the bed – naked, exhausted and replete.

“Wow!”

Greg sprawled out beside her and appeared equally affected by their lovemaking. “Yeah.”

“Wow!” She was overheated and sweaty and kind of embarrassed by how animalistic she’d been just now.

But she couldn’t remember ever having an orgasm as powerful.

After a minute, Greg managed to roll out of bed and walk to the bathroom to wash up. Victoria wanted to wash up too but she couldn’t find the energy to get out of bed.

She was still in her damp, naked sprawl when Greg returned with a wet washcloth. She stared at him in confusion until she realized what he was doing.

He sat next to her and gently wiped down her groin and inner thighs – which were sticky with sweat and the mingling of their juices.

“Thanks,” she managed to say, oddly touched by the sweet gesture.

He just smiled at her, carefully stroking her sensitive, swollen flesh with the deliciously warm, wet towel.

She felt a lot better and had almost caught her breath when made he one more trip to the bathroom and then stretched out on the bed beside her.

The silence wasn’t awkward. Instead, it seemed comfortable and strangely familiar.

As if there was nothing they needed to say.

Apparently Victoria was feeling *too* comfortable because, when she finally spoke, she did so without thinking.

The words just spilled out without any premeditation. “Your wife must have trained you well.”

Greg turned to stare at her with a jerk of his head.

Victoria blushed painfully. “I mean... I didn’t mean... I wasn’t thinking. Sorry.” Silently, she cursed herself for saying something so dumb.

They didn’t talk about personal things. And they certainly didn’t talk about his wife – who had died several years ago.

“It’s fine,” he said mildly. “What exactly were you referring to?”

She shrugged, feeling like a fool. “I don’t know. Everything, I guess. I mean, you’re so good at everything. Sex and...and other things. And you knew to get that washcloth. I just meant... Well, the guys I’ve dated before were far more clueless than you are.”

Greg gave her a half-smile. “I imagine I’m older than them.”

“Yeah but still.”

“I suppose some of it might have been my experience with my wife. But she didn’t really train me, at least not in regards to sex.”

“I didn’t mean that,” Victoria began, terrified he’d think she was prying.

She wanted to pry. But she'd had no intentions of doing so.

"She was... She was different from you. She didn't really enjoy sex." Greg stared up at the ceiling. He didn't look particularly uncomfortable, although this couldn't be easy for him to share. "She loved me. But she was never very enthusiastic or adventurous. And I had to always be careful when it came to sex."

Maybe that was why he was always so considerate—even when he was smoldering with passion. She'd never met a man as thoughtful in bed as Greg was.

Or as inventive.

Or as skillful.

Or as innately passionate.

"Oh," Victoria said, feeling like she needed to say something.

She had to be careful and not read too much into this. He might be sharing this with her but it wasn't a sign that their relationship had shifted into something deeper.

She was the one who'd brought it up.

"Do you really think I'm adventurous?" she asked, before she could stop herself.

Greg glanced back over to her. His expression didn't hold any particular emotion but there was something oddly serious in his eyes. "Of course. Didn't we have sex on the balcony earlier this week?"

"Yeah," she said with another blush. "But most people think I'm quiet and boring. And I have a friend who teases me about being repressed."

He shook his head. "Anyone who thinks that being quiet and private is a sign of being repressed is crazy. Sometimes the most passionate people are those who don't show all their feelings on the surface."

Something in Victoria's chest felt like it was melting and a smile started to grow on her face, one she had no way of suppressing.

No one—no one in her whole life—had ever said anything like that.

No one had ever understood her so perfectly.

She opened her mouth to say something, although she had no idea what might come spilling out. But before she could shape the words she heard a sound.

A slamming door from the front of the house.

Her mouth shut with a snap. And she sat straight up in bed when she heard a muffled female voice call out, "Dad?"

Greg stiffened beside her, his face growing unnaturally still.

"Dad?" the voice called out again. "Dad? Are you here?"

The bedroom door was closed but Victoria still felt utterly exposed.

She'd just fucked the man beside her. His finger had been in her ass. And now his teenaged daughter had come home.

Victoria gathered the sheet and pulled it up around her shoulders in an instinctive gesture she would have found silly at any other time.

"Fuck," Greg muttered, heaving himself out of bed and looking around blindly. "Fuck!"

Victoria saw the sweat pants he'd been wearing earlier tucked under the comforter and she tossed them over to him.

As he pulled them on, his daughter's voice sounded again—this time closer than before. "Dad? What's going on? Whose car is that out there?"

Victoria felt her vision blurring with an impending knowledge. Her mouth was dry and she felt sick to her stomach.

Greg made a grab for a gray t-shirt thrown across the chair and pulled it over his head as he took four long steps toward the bedroom door. His dark hair was tousled—sticking out in all directions—and the one day's growth of beard made him look even more unkempt.

He was a mess. And he looked adorable. But that was the last thing on Victoria's mind at the moment.

She couldn't stop thinking about how they'd been fucking just a few minutes earlier.

And that his nineteen-year-old daughter was in the hall.

Darting one last anxious look back at Victoria, Greg left the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

"Carrie," she heard him say. "You're back a day early."

"What's going on? What are you doing?"

"Carrie," Greg tried again, his voice barely muffled through the closed door.

"Is someone in there with you?" Carrie's voice grew shriller and louder. "She's in there, isn't she? As soon as I leave town, you bring that slut to —"

"Don't!" Greg's voice snapped out like a whip. "She's not a slut. I know you're upset but you can't —"

"I'll call her whatever I want! I can't believe you brought her to the house!"

Victoria was still sitting in the bed, shaking and squeezing her eyes shut. It sounded like Greg was trying to get Carrie back down the hallway and toward a more distant part of the house so they wouldn't have this conversation only a door away from Victoria.

But Carrie was shouting so loudly Victoria could still hear her.

She put her hands over her ears, trying to block out the sound.

A buzzing started to grow in her head as she pretended this wasn't happening.

It was just supposed to be sex. Great sex with an attractive, experienced man.

It was supposed to be free of complications.

It was never supposed to lead to a screaming teenaged daughter, calling Victoria a slut.

