

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

TORRID TAROT

Red Garnier

Bona Fide Liar

Syneca
Two of Wands



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Bona Fide Liar

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BONA FIDE LIAR

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Two of Wands

The Suite of Wands is linked to the element of fire. It represents the spark of life and growth as well as passion, enterprise, initiative and creativity.

The Two Wands speaks of duality and instinctive knowledge. It indicates that a choice is required – to either remain on one's path or veer in an unexpected direction. It can also mean that a change in relationship is imminent, or that something unexpected will occur.

This adventurous, daring card emphasizes our need to assert our beliefs and ideals. It tends to make the holder feel omnipotent and all-powerful, as if he or she can take on the world. It speaks of boldness and impulsive action, originality and garnering the respect and attention of those around us.

The Two of Wands is a card of passion and action.

Chapter One

So this is what spying feels like.

It wasn't entirely unpleasant. In fact it was sort of wicked, in a good way.

Carly Sanders was no pro detective. No FBI, no CIA, no Dick Tracy...and she was *certainly* no Sherlock. But on this particular circumstance, she'd had no other choice but to play the part.

Spying hadn't been on the agenda.

It seemed more like an accident of fate, or a really bad coincidence. Either way, she had no way of avoiding it.

Before she'd accidentally ended up spying, Carly had been sitting behind her Linux OS workstation for most of the morning nursing a stubborn, irritating creative block. To any colleague passing by she presented quite an entertaining image. Glaring at her computer while biting the eraser out of a pencil. Counting the spins her swivel chair could do with a single push and her person on top of it. After a dizzying half-hour and a personal best of five spins, she took inventory of her drawers—where discovering she was missing her favorite blue pen turned out to be the highlight of her uneventful morning. Of course, all this took place *before* she returned to sulking.

It was almost noon by the time she decided her situation was pitiful and she needed a change of scenery. Working at Yoodle had its share of advantages. As the leading internet search engine in North America, Yoodle was a company known to actively promote innovative ideas by offering its workers a colorful array of games and “thinking” spots meant to enhance their creative abilities. Oversize rubber balls were scattered throughout the building's lobby, sometimes some of the most restless ones accompanying workers on elevator rides. Sports, wine tasting, puzzles and video games, these diversions were not only allowed at Yoodle, they were encouraged.

In a company striving to keep its workers happy, relaxed and creative, it was not a good thing to spend a morning sulking over creativity problems.

Rising from her desk and working the kinks out of her shoulders, Carly decided to try to solve her dilemma by heading to one of the “thinking lounges” off the lobby. She strode into the spacious, ominously silent room, obviously the only person in the whole company experiencing a block today.

That fact didn’t help lift her spirits at all.

Narrowing her eyes against the blinding sunlight that stole past the tall arched windows, she crossed the room and plopped down on a faux-suede orange beanbag in a far corner, grateful for the tall recycled-paper screen that shielded her from view. Carly had lately preferred this hidden spot because it was important her nemesis never, *ever* know when she was having a severe brain crisis. She would rather eat dog food than give him something to gloat about.

Okay, now think, she urged, dropping her gaze to the black-and-white-checkered floor while she willed Ideas – the lifeblood of her industry – into her mind.

Oh, Ideas, cooome to Carly...

When they didn’t immediately hop to, she closed her eyes and sighed. Relaxation and a positive attitude were essential to creativity, so she drew in several deep, steadying breaths and fought to welcome Ideas into her brain. Anything at this point would have been welcome. Even lousy Ideas. Of course, some good ones would be even better. Good Ideas that would improve the Yoodle search engine, their cash flow, their client base, their advertisers and more importantly, her position in this company. Something that would beat the ever-flowing, disgustingly genius ideas of her long-time nemesis...

She’d been too busy struggling with her dilemma to realize several of her male colleagues had settled down on the leather sofas at the other end of the room. From their bantering and loud voices, one would never guess they were seated in the modern, luxurious thinking lounge of Yoodle’s Houston corporate offices. She could’ve

sworn they thought themselves drunk and in a sorry, cheap bar, because they were discussing equally cheap topics of conversation. She distinctly heard the phrase, "You check out her ass yet?"

The concept of the thinking lounge seemed to have escaped them completely.

The recycled-paper screen, which now took on the importance of a massive wall of fortitude, kept her presence unknown. Carly was blissfully grateful for it, because she wanted no one running upstairs to tell her odious enemy she'd been spotted at the thinking lounge.

Not when *he* rarely seemed to have any troubles himself.

She'd already decided to ignore the intruders completely when her name came up as the topic of conversation, and that was the sole reason she was now spying on them. Really.

"I think I'm asking Carly Sanders to the three-year anniversary dinner." Now this was what had intrigued her. This unwanted...invitation. It was Gregory Hutchinson speaking, a man she'd spoken to three times at most in her whole career at Yoodle.

She dearly hoped he didn't ask her, because she'd feel pretty bad having to say no, or worse, saying yes out of politeness and then pretending to get sick in order not to go. Gratefully, she heard another voice, deep and husky and extremely sexy, say, "Sorry, Gregg, but she's already taken."

"By who?" a third male voice she didn't recognize asked.

"By me, you moron," the sexy voice said.

Her heart skipped a beat when she realized that low, unfairly sexy voice could only belong to one person on this entire planet. Her nemesis. His name was Alexander Callahan, and he was *only* one of the most creative minds at Yoodle, not to mention the proud bearer of one of the largest egos in worldwide history. He was almost a god around the office, which just goes to show what the world has come to. The man was a real jerk!

"You're taking Carly Sanders?" Gregory asked in disbelief.

"Yep."

It was a staggering surprise to Carly as well.

She didn't remember speaking to him recently, and that was not something she would easily forget. Usually their conversations had a way of replaying themselves in her mind, much to his sadistic pleasure, she was sure. And to prevent her from doing that slightly important thing called her *job*—which consisted, in short, of being paid to think of something *other* than Alex and the haunting pair of lips he just happened to own.

"That's bullshit Alex," the third voice, obviously belonging to a genius, said. "She doesn't even like you, man."

"Don't be stupid, Rock, the woman adores me."

Carly was certain she hadn't heard correctly. She felt many, many things for Alexander Callahan, but adoration wasn't among them.

She meant to keep it that way.

"Oh yeah? You screw around with her?" This came from Gregory. Carly bristled at his insensitive words, and would have loved to jump from behind the wall that separated them and shout, "That's none of your damned business!"

Instead she settled for remaining very still and held her breath as she waited for the negative answer she was sure would follow.

"I just did her in the restroom."

Carly's mouth fell open in shock.

His words stung her deeply—between the legs, they literally stung her, painfully so.

For a brief moment she wondered if she'd missed something important—like the memorable experience of being *done* in the restroom, perhaps?

Yeah, right!

Not having Alex Callahan's blue eyes in front of her so she could claw them out, she sank her nails into the beanbag beneath her. Alexander Callahan was a big, fat liar! Carly would never do such a thing. She would never allow herself to be "done" in some filthy bathroom—and if she did, it was definitely something she would never, in this life or the next, forget!

The man called Rock—certainly no genius, she now realized—was having a big riot, his laughter loud and boisterous, as if he'd just heard the wittiest of things. Though he'd been baptized with another name, everyone at Yoodle knew him as Rock because he walked around, tall and lanky, with an iPod around his neck all the time. When he wasn't listening to it, he was fiddling around with it, downloading more songs. The sight of his extraordinarily huge Adam's apple bobbing up and down as he sang was a common distraction at Yoodle, and not a pleasant one to listen to. Even though Rock was over fifty, Carly was pretty sure he'd be turning sixteen next year—he acted like such a baby.

"In the restroom!" Rock said. "Dude, that is so awesome!"

Some runaway pig from Lord knows what kind of farm snorted loudly. "I'm telling you, she adores me." It was a miracle. Pigs can actually speak! "I swear she can come just by looking at me."

As if! Carly couldn't even remember having a single orgasm in the past year, and the last one she'd had, she'd given to herself because it had been pertinent health-wise that she do so.

This diabolical machination of Alex's mind proved one thing. Alex Callahan was too creative for his own good.

What on earth was Carly supposed to do now? Disclose her identity? Storm out from behind her hiding place and bellow like a furious she-devil, demanding they stop telling all these lies about her?

"Shit, I'd love to fuck Carly Sanders," Gregory said, all wound-up now. "I'd love to do her like a dog, sink it right into that cute little—"

"Gregg, stop, man, you're making me sick," Alex said in disgust.

Carly was more than sick, she was damn near hospitalization. Trauma care. With a supreme effort, she swallowed back the bile that rose threateningly in her throat.

"Sorry, I just get a hard-on every time I see her."

Carly immediately realized she would never look at Gregory Hutchinson the same way again. In fact, she would make it a point never to look him again, period. Ever.

"So you two screw around all the time?" Rock asked, just being himself—a man!—and fishing for the juicy details.

"Hell yeah!" Alex said.

"Like where?"

Damned perverts! No wonder women were taking over the world—because while these Neanderthals were discussing porn, the women upstairs were actually *working*.

"Well, what can I say, Rock? We screw around everywhere, sometimes two or three times a day. Heard of the Kama Sutra, buddies? Heck, Carly could write a whole new book."

"Dude, that is so awesome!" Rock enthused.

"Damn right it is."

"She give good head?"

"Hell yes!"

"Hot bod, huh?"

"Yep."

"Take it up the ass?"

"Fuck yeah!"

"So you two have a rule about not mixing your personal lives with work?" Gregory interrupted.

Alex didn't miss a beat, as if he actually believed this whole story was true. He could have won an Oscar for this performance. A Golden Globe. Heck, both! "Uh-huh. Carly thinks it's better this way."

"I can tell she would. She's a bit too conservative, isn't she?"

This last whopper was astounding, coming from a prematurely balding, seemingly harmless five-foot elf who wore his pants up to his chest like Gregory Hutchinson the Fifth. *He* actually thought *she* was conservative?

"Yeah, well, you know her type," Alex explained, as if that alone said it all.

What frigging type?

Whereas she was known to have a quick temper, even Carly was surprised by the violence surging within her, like something she'd never experienced before. Vivid images of herself punching each of them on the cock served to appease her only slightly.

"I guess if you're taking Carly, maybe I'll ask Regina Kyle," Gregory commented.

There was a long, tense silence that meant no one thought Regina Kyle was hot.

"Well, I'm taking the Pizza," Rock proudly said.

Alex whistled. "Extra anchovies, whoa."

"I don't think I know her. Does she work here?" Gregory asked thoughtfully.

"Of course, dude! The Pizza is Georgina Harrison, only everyone in the whole building knows she's the Pizza!" Rock explained.

"But...I don't understand. Why do they call her Pizza?" Gregory asked, baffled.

"You don't know why?" Rock exclaimed. "Aw, man! Give me a hug! She's the Pizza because she delivers within thirty minutes—get that, dude? Man-oh-man, I can't believe you didn't know that!"

"Thirty? I always get it in ten," Alex boasted.

"Ten is super-express, man. Shit, now I just gotta beat that record," Rock said, clearly excited at the prospect.

The three of them burst out laughing, having the finest time of their lives.

Carly was near the point where she would tear down the recycled paper wall and, though she didn't know karate, miraculously strike a Daniel-son *Karate Kid* pose and smack all three of them unconscious. She shook from the effort it took just to remain seated and not do so. Hot, livid flames torched her stomach, heating her skin to a deep crimson color. Just who did they think they were?

"Say, guys, how about playing ball before we get back to work?" This came from Alex, and although she heard no official reply, there were sounds of agreeable male grunts, feet shuffling on the floor and receding footsteps.

Only after complete and utter silence settled over the room did Carly rise and walk toward the area they'd just occupied. She glowered at the black leather sofa, noting it bore the indented mark of someone's big butt which had just been there.

Carly had to do something.

It wasn't fair to expect womankind to tolerate that sort of behavior from men, and it certainly wasn't fair to Carly. Alex Callahan was lying through his teeth! Carly didn't even like to suck cock, and she certainly did *not* take it up the ass! True, she'd thought about it a couple times, and unfortunately, thought about doing it with *him*, damn it. Was the man a mind reader now? Was he privy to the very private, very personal fantasies she'd buried safely in the deepest recesses of her mind? Or perhaps she had a sign pasted on her forehead, unashamedly announcing to everyone that, though Alexander Callahan was an arrogant pig, she actually had the hots for him?

Oh, but she didn't. Not anymore! Not ever again, in fact!

She should confront Callahan and set one thing straight. She wasn't anyone's whore — much less a pig's!

Yet she suspected if she challenged him, she would only look desperate and childish. Maybe even horny. God forbid.

The fact that she'd spied on him would be uncomfortably apparent. And the fact that she'd been experiencing creative difficulties and spending time at the thinking lounge would also be too obvious.

There had to be a smarter way to go about this. And just like that it came to her...

An Idea.

And with it, the wise words she'd once heard from Ivana Trump, talking in her sexy accent in Carly's head as she repeated a world-famous quote that Carly would be wise to consider.

Don't get mad. Get even.

Brilliant. That was exactly what Carly had to do.

Several options tumbled in her brain now, and Carly was so angry she wanted to execute them all, wanted to do every mean, vengeful thing she could think of. Use them to make Callahan realize she was not going to stand for this.

She would show him. She would wound his pride, his ego, his filthy rotten cock. Spread rumors just as nasty or worse as those he was spreading about her. Show him, in her very own personal style, that she wasn't that eager to sleep with him after all – no matter where he got that top-secret, confidential information. Carly's body may have at one embarrassing moment in her life been a little attracted to him, but that was history. So very long ago. Weeks, in fact.

And unlike all the bimbos he seemed to prefer, Carly was fortunate enough to own a brain, and it was far stronger than her body. She'd be more than happy to prove it to him. Contrary to what he may think, she didn't care to feel those icky things he made her silly body feel, thank you very much.

Smiling, she let the Ideas begin to mature and calmly took the elevator up to the seventh floor. When the brass doors slid open, she headed straight for Alex Callahan's workstation instead of hers, which was gratefully in the opposite direction and as far away from his as possible.

Bending over his computer so nearby colleagues wouldn't notice, she pressed the keypad several times, trying to access his computer. Damn, he'd locked it. Frowning at the screen as it requested a password, she felt her heart race as her fingers briskly flew and tapped over the keys, typing different words.

It wasn't all that hard to guess the keyword a man like Callahan would use.

It finally unlocked when she typed p-u-s-s-y.

Using the mouse, she double-clicked and opened a search engine, then typed several keywords, clicked "Agree" when asked if she was over eighteen and finally found what she needed – or rather, *he* did.

A penis enlarger.

Guaranteed to downsize an ego while sizing up a cock.

And hey, this site offered two for the price of one! Wouldn't he like that? Maybe he could attach the second one to his nose and finally look like the lying Pinocchio he was.

Smiling, she opened the full screen to reveal a pair of very detailed "before and after" pictures. They were both gross.

Glancing studiously around his desktop, she found the black "call" button behind his phone and pressed it. The call button blinked in the boss's office upstairs and it usually meant either someone had blown it big time, or some sorrier soul had gotten into a royal mess. Because they were so rarely used, a call was a surefire way to get a boss's attention immediately.

Of course, their manager would never fire his golden boy, no matter what perversions he had. But at least Alex would get something to think about *other* than Carly's newly revealed status as his very own personal tart!

She'd never imagined good old vengeance could taste so damn sweet. Carly smiled as she crossed the room and headed to Donna's workstation.

Donna could talk effortlessly to a wall, and she'd always proudly admitted that the neighbor said that her sister said that her father said that her mother swore she'd been

born to gossip. Communicating tidbits was Donna's lifetime mission, ergo, Carly was certain Donna would love to hear the news she was aching to deliver.

Donna was the kind of effective tidbit-spreader who could make something as inconsequential as someone spilling coffee into an important worldwide event. She could turn Carly's words into official, dramatic, highlighting news that would be sure to spread fast and thoroughly throughout the whole state of Texas.

Before Carly even reached her, Donna was already looking up from her chair, grinning excitedly and getting way ahead of herself. Carly was fairly certain it must be physically straining for Donna to have to keep any amount of information to herself.

"Hey, Carly. You look awfully cheery today. Went shopping or what? Frannie did, she bought her red shoes on sale. You see them? Say, did you hear Rock asked Georgina to the anniversary dinner?"

"Yes, I heard, but I have an even better one for you, Donna! You won't even believe this!" Carly cupped Donna's ear and told her a little something she knew would make her coworker's gossip-loving day, if not her year.

Donna's brown eyes widened and even the ends of her limp auburn hair seemed to curl up in excitement. "No!"

Carly took a step backward and nodded seriously. "Yes."

"You know for a fact?"

Carly continued to nod, pursing her lips in a look that was dead serious. "Uh-huh."

"And do you mean fruit-soft or totally gelatinlike soft?"

"He can't get it up, *period*. It's soft, Donna. Really soft. And really *tiny*."

"That is such a waste!" Donna cried, smacking a hand on her desk in emphasis, letting the world know how furious she was at the injustice of it all.

Carly kept on nodding, her expression pained as she pretended to share Donna's distress over the news.

Donna bent forward to whisper, "Umm, Carly, do you think I could tell Ginger?"

In a motherly way, Carly patted Donna's shoulders, really feeling for her. "Why sure, sweetheart, you go right ahead. We should warn as many female coworkers as we can. We wouldn't want them to get their hopes up or anything!"

Whirling on her heel with a gloating smile, Carly finally headed toward her workstation just as she caught sight of the departmental manager bending down with a grimace, staring closely at Alex's computer screen.

Alex was nowhere in sight.

Carly truly hoped he was enjoying playing ball. As for herself, she realized she might actually enjoy playing fetch with him. A lot.

* * * * *

"But I told you already, I'm not buying that stupid shit!" Alex cried, thrusting his hands in the air. He'd only explained to the boss ten times already. Jeez!

"Alex." The boss sighed in exasperation. He was clutching a manila folder in both hands and although he was outwardly calm, there was a steely glint in his dark gray eyes. "We don't mind if you need a little help. God knows we can't all be perfect. What you do with your personal life is of no concern to us. What we *do* expect is for you to keep your sex issues out of the office. Are we clear?"

"Someone set me up, Roy," Alex said, scowling. "If there's a gifted man in that respect, it's me! Christ, I'm a hot-damned stud! My cock barely fits my pants. Seriously!"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," Roy said, waving the manila folder in the air as he crossed the conference room toward exit.

Alex halted him midway, his hand on his shoulder. "You're not telling anyone about this, are you?"

The boss met Alex's worried gaze and sighed again. Roy was a fairly reasonable middle-aged man, except when it came to his ties, which gave new meaning to the term "fashion statement". His ties *literally* stated something, most times in bold letters that

could easily be read from a block away. Today he happened to be wearing a solid black one with bold gray letters that proudly shouted, "I'M THE BOSS. WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?"

Alex knew he was treasured in this company. His ideas had filled Yoodle's coffers with hundreds of millions in screaming liquid cash. Yet damn, one could never be too sure. He let out the breath he'd been holding when Roy finally said, "No. This is between you and me, Alex. But it better not happen again. Not all bosses might be as understanding. It's important for you to realize that you *could* lose your job over this."

"Roy, you have to believe me. I don't need that sort of shit—honest! By the way, that it some tie you've got there."

Harrumphing him for his bullshit and brushing past him, Roy reached the glass door in three long strides, his hand pausing on the chromed handle. "Alex, you're my best creative mind. Believe me—I don't give a shit. Just keep your pants on and your interests at home. If it had been anyone else but you, you know damned well I'd have fired him no matter what." And with that he pulled the door open and left Alex glowering after him.

Shit. Now what?

Okay. Deep breath.

There was no reason to worry. No one in the office was going to know about this. It was between him and Roy and it was staying that way. Plus, his colleagues had much more important things to do than worry about him and his dick. Thank god.

Shaking his head ruefully, Alex slowly made his way back to his workstation, suddenly noticing there was an eerie silence in the workspace, disturbed only by low, snickering noises.

Lifting his head, he suddenly realized everyone—and that meant every single one of the fifty-four people on the freaking floor—was looking at him as if he'd grown another appendage down there. All eyes present were settled on his crotch and it made

him extremely self-conscious, because the looks in them sort of implied...well, they sort of said...in fact, if Alex didn't know better...

"Hey, mini-man," a female voice said from somewhere.

"Must be really tough to walk with a pea between your legs," a guy walking past him laughed.

Were they speaking to him? Alex glanced around for a full minute, downright confused and troubled by how fucking fast the confidential news had spread. Then he saw *her*—and promptly forgot everything else.

Carly Sanders. In sleek black slacks and a sexy cheetah-print button shirt, with her long blonde hair falling past her shoulders and held back by a sleek, satiny red band framing the face of a live, flesh and blood Venus. Winged eyebrows, full pouty lips set in a perfect oval-shaped face with a rounded little chin and a nose that perked up with an attitude. Walking "the walk"—that amazing walk only she could do—with the gentle sway of her hips and long, sure strides. He could almost hear the classical music in the background as she walked "the walk" down the aisle and straight at him—no bullshit. Straight at him.

Alex's heart began to pound against his rib cage. *God, please, please don't let Carly Sanders know about this. Not her. Please, please, please,* Alex prayed.

Her magnetic gaze suddenly latched onto his and Alex felt the air vacate his lungs completely. Now that was exactly why it was so damned hard to look at her. It was as if every living inch of him couldn't take it—the pain of just looking at her. But then it was also hard *not* to look at her. Who'd be stupid enough to miss out on a rainbow, a comet, on everything breathtaking and beautiful and rare? What kind of schmuck would turn away from her? Just *look* at her, damn it!

Carly Sanders, tall and slender and curvy, walking slowly—sexily—toward him, using those breathtaking emerald green eyes to look straight into his blue ones and silently, eloquently let him know...

Oh. My. God. There was no mistaking the look in her eyes. She wanted him. No shit, she did!

His cock rose to red alert.

His jeans felt mighty uncomfortable. *Down, solider.*

Damn, she was only a few feet away, and Alex truly doubted if he'd be able to talk properly with that hairball in his throat. Shit, shit, double shit.

"Hey." Her smile was sultry, her awesome, luscious lips curved at the ends.

"Hey."

His shoulders stiffened when she slowly reached out and circled the top button of his shirt with her fingertip. "So. Have any plans for the anniversary dinner, Callahan?"

Holy crap. She was going to ask him. Holy shit—what would he say? It was impossible to control the way the blood flushed down his body in a torrent, all of it settling uncomfortably in his cock. If someone had just grabbed his nuts and twisted them, it would've hurt less. "Um. No."

She made a low guttural sound deep in her throat, a sound she must make when coming. The sound traveled down his spine until it zapped him on the balls, making him even more uncomfortable—like that was possible at this point. Stepping so close her breasts were almost crushing against his chest, Carly inched her face toward his. "Want to come with me?"

This had to be a wet dream, because her lips were less than an inch away from his and all he could do was stare down at them, cross-eyed and horny as hell. This couldn't be happening—he was just not that lucky. "I guess I'm, uh, free," he said in a voice that could only belong to the world's most stupid, frail, weak little idiot.

"Hmmm. You know what a woman like me wants from a man like you, don't you?" When he didn't reply and just stared at her like a love-struck fool, she smiled a sexy smile. "Be sure to bring enough plastics, big boy."

Plastics? Big boy? This couldn't be real. No. It couldn't be. He had to hear it again, otherwise he would never believe his dream had come true.

His voice was so dry and so thick it barely got past his lips. "Would you, um, care to be more specific, Carly?"

She threw her head back and laughed, the sound as sensual as the rest of her.

Alex stared down at the graceful curve of her neck and had to use every ounce of willpower not to run his tongue down the length of her delectable, swanlike throat.

"Oh, Callahan." Fixing her eyes on his again, she sobered. "Yes, I can definitely be more specific. Care to meet me at my place tonight to find out?"

No way! This was the moment he'd been dreaming of for as long as he could remember. This was *the* dream, *the* moment, *the* woman he'd lusted after for ages. This was *the* frigging climax of a frustrating, tense, three-year-old imaginary romance. And he could think of nothing witty to say! All he could do was stand there and stutter. "I-I'd love to."

"Good. My address is on a Post-it in your top drawer, next to your Viagra pills." Moving forward, she planted a soft kiss on his cheek, sending jolts of heat down to his crotch. Then she shifted those plush, glossy lips to his ear, her voice sending tingles all the way to his toes when she whispered, "Bye."

"Um, bye."

Alex stared blankly at her retreating back. It took him several long, interminable seconds to finally register a particular word she'd mentioned.

Viagra?

Alex didn't take Viagra. Alex was a man's man—he was twenty-eight years old, for god's sake. Plus, he was wearing a huge hard-on right now with no one's assistance except maybe Carly's, which was certainly proof enough of his virility.

He scowled as he marched toward his desk and pulled out the drawer. Taking the Post-it and sticking it into his jeans pocket, he frowned down at the bottle of Viagra, so

innocently lying there—in *his* freaking drawer. Grabbing it, he lifted it up for everyone to see.

“Whoever put this in my desk is a dead man!” he shouted.

Usually people were shit-scared of Alex when he was pissed. But now...

Everyone burst out laughing. His nearby buddy grimaced. “Alex, for the love of Christ, put that away, man.”

Chapter Two

Carly set the plain brown shopping bag on her bed and quickly began to empty its contents. Whip. Pink fur handcuffs. Another set of pink fur handcuffs. A brand-spanking new, state-of-the-art, great-looking dildo in a soft pink color, with a mushroom head and balls the size of genetically altered apples.

Fascinating!

Madam Kukoo said it was just like the real thing, but Carly had never seen anything this big. The few guys she'd dated never seemed to make it to the six-inch mark, and that was when hard. When soft, she recalled their cocks looked like tiny pink buttons, barely peeking out from the mat of hair between their legs.

Pushing that less-than-welcome thought aside, she continued with her thorough inspection of her brand-new sex toys.

Feather duster. French maid costume. Whipped cream. Porn videos. Scarf. Blinders. Porn magazine. Love potion from Kukoo. And...card?

Carly stared at the tarot card. Two of Wands.

The picture portrayed an elegantly dressed man glancing toward a blue horizon, as if he were contemplating something of utmost importance. He stood as tall and proud as the two sleek poles rising beside him. Holding on to a pole with one hand, he held a large globe in the other, as if the whole world was sitting in his capable hand. Turning the card around, Carly found a note posted to the back, scribbled in a hurry no doubt, by Madam Kukoo.

Thought you might want your card.

It's time to make a choice. Time to follow your instincts. Let your dreams take flight and take the world in your hands. Just two drops of the sex potion and you'll see how easy this will be!

Love, Kukoo

Carly smiled at the note, feeling somewhat encouraged by it as she set it down on the nightstand next to the Two of Wands.

Madam Kukoo was her friend, who also happened to be the head astrologer and tarot reader at Yoodle. She was in charge of the free online horoscopes and also did personal natal charts and tarot readings for a small Yoodle fee.

The madam—a free-spirited, red-haired beauty with sharp violet eyes and posture fit for royalty—was barely in her thirties, and although she was a woman who firmly believed in enjoying life as it came, she possessed a calm knowledge and emotional sensitivity most commonly found in someone far older. Her name was actually Katherine, but everyone knew her by her artistic name, Madam Kukoo. She was a dear, and although she might seem kinky and strange to the more conservative types, Kukoo was the best a friend could get. Aside from being fun, open and honest, she possessed that rare, precious gift called *listening*, and Carly had desperately needed someone to talk to—and to accompany her on the mind-boggling excursion of sex toy shopping...

By the time Carly met Kukoo outside the sex shop, she'd already listened to Callahan's hateful words a million times in her head, and each time she did, she found herself getting even more fired up. Still, she couldn't help but wonder if she was overreacting, like she usually did thanks to her renowned Sanders temper. A temper her father had pegged down to perfection, and which her mother hadn't been able to live with save for the first two years of their brief, torrid marriage.

Carly didn't want to do anything she might later regret. After all, she wasn't so heartless. She wasn't so full of herself like Callahan. Instead of taking a stand she could simply...ignore him. Like she always did.