When she couldn't stand it anymore, Victoria forced herself out of bed. As she hurried into the bathroom, she could hear Carrie yelling, "She's like fifteen years younger than you! Is she after your money?"

Victoria felt like she might choke as she closed and locked the bathroom door. Then she turned on the shower as hot as she could stand and stepped under the spray.

She sobbed a few times into her hands, unable to resist the involuntary emotion.

Her life had always been lived with a certain degree of peace and sanity. And this incident had disturbed the very fabric of her identity. This kind of thing didn't happen to her.

She'd never been this woman.

By the time she'd finished scrubbing down her body, she'd regained her typical quiet composure.

And she knew what she needed to do.

The screaming had stopped when she turned the shower off and toweled dry. As she went into the bedroom to pull out her overnight bag, she heard the front door slam and then the squeal of tires.

Carrie must have stormed off in a full-fledged temper-fit.

Victoria had put on jeans and a button-up shirt and was braiding her long, wet hair when Greg reentered the bedroom.

He was rubbing his face. When he lowered his hands his expression was torn and exhausted.

Victoria understood how he must feel but she didn't let herself dwell on the pang of sympathy.

"What are you doing?" Greg asked at last, after he'd watched her grab her little cashmere pajama set and stuff them back into the bag.

"I'm leaving." Her voice was cool and natural. She'd made her decision and she was certain of it now.

"You don't have to leave. I'm sorry you had to hear that but she's not going to—"

"It doesn't matter." Victoria found the bra she'd been wearing the day before flung over the chair beside the bed.

Greg seemed to recognize the finality in her voice because he froze, standing in the middle of the floor. "Victoria? What's going on?"

With a sigh, she said what she'd unconsciously known she would need to say — ever since his daughter had entered the picture. "It's not worth it, Greg. We've had a good time. But I think it's time to end this."

His face closed down in a strange way — becoming completely unreadable. "Why?" The one word was bit out.

Victoria sat down on the bed when her legs would no longer hold her up. She was so tired. She just wanted to go to sleep and not wake up until all of this was over. "I don't know what your relationship with your daughter has been like. But she's obviously not ready for you to be...to be moving on like this."

"She's not a child. She needs to adjust."

Victoria looked him in the eye. "Are you going to stand there and tell me that she'll just need a few days to get used to the idea and then everything will be fine again?"

He stared at her for a long time, his lips pressed tightly together. Then he broke the gaze and looked to the side. "No. We have a lot of work to do."

"And this thing with me will only get in the way. You should concentrate on your daughter right now."

"Victoria." Greg's voice cracked on the word. He cleared his throat and walked over to her, putting his strong hand on her shoulder. "I don't know why they need to be mutually exclusive."

She shook his head — feeling a poignant kind of loss and a strange numbness at the same time. "We can't always have everything."

She'd never had everything with Greg. She hadn't even had close to everything.

"It's always just been sex between us, right?" she asked. She couldn't help feeling a desperate kind of hope on the last word.

There was a chance — the tiniest chance — that he'd changed his mind.

That he wanted more than sex with her.

His gaze was quiet and infinitely sober. "Right."

The stupid, tiny hope crushed in her chest. But she didn't even wince. Just said coolly, "Are you actually going to tell me that sex—*just sex*—is more important than your daughter?"

Greg closed his eyes very briefly. "No," he admitted. "It's not."

"Then it's pointless to keep this up. It's only going to complicate things with Carrie. And this would have ended eventually anyway. We might as well do it now. Before things get any messier."

She waited for just a moment—to see if he'd object any further.

He didn't.

He took a deep breath and released it, looking out the window as he did. "All right."

And so all that was left was for Victoria to finish gathering her stuff together. She didn't have all that much stuff over here anyway so it didn't take very long. When she closed her bag, Greg was still standing a few feet away, watching her.

He looked just as scruffy and disheveled as he had before but now he looked older, more tired.

"So," she said, not sure what there was to say.

"So." His mouth twisted slightly. "Is there anything I can do? You're all right getting back?"

She gave an amused huff that was only slightly bitter. It was so like him—considerate and courteous to the end. "I'm fine. I'm a big girl. I..." Her voice cracked and she had to start over. "I'll miss you. I really enjoyed this. It was the best sex I've ever had."

The expression in his eyes was too distant to pin down. And he almost swallowed his response. "Me too."

That admission — and everything it implied — almost did Victoria in. She had to turn away to hide her expression before she was able to compose herself.

“All right then.” There was no sense in stretching this out. It would get better as soon as they’d made a clean break. “I’ll take off. I hope things work out all right with your daughter.”

“We have our difficulties. But we love each other. We’ll be all right.”

“Good.” She walked over to the door with her bag. Turned back to look at him one more time. “Bye.”

He looked so handsome, masculine and human — standing barefoot in his sweats and t-shirt — that she had the almost irresistible urge to hug him.

She didn’t.

“Bye,” he said, his eyes never leaving her face.

She left the room. Shut the door behind her. Made it out of the house and to her car.

She drove back to the city.

And didn’t cry until she got home.

Chapter Three

"So are you ever going to tell me about it?"

"What?" Victoria gave a startled jerk and turned in her desk chair to face the door.

Jeanie was standing in the doorway of her office. Her hair was a pinkish shade this week and she was wearing all black—a turtleneck and stretch pants like a beatnik poet. "You've been moping around for the last three weeks. I was wondering if you were ever going to tell me why."

"I haven't been moping," Victoria insisted. But then she snapped her mouth closed at Jeanie's knowing, sympathetic gaze. "I didn't think it had been that obvious."

She *had* been depressed for the last three weeks, far more affected by her breakup with Greg than she'd expected to be. She'd known it wouldn't be easy—she would miss him, miss the sex and miss having such an exhilarating aspect to her life—but she'd thought she would be able to talk herself out of her low mood fairly quickly.

She was a smart, realistic, matter-of-fact kind of person. She was used to not getting everything she wanted and she'd always managed to be satisfied even when life didn't go the way she wished.

In the past, she'd been able to make the most out of circumstances.

Which was why she wasn't prepared to still be brooding about Greg almost a month after she'd broken up with him.

She couldn't stop thinking about him. Couldn't stop wishing things had happened differently. Couldn't stop hoping he was all right and hoping he missed her a little bit too.

She hadn't seen or heard from him since she'd left his house that afternoon. She hadn't expected to.

But that didn't mean she wasn't crushed.

She was the one who had ended it and she was still certain she hadn't made a mistake. Obviously her emotions had become more involved than she'd intended—otherwise she wouldn't be so upset about losing him. If they'd stayed together for meaningless sex, she would have had her heart broken eventually.

It was better this way.

It just felt like her heart was broken anyway.

"You hide it pretty well," Jeanie said, coming into the office and shutting the door. "But I know you. Did your fling with that guy fall apart?"

Victoria let out a shaky breath. "Yeah. It fell apart."

"And it wasn't as casual as you thought?"

"No. I guess I just fooled myself into thinking it could remain casual indefinitely. It was bound to end badly, one way or another."

Jeanie perched on the end of a chair next to Victoria's desk. Her face was compassionate. "Did he decide to move on?"

"No. I ended it. It was getting too complicated."

"If you ended it, why don't you just tell him you changed your mind?"

"I can't. It needed to end. Even if this particular complication could be resolved, there's no way I could go back to meaningless sex with him now." Victoria rubbed her forehead with her finger and thumb, trying to rub away the faint headache she'd had for the last few weeks.

"It wouldn't be meaningless anymore?"

Victoria groaned and lowered her head into her hands. "No. I'm such an idiot. I thought I was being mature and realistic—taking a risk but still keeping everything under control. We had it all worked out from the beginning. Just sex and nothing else. How the hell did this happen?"

Jeanie was quiet for a moment. Then she murmured, "You've got it bad."

"Tell me about it." Victoria indulged in pure despair for a minute—feeling a wave of deep emotion overwhelming her at the thought of Greg. At what she wanted from him. At what she could never have. He was out of her reach in so many ways and she would be a fool to hold out any hope for a miraculous fairytale ending.

Life didn't work that way. *Her* life never did, anyway.

Then she shook herself off. Things didn't always happen the way she wanted them to but she wasn't going to sink into real depression.

She needed to get on with her life. She would get over Greg.

It would just take longer than she'd expected.

"Maybe he's been moping all this time too."

Victoria snorted. "Right. That's likely."

"Well," Jeanie insisted, getting up and moving toward the door. "You also wouldn't have thought it likely that he would want a wild, hot fling with you in the first place. He did. And you wouldn't have thought it likely that it would last three months. It did. Why shouldn't it be just as likely that the feelings you developed might be returned by him?"

Victoria had no answer to that question but she couldn't let herself hope.

There would be no moving on if she did.

Greg had a successful, complex, full life. A life she'd never been a part of. He might miss the willing sex partner. But if he wanted more he wouldn't have accepted the end of their relationship the way he had.

Victoria wasn't going to pretend anything else was even possible.

"Thanks for the pep talk," she said, smiling at Jeanie. "I'm determined not to mope for much longer."

Jeanie laughed. "All right. Give me a call this weekend if you need a distraction. My cats can only provide so much entertainment for me."

Victoria agreed and actually felt better when Jeanie left.

Her world wasn't decimated just because she'd lost the man of her dreams.
The truth was – she'd never really had him.

* * * * *

Victoria was walking back from the bathroom that afternoon when she saw Greg.

He was there. Standing right in the middle of the lobby of the university library. He was facing the opposite direction but she recognized him easily. Even from the back.

His broad shoulders, lean hips, tight ass and long legs were distinctive in the well-tailored dark business suit. And his thick hair was slightly ruffled – probably from the wind – the gray flecks just faintly visible in the dark brown.

Victoria's heart froze in her chest at the sight of him. Then it began to hammer frantically as she made herself keep moving toward her office.

He hadn't seen her yet. And she cowardly hoped she could get away before he knew she was there.

She was wearing a new pair of designer heels – a far too expensive extravagance she'd allowed herself last week to help pull her out of her slump. The heels clicked on the polished floor of the lobby despite her attempt to remain discreet.

Greg turned around, just as she'd passed him. "Victoria."

She froze, staring straight ahead and trying to focus her fuzzy mind on something intelligent to say.

"Hi," she said stupidly.

His mouth twitched very slightly. "Hi. I thought I recognized the sound of your footsteps."

Frowning, she demanded, "What do my footsteps sound like? I walk just like everyone else."

"No, you don't."

"Yes, I do. What do they sound like?" It was a ridiculous conversation but she felt compelled to find out how her footsteps differed from everyone else. She tended to walk fairly quickly but surely that wasn't enough to make her stride recognizable.

"I don't think I'll tell you." His smile was easy, warm but just slightly poignant. And it crinkled the corners of his mouth and his eyes.

She didn't understand his expression at all.

Victoria experienced a sudden wave of annoyance. What was he doing here, anyway? She had just determined to get over him and he showed up out of the blue, being obnoxiously smug and smiling at her like that.

Kind of possessive. Kind of tender.

The implications terrified her. And her reaction to fear was always resentment.

She *hated* being afraid.

So she scowled at him. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to see you. I thought that should have been obvious. Believe it or not, I don't hang out at university libraries just for fun."

His glibness irritated her even more and her scowl tightened into a cold glare. "Why did you want to see me?"

She wished she looked better. She hadn't spent much time on her appearance lately. Her hair was pulled back in a chignon that was more severe than she usually wore, with no loose strands to soften the look. She was wearing her glasses and she had on a dark blue suit. The jacket was fitted and the skirt reached mid-calf but it wasn't as distinctive or flattering as most of her other outfits.

She must look like the spinster librarian everyone tried to stereotype her as.

Everyone but Greg.

"I thought maybe we could talk," he said, his forehead wrinkling as if he were confused. "Is there somewhere we could go?"

They could go to her office but she didn't want him there. She was supposed to be getting over him and this would already set her back a full two weeks. "Not really. And I don't know what we need to talk about anyway."