Oh, but she'd die before she let him get away with this!

"This is it," Kukoo said with a smile as she pushed on the glass door. All kinds of bells and horns chimed and clinked as it opened, kindly announcing to everyone that Carly and Kukoo had arrived at the sex shop.

Wincing at the sounds, Carly followed Kukoo inside, grateful to find no other shoppers around.

The shop was a paradise of kink, with pictures of boobs and butts and cocks just about everywhere on the walls. Mannequins covered in shiny black-patent leather stood at the far end of the room, while the front was stacked with shelves proudly displaying all things naughty. A balding middle-aged man was leaning behind the register, courageously wearing a partly open blue button shirt that revealed a very unappealing male chest with an inordinate amount of brown hair. While absently twirling a finger around one of his chest curls, he was flipping through the pages of one of the establishment's most colorful products with avid interest.

"Maybe we should leave," Carly suddenly whispered.

"Will you look at this?" Kukoo exclaimed, heading to one of the taller shelves and pulling down a huge phallus the size of Carly's whole arm and almost the width of her thigh.

Carly's eyes widened, a tremulous smile on her lips. "I'll bet that'll cheer me up."

Kukoo smiled and gently patted her cheek. "The only thing this'll get you is killed. You don't really want to go there. Now *this* is what I'm talking about. Just the perfect size," Kukoo said, setting down Carly's would-be murderer and pulling out another, less dangerous one.

"Perfect size" seemed mighty huge to Carly, and still seemed a little too threatening. Yet she couldn't keep her eyes off the thing. It was such a mighty cock. "Fine. Okay. Let's go now," she said, desperate to leave the place pronto.

Kukoo quickly caught her by the sleeve and dragged her farther along the aisle, grabbing any and all objects that caught her attention and stacking them into Carly's arms. "Hold this. And this. And this too."

Carly stared down wide-eyed at the rapidly growing pile then up at Kukoo, her face filled with concern. The load was quickly getting heavy and she truly doubted spending a whole month's salary on sex toys was necessary. "I don't really need all this, Kukoo. I just want..." Glancing past her shoulder, making sure the man behind the register was still under boob-hypnosis, she added, "I just want two of those—yes, the handcuffs. No, not those, the pink ones."

"Oh, the fur ones!" Kukoo grinned, grabbing a pair in each hand and dumping them into her arms. "Now you're talking."

"And the blinders," Carly added with growing enthusiasm.

"Yes, ma'am," Kukoo said excitedly, snatching up the cutest pink blinders and smacking them face-up on top of the pile.

"What about this?" Kukoo asked, pressing a sexy French maid costume to her body and batting her eyelashes. "*Parlais français, Monsieur Callahan?*"

Carly nodded eagerly. "Wee."

"It's *oui*, Carly."

"Whatever." Carly was smiling now, already visualizing herself miraculously speaking perfect French while doing all things Continental to Monsieur Callahan. All for the sole purpose of torturing him, of course.

Piling the costume in Carly's arms, Kukoo winked at her. "Alex is in for a real treat tonight."

The mere mention of his name made every inch of Carly's body grow tense. "I'm not giving him a treat, Kukoo. It's a lesson."

"Oh?"

At Kukoo's apparent disbelief, Carly thought it proper to remind her. "For the way he spoke of me."

Kukoo absently tapped a finger to her lips, returning her attention to the naughty items on display. "Well, what did you expect? He's a man, Carly, he can't help himself. They do that sometimes — they brag."

"But he's lying! How could he spread all those lies about me?" Carly cried, feeling really miserable now.

"That was just his imagination getting the best of him," Kukoo said reassuringly. "We all know Alex is pretty darned gifted in that area."

Biting her lower lip, Carly eyed her friend's profile with worry. "Kukoo, what would *you* do?"

If there was something unnerving about Kukoo, it was her know-it-all violet eyes, which now made Carly extremely uncomfortable as they landed on her. "I'd definitely give him something to talk about," Kukoo solemnly said.

"Good."

"Maybe a black eye?"

"Great!"

"Or how about blue balls?"

Carly almost squealed in delight. "You really are a mind-reader, aren't you?"

The madam burst out laughing. Stepping behind her and grabbing her shoulders, Kukoo slowly guided her toward the register. "I wish I could turn him into a toad for you, Carly, but I actually think he's kind of sweet."

"Callahan, *sweet?*" she asked the whole store, then glared at Kukoo past her shoulder.

"Yes, sweet, Carly," Kukoo stressed, admonishing her with a look. "He's one of the nicest guys I know. I can't see why you refuse to admit it. He's always helping out everyone and is really quite charming. And I'm not saying this because he's gorgeous, because he is, but to me it's something...deeper. I'm not that stupid to think looks are all that matter, and most women aren't either."

Carly was certain they weren't speaking of the same person. Call Callahan cocky, call him smart, call him selfish, arrogant or killer gorgeous, but *sweet*? She didn't even realize she was crushing the toys until her arms began to ache in protest. "Please don't defend him to me. I know exactly what I heard. He's a bona fide liar!"

At the quivering passion in Carly's words, Kukoo smiled knowingly, halting before the register. "Okay," she said as she carefully began to set the toys one by one beside the register, blowing back a stray strand of hair that dangled over the tip of her nose.

Carly frowned, lost in thought while Kukoo finished unloading the toys onto the counter. "I swear at this moment nothing could bring me as much pleasure as giving Callahan a sip of his own poison!"

"Just screw him and get it over with, I say," the man behind the cashier said.

Carly turned to stare at him with big, wide eyes, completely appalled by the nerve of him, but Kukoo was much more diplomatic. She smiled at him. "You seem to know your business pretty well, mister."

The man grunted, knocking his knuckles on his head, implying there was some kind of intelligence lurking under all that shiny, bald skin. "Well, hell, I know a desperate look when I see one," he proudly explained.

As if in accord, both his and Kukoo's gazes suddenly landed on Carly, and the concerned looks in them greatly offended her.

"Can we pay already?" she asked.

"Sure you can," the man offered, ringing every single toy with the speed of a tortoise, his eyes fixed on her. He seemed to have know-it-all eyes too. "So you're going to fuck him or what?"

Carly fisted her hands at her sides. "No, I'm not. I don't even like the guy."

He stifled a yawn with great effort. "Uh-huh. And I don't like my job, either."

Then he laughed at himself when no one else did – maybe because he wasn't even funny!

The man sure needed to learn some manners. But Carly wasn't going to seduce *him* to give him a lesson. Instead, she ignored him completely, turning her attention back to Kukoo. "I just need to show him I'd *never* sleep with him, even when I have the chance. Someone should set him straight, Kukoo."

Kukoo took her shoulders and gently squeezed. "Then do so."

"I am," Carly declared. "I will! But please tell me this will work, Kukoo?" she urged, her eyes searching her friend's face as if she had all the answers—which was spooky because most times she did.

"Look, I don't really know what to say. Let me pick out a card, see what's in store for you, hmm?" Kukoo reached into her tote. "You know I never leave home without my lucky deck," she said with a smile, but her smile soon faded when her lucky deck seemed to have up and walked out of the store. "Where are you?" Kukoo cried, frowning down at the interior of the bag. Within seconds her complexion paled, her brow creasing with worry. Frantically, she began to empty the contents of the bag, all her possessions crashing down on the counter, every single one of them ranging from strange to stranger to strangest, until she finally found her deck. "Jackpot."

"Whew," the man said, relieved.

Carly was torn between laughing at him or shouting, because he was really getting on her nerves. Instead, she focused on Kukoo as she briskly shuffled the deck and pulled out a card.

Kukoo stared at it for the longest time, making Carly's heart completely stop beating.

"Aha."

Carly held her breath. "What?"

Kukoo pursed her lips. "Interesting."

"What? Tell me."

Kukoo nodded slowly. "Very, very interesting."

"Kukoo!"

"Yeah, Kukoo, come on!" the man cried, the suspense obviously killing him too.

Kukoo sighed and dramatically turned the card so Carly could see it. "Two of Wands."

"And?" Carly prodded impatiently, crossing her arms and tapping her foot on the floor.

"Means it's time to follow your instincts. A time for new ideas. Time to take the world by storm and show who you really are. Time to make a choice and to get recognition and respect."

"Really?" Carly's shoulders sagged with relief, for she'd momentarily feared she'd gotten some sort of ill-bearing card. She hadn't had a particularly lovely day, after all.

Kukoo's smile was wide and bright, which Carly took as a good omen. "Well, then, I guess it's destined. It's time for new ideas, Carly, and more importantly, a time to follow your instincts and make a move."

Carly nodded, her determination completely renewed and reinvigorated by Kukoo's words.

"Now that's a great fucking card!" the man said, clapping vigorously. "Wanna do mine?"

Kukoo pursed her lips and pointed at the goods he was ringing. "Wanna give us all this stuff for free?" At the man's blank expression, Kukoo smiled. "I didn't think so."

Once outside the store, while walking down the block toward her car, Carly suspected everyone passing by knew her big brown shopping bag was loaded with sex toys. The elegant young man who smiled knowingly, the woman pushing the stroller whose eyes quickly darted away from hers. They all knew she'd just spent a small fortune on sex toys. It was really, really embarrassing.

For a moment, she even had a mad urge to stop a passerby and spill it all out, explaining how she didn't really need the sex toys, how this was all just part of a master plan, a way to clear her name because some *guy* told everyone she was a slut.

It was Kukoo who suddenly distracted her, thrusting a special potion into the bag and quickly sending her home with a hug and her best wishes.

"Something good will come out of this, Carly," she assured.

It sure will, Carly thought presently. And it's going to feel just great when it does.

Carly was no shrinking violet, and even if Alex thought she'd screw someone as gross as him, she was going to teach him otherwise. It was about time someone put him in his place, and now that it was disgustingly apparent nobody else would – because he was so *sweet* – it was up to Carly to do it.

She seemed to be the only person in the whole Yoodle complex who wasn't kissing his ass all the time. It made Carly sick to her stomach to watch all her colleagues dote on him, vying for his attentions like sorry, starved little pets. She had no intention of joining that club. To have to listen to the girls fight over whether he was asking one of them out was just plain infuriating. Carly couldn't even participate in such discussions, seeing as how the man flirted with everyone except her. "You see Alex today? He looks so hot," one never failed to say. Carly didn't think he was hot, and he wasn't cool either. He was a liar. He lied with his eyes and he *certainly* lied with his mouth.

She clearly remembered him uttering another lie only last month, right to her face, after he'd taken the liberty of inviting himself to her table. Only to disturb her thoughts, she was sure. To keep her mind off her job. So he could be employee of the year and *she* couldn't.

She'd been calmly sitting at one of the small round tables at the Yoodle café when she heard that disarmingly sensual male voice say, "May I join you, Carly?"

Carly's head whipped up and she felt her breath catch when she realized it was him. Frankly, she had no desire to be "joined" by him. But no matter how much he annoyed her, she wasn't ill-mannered, so she nodded.

Then he smiled that hope-you-die-when-you-see-this smile that would've made her legs wobble if she'd been standing up. As he lowered every inch of his lean muscle to the chair, he set down his water bottle and linked his hands over the table, his piercing gaze fixed on hers. Carly couldn't tolerate looking at him so she'd stared at his hands, but they were too indecent, too bare, too tanned and raw, so she decided her club sandwich was much less threatening. It was beautiful. It had two slices of bread, and several slices of Swiss cheese and even some bacon...

"I'll leave if you want me to," he said softly, his voice oozing sex appeal and self-confidence.

"Oh no, I don't mind you at all," Carly said, keeping her gaze averted from his.

Dreadful, riotous feelings settled in her stomach at his nearness, and within seconds she found she'd completely lost her appetite. She was so grateful when a third voice approached that she almost sighed in relief.

"Is this chair taken?"

Carly glanced up to see the youngest Yoodle member, the twenty-three-year-old Frannie Williams, standing besides them with a tray. Her dark brown hair was pulled back in a ponytail and her eyes were fixed on Alex. Of course to her, Carly was just another piece of furniture at the cafe.

Not missing a beat, Alex quickly turned on the charm. "I've been holding it just for you, beautiful," he said smoothly, pulling out the chair for her, smiling a killer smile.

Frannie giggled and set down her tray. "Alex, you're always such a flirt," she said prettily.

His rumbling laugh vibrated through Carly's body. "But you like it, don't you?"

"Sort of," Frannie admitted.

Carly was going to get sick.

"Say, I heard you're working on the map thing," she told him.

"Yep."

"Is it true I'll be able to access it through my cell phone and get verbal instructions?"

"Very true," Alex confirmed.

"Wow. How do you come up with so many ideas, Alex?" she asked, and Carly thought the only thing missing from her open reverence was a genuflection and chant.

For a brief moment her words of praise lingered in the air, until finally Alex spoke, his voice dropping an octave. "I have a muse."

Frannie laughed sexily, obviously thinking *she* was it. "Oh Alex," she said, sighing. "I heard you're getting the Yoodle Creative Award this year."

Carly stared hard at her French fries as if they were the most riveting things she'd ever seen. Alexander Callahan had won that coveted prize for the last two years in a row. Now a third time? It just flat out ticked her off. Of course, the man was so full of himself he probably thought he was the only one who deserved it. And apparently, the bosses agreed.

"Really? Well, I think Carly should win."

What?

"What?" Frannie asked, reading Carly's mind.

"You heard me. I think Carly should win."

Surprised, Carly leaned back on her chair and stared directly into Alex Callahan's electrifying blue eyes. She was surprised to find he was not smirking, not leering and definitely not laughing. He looked dead serious, his face so gorgeous, so damned handsome it just pissed her off.

Carly didn't know what to make of his comment, but she reminded herself that he was her nemesis, and in office politics, it wasn't unusual to plan someone's downfall with a wide and friendly smile upon your face. In fact, it was the rule.

She smiled at him icily. "I'm surprised you expect anyone to believe that, Callahan."

Frannie's eyes widened, probably because she was one of his newest groupies. Groupies never talked to their Majesty that way, and she obviously hadn't gotten the memo that Carly was *not* a member of their pitiful little club.