"Are you angry with me for some reason?" He took a step closer to her, his brown eyes scrutinizing her face.

"No." She had to look away from his familiar, observant expression. She used to feel a secret thrill when he looked at her like that—thrilled at the idea that someone cared enough about how she felt to try to understand what she was thinking.

Now it just made her belly clench with anxiety. She was disoriented and confused. And she wanted to lash out at Greg for making her feel this way. "I just don't like personal stuff interfering with work."

"Oh." He frowned slightly. "I could stop by your apartment after work, if you'd rather."

"No!" The word came out too violently and a few people glanced over at her in curiosity.

Flushing with embarrassment, Victoria was slammed with another wave of annoyance. "Why do we need to talk at all? I thought things were settled between us."

She couldn't stand to look at him anymore so she walked distractedly over to a cart of books that needed to be reshelfed. She fiddled with them, pretending to put them in order just so she could do something with her hands.

Greg stepped over until he was beside her and he tilted his head to study her tense face. "You *are* angry with me."

"I'm not angry," she bit out.

Why, oh why, wouldn't he just go away? He would just make everything worse.

Just make her tangibly recognize everything she could never have.

"Victoria," he murmured, his voice huskier than before. He gently put his hand on her forearm. "Tell me why you're angry."

She couldn't tell him—couldn't tell him anger was the only way she could defend herself from the flood of emotions she felt when she saw him.

She couldn't tell him anything.

So she started to push the cart of books toward the elevator. "I need to work," she muttered.

It wasn't her job to shelve books. Work-study students usually took care of that. But she needed to do something and this was the only thing available.

Greg didn't object. He just went with her, getting onto the elevator after her before she could stop him.

Since a student got on with them, they didn't speak until they'd gotten off on the fifth floor.

The floor was nearly empty, with only one graduate student studying in a carrel and one older man browsing the British literature shelves.

Victoria headed back toward the theology books in the far corner of the floor, since those were the first call numbers she saw on the books in the cart.

"Victoria," Greg began, following her toward the isolated corner of the library. They were as private here as they would have been anywhere. "Victoria, why won't you at least talk to me?"

Her eyes were glazed over now and her hand trembled as she pushed one of the books into its place on a high shelf.

Before she could bring her hand back down to the cart, Greg took it, surrounding her small, cold hand with both of his big, warm ones.

She sucked in a harsh gasp at the touch. And at how it affected the ache in her chest. "We have nothing to talk about."

"Yes, we do," Greg insisted, his voice sounding rough again. He took a step forward until he'd pressed her back against the wall of bookshelves.

He hadn't let go of her hand.

Victoria stared up at him. His eyes were dark and intense and he had just a hint of a five-o'clock shadow.

She wanted to touch him. Hold him. Have him bury himself inside her.

She wanted to feel him in every possible way.

"I missed you," Greg went on, pressing forward even more. His body wasn't touching hers but she could almost feel the heat of his presence radiating off him. "Didn't you miss me even a little?"

"What does it matter?" she choked out. "We decided it was over. And this isn't going to help anything?"

"What isn't?"

"This," she tried to explain, gesturing with her head down toward their bodies and joined hands. "Yes, the sex was great. But one last...last fling—because you suddenly decide you miss me—will only make it worse. A clean break is the best way to move on. Nothing has changed."

Greg lowered his face toward hers and reached up with his free hand to hold the back of her head. "Hasn't it?"

She didn't understand any of this but she could barely breathe through the pressure in her chest. It felt like she was drowning in the intense expression in his eyes.

He smelled like Greg—warm, masculine, faintly expensive, the most delicious thing she'd ever breathed in.

Her body was already reacting to his closeness, her nipples tightening and skin flushing with warmth.

"Greg," she tried once more, her voice pitifully weak, "I don't—"

"You don't what?" He hadn't made another move but he hadn't pulled back either.

He seemed to be waiting. For her.

And Victoria could no longer resist. He was right here—everything she'd ever wanted. And she was going to take it when it was offered, even if it was only offered for the afternoon.

With a stifled groan, she freed her fingers from his grip and grabbed his face in both of her hands. She hauled him down into a kiss, devouring his mouth with a need and urgency that both startled and thrilled her.

Greg responded immediately. Pushing her back against the solid bookshelves, he opened his mouth against hers and held her head securely in place with the fingers curved around the back of her skull. His other hand went down to cup her bottom possessively, pressing her against the length of his body.

Her mind a hot, ecstatic whirl, Victoria fisted one of her hands in his hair and caressed his face with the other. His lower jaw was rough with bristles and it felt exquisite against her hand. She wanted to feel him—all of him, as much of him as she could.

His heat and scent and touch overwhelmed her and Victoria moaned helplessly in the back of her throat. They were alone in this part of the library. It was a section that was hardly ever used. And Victoria found it impossible to grasp the fact that she probably shouldn't be making out semi-publicly in her place of work.

Greg seemed to be just as out of control as she was and he started gathering up the back of her skirt with his groping hand. When he'd pulled it up around her hips, he stroked the full curve of her ass, sliding his hand over the soft skin and the skimpy lace of her panties.

Her pussy starting to ache insistently, she lifted one of her legs and tried to hook it around the back of his thighs. She wanted to rub her groin against him, wanted as much stimulation as she could get.

He was just as aroused as she was. He was hardening against her middle and making muffled, throaty sounds against her mouth. He breathed harshly through his nose and rocked his groin into her with involuntary little thrusts.

“Oh fuck, baby,” he rasped, tearing his lips away and mouthing a line along her jaw. His skin scraped erotically against hers—just rough enough to send tingles of pleasure down to her center. “I missed you.”

His words affected her just as powerfully as his touch and Victoria’s head lolled back against the shelf behind her, pushing the books back toward the wall. “Me too,” she said, gasping when his mouth lowered even more to bite down lightly on the throbbing pulse in her throat.

One of her arms flew up to cling to the shelf at shoulder-height, pushing back more of the musty, seldom-used books. Her fitted suit jacket stretched taut across the swell of her breasts and she wished she was wearing fewer clothes.