Unaffected by her words, Alex calmly mimicked her posture, folding his arms across his chest and leaning back on his chair, eyeing her intently.

"Why would I be lying, Carly?"

Unfortunately, him being such a popular guy, loved and adored by everyone, he was briskly approached and slapped on the back by Mitchell Thorpe before she could answer.

"Ready to get your ass beaten at Ping-Pong?"

Alex smiled listlessly. "I don't think so, buddy."

"Five bucks says I win."

"You already owe me twenty, Mitch."

Mitchell laughed and squeezed Alex's shoulder. "Fine, we'll make it twenty. If I win, we'll call it even."

"If I win, you'll owe me forty," Alex countered.

Mitch airily waved his hands. "Hey, I don't mind, I don't mind."

But those eyes, bluer than the Caribbean, still remained on Carly, unsettling her in the deepest of ways and in the tightest, wettest of places.

Alex obviously didn't want to play. After all, what's twenty bucks compared to the priceless way he must feel when tormenting her?

Carly was not in the least bit inclined to give him that sort of satisfaction, so she arched a sleek eyebrow. "Wouldn't want to keep your public waiting now, would you?"

He stared at her for a long moment before pushing back his chair. "Fine. I'll play," he said, his eyes never wavering from hers. "And I'll win."

After he left to fill his coffers with yet another forty dollars, Carly unwittingly engaged in her own sport, competing ruthlessly with her sandwich for soggiest bottom. Needless to say, Carly won. Her prize was complete and total embarrassment!

Carly scowled at the memory. Tonight—tonight there was only one competition, one mission, one goal, and it was one to make her proud. Tonight was payback time. For every time he'd smiled his smile and outright breathed her air.

After arranging her brand-new sex toys on the bed in a single straight line as if she were marching them off to war, Carly strode toward her closet and moved onto the next dilemma. Her costume.

She needed to look sexy. Hooker hot. She didn't *do* hooker hot, so she really didn't have a lot of options. The sexy little French number she'd just purchased was really not an option until she got the night going first. Perhaps she should wear a lacy black bra, a pair of skinny jeans and a sexy, sheer top?

Her master plan for the evening was really very simple—though it would require some effort and creativity on her part. Nevertheless, success would be so sweet that she was willing to make a sacrifice. She was, after all, a creative Yoodle mind, and ever since she'd heard Callahan's horrible words this morning, Ideas had begun to tumble into her brain and were still continuing to do so by the dozen.

She'd gotten a million-dollar one already when she'd suddenly realized, after eavesdropping on the men this morning, that people actually enjoyed sharing juicy tidbits. People liked to express themselves. They liked to gossip and outright slander some poor unaware woman who hadn't done anything to any of them. Apparently Yoodle was just the place to do all that.

So she had decided she would propose that Yoodle create the ultimate revenge tool. E-Insults—free e-cards with the sole purpose of giving a little verbal payback to all the cheaters, frauds and liars. The ‘Net was filled with scum, and the Yoodle search engine would no doubt be swarmed with victims eager to send a few well-chosen words to their bashers. One didn’t necessarily have to curse to get revenge on someone for an offense, and she could ask Rock to create a fitting melody—perhaps similar to *The Twilight Zone* score—to play when an insult was clicked on in the recipient’s inbox.

The Idea was truly and literally inspired. She had no doubt she was going to get big points when she proposed it to the bosses, who appreciated sarcastic humor. Maybe next year she’d get that cursed award herself.

As for her inspiration, Mister Full-of-it Callahan...

She knew just the thing.

She would have to kiss him and touch him and maybe even—god!—feel him up. Not that she wanted to, of course, but it was completely necessary. Then she’d tie him to the bed with the pink handcuffs. Put on the pink blinders. Make him think she was almost coming just by looking at his big old fat face—then take pictures of him. Naked and tied to the bed with everything pink. It would make a very artful image, she was sure. Everyone at the office would love it as a desktop background.

Though personally, the last thing Carly wanted on her computer was a picture of Alex Callahan.

Of course, right after taking this gruesome horror picture, she’d completely ignore him. Leave him tied to the bed for a little while, deliver a few blows to his Herculean pride. Downsize his ego. Tell him he wasn’t doing it for her. Maybe even insult his penis—that would really hurt a man like Callahan.

Make him hot—then let him rot.

That was The Plan.

It was just like Alex “The Einstein of Sex” Callahan had said this morning. Carly sure knew how to screw—and she was going to screw him big time tonight.

* * * * *

Alex drove to Carly's place later that evening with a dozen red roses as company. For some reason, everyone else on the freeway seemed hell-bent on delaying him, and it made him fist his hands on the steering wheel and swallow back a few colorful words. The old lady driving in a zigzag pattern a few feet away from him was begging for a permanent visit to the netherworld. She shouldn't be driving at her age anyway. Judging by her difficulty staying in the same lane, Alex was dead certain she was drunk.

A strange sense of elation rushed through his veins when he was finally able to pass her – miraculously surviving the ordeal – and when he did, he decided nothing and no one was going to stop him now, much less something as trifling as the speed limit.

If he didn't know better, he'd think he was a smitten, insecure teenager out to lose his virginity. Not that he was a virgin, yet curiously, he felt just as nervous as that day when the much older, much more experienced Cherry Donatello dropped down his pants in her father's garage and blew the hell out of him.

Drawing in a deep breath, he rammed his foot on the pedal as he conjured up a visual of himself transforming into a man of steel. He had to be strong – a man's man. He couldn't outright let Carly Sanders know that she could, if she pretty much wanted to, wrap him around her little pinky. That just wasn't smart for a man to do on a first date. One had to preserve one's manliness, after all. "Be the flame, not the moth," as Casanova would've said.

But then, Casanova had never met Carly Sanders.

She was hot. *She* was the flame, and that left Alex the measly, unattractive role of the moth. But hell, just to be near her, he'd be anything. Carly Sanders was a living, walking, breathing wet dream. Sleek and sexy, with delicate, exotic features, breasts made to fill a man's hands and hips born to rock and sway above him. And her mouth! Dear god, he could swear it had been *made* for pleasuring. Just the sight of her lush, full lips made Alex wonder if the ones down south were just as pink, just as plump as

those above. It was an expedition he was more than eager to embark on when the time came.

The truth was, everything about Carly Sanders said “sex, sex, sex” and that red-hot temper of hers only shouted it louder. Hard-working, determined and passionate – that was Carly Sanders. And she was a real ball-zapper.

Like the time she insisted Yoodle should offer free emails. Alex had never seen someone fight so fiercely for something in his life. Even the five departmental managers combined didn’t stand a chance against her. They’d had to shell out millions and pray the traffic on the site would triple to help compensate for the expense – and it had not only tripled, it had increased tenfold.

Then there was that other kind of fire, the rare moments when she looked at him with sheer, sizzling lust, blazing so hot in her eyes it burned him to his soul. He could only wonder, even pray, that she would look at him like that tonight...

He’d been so lost in thought he nearly missed the highway exit to Carly’s. Spotting it almost too late, Alex quickly veered the car to his right, the move accompanied by the piercing noise of screeching tires and the shouts of some pissed-off driver who sent regards to Alex’s mother.

“Up yours,” Alex muttered.

He’d been a nervous wreck the whole day, and when he’d showered and changed an hour ago, he’d made a life-altering decision. One of the hardest of his life.

He’d decided – despite his dick’s contrary opinions – that he was *not* having sex with Carly tonight.

He wanted to, all right, but Alex wanted to treat her like she deserved to be treated. She wasn’t like the Pizza, or any of the other women Alex had dated throughout the years.

Carly was special – and Alex was crazy about her.

Hell, the whole office was crazy about her, but Alex efficiently took care of *that* inconvenience this morning. He couldn't stand to hear the men talk about her anymore. Couldn't stand to listen to them go on and on about what she'd said that morning, where they wanted to take her – or *how* they wanted to take her.

Alex was going mad-jealous insane.

He'd needed to make a claim on her. His friends would stay away if they knew Carly was his, and he'd had to do it. Had to let them know they should back off, giving himself the fucking space he needed to make his move. True, he'd gotten a bit carried away. All the thoughts of officially marking her as his had really inspired him. His comments may have been less than proper. But Carly was his, damn it! Besides, she'd never know.

He'd been planning to ask her out all these years but for some reason he kept stalling, somehow sensing if he messed up, a smart woman like Carly would never give him a second chance. Lord knows, he'd been having a hard time getting a first one. Though there had been opportunities – which he could've seized if he hadn't been such a goddamn sissy.

He'd been presented with the perfect one just over two months ago, when they'd gotten stuck in the Yoodle elevator for over an hour. Alone – just the two of them.

An act of god, to be sure.

But Alex had been so damned nervous he'd pressed himself all the way toward the opposite side of the elevator. Carly had shot him a puzzled look, as if she'd expected him to do something other than get as far away from her as he could. Noticing her amusement, he'd tried his best to appear confident and calm and even made a valiant effort at small talk. He succeeded only for a couple minutes, being it was far more difficult than he'd anticipated, since every word either of them spoke seemed to have a double entendre. Like how *hard* it could be to fix an elevator. How *long* a thing like this would take. And was it *hot* or was it just them?

It wasn't them—it had only been *him*. Heating up the whole damned elevator like a boiler room.

He'd almost lost his footing when the heat finally got to Carly and she unbuttoned the top two buttons of her shirt, beads of sweat ambling down her throat and dipping into the cleft between her breasts. Alex recalled being dead certain the gas chamber would've been kinder to him than having to smell her unique, intoxicating scent for a whole hour. His cock had been so pained he'd almost convulsed.

The only comforting thought he'd had at the time was if he up and fainted, he'd probably get mouth-to-mouth from her. That thought alone made his thermostat hitch up another notch, and by the time they'd been let out by the technicians, he'd been drenched in sweat and boasting a hundred-pound cock that could've easily penetrated marble.

Thinking back on it, he knew he should've kissed her. He should've torn her clothes off and made wild, messy love to her right there—damn both their asses getting fired. He wanted her too much. At least he should've asked her out, but he'd been a coward.

He'd been scared of messing it up, of being dispatched with a heartbreaking “no thanks” and no more hope to hang on to. Because sex wasn't the only thing Alex wanted from Carly Sanders. He wanted far more than that.

When he finally knocked on her door at the luxurious apartment building, he drew in a shaky breath in an attempt to steady his heartbeat, reminding himself all he had to do was act cool and unaffected by her.

When the front door opened, Alex locked his jaw to keep it from falling all the way down to the floor.

She was wearing tight blue jeans and a sheer black top he could see right through, down to the black bra underneath.

Holy guacamole!

He stared and swallowed, clutching the roses to his chest while almost drooling at the sight of her. The silky bra followed the form of her perfectly rounded breasts and for a moment he felt jealous of it, touching her so intimately.

Under the sheer top, he could make out the enticing curve of her waist, the tempting little button low on her belly. Her hair was loose and wild, tumbling past her shoulders in long ribbons of gold. A slow, sensual smile curved her lips and her eyes, a jewel green, glowed with promise.

“Hello, Callahan,” she said, leaning against the doorframe with a smile.

There went his I-won’t-fuck-Carly plan.

Chapter Three

Carly never expected to feel so nervous.

But standing at the threshold dressed like a prostitute—and looking at Alexander Callahan standing motionless outside her door with a dozen red roses in his arms—made her knees sort of wobbly. Maybe it was his calendar-worthy face, or maybe it was the fact that he looked unfairly gorgeous in a pair of low-slung jeans and black polo top, with his blond hair slicked back and his eyes glittering like topaz.

His parents should've called him Adonis.

Adonis Callahan. From his sleek, low-set eyebrows, a darker shade than his hair, to his straight nose and aggressively virile jaw—which jutted out of his face and was partly responsible for the pair of sleek, shadowed slashes across his cheeks—he was too damned gorgeous to be a plain old Alex.

Then again, his parents should've called him Asshole.

Asshole Callahan.

Oh Lord. What was she doing?

Had she completely lost her nerve already? Shouldn't she have considered the fact that she may not—at all—have the guts to go through with The Plan? Not even with a part of it, much less the whole ill-conceived plot? And what sort of refund policy *did* the sex store offer anyway?

With her stomach clenching tightly, Carly stared back at him, not certain of what to do. Before she could yield to the impulse to slam the door in his face and run and hide, he moved forward and handed the roses to her. “Here,” he said, as if they were infected, and then helped himself into her home, walking with the haughty, arrogant air of the President.

He crossed the narrow entry hall as if it were something he did every day, pausing when he reached the living room and eyeing her colorful furniture in appreciation. His eyes skimmed over the deep wine-colored couch and the mustard yellow chairs sitting across from it. Between them, a heavy mahogany coffee table sat over a retro-style rug that featured an explosion of colors, somehow always managing to remind Carly of the Big Bang and the creation of Earth.

"I like it. I like it very much."

He spoke the words slowly, as if he were saying something of grave importance. As if his opinion was the most important thing *ever* to Carly. Yeah, right, dodo!

Then again, it did make her feel just a tiny bit happy, if the flutters in her stomach were a reliable indication, that he found her décor pleasing.

What was she even thinking?

He was a liar, and he deserved what was coming. The flutters in her stomach were out of sheer, complete, total excitement at the prospect of proving all his fabricated stories false.

She had to focus. Focus on The Plan.

Stifling the urge to flat out scream at him for complicating her existence, she gritted her teeth and stormed into the kitchen, thrusting the roses into the sink.

If there was something certain in this uncertain world, it was that Carly could always count on Triple A Callahan – Alexander Adonis Asshole – driving her out of her sorry little mind.

Gripping the corners of the kitchen sink, she drew in a deep breath, remembering her plan. *Get him hot, then let him rot*, she told herself. He'd get his due, and Carly was going to give it to him good. She'd show him. Kukoo said so, the tarot card said so, and Carly said so too.

She could do this.

Taking another deep breath, she pursed her lips and poured some wine, then determinedly put two drops of the sex potion into his glass. Since she was so nervous, she decided she could use some of that as well, adding two drops to her own. Then, what the hell, she gave him two more, just because she was sure a man like him probably needed more than the average guy.

Pasting a calm smile on her lips, she strode back into the living room, the two crystal glasses in hand. He'd already helped himself to the sofa, plopped his feet on the coffee table and crossed his arms behind his head.

She tried not to be overwhelmed with annoyance at his I-am-King-so-hail pose, but it proved as futile as holding back the sarcasm from her voice. "Comfy?" she asked, her lips twitching to a sardonic smile as she handed him the glass.

"Yes. Very. Thanks," he said, straightening before taking the glass from her.

"How nice."

Smiling prettily, she lifted her drink to her lips while eyeing him above the rim, hoping to entice him to drink from his own.

Taking an innocent sip while embodying the very image of righteousness—like she'd *never* put anything in his drink—she was amazed she could keep her hands, heart and breathing steady.

Alex quickly downed his wine in several long gulps, setting the empty glass down on the table with a resounding thump.

Slowly finishing hers, Carly calmly and silently—no need to make a big ceremony off it like he had, of course—set her glass beside his.

As she rose slightly in an attempt to put some distance between them, Alex snatched her wrist to halt her, turning her to face him with a less-than-gentle jerk. "Hold on a sec," he said, his voice ruggedly male. Holding her breath, she forced herself to meet his gaze, so blue and bottomless.

It felt very much like snorkeling.

Snorkeling naked. In the deepest, bluest ocean. Without any oxygen tank at all.

Which was surely a lethal sport and a *very* dumb idea.

"What are you doing, Carly?" His voice was low and raspy, causing all sorts of trembles inside her. Had his eyes always been this blue? She was halfway to Tahiti by now.

"Nothing," she assured, feeling greatly uncomfortable by the fact that her breasts were nearly at his eye level and he was only a few feet away. Yet his piercing stare immobilized her. Drowned her.

"Nothing," he repeated, his hold slackening on her wrist while his thumb grazed her skin then slowly dipped into her palm, sending a jolt of nervousness down her spine. He was engulfing just about all of her air, for there was an uncomfortable lack of oxygen in the room and she had to make an extra effort not to fall to the floor.

Finally jerking her gaze from his hypnotic one, she tried to concentrate on the nice, insipid white wall behind him as his thumb circled the dent in the center of her palm. She might even describe the sensation as pleasing, if it weren't for the sudden zing that shot from her arm down to her sex, jolting her. "Would you like more wine, or m-maybe some water?" she blurted.

"That's not what I want and you know it."

Except for the slow, languid movements of his thumb against her palm, his body was so stiff he could've been carved out of stone. Yet sculptures didn't lie, did they?

They didn't fuck her hand with their thumbs, either.

Though she wasn't *really* looking there, she noticed how prominent and huge the bulge between his legs looked. His jeans fit him loosely around the waist, but they were very snug in that single most important area, serving to display the perfect rise of the goods underneath them with extreme accuracy. He appeared to be inordinately huge, so much so that she even wondered if it was real. Then she realized it might not be what she suspected at all. It might be a whole lot of other things. He could've crammed a full loaf of bread in there. Or a football. Or several pairs of socks. Hell, all those things.

Especially after the penis-enlarger stunt, when a walking, talking ego like Callahan would obviously want to prove his worth. He couldn't possibly be that big!

None-too gently, he pulled her an inch closer. Her breath caught in her throat when her knee bumped against the side of his thigh.

"Do you plan to explain to me why I'm here, Carly?" he asked, his gaze boring into hers.

This was going to be very, very difficult. She couldn't outright kiss him, even though he did have the hottest pair of lips—no, no, no! They weren't all that special. They were plump and sensual and chiseled to perfection, which was certainly nothing extraordinary. Besides, she couldn't kiss him now, not until the drops took effect. She needed their help with this. She couldn't do this alone!

When all she could do was focus on dragging air into her lungs while trying her damndest to yank her gaze away from his, he gently tugged on her hand and in a hot whisper that tingled over her skin, said, "Come here, Carly."

She was so *not* ready for that!

Quickly yanking free of his hold, she walked around the table, intent on putting a safe distance between them. His eyes followed her, piercing her to her bones until she felt so unsteady she had to sit on a nearby chair facing him. "Well," she said, staring blandly at him across the coffee table and crossing her legs in a supreme effort to appear cool and collected.

With a confident expression she'd studiously practiced a few hours ago, she arched her brows. "You sure you don't want some more wine?"

Resting his elbows on his knees, he linked his hands in between. There was a long, tense silence as he eyed her steadily, his jaw set firmly. It had always bothered her how he could be so smooth and flirty with everyone and so serious and solemn with her. "Just tell me this isn't a joke," he finally said.

She almost choked on her own saliva because that had *not* been part of The Plan. His having a brain and playing Dr. Freud with her had not been part of it at all. How the hell did he know?

Rising restlessly from her seat, she rounded and gripped the back of the chair—a poor substitute for throttling him. “No. Why would it be?” she countered, not even bothering to hide the annoyance from her voice. If Alex had expected her to sweeten her words with honey and a frivolous bat of her eyelashes then she was clearly not his girl—something she should be eternally grateful for.

Besides, this wasn’t a joke. This was revenge. It was justice.

Oh, bother what he thought, anyway! She wanted to get this over and done with as soon as possible, because her palms were sweating and her feet were shaking from sheer nervousness. Were the drops in effect yet, damn it?

“Look, Alex, we’ve been friends, right?” she asked, quickly interjecting, “Colleagues. Okay, competitors.”

He looked solemn as he regarded her, as if there was something he didn’t quite comprehend. “Yes,” he said cautiously. “But I figured...I mean, you said...” He cleared his throat. “You asked me to bring the, um...”

“Condoms. Yes. Did you?”

He shifted, looking uncomfortable, suddenly taking a small pillow from the couch and setting it atop his lap. “Um. No. Not that I don’t want to...you know...I just...” He sighed, rubbing his face with his hands for a brief moment before looking up at her again, his gaze dark and almost desperate. “I’m sure you didn’t mean that, Carly.”

“Why wouldn’t I mean it? You mean you thought I’d *lied*?” she asked, horrified at just how accurate an assessment the man could make.

He was deathly still, every muscle in his body emanating a tension that was so strained it was palpable, even from a distance. A muscle twitched in his jaw. “You tell me.”

She was not going to let him make her feel remorseful! Uh-uh, no way. This was all his doing. The law of cause and effect. Of course his crap talk this morning would have an effect and guess what? This was it, genius.

"I was completely serious...and I still am."

She had no idea what to do next, and apparently neither did he. She wondered if he was still breathing, he was so stiff.

When he didn't move a single muscle, she sighed dramatically, dismissing his accusations and, without even thinking, pulled the sheer black top over her head, flinging it to the floor. "I'm on the Pill anyway, so let's *not* let that stop us, shall we?" After this improvised statement, she finished by smiling a real dazzler, grateful to find the effects of it were exactly what she'd hoped for.

Alex's whole body jerked. One part of him *especially* so.

The cushion on his lap moved slightly upward, as if thrust by an unseen force of nature, a mountain of rioting goods maybe, and now it appeared to be sitting almost an inch over his body. His face reddened furiously and he slammed his hands on the cushion, forcing it back down.

In light of that event, Carly was certain she was about to faint because she was beginning to suspect Alex Callahan was not complete bullshit and maybe he *was* sort of a stud. Maybe he had a very big dick. A killer dick. Her mouth watered at the thought but she forced it out of her mind, trying to concentrate on her mission and getting on with The Plan.

Make him hot then let him rot.

Sighing, she planted her hands on her waist and tried not to wince at her next words. "So what do you say, Callahan? Should I call Gregory Hutchinson instead?"

He moved like a stroke of lightning. One second he muttered, "Shit," and the next he was at her side, crushing her body against his and locking his lips to hers.

Oh, he was bad.

Very bad.

His powerful, naughty tongue immediately took charge. It wouldn't take no for an answer, and with an easy thrust, penetrated her mouth completely, claiming it as his.

Carly kissed him back like a starved nymphomaniac slut—only for the sake of her master plot, of course. Rubbing her frigid sex against his body was actually part of The Plan. And so was sticking her tongue into his not-doing-anything-for-me mouth. If she felt dizzy and lightheaded it was only due to knowing that soon—very soon—Alex Callahan was going to get his due.

Her accelerated breathing had *nothing* to do with him.

She was totally immune to his hands as they fondled her breasts. In fact, aside from the disgusting tingles and the unbearable heat and the unwelcome havoc on her insides, she didn't feel a thing.

No fair! Now how was she supposed to remain unattached when he groaned like that? So low and deep and sensual, sending vibrations all the way down to her previously frigid, now strangely near-boiling-point sex.

Maybe Carly shouldn't win that creative award after all. She clearly didn't have much of an imagination, because she had never imagined that kissing Alex Callahan, or anyone at all, could be so utterly...amazing.

She knew she shouldn't be enjoying it but then she'd never imagined—duh!—he would feel this good, this big and warm and strong, and she had no idea he would taste so delicious. All right, she had wondered about it sometimes, but that was way back when she'd had the hots for him. Not now, when she was totally immune to him. Not after she'd heard what he'd said about her.

Oh god, she did *not* just whimper. Oh no! She did *not* just moan!

This was getting way out of hand.

She needed to think, to analyze. This was not proceeding the way she'd planned. She was supposed to be detached and calculating and something strange was making her the complete opposite.

Spreading her palms on his chest, she pushed him away, taking precious seconds to succeed. "Stop, Callahan...stop," she said urgently, desperately.

Swearing under his breath, he dropped his hands to his sides and took a step backward. "I'm sorry." Dropping his gaze to the floor, he shook his head, flexing his hands at his sides. "I shouldn't have done that."

Carly instantly regretted having pushed him away because now her body felt even worse. Hot and bothered and desperate. She now realized she was being frighteningly affected, in a bad way, by those extremely potent sex drops. This wasn't like her usual self at all. Now that she'd stopped him, all she felt was an aching emptiness and a surging need to pick up where they'd left off.

"Oh god," she breathed, for this hadn't been part of The Plan either.

Mistaking the desperate plea in her voice, he quickly lifted his hands and said, "I'll slow down, Carly, I promise."

Slow down? He couldn't move fast enough where she was concerned. Her body was getting intolerable and the room was growing hotter by the second.

She was sweaty and feverish and she could feel her whole body trembling with need. A hot and stinging pain clenched tightly between her legs, and she needed a new pair of panties.

Suddenly something had changed and Carly knew, without a doubt, that she wanted him. His hands, his mouth and his filthy, lying person all over her body.

Go figure.

Though she would have liked to think this grave tragedy wasn't her fault, she realized she'd been a fool to have taken the sex drops without realizing they would turn her into some kind of...sex fiend. An extremely horny one.

But she thought she was over this Callahan crush crap!

Oh, but she *was*! It was just those drops, making her crazy, making her body hurt.

Every inch of her seemed deeply afflicted. Among other things, her heart had dropped and was now pounding hard and fast in the very center of her sex. Even her mind was no longer coherent, for where it was usually filled with thoughts, now it was frighteningly blank and unfocused. All she knew was that more than anything else, she wanted his hands back on her body. His lips on hers and that yucky tongue inside her.

Oh no, what was happening to her?

Her chest heaved with each breath she took, and when Alex lowered his gaze and stared hungrily at her breasts, barely covered by the flimsy black bra, his face tightened with need. "I'd better go," he muttered.

"No!" What about The Plan? What about his hands on her body? His lips? Her sweet, coldhearted revenge?

She bravely met his gaze, a shiver running down her spine at the raw desire in his eyes. With a pained face, as if she were being forced to speak the words aloud, she breathed, "Kiss me...please just kiss me."

Her back smashed against the kitchen door when he crushed her body to his, gluing his lips to hers. He kissed her hungrily, desperately, while he filled his hands with her breasts, kneading and squeezing her flesh. The kitchen door had swung on its hinges with the impact and came back to slam her backside, flattening her against Alex's hard male body. Growling against her lips, he ground his cock against her lower belly. Carly didn't need to be a genius to realize that Alex Callahan was very, very gifted down there.

His greedy tongue filled her mouth as he cupped her bottom and lifted her. She coiled her legs around his hips when he tightened his grip on her butt and began to move her up and down, rubbing her sex tightly against his denim-clad erection.

Suddenly, the last words of the great Wicked Witch of the West came to mind, and all Carly could think of was, *I'm melting, oooh, oooh, I'm melting, I'm melting, I'm melting!*

She locked her ankles behind his butt and sank her hands into his hair, her concentration focused on the killer feel of that thick, ready cock scraping against her sex. Up and down, up and down.

He was just like a superhero, He-man and Superman and all of them combined. Strong and muscular and powerful, and Carly was completely overwhelmed by his strength, his passion. Heck, *her* passion. Those sex drops were making her embarrassingly horny. Though he certainly didn't seem to mind.

"I want you naked," he growled against her ear, the heat of his cock almost burning her cunt through the denim fabric. "I want you naked *now*."

This was not the time to argue.

In fact, Carly couldn't remove her clothes fast enough. The nanosecond it took her to jump off him and jerk off her bra seemed eternal. And so was the other it took to push her jeans and panties to the floor. Just as hurriedly, Alex yanked off his polo shirt and unzipped his jeans.

As soon as they were both naked, their lips fused together once more. The engorged, bulbous head of his cock pressed and rubbed against her bare stomach when he pressed her body against his. Splaying her hands on his skin, she glided her fingers along the flat, muscled planes of his chest, marveling at the silken smoothness of him. Gently sliding his big, powerful hands down her back, he cupped her buttocks and crushed the flesh into his palms as his lips closed down on her lower lip and nipped and pulled and sucked. She moaned in pain, in agony, in surrender.

A low rumbling sound tore from his lips when she dipped a hand between their warm, naked bodies, lower, lower, searching for...bingo.

He beat her record by a long shot. He was definitely eight, maybe even nine inches.

A ruler would've been great right then, just to be sure.

Hot, tingling thrills rushed throughout her veins when a part of her—under the despicable influence of the sex drops—demanded that she touch it, touch it all.