Greg evidently wished the same thing because his fingers fumbled at the buttons of her jacket until he was able to push it open. His big hand slid up to cup her left breast and her nipple tightened into a peak at his touch.

Victoria whimpered as she felt corresponding tugs of pleasure at her pussy. And then she bit down on her lip hard when he flicked at the nipple with his thumb.

His erection pressed against her insistently—tight in the confines of his trousers. Victoria tried to balance herself enough to rub her arousal against his, still clumsily trying to get her leg higher around his thighs.

He hooked one of his hands around her raised thigh—just where her lace-topped, thigh-high stocking met her bare skin—and held her leg in place, giving her enough stability to get some good friction on her clit.

Her cheeks were blazing now and her glasses had slid about halfway down her nose. She would have taken them off completely but she couldn’t seem to let go of Greg’s neck. She shamelessly ground herself against him—the fabric of his pants incongruously soft against her hot pussy—not even caring if she looked overly eager or desperate.

“Oh fuck, baby, that’s right.” His face was hovering in front of hers—his eyes smoldering and his voice like gravel. “Are you going to come like this?”

“Yeah,” she gasped, using his solid strength to give her the stability to let herself go. “Yeah. Yeah, please.”

He adjusted his leg to ease her awkward position and she let out a shaky gasp of relief as the stimulation intensified on her clit. “Fuck, Victoria, you’re so gorgeous. So hot.”

She rocked and squirmed, almost on the edge.

“Look at you,” Greg murmured, “in your suit and glasses. About to come against my leg in the back of a library.”

She made a sobbing sound of anxious pleasure—realizing how she must look, imagining someone coming through the stacks and seeing her here.

“What would they say if they saw you like this? They think you’re a proper librarian but what if they saw how hot and naughty you really are?” His breath blew against her damp skin and his eyes were devouring her urgent, jiggling form.

Her eyes squeezed shut as the pressure deepened almost unbearably. She rubbed her pussy eagerly against his thigh, supported by the bookcase behind her and Greg’s body in front of her.

“Let go, baby. Let go.”

She took a slow, deep breath—remembering how it had released and intensified her pleasure the last time they’d been together. In doing so, she lost control of her orgasm and it spiraled up without warning.

She cried out—too loudly for a library—as she came hard against his leg. She would have lost her balance and fallen over had he not been holding her up with his unwavering grip.

Then she buried her face in his shoulder, gasping and shaking, both exhilarated and mortified by what she’d just done.

She’d humped the leg of a respectable, well-dressed man in her own library, where anyone might have seen her.

Greg pulled her head back and kissed her fiercely, his mouth moving against hers with almost brutal intensity. Her lips were swollen when she finally pulled away and something shuddered deep inside her.

Greg's body was so tense she could feel his clenched muscles beneath his suit. "Is there somewhere we can go?" he rasped, "Or did you want to try it here?"

She looked past him at the rows of tall shelves and academic books. It might be kind of exciting—with so much danger of being caught—but it would be awkward and uncomfortable, since they'd have to fuck standing up.

"There's a study room just over there," she said, pulling her skirt down and walking shakily toward the opposite wall. Greg followed. And she was sure she could feel his eyes focused on her rounded bottom beneath her wrinkled skirt.

It was a small room—with a table and four chairs for a small group of students to study. The door closed but didn't lock. And there was a square window through which anyone could look.

But hardly anyone ever came back to this corner—the theology books were the least used in the entire university library—and it was even less likely that someone would peer into the study room. This was the best they could do, if they were going to fuck here and now.

"Is this okay—" she began, shutting the door and turning to face Greg.

He didn't even let her finish. Instead he drew her into another fierce kiss.

She returned it with equal ardor, clawing at his suit in a futile attempt to feel his bare skin. He had way too many clothes on and she wasn't likely to get the chance to take them off.

As if he'd read her mind, he tore his mouth away. "I'm pretty far gone," he muttered, rubbing his coarse cheek against hers. "I'm afraid this isn't going to be one of my more stellar performances."

She gave a broken laugh. "God, Greg, just fuck me. Soon."

With a hoarse groan, he turned her around and put a hand on her back, gently pushing her down until she was bent over the table. She braced herself with her hands on the surface and gave a shuddering moan when he lifted her skirt until it was bunched up around her waist.

She started to take off her glasses but he stopped her with a gruff, "No. Leave them on."

Then she heard fabric rustling as he unfastened his trousers. Then felt his fingers between her legs. He pushed her panties aside and explored briefly—sliding his finger into her pussy to check that she was ready.

She was more than ready. She was swollen, aching and drenched.

And she couldn't suppress a low cry of satisfaction as she felt him align his cock at her entrance and push in to her slippery channel.

The penetration was substantial and she pushed against the table in response.

"Fuck," Greg rasped. "Oh fuck." His hands gripped the flesh of her ass so hard it would probably bruise.

Victoria whimpered and rocked her bottom against him, dying for stimulation to ease the deepening ache at her center.

Greg responded immediately, pulling his pelvis back only to pitch it forward again, driving his cock inside her.

Victoria released a few breathless huffs of effort in response to the raw pleasure. Her fingers fumbled for purchase on the smooth surface of the table as she bent over even further.

He thrust into her again, his hard cock rubbing deliciously against her sensitive inner walls.

"Mm." She bit down on her lower lip again, trying to stifle the sound. Anyone who walked by might hear.

Might glance through the window and see her folded over the table with her skirt up around her waist—and Greg, half-dressed and primitive, gripping her bottom and pounding into her from behind.

The knowledge intensified her pleasure even more and Victoria felt the sensations swelling up as Greg accelerated his motion into a fast, forceful rhythm.

His angle shifted slightly and Victoria felt shudders of new pleasure rippling out from the contact.

“Oh God! There! There!”

Greg grunted and kept up the new angle, hitting her G-spot on every stroke. “Fuck, you feel so good,” he muttered, half under his breath. “So hot and wet and tight and—”

“God, oh God, oh God!” Victoria’s voice got shriller as the momentum of her climax intensified.