Splaying her hand over his length, she pressed the heel of her palm against the middle of his cock while her fingers cupped his scrotum. Even his sac was big, drawn tightly against him, holding something hard and important beneath the soft rugged flesh. His record-holding cock, which couldn't even fit in both her hands, pulsed against her palm, stiff and hard and *so* big and ready. Her pussy clenched and tightened in want of it as Carly pictured him sliding it deep into her smoldering heat. And if it didn't fit, well, hell, Carly would *make* it fit.

But they wouldn't get to that part, would they? Because at some point Carly would have to stop him. To demonstrate to herself and to humanity that women's brains could easily conquer their bodies. To demonstrate to Callahan she wasn't one of his silly, whimpering groupies and that she wouldn't stand for his lies.

Now when would these important events take place?

Maybe tomorrow...some other day...Carly didn't know...

All right, she did know. She had to take him to her bedroom and then—

What was The Plan?

She couldn't even think, not while those scorching hands kept running up her back, pressing her belly against the strong, rigid flesh of his cock. There was moisture on its tip, leaving a wet path on her skin as he lightly rubbed himself against her navel, making her dizzy but she figured she could faint later.

"My bed..." she whispered against his lips. "My bedroom."

Muscles rippled as he lifted her in his arms before following her breathless, eager instructions and carrying her into her bedroom. She'd hidden the toys under the bed, but for this brief, reckless moment she couldn't have cared less about them, so she let him lower her onto the mattress. It bent under their weight as he set her down in the center.

Pulling back, he knelt beside her, feasting at the sight of her body, studying her with hot, blazing eyes.

Carly had never felt so vulnerable, and yet at the same time, so very powerful.

His eyes, those deep blue sexier-than-sex eyes, shone with lust as they ran over her skin, storing every nook, every inch, every curve of her body to memory.

It suddenly struck her how Alex Callahan, stripped of all his clothes and his chauvinistic words and his ever-so-cocky attitude, was really quite mesmerizing.

He was just a man here, in the darkness of her bedroom, his tanned skin glowing under the faint streetlights that spilled through the window. He was lean and sleek and muscular, his body the very essence of strength and power. Though partly shadowed, she could see his face, the strength of his features and the angles of his jaw and nose, even more pronounced by the shadows. He looked like a man with a mission. A man who wouldn't be deterred by anyone—including measly little her. There was a fierce, possessive glimmer in his eyes, and as she gazed into them, she wondered what he could see in hers. She'd bet it was something soft and mushy, like puree.

"I've pictured this hundreds, thousands of times," Alex whispered, his gaze skimming hungrily over her face. "But nothing can compare to the reality. To you. Here, naked...and mine."

Wow.

He must say that to all the girls.

It probably did wonders for them too.

Taking her hand in his, Alex pressed it to his chest, where his heart pumped beneath the skin and muscle. Madly. As fast as hers. Only stronger, deeper.

She weakened, making a strangled sound deep in her throat.

His eyes captured hers through the darkness. "You're beautiful, Carly."

Carly would not think, would not consider...would not even *contemplate* the fact that his words were making her hesitate. He sounded so humble and sincere. So *aroused*.

No, no, no, he was a liar and a cheat and she needed to teach him a lesson.

She whimpered and arched her back when he ran both his burning hands up her thighs, past her hips and up to her breasts. Her nipples hardened under his touch. His thumbs circled the tight, taut peaks, teasing the crests with slow, dizzying strokes. With starved eyes, he watched as he pinched them, watched her buck beneath him and cry out in pleasure.

“Do you want this, Carly?” His thumbs swirled over her nipples again, easing the sting of his pinches. “Once I take you, I’m not letting you go,” he vowed, dipping his head to latch onto one hardened crest.

She shivered at the first flick of his tongue, lightning bolts shooting down to her sex. He made low slurping sounds against her breast as he suckled her, sucking the tightened bud deep into his mouth while he swirled his tongue around it. The length of his throbbing, rigid cock rubbed against her inner thigh, almost scorching her flesh there.

“No...yes! Wait...where are you going?”

Nudging her thighs apart with his knee, he eased his body down the length of hers, smiling up at her in mischief and making her heart stop completely.

Settling his wide male chest between her thighs, he dropped his gaze and stared hungrily at her pussy.

Every breath she took was an effort in itself, but to deny herself the feel of him, the strokes of his tongue in her very essence—in her pussy—for some sick vengeance...

Was she completely stupid?

Oh, those dark, glorious drops.

She cried out, the sound tearing through her chest when he dipped his head and nuzzled her curls. Fisting her hands in his hair, she arched her hips to meet the quick flick of his tongue as he thrust it inside her, claiming her pussy with a deep, thorough stroke.

Carly had never known a declaration of war could be so sweet...and so lethal.

She surrendered, quite humbly, when he slipped his powerful, greedy tongue past her swollen lips and deep, so deep into her pussy.

Her sex walls pulsed around his tongue, alive and aching for him. His sure, burning strokes, rather than appeasing her need, only drove it higher, stronger.

Growling in pleasure, he stabbed her honeyed cunt repeatedly with his tongue, making her whole body shudder beneath his.

Pulling back, he placed two fingers on her labia and yanked it open, feasting his eyes on the bright pink folds as he spread them apart. Slowly, he eased his thumb past the slick folds and circled the talented bastard inside her, thick and sure and powerful. Carly stilled at his touch, overwhelmed by this new, painful torture. She could feel the tension in every muscle of her body tighten, could feel his thumb inside her as it fiercely rubbed the slick, throbbing muscles of her cunt.

Locking his mouth around the wet little pearl above her slit, he suckled greedily while he briskly withdrew his thumb and pummeled two fingers inside her. Her eyes jerked backward and she writhed and mewled beneath him, dying a death of pure, excruciating pleasure.

He purred against her, the sound vibrating against her clit as he brushed his lips against it, making her breasts tingle wantonly.

Carly couldn't take any more. She felt ready, oh-so ready to come, but she wanted him inside her. Buried up to his neck, far and deep and completely.

"I can't take this," she murmured, whimpering in protest when he pulled away.

She resumed her breathing when he covered every inch of her body with his bigger one, bracing his arms to each side of her face as he held his torso inches above hers.

"Want me inside you?" he murmured as he aligned their hips, his hardness pressing against her entrance. Carly wrapped her legs around him and sank her fingers into his silky blond hair, pulling him down for a kiss. He resisted, craning his head back.

"Do you want me inside you?" he repeated.

His lips glistened with moisture from her sex and Carly was suddenly overcome by an urgent need to feel them against hers, to taste him again, to taste herself in his mouth. "Yes," she breathed, raking her fingers on his scalp, her eyes fixed hungrily on his lips.

"Look at me."

Slowly, she lifted her gaze and stared at him through heavy eyelashes. His face was strained and harsh, and every muscle in his body seemed to quiver as he held himself above her. Cords strained against his neck and his jaw was set firmly, determinedly. His nostrils flared menacingly at each breath. Yet it was the glimmering lust in his eyes that held her transfixed.

"Say my name," he breathed.

She moaned in protest, pushing her hips against his, urging him to get on with it.

"Say my name," he urged desperately. "I want to hear you say it."

She groaned, clawed her nails into his back, the pain inside her body almost unbearable.

"Say it, Carly!"

"Alexander."

His name sounded sinful. Low and feverish.

He groaned in pain and whispered hers. "Carly..."

Hers, on his lips, sounded even worse.

She reached up and cupped his jaw, the light stubble of beard scraping the flesh on her palm. "Alex," she breathed, the word itself a plea.

He growled and fully impaled her with that massive, rigid, record-holding cock, sinking it deep inside her, stretching and pushing her muscles to their very limits until he was fully sheathed inside her. Like a conquering beast, he threw his head back and

groaned a sound of sheer, raw pleasure that seemed to tear from his chest and echo in the silence.

Then slowly, looking down at her with storms in his eyes, he moved inside her.

"More," she urged, and he muffled the last of the word with his lips, kissing her fiercely when he withdrew his cock to the head, only to ram it back inside her again.

She rocked her hips against his when he began to pound inside her with purpose, hot, harsh air tearing out of his lungs.

Whimpering, Carly raked her nails across his back while he dipped his head and ravaged her neck with hot, starved kisses, murmuring low, fevered words against her burning skin.

Suddenly slowing his pace, he began to deepen his strokes, his balls lightly brushing against her butt each time he buried himself fully.

His cock slipped in her needy pussy easily now, her juices flowing around him like cream. Each time he fully entered her the muscles in her cunt squeezed around him, slowly massaging his cock, milking it.

With her muscles growing tenser with each move, each caress, Carly clawed his back, arching up and lifting her hips to draw him in deeper. His eyes were closed as he dragged his lips to her nipple, opening his mouth around the straining little pearl and bathing it with the heat of his breath as he panted harshly, pounding inside her faster now, harder.

"Suck me," Carly urged desperately, rocking her hips against his, but still Alex didn't kiss or lick her nipple, just breathed over it to drive her insane. She couldn't bear it, and when his lips secured tightly around the aching pink bud and the tip of his tongue lapped over it, the tremors began.

She came with a loud cry and bright explosion of colors at the same time he threw back his head and cried out her name. His body jerked above hers, his eyes blank and wild for a few seconds before his lean, sweaty body sagged on top of hers.

Maybe seconds or even eons later, Alex fell on his stomach beside her, wrapping an arm around her waist and hauling her to his side with a low, satisfied growl.

Carly's body felt like liquid. She'd never had an orgasm like that. Nor sex like that. And though she'd exploded into a billion pieces and was barely recovering, she was still hungry for more. She wanted him inside her again. His lips on her cunt. His rigid, throbbing flesh dipping into her pussy. Into her mouth.

She couldn't bear to say it, though, for what would he think? This would only prove his theory about her sucking cock and liking it up the ass and being such a big fat whore. But then, she was drugged. Plus she had a Plan, on behalf of all womankind, and she was doing this for *all* their sakes.

She needed to get back to The Plan, needed to teach him not to go on spreading lies about her...

"I can't get enough of you," he said softly, settling one possessive hand over her breast.

Her heart, taking on a new role tonight as a gold-medal gymnast, jumped and flipped at his words, doing an impressive job of it.

"I want you too," she confessed, feeling a sudden burst of energy at his declaration.

Shoving him to his back with a superior effort and narrowing her eyes determinedly, she crawled on top of him, her intent quite obvious. "I want to suck you. I want to *eat your dick*."

She'd always wanted to say that. She felt so liberated. So naughty. So utterly modern and bad. Who would've known a small word like "dick" could have such a positive effect on her?

The smothered sound he made sounded painful. "You could kill me, talking like that."

She smiled down at him like a bad, wicked little girl. "Don't die on me yet, not until I eat your big, fat *cock*!"

His lips quirked at the ends. "Okay."

"I'm going to *bite it* too."

His eyes widened. A little in fear, maybe. But there was definitely an interested gleam in them. Things looked promising. "Oh?" he asked warily, cocking an eyebrow.

"I'm going to play with you long and hard. Your *prick* will be my toy, to do with as I please."

There was a tense silence. "Aha." It was as if he couldn't believe her obsession with his cock. He looked a little concerned but she didn't let that deter her. Not when this cock-talk was proving to be such good therapy.

"And I'm going to eat your *cum* too. Would you like that, Callahan?"

By the way he groaned, she could tell he did. His eyes darkened, the smile fading completely from his face.

Now would probably be a good time to tie him up and proceed with her Plan...

All right, maybe in a few minutes, because right now she had other things in mind. She needed his cock, needed that tall, proud apparatus, already stiff and glistening with arousal, and looking damn good.

Yeah, you go, girl, you go suck some cock, she cheered herself.

Those drops she'd taken had made her want, made her need, made her think of nothing else but this. They were having such a strong effect on her that she was sure they might even be illegal in some states. They were definitely dangerous, the way they made her lose all control, turning her into some sex maniac. And this was her nemesis, no less. And she was talking about dicks with him. This was too weird.

Carly had never really had the desire to suck cock. It usually seemed so...unappetizing. But now, looking down at the menu, at the recommended Callahan fat-and-juicy, supreme-gourmet dick, it was all she wanted to dine on. Breakfast on, lunch on and snack on too.

Drawing it into her mouth, she took as much of it as she could, locking her lips around the center and sucking the head slowly while lapping her tongue around the tip. There was semen from his recent orgasm, salty and hot and creamy. It was his flavor, and she was tasting it, eating *him* with her mouth and tongue. She drank every last drop of cum on his cock and when she swallowed, she made a low, pleasure-filled sound meant to let him know she was totally loving it.

She'd never given head, but she didn't feel clumsy. She'd seen porn a few times with friends. She'd read novels and well, nothing was a surprise to a woman nowadays. Besides, it felt natural, to take him into her mouth and suck, to rub her tongue around the head of his shaft and circle the folds slowly, licking every edible inch of him and then some.

He was watching her as she pleased him, his face awed and beautiful, like no other she'd seen before. It was a face raw with passion and desire. No pretending. No lying now.

To *not* taking advantage of such a perfect male specimen because of a massive worldwide vengeance scheme in the name womankind seemed really very silly now.

Besides, she'd already figured out a Plan B, the make-him-feel-like-shit-afterward Plan, which she could put into effect right after she was through with him.

And after the horny drops wore off.

And after she came a dozen times and did some despicable things with her very drugged, very afflicted body.

It would be pointless to attempt to halt the demands inside her. Not now, when she was solely ruled by a very potent, nearly suicidal drug. What she really wanted was of no consequence, of no importance, for now the drug ruled her, and she knew it well.

She had no other choice but to suck that cock.

Alex was in complete and total agony. He was already on the brink of orgasm and yet he was doing everything within his power to hold back. Mentally counting up to ten thousand was not proving much of a distraction, but he needed to think of something, anything that wasn't Carly sucking his cock.

She ate him up as if he were the most delicious banquet she'd ever tasted and her thirst and hunger for him was downright killing him. She wanted him. Nearly as badly as he wanted her. This newfound revelation had his heart pounding hard and his insides simmering to what would surely be a deadly explosion. But Alex couldn't come now, not until she came with him, not until he got to probe every single opening in her scrumptious little body. That tight little cunt, that sweet little ass and that mouth. God, he ached to kiss that sweet, burning mouth and lose himself in it.

Groaning and quite simply running out of distracting things to think of, he flipped her onto her back and pinned her shoulders with his arms. She gasped at the swift movement then relaxed beneath him, eyeing him through her lashes.

Like roses blooming in the spring, her glossy pink lips were parted invitingly, her eyes green and bright as she gazed up at him. Damp tendrils of golden hair clung to her neck and cheeks. That sexy, curvy body of hers was firm yet soft where it mattered, her skin white as cream and smooth as silk. So beautiful, she was just *so* damned beautiful.

And she was his tonight. And real—unlike the thousand times he'd dreamed about this moment. Nothing could've prepared him for the reality of it. Not in his wildest fantasies had he expected to feel so out of control, so completely *taken* by her.

"Alex?"

"You're not making me come, Carly," he said gruffly. "Not yet, baby."

Her eyes flashed with concern and she suddenly shook her head, her breasts rising and falling heavily. "No, wait...I still have to...do something," she protested, pushing at his forearms as she tried to rise and reach across the bed.

He grabbed her hands and pinioned them back to the bed, massaging her wrists with his thumbs. "You're not going anywhere until I'm through with you, and I mean it, Carly."

Her body shivered under the weight of his. "No, really, I must get something...from under the bed."

Pinning her hips with his thighs, he stretched his torso and reached under the bed. Lifting a brown shopping bag, he set it on the bed beside her. Stilling her protests with his thighs as her body squirmed under his, he rummaged through the contents of the paper bag, very impressed with what he found.

"You're full of surprises, aren't you, Carly?" he said as he pulled out a large silicone dildo, eyeing it with a sparkle in his eye.

"Well, I, ah..."

Setting it aside on the bed, he kept skimming through the contents, pulling out the items that caught his interest. "Camera...handcuffs. Gee, pink, my favorite," he said with a twinkle in his eyes. Setting down the camera and holding the handcuffs in one hand, he curled his fingers around her wrist and pinned her hand behind her head. "Let's see how good these handcuffs hold."

"No, Alex! No!"

"Oh yes, sweetie baby," he said amusedly, closing one fur-lined handcuff around her and stretching to clasp the other end to the headboard.

"No!" she squealed, wiggling beneath him when he did the same with her other hand, and although she sounded delighted, he really couldn't be sure. She might think he was taking advantage of her, that she was being forced into submission. But it wasn't like that.

His solemn blue eyes suddenly captured her gaze and didn't let go. "I want you wet and ready and every way I can think of, Carly."

"*Every way?*" she squeaked.

"Yes. Every way. Even your little behind."

She shivered in arousal. "Oh that...well, o-okay."

"Have you ever been fucked in the ass, Carly?"

"No."

"Do you want to be?"

The hot, yearning look in her eyes said it all.

It made Alex feel feral, animal. Every thought within him turned savage, out of control. He felt no tenderness now, no desire to talk with her, nor make her smile. No waiting or giving her time because she was special. He wanted her to scream. Moan. Burn for him. All that mattered now was taking her. Having hot, randy sex with her and making her his.

Grabbing the bag, he dropped it to the floor. "Won't be needing the rest of those. I've got everything I need to fill every little hole of yours and then some."

Carly could hardly contain her excitement. "Ooh!"

Grabbing the small camera, Alex leaned backward. "Now spread your legs, pretty baby. I'm going to take a picture of that tight little cunt."

Carly spread her legs, but she wasn't posing. Not at all. She wasn't even photogenic. "No, please, I couldn't... Okay but just one! Make it look...good."

"Good? It's perfect. Open up wider. Mmm. Nice, wet, pink little kitty." He rubbed a finger over her labia while he held the camera up to his face. "We'll need to get an eight by ten of this one, and a smaller one for my wallet."

The camera flashed, making Carly blink to focus again. Oh dear. Her pussy...in a picture...in his wallet.

In his *wallet*, for god's sake!

She didn't know how she felt about that.

Mortified, true.

Hot and bothered and excited?

Okay, fine, yes. Also true.

Temporarily regaining her scattered wits, she frowned down at her own person, for her stupidity and failure to bring her Plan to completion. *Now* who was the one tied to the bed and getting her picture taken? Certainly not Carly!

Damn those drops anyway.

Though she was trying really hard, she couldn't seem to stop their effect on her. It was as if she had no will of her own. Nothing could stop the drug burning inside her, turning her into some horny sex monster. It was unstoppable. *She* was unstoppable, like a deranged little nympho fresh out of a sex clinic.

Another flash blinded her, and she realized Alex had taken a second picture of her cunt.

That would make two—two close-ups of her soaked little kitty. It was so dirty. So downright whorish! It did *not* arouse her in the least. In fact, it worried her.

But then, no one would even know it was Carly's pussy, right? It was just a regular pussy, after all. It must look like a million other pussies. Only Alex would know the truth, but he was drugged, and if she was very lucky he might never forget—er, remember. He might never *remember* her soaked little pussy. At all. If she was lucky.

Setting the camera down on the bed, Alex lifted the dildo in the air, waving it in her face like a delectable treat. "Now let's get this little friend inside you. You want it, don't you?"

Oh dear god, not that monstrous dildo. Not that brand-spanking new, super-duper cock, the light pink silicone one she *hadn't* licked and squeezed for a couple minutes today. "Frankly?" she gasped, her breath catching in her throat.

"Yes, frankly."

"Yes!" she wailed miserably. "Oh yes, yes, I do!"

He chuckled heartily, a low rumbling sound that triggered little quakes in her insides. Gently, he pressed the dildo between her breasts and dragged it lower. Carly sucked in a breath at the slight coldness of it, so unlike Alex's hot, smooth cock.

Grazing the triangle of curls at the apex of her legs, he rubbed the tip against her clit then teased the outer folds of her labia with it. His eyes were hot and hungry as they watched, his hand expertly guiding the head as it slipped past the glistening entrance of her cunt until the full length of the plastic cock had disappeared inside her.

"*Oh god,*" she gasped in a tortured voice that clearly meant she expected no assistance from up above.

At that same instant, Alex thanked Heaven above and everything and everyone else responsible for this — his lucky day.

He had her right where he wanted. Pliant, hot and cuffed to a bed. Begging for mercy. Her legs open for him. Her lightly trimmed, soaked little cunt open and swollen and sucking in that dildo.

He hadn't expected, though, that watching the huge faux cock disappear inside her, watching her face contort in ecstasy and listening to her hot, wanton sounds would almost make him come over the duvet. It took all his effort not to do so.

"Like it, baby?" he asked hoarsely.

She answered with a barely audible sound that was filled with need.

"Want more?"

She whimpered wantonly, her breath coming in little gasps.

He pulled out the cock and pushed it inside her again, this time flicking his wrist and screwing it deep. She whimpered, clutching the handcuffs with her fists and biting her lower lip.

"Alex, please..."

Withdrawing, he drove it inside her again, gritting his teeth as he watched it disappear into her cunt. She bucked and twisted her body to receive it, a sheen of sweat glistening over her creamy white skin.

"Alex, I want *you*," she desperately cried, gasping when he withdrew the dildo from her body.

"Not yet, love. Turn around. I want you on all fours, like a good little pet."

Purring deep in her throat, she eagerly twisted her body and crossed her arms, maneuvering with the slight inconvenience of being fastened to the bed. Once on her knees, she stared at the headboard, clutching a good amount of pink fur with her fists.

"There. Now fuck me."

Chapter Four

"Let's take a second to capture the moment."

The blinding camera flash bounced against the walls and Carly was startled to realize her ass was the star of the show this time. As if on cue, a wave of liquids whooshed down to her pussy.

She shuddered and gazed back at him when he slid a sizzling hand between both her ass cheeks. Parting her buttocks, he gazed greedily at his newfound treasure. His cock seemed to quiver at the mere sight of those spread cheeks and the puckered rosebud of her anus.

"Sweet," Alex whispered as he pressed the pad of his thumb over it, stroking the little hole in slow circular motions.

She clamped her teeth on her lower lip when he penetrated her, thrusting his thumb deep into her impossibly tight passage.

Honey oozed out of her sex while her pussy clenched with a fierce need. Did this mean Carly *did* take it up the ass? Or did it have to be something bigger to qualify? Oh, well. She was taking something in her ass and she was very much liking it. She was not going to apologize for this. Not when she had a perfect, plausible explanation for her behavior.

"What would you say," Alex whispered as he toyed with her ass and pressed two long fingers to the lips of her slick, wet cunt, "if I wanted to fuck you right here? In this tight little kitty?" Both limber, expert fingers played with the slippery, engorged entrance of her sex.

Carly whimpered.

"Is that an official reply?"

"I'd..." Carly swallowed hard. "I'd say go for it."

"What about," he said, slipping his thumb out of her ass and rubbing it mercilessly outside the entrance, "here? In this tight pink ass of yours?"

She mewled helplessly. Wantonly.

"Is that a yes?"

"Yes."

She yelped when he switched fingers and dipped his long middle finger, soaked with her juices, into her ass – in and out, in and out, pounding hard and fast.

Pressure built up inside, heat and tension making her pussy clench in tight, needy spasms.

"Yes! Yes!" she cried feverishly, throwing her head back, shoving her butt against his finger, wanting it deeper. She gazed back at him again, her look pleading.

Shuddering with need, Alex pressed his body closer, leaning over her back. "I want my cock," he whispered against her ear as he flattened his hands over her cheeks, "inside your little ass. Very much."

Heat and want stifled any fear she might have felt. Hot, scorching flames of desire licked over her body, making her tremble with fever. Her voice was nothing if not desperate. "Yes, please!"

"I'm just going to need some cooperation, a little patience," he cooed as he bent down to nuzzle her neck, his breath scorching her ear. "I need it slow and easy so I don't hurt you."

"I'll do anything," she breathed. "Anything, please, just fuck me."

Groaning in answer, Alex shifted behind her, rubbing his engorged, throbbing cock over the slick outer folds of her labia. A rush of desire coursed through her body as he spread her juices down his length like honey. "Easy now," he murmured as he pulled back and slowly pressed the tip of his thick, searing cock into the entrance of her ass.

"Tell me if I hurt you...oh god! Your ass is as hot as your pussy...and *so* much tighter!" He growled deep in his throat as he entered her.

Once she felt every inch of him buried inside the tight channel of her ass, she began to move with him, moaning and whimpering with a mixture of pain and pleasure. Her breasts heaved with each rock of his hips, and Carly felt herself hanging precariously near the edge of orgasm already.

Sliding his hands along her waist, Alex cupped a breast with one hand and slipped the other lower, until he held her wet, slippery cunt in his palm. Slipping his long middle finger inside her creamy pussy, he crushed her breast in his palm and quickened his pace, pounding into her ass harder, faster.

His sweaty, muscled chest pressed against her back when he bent his head and began to hungrily kiss her jaw, her neck, her shoulder.

Dragging his lips along the curve of her shoulder back to her neck, he trailed a path of wet, burning kisses before finding a tempting spot on her nape and grazing it with his teeth. A hoarse cry of pleasure tore from her chest when his teeth sank there, biting her fiercely.

Hot and ragged air wheezed out of her lungs as she stared blindly at the headboard, rocking her body beneath his and crying out, the sounds of his hoarse, needy breaths shooting straight to her pussy and tightening her muscles like a fist.

Alex fucked her like he'd been born to please her. And when she came, she cried out his name and let herself fly, let her body shake and tremble as the power of her orgasm took her, the juices from her cunt spilling on his palm.

"*Alexander!*" she cried, making him groan and growl and pump into her tight, hot little ass one more time before following her to oblivion.

For what seemed like hours, the only sounds in the room were the loud, shallow noises of their breathing.

The first thing Alex did when he was able to recover was reach out to unlock the cuffs.

"You okay?" he asked.

As soon as she was free, Carly curled herself into a ball, her arms wrapped tightly around her legs, her face buried in her chest.

Alex ran a hand down her soft blonde hair, his gut tightening with fear. "Carly, you okay?"

There was no answer except a nearly imperceptible shake of her head.

Confusion and desperation warred within him, filling him with dread. "Please, Carly baby, what's wrong? Did I hurt you?"

More of that silence, until he couldn't bear it any longer.

He sat back on the bed and hauled her with him, setting her quivering, sweaty body on his lap so he could rub his hands down her back and press her chest to him while he whispered soothingly in her ear. "I'll make it better," he murmured. "Let me make it better."

Shifting on top of him, she wrapped her arms around his shoulders and buried her face in the crook of his neck. Resting his chin on top of her head, he let out the breath he'd been holding and closed his eyes. "Carly."

"You were right about me," she whispered.

He had no idea what she meant, but she felt so good, so warm and pliant in his arms, the scent of their lovemaking clinging to the room, filling his lungs with its heavy musk.

He held her tightly to him, as tight as he could without breaking her bones. She seemed so fragile now, as if he'd frightened her somehow. "I knew it would be like this," he breathed, rubbing his hands aimlessly on her back. "I knew it, Carly."

"I can't do this," Carly softly said.

She couldn't stand the self-loathing slapping her in the face. She was a failure to herself and to womankind. Nothing at this point could prevent her from being completely, totally disappointed in herself.

"Alex..." she began, pulling a few inches away from him and stealing a quick look at his face.

"Hmm?" His eyes were closed, thick golden lashes resting against his cheekbones, his hands still stroking her back.

Fear.

It slithered inside her like icky black goo, almost paralyzing her. She was scared of what she'd done, of what she'd felt. Scared, even, of what he might think of her. And more than that, she was scared of what in the hell had possessed her. What had made her submit to Alexander Callahan—now, when she'd just gotten past her lusting after him for so long.

"Alex, I think you should leave," she began, shifting over his lap as she tried to pull away from him.

His eyes popped open the same time he grabbed her arms to halt her. "Is that what you want, Carly? You want me to *leave*?"

"Do I have to repeat myself every time to you, Alex?" she asked, jerking away from him and stalking toward the bathroom to clean up.

Minutes later, she came out tying a bathrobe around her waist, pursing her lips in irritation when she found him still on the bed.

He was sitting with a pillow propped up behind him, and looking as confused and baffled as ever. At least Carly hadn't been the only one who lost her wits tonight.