He took a ragged breath and hooked his hand around her inner thigh, pulling it up slightly and parting her legs even more to sink more deeply inside her. “That’s right, baby. Do you like it like this?”

“Yeah, yeah. Fuck me. Fuck me hard.” She didn’t even know what she was saying. The frantic words just spilled out of her mouth as she stared hazily at the window and half expected to see someone pass by. If they did they would see her—the proper librarian—getting fucked over a table. “God, don’t stop!”

Greg was grunting now, primal sounds timed to his rapid thrusts. “Baby,” he rasped, falling out of rhythm, “Baby, I can’t—”

“Mm, mm—yeah!” Unable to smother the sound, Victoria cried out loudly, using her hands to brace herself so she could shake her bottom frantically against Greg’s now erratic thrusting.

“Fuck!” he bit out. “Victoria!” The last word was strangled and desperate and she knew he’d lost it. The groan he let out was long, hoarse and uncontrolled and his pelvis jerked urgently against her ass.

The knowledge that he'd wanted her so much he'd come against his will was enough to push Victoria into climax as well. Her body jiggled wildly as she fell over the edge. She started to scream.

Barely had enough time to stuff her fist into her mouth to muffle the sound.

Her orgasm was so powerful she had to bite down on her fingers as her channel spasmed hard around Greg's cock.

Their contractions lingered into breathless, sweaty, exhausted satisfaction. Greg planted his hands on either side of her body to support himself on shaking arms—obviously close to collapsing on top of her.

Victoria had fallen forward so far that her cheek was pressing damply against the table. When she finally found the energy to pull up again, her skin clung to the smooth surface.

Greg's breathing sounded forced and painful as he slid his slick, softening cock out of her tightened channel. Then he straightened up and fastened his pants before he helped to pull her up as well.

He took her in his arms, holding her hungrily as she tried to pull down her skirt over her naked thighs.

It was only then that Victoria started to think. Really think.

She'd just lost whatever progress she'd made in getting over him.

She was back to the beginning. Worse than the beginning.

She wanted him more now than ever.

"Greg," she choked, trying to pull away.

He didn't let her go. "Don't say it. Don't say it was a mistake."

"But," she tried again. "But nothing has changed. We agreed—"

"Fuck what we agreed to." Greg finally pulled back so he could look down into her face. His expression was twisted with an emotion she couldn't quite recognize. "I changed my mind."

She felt the slightest flare of hope but couldn't indulge it. "But your daughter. We agreed. It's not worth hurting her for just sex."

"I know. It's not."

The flare of hope she'd felt died a sudden death—despite the fact that she'd tried to ignore it.

Greg gripped her shoulders with almost brutal force and his gaze claimed hers unwaveringly. "I know we agreed it was supposed to just be sex. I know it's not fair to change terms like this. But I thought it would work. I thought all I needed was some physical satisfaction and the rest of my life would provide me with everything else. But that's not how it worked out. I thought it was just sex. But it wasn't."

Victoria stared up at him blankly. "What?"

"I haven't been able to stop thinking about you. I think about you all the time. Not just about how good we are in bed. But about your smile. And your silly glasses. And how excited you get about a good book. And how you try not to let anyone see how passionate you are about everything. I don't care if it's not fair. I'm changing terms. I don't just want sex from you."

"You don't?" She couldn't seem to follow what he was saying. It didn't fit with any of the ways she'd always understood the world.

"I want a relationship. A real relationship." Greg's face had been set and determined but now it wavered slightly. He added weakly, "Exclusive. And...and long-term."

It was his slight uncertainty—the unexpected sign of insecurity in such a mature, confident man—that finally convinced Victoria this was real. "What?" she breathed, feeling a wave of something like awe rising up inside her.

He must have mistaken her joyful disbelief for resistance. His brows drew together and his hands moved up to cup her face. "I know this isn't what you had in mind when you got involved with me. And I'm not expecting for you to be in the same...the same

place I am. All I'm asking is for you to give me a chance. Let me convince you that we're good together in every way – not just sex."

"Convince me?" She couldn't seem to do anything but repeat the words. Her whole world was reshaping itself into something she'd never believed in before.

"Yes. I'll treat you like I should have from the beginning." Greg pushed a hand through his dark hair, ruffling it in his earnestness. "I want to date you, not just fuck you. Just give me the chance to...to..." He appeared at a loss and ended lamely, "To woo you."

Victoria made a choked sound—half laugh, half sob. "*Woo* me?" She knew he was anxious, upset, worried she was going to reject him. She needed to let him know the state of her feelings but she couldn't seem to find the words. "How are you going to do that?"

Her eyes were tender as she looked up at him and she raised a hand to caress his cheek, feeling the delicious stubble against her palm.

He seemed to recognize that something had changed. His dark eyes softened into a matching tenderness. "If you're free tomorrow night, I thought I'd take you out for a nice dinner. Maybe give you flowers. You know. Try to be romantic. To show you I'm not such a bad catch after all."

He was the kindest, smartest, funniest, sexiest, most wonderful man she'd ever met. She almost laughed at the idea of his being a bad catch.

Greg's face grew sober. "Baby, I know I haven't done anything to make you believe this. But I...I'm crazy about you. And it's not just sex I want from you."

She swallowed hard, her eyes starting to burn with the most poignant kind of joy. "What about Carrie?"

His lips pressed together briefly before he said, "We'll have to work through this. But part of her problem was that she thought it was just some cheap, illicit affair. I think it will make a difference when she sees it's a real romantic relationship." He paused, jerking his head to the side. "That is, if you want it to be —"

"Of course I want it to be!" Victoria burst out, wrapping her arms around his neck. "How can you be so stupid?"

He stared at her disbelievingly. "Really?"

"Yes! I've been in the depths of despair for the last few weeks but I didn't know what to do about it. I couldn't go back to just having sex with you when I was feeling," she gulped, "so much more."

"Really?" he repeated, a blaze of shattering joy flaring up in his eyes.

She was torn between melting away in happiness and sobbing with absolute relief. So instead she snickered. "Really. You won't even have to do much wooing."

With an agonized groan, Greg pulled her against him, his arms tightening with such force she lost her breath.

She didn't care. She just buried her face in his suit coat, breathing in the dear, delicious scent of him.

Of Greg.

Who was somehow hers.

"I'll woo you anyway," he murmured hoarsely against her ear. "I'm good at wooing."

She smiled up at him, fatuous and completely sappy. He looked adorably rumped and so sweet she wanted to gobble him up.

Victoria knew they would still have some things to work out but some things weren't complicated at all.

She said, "You're good at everything."

Epilogue

Victoria sprawled out on top of Greg, her breasts pressed down against his chest and her legs splayed on either side of his. His cock was sheathed inside her pussy but they weren't really moving, just lying together tangled in lazy intimacy.

She'd woken up a little while ago to the feel of his erection poking into her ass. After some sweet, drowsy foreplay, they'd ended up like this—neither feeling particularly wild or urgent.

She moaned—low and lingering—and mouthed his jaw, brushing her lips against the bristles on his skin. He was always the most bristly in the morning and sometimes her skin was too sensitive to get close to him until he'd shaved. But this morning she liked the feeling—the coarse stubble stimulating her lips deliciously as she stroked them along his jawline.

One of Greg's hands was buried in her loose hair, combing his fingers through the long strands in a gentle caress. The other hand was hooked over the back of one of her thighs. His fingers stroked the soft flesh of her inner thigh, very close to the crease of her bottom and not far from where they were intimately joined. His touch was leisurely, almost unconscious, as if he was just enjoying the texture of the skin there.

She could hear him breathe, feel his chest rise and fall slowly beneath her. The hair on his chest tickled her breasts, particularly her sensitive nipples—but the texture was sensual and pleasing rather than annoying.

Victoria had no idea what time it was and she didn't really care. She would be perfectly happy to lie like this with Greg for the rest of the day. For the rest of her life.

When she shifted above him to stretch out one of her legs, his cock adjusted inside her. She moaned again at the soft tugs of pleasure.

"Enjoying yourself?" Greg asked, his voice thick with sleep and arousal.

"Oh yeah." She trailed her mouth down his jaw toward his throat, humming in satisfaction at the rough texture under her lips. "I love that you aren't soft and smooth."

Greg's cock was deliciously hard but the rest his body wasn't particularly tense. The muscles of his arms and legs were relaxed and only his belly was a little tighter than usual. "Excuse me?"

She chuckled and ran one of her hands through the short hair on his chest. "I love that you aren't soft and smooth. You're hard and rough and —"

"And hairy?"

Snorting at his ironic tone, she objected, "You aren't *that* hairy. Just enough to be yummy. I love how your chest feels." She moved her hand to stroke down one of his arms, feeling the rippling muscles and short hair. "And your arms." With a little shifting, she was able to run her toes along one of his legs. "And your legs. And your face. And your..."

There was a smile in Greg's voice as he prompted, "And my what?"

"And your cock," she admitted, rocking her pelvis gently so she could feel the substance of his erection moving in her slick channel. "It sounds stupid, I know but you feel *real*. Like a real man. Like I haven't just dreamed you up in some sort of plastic fantasy."

His laughter was low and husky and shook his body with lush vibrations.

"I told you it would sound stupid," she mumbled, hiding her face against his shoulder and taking the opportunity to mouth a kiss on the broad curve.

"It doesn't sound stupid." Greg moved his other hand to the back of her thigh so that both of his hands were spanning the soft flesh where her bottom met her legs. "I know exactly what you mean." He squeezed softly and didn't seem to mind that there was a little extra fat there. "I love how real you feel too."

She felt so melty that she felt compelled to say, "Are you alluding to my cellulite?"

He chuckled and his fingers explored further, one hand stroking along the crease of her ass and the other rubbing along the line where her inner thigh met her pussy. The moisture from her arousal had leaked out around his cock, making the skin there slightly damp. "No one has ever felt better than you."

"Good answer."

She leaned up to press her lips against his and they kissed for a long time, their tongues exploring the other's mouth with unhurried tenderness.

She rocked above him as they kissed, easing her pelvis in soft, gentle pumps so she could feel him in every possible way. His hands still played around her upper thighs and bottom—with an absolute entitlement that still thrilled her, even after all these months.

Eventually, she could feel him begin to tense up beneath her. And his fingers became a little less gentle as they pressed into her flesh.

"Baby," he said at last, tearing his mouth away from hers.

She smiled against his skin. "Is your patience running out?"

He had more patience than any man she'd ever met. Every man she'd slept with before had wanted to start thrusting immediately.

"Sorry." He moved one of his hands up to massage the small of her back. "I know you were enjoying just lying here like this."

"That's okay." She lifted her head to look down on him with a teasing smile. "If you need to come, you need to come. But you're going to have to do most of the work this morning."

Returning her smile, he adjusted beneath her to get some leverage. "No problem. Hold on."

She held on with her arms and her legs so he was able to flip them over without losing the penetration of his cock. He reared up on straightened arms. Then pulled his hips back and slid forward with a slow, luscious thrust.

Victoria stretched her back and arched her neck at the resulting sensations. "This," she hissed, "Is pretty good too."

He gave a few more long, skillful thrusts, which felt so good she had to reach up and hold onto the headboard for support. "Oh yeah," she said shakily, as her body started to flush with heat.

"Yes, baby," Greg rasped, his face tightening with effort and pleasure. "That's right. Are you going to come for me?"

"Uh-huh." Her orgasm rose up quicker than she'd expected. She planted her feet flat on the bed and used them to pump her hips against Greg's thrusts to increase the stimulation. "Uh-huh."

"Fuck, you're so good, baby. Let me see you come." His rhythm intensified, his thrusts growing faster and shorter.

She wasn't going to quite get there like this so she snuck one hand down and squeezed it between their bodies. Finding her swollen clit, she rubbed it in tight circles.

"That's right." Greg's head jerked to the side for just a moment before he resumed his erotic rhythm. "Good. So good. Come for me."

The tension shattered inside her and she came with a loud cry of relief. Her body convulsed beneath him as he kept thrusting against her contractions.

"Fuck," he gritted out, his eyes raking over her body as she came. "Keep rubbing your clit. Come for me again."

She did as he instructed, even through the blur of her pleasure. And her clumsy massage of her swollen clit combined with his jerky thrusts into her clenching channel to push her into another climax.

She cried out a second time but this time her shout of pleasure blended with a rough exclamation from Greg—as his pelvis twitched and jerked against hers and his face twisted in a hard release.

He collapsed on top of her afterwards, the hot, heavy press of his body pushing her down into the mattress.

She loved it. Clung to him with her arms, her legs and her pussy. Tried to catch her breath and regain her senses as her body was washed with visceral satisfaction.

"Happy birthday," she whispered at last, her hands tenderly stroking his smooth back.

"Thanks. So far it's been a very good day."

She smiled and wiggled beneath him, his weight starting to become a little uncomfortable. "Forty-four today. Do you feel old?"

"I didn't until you asked me that." His voice was dry and she knew he was teasing.

Giggling, she teased him back. "So not even those gray chest hairs make you feel old?"

"What?" His tensed above her with a jerk and tried vainly to peer down at his chest.

She burst out into rippling laughter and their motion caused his softened cock to slide out of her slippery channel. He rolled over onto his side and frowned at her.

"There were just one or two gray ones," she explained, reaching over to point out the offending hairs. "Hardly anything. I wouldn't have even noticed had I not been admiring your manliness this morning."

He returned her smile, obviously pleased at the compliment. And she was once again amazed that he was as secure and self-assured as he was.

But after a moment he asked, almost diffidently, "Would you rather I not be turning forty-four?"

She leaned over and kissed him softly. "I wouldn't want anything to be different about you."

It was true. Most of the time, she barely thought about their age difference. And when she did it was usually to be glad he was as mature and well-grounded as he was. The only time it worried her at all was when she looked very, very far into the future.

Her response seemed to satisfy him because he pulled her into a warm embrace.

"So we're on for dinner tonight with Carrie?" she asked after a minute. The day outside the window was getting brighter. She hadn't checked the time yet but she knew she'd need to get up soon.

"Yes. She's meeting us at the restaurant at seven."

"And she seemed okay about my being at your birthday dinner?"

"She's not exactly jumping for joy about the situation but—yes—she didn't even question it."

Victoria squeezed him with her arms. "And you told her that I moved in with you last weekend?"

"I told her."

"And she didn't get too upset?"

"I think she was expecting it. You've been practically living here anyway for the last few months. She's coming around, Victoria. I promised you she would."

Victoria knew he was right. It had been very awkward at first—since Carrie made it very clear she disliked her father's girlfriend. Victoria didn't like confrontation and she didn't like people hating her so she'd suffered a lot of stress as they all adjusted to the new situation.

But it had been six months since Carrie had found out. And she was a smart, sensitive girl who loved her father very much. She had to have seen how happy he was with Victoria. And Victoria had done everything she could to be understanding and generous without pushing too hard to get the girl to accept her.

She'd never dreamed she'd be in the position of trying to relate to the teenaged daughter of the man she was dating. Sometimes it seemed so bizarrely inexplicable she couldn't believe it was true.

"I just want her to like me," she whispered.

"She will," Greg said, tenderly brushing his fingers against her cheek. "Give her a little more time. She will."

They gazed at each other for a long time—with understanding, sympathy and tenderness.

Then Victoria happened to glance back at the clock on the bedside table.

She sat up straight in bed. "Shit! It's after seven! I have to teach a class at eight!"

Greg straightened up and peered at the clock. "Is it already that late? I'm going to be running behind too."

"I'm later than you are. I get the shower first," Victoria insisted, scrambling out of bed and racing for the bathroom.

She took a five-minute shower. She didn't wash her hair but she had to at least soap up and rinse off to get rid of the sweat and semen from their lovemaking.

Then she raced through her hair, makeup and clothes while Greg took his shower. She had a longer commute from the house than she had from her apartment and she'd had trouble getting used to the new schedule.

She was throwing on a pearl necklace—one that suited the vintage silk blouse she had paired with a black pencil skirt—when Greg came out of the bathroom with a towel slung low on his hips.

He gave her an appreciative once-over. "When you dress like that—all prim and old-fashioned—you make me want to bend you over and fuck you until you scream."

She chuckled and felt a little tug at her pussy. She had no idea why her sense of fashion and wire-rimmed glasses got him so hot. But it always gave her a possessive

thrill to know that he really wanted *her* – the real Victoria Ray – and everything about her. “Save that thought until later. It’s your birthday, after all.”

As she spoke, she slid on a pair of black and white retro heeled pumps and peered at herself in the mirror to make sure she’d put on everything essential.

“I know,” Greg said thickly, stepping over and brushing his hand across her breast, tweaking the nipple that tightened under his touch. “I have all kinds of plans for tonight.”

Her intimate muscles clenched in anticipation but she didn’t have time to indulge it. She just arched her eyebrows. “I can hardly wait.”

Before he could respond, she glanced back at the clock. “Shit! I have to go. I’ll see you tonight.”

“Yep. Have a good day. Don’t drive too fast and have an accident.” He’d gone over to the closet to find something to wear.

She’d left the room, grabbed her purse and was about to head out the front door of the house when she remembered something.

So she raced back to the bedroom and barged into the closet, where Greg was pulling a blue dress shirt off its hanger.

She gave him a quick kiss and mumbled, “Almost forgot. I love you.”

He chuckled in warm appreciation and pulled the length of her body against his before she could get away.

He said, “Baby, I love you too.”

About the Author

Zannie Adams writes, reads, and caters to her chocolate-brown cocker spaniel, and watches cooking shows on television. She has lived in eight different states, had far too much graduate-level education, and generally done her best not to settle down. She has been writing novels all her life, but only recently did she begin to write erotic romances—a genre that has allowed her to explore her love of both passion and commitment.

Zannie prefers to spend most of her time writing, but she has to stop occasionally to teach writing and literature at a liberal arts college and to walk her dog. She lives in the Midwest.

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

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