"Can you explain to me what's going on, Carly?" Alex asked calmly, a sleek eyebrow rising in question.

"Don't tell me this is a surprise, Alex," she said stiffly.

An overwhelming amount of anger was building up inside her and it was mostly directed at herself. For not following The Plan. For submitting to the drops. To her nemesis. To her silly old body!

For joining the Alexander Callahan Whimpering Groupies Club!

As if exasperated, Alex straightened, raking a hand through his rumpled blond hair. "I'm sorry, but I don't understand."

"Really? It's very simple. I want you to leave, and I want you to leave *now*," she said tersely.

He leaned back on the pillow, crossing his arms across his chest, his jaw set. "Did I do something wrong?"

She wanted to scream at him, scream it all, the whole damned list. He'd done *everything* wrong. He'd touched her so right, kissed her so right, made up lies about her that turned out to be so right that it was just *wrong*. Maybe to top off her evening, he should pull out a wad of bills and go ahead and pay her!

Instead she simply said, "Yes."

"And just what in the hell does that mean?"

Her fists shook at her sides. "Just leave, damn it!"

"Why are you doing this?"

"Because I'd like to get some sleep and because I don't want to see you again. I want you to leave and I want you to forget about this."

That crushing sound – was that something inside her?

It hurt.

"So you expect me," he breathed in a deadly voice as he slowly rose from the bed, six feet of sinewy muscles rippling at the move, "to conveniently forget the way I fucked you, the way your wet little pussy tasted in my mouth, the way you said my name and the way your voice shook with desire when you all but begged me for it?"

"Yes!"

He reached her in less than a second, his fingers coiling around her arms like whips, squeezing so hard he almost cut off her blood supply. "You are *so* wrong, Carly. So fucking wrong."

"Just leave!" Her voice cracked, the pitiful sound tearing through his building fury and succeeding in what her anger had not, sending him stalking out into the living room to fetch his clothes.

She winced when she heard the front door slam shut and suddenly felt a strange urge to cry. Was that a side effect from the horny drops? She was certain of it, because there was absolutely, positively *no* other reason for her to want to cry right now.

* * * * *

"What do you mean it was a failure?" Kukoo cried from behind her desk, her gold turban twisting atop her head as she suddenly rose with her outburst.

Kukoo was one of the few coworkers in Yoodle who was privileged with privacy, otherwise she'd never get inspired to do her job. Her small corner office was cluttered with hocus-pocus items. There were things hanging from the ceiling, on the walls, other stuff scattered around on the floor, and always the constant soft hum of inspirational music playing in the background. Yet no spiritual music could help Carly's disposition today. She was *way* beyond helping now.

Across from the madam, Carly braced her hands on the edge of the desk and shook her head. "It was horrible. I totally failed. I couldn't even go through with The Plan!"

Kukoo rearranged her turban and sat back down, calmly lifting her hands up in the air as if trying to placate the ambience. "Now, now, now. Let's look at it in perspective. My tarot cards never fail me."

"Well they did! I was supposed to give him a lesson and instead..."

"Gave him head?"

It was the worst excuse for a joke Carly had ever heard but Kukoo thought it was marvelous, trying unsuccessfully to stifle a giggle. "I don't think it's funny at all,

Kukoo. I took two drops of your potion and turned into a...you don't even *want* to know what."

"I don't?" Kukoo looked greatly amused, as if Carly were her personal clown, doing a private performance just for her.

If she weren't afraid of breaking some mysterious item and being doomed for life, Carly would have smashed something. Instead, she pushed herself from the desk and began to pace the little room, managing a complete circle every two seconds. "Okay, fine, you *do* want to know, and I'm going to tell you." Carly paused in mid-circle, taking in a deep breath. "I was despicable. I was practically begging for it. I completely lost it! I lost my pride, my dignity. They're gone. Goodbye."

Kukoo burst out laughing but Carly was too mortified to admonish her. "Your drops are way too strong, Kukoo, worse than any drug I've ever even heard of. What do you put in them anyway? Cialis with Red Bull? I mean really?"

Kukoo had barely recovered from the first before she burst into a second round of laughter. "Those drops are completely natural. All they do is loosen up your inhibitions. Help bring out the sexual siren in you."

"*Monster* would be more like it. I swear if I didn't know I was drugged, I'd despise myself after what I did yesterday. What I said. Oh god." She plopped down on a chair across the desk, suddenly defeated.

"Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but they couldn't make a dog fuck if it didn't want to. If you were a monster, honey, that was ninety-nine percent you. Those drops are as effective as a mild nighttime tea for an insomniac."

Carly arched a brow, her voice changing. Deepening. "What did you just say?"

"I'm sorry but don't kid yourself. Even if you'd taken the whole bottle, all it has is a ton of scented water and a mild stimulant for the brain, to relax and loosen up. It doesn't do a thing for most people."

It couldn't be. No. It couldn't. It must have been mixed with something else, otherwise Carly would have never acted the way she did — oh no, not like *that*!

"Then why did you even give them to me, Kukoo?"

"Because it's all up here!" Kukoo cried, tapping a finger to her temple. "In the mind."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"It means people are foolish! They want to go one way and instead go the other. They have little faith and are swamped with negativity. What I do is give them hope. An amulet, some drops, a positive reading. These are all things that help the mind get in tune with what the heart desires. They're just props to change the energy around people into something positive. Little things that give them strength to reach for their goals. You want to know the truth? I've been sick watching you and Alex all these years. Sick, sick, sick! I'm *glad* one of you finally did something about it."

Carly narrowed her eyes, curiously feeling as if she'd just been spanked. "Did you just call me foolish?"

"I was speaking generically."

Shaking her head, she stared at Kukoo in disbelief. "And am I supposed to feel better with any of this?"

The madam pursed her lips and sighed, her voice softening. "Carly. The Two of Wands means choices, or sharing your energy and power. Maybe you needed him to help make your dreams come true. And maybe yesterday – maybe that's who you are, sweetie. You've wanted what happened yesterday, dreamed of it, and though you hate to admit it, that was you. Some strange circumstance gave you an excuse to just do it, follow your instincts and let your real feelings for Alex out in the open. I know how you feel about him, and it's not quite what you make it out to be. Caring for someone does *not* make you vulnerable, Carly. It makes you powerful, it sets you free."

Carly gritted her teeth. "I do not care for Alex Callahan. He rubs me the wrong way!"

Kukoo's eyes glinted with mischief. "Maybe he needed to rub somewhere else. Did he get to last night?"

Carly sighed drearily. She'd slept one whole hour last night and this was clearly the worst day of her entire life. "Look, just make me invisible and I won't bother you again. I promise."

Kukoo's eyes were filled with pity. "Oh, honey. You have no idea, do you?"

Carly straightened up on her seat. "Is there some sort of secret I'm supposed to know? Otherwise, why on earth would you be looking at me like that?"

"Why would I, indeed?" Kukoo retorted, arching a brow.

Carly sighed as she rose to her feet, feeling damned tired by all of this. "I've got to go, Kukoo."

She was *not* addicted to Alex Callahan *or* his kisses *or* his loving. She wouldn't even think of having tender feelings for him because she *didn't*. Yet last night had been—no, it had been horrible. The worst sex ever.

They'd been like animals. Biting and licking and kissing and yelping and groaning.

That was not good. That was bad.

Yet, if she didn't know better, which she of course *did*, she could've sworn he was all she wanted, all she'd ever wanted. Maybe even since she was a little girl, playing with her Barbie and scrubbing the ugly brown hair off her Ken. Perhaps she'd wanted a blond Triple A—

No, no, no, Carly knew better. She had lived her whole life without him, without dirty, naughty sex. She couldn't become dependent on him so soon. Could she?

When she quietly left Kukoo's office, Carly took the elevators to the third floor, the home of the wine-tasting area. Instead of taking a sip of wine and spitting it out like a real wine taster, she planned to drink—and swallow!—the whole bottle and conveniently forget *everything*. Actually it wasn't above her to flat out steal a bottle. She could hide somewhere and get blissfully drunk. A whore could do that, you know.

When she stepped off the elevator and caught sight of Alex Callahan exiting the same room she'd been planning to visit, looking remarkably well and like *he'd* actually slept, she quickly slipped into the first convenient doorway.

Carly wasn't a coward. She merely wanted to take a look at the...conference room. It was very spacious, actually. Very bright, thanks to the floor-to-ceiling windows at the far end, allowing full access to the sunlight. The long oval table was just remarkable. The perfect size for conferences, indeed. And the fake plants strategically positioned at the corners of the room were rather interesting, too. They were all green. And —

"We need to talk."

She had absolutely *no* idea who spoke those words, but she didn't want to talk to him. Whoever he was. Plus his voice sounded dry and humorless, a quality she deemed extremely unattractive right now.

"I'm busy," she spat, suddenly staring at her nails, engrossed.

Grabbing her shoulders, he twisted her around to face him. "Have you been spreading rumors about me?"

Carly held her breath, because this particular morning Alex Callahan looked uglier than ever. Those blue eyes, that rugged, masculine face, those lips that never failed to make a woman feel like a...like a whore. Yes, he did look very, very ugly this morning. Horrible, in fact. She could hardly speak from the effect.

"Have you, Carly?" he pressed.

She widened her eyes in feigned innocence. "Now why would I do that, when you've always been so nice to me?"

He squeezed her shoulders. "That's exactly what I wondered. Why?"

Pursing her lips, she cocked her head sideways, suddenly deep in thought. "Let's see now. Hmmm..."

"Does 'tiny' ring any bells?" he prodded.

"You know? I'm not really sure."

"What about 'soft'? Does that ring any bells?"

"Hmm, you know? I cannot seem to remember? I'm quite not myself today, Alex, you're going to have to check with me at another time."

"Maybe you'll remember this more clearly." He crushed her sex in his hand, his palm almost setting her slacks on fire. But his touch didn't in the least bit arouse her. A sudden rush of liquid did *not* just flow into her panties.

"Remember that?" he asked tightly, rubbing her sex through her black work pants.

"I don't think so."

"No? What about this?" he asked, before dipping his head to her neck, dampening every inch of skin with his tongue and lips, scorching wherever he touched.

She did not like those hot, sloppy kisses at all.

A dog could do better.

Whimpering from sheer and utter frustration and not for any other reason, she fisted her hands on his hair, trying to pull him back, but of course she was powerless against a superman like Callahan, and he didn't budge an inch.

He pressed his lips to hers and spoke into her mouth, his breath tinged with the scent of wine. "Remember that, Carly?"

"Maybe if it were something a bit more memorable, I would," she conceded.

"Your body seems to remember me," he muttered as he easily unzipped her pants and slipped his hand past her undies. "Yep, it sure as hell remembers me."

"Really? I can't tell for sure," she said as she gripped the edge of the oval table, pressing her rump against it at the same time a long, capable finger found the rosy nub of her clit.

"Well, I can, Carly. You're soaked, baby." His finger slid downward, gently rubbing her entrance before dipping inside her. It slipped in easily for some reason *other* than the fact that she may just be a little wet.

Carly didn't want him to pull out his cock and ram it inside her, didn't want him to kiss her like a starved man, didn't want to hear his low, aroused sounds as he made love to her and she certainly didn't want to be fucked over the conference table. So all she could do was remain very still and pray that he wouldn't. It was the best she could do.

"Tell me you want me," he said before he kissed her, a quick, thorough kiss that left her breathless when he pulled away. Cupping her hip with one hand, he slipped a second finger inside her, screwing them both in and out of pussy. "Tell me you want me and I'll fuck you on your back right over this table, make you shiver and moan and call out my name when you come."

Why must he play hard to get? She couldn't possibly outright admit, to him and herself, that she wanted him. Not when there would be no one to blame, no other reason than the simple, overwhelming, uninvited want of hers. Which she did *not* feel, mind you.

Clutching his arms, she bit back a moan and rocked her hips against his probing fingers, using her fevered body to tell him every lie he wanted to know.

"Carly," he murmured. "Tell me, baby." Closing his eyes, he scraped his thumb over her clit and dragged his lips across her face, his breath hot and harsh on her skin. "Say it, gorgeous. Just say it."

Grabbing his jaw, she kissed him instead, muffling his deep groan of pleasure as she thrust her tongue into his mouth. Sliding his hand up her back, he tunneled his fingers into her hair and groaned into her mouth as he deepened the kiss, stroking his tongue against hers with deep, urgent thrusts. Carly let herself kiss him, allowing her body to do the lying, letting it tell him she *did* want him, very much so.

As if that weren't enough for him—as if that mind-blowing, nerve-racking kiss weren't enough for him—he pulled his hand from between her legs and stepped away, his nostrils flaring. "This is just a game to you, isn't it?" he grated through his teeth. "You're fucking playing with me—aren't you?"

Carly shivered under his stare and sank her teeth into her lower lip, feeling even lower than a whore. Like a whore bug.

His chest was heaving, knuckles white with pressure at his sides. "Sure...I've been played by you, played good and hard," he said tersely. "Admit it."

She wouldn't let him make her feel so low, not when *he* was lower. "If I played with you it's because you practically forced me to. You played with me worse."

"Ha! When?"

"You spread some nasty, selfish rumors about me, what did you expect me to do? Sit back and watch like a good little bimbo?"

"What in the hell are you talking about?"

"Oh, come on! Don't play the innocent with me. I *heard* you! Telling Rock and Gregory about all the things you supposedly...did to me."

There was a flash of recognition in his eyes and suddenly his complexion paled. Yet Carly hardly noticed, and if she had, she wouldn't have cared!

She was so wound up that if she'd owned a bulldozer, she'd be using it on him now. "You deserve every lying, cheating thing I could do to you, Callahan. And maybe I should apologize, maybe I *did* handle it the wrong way, maybe I shouldn't have spread rumors about you. I should've just ignored your stupid remarks and left you the hell alone!" Her voice broke, so she shoved past him toward the doorway, turning back to him as she grabbed the doorknob. "I'm sure I don't need to tell you that I've decided to go *alone* to the anniversary dinner."

A muscle twitched in his jaw. "Fine," he said thickly.

"Fine!" she shouted back and stormed out of the room, seething as she strode down the hall toward the elevator bank.

She hated him. She really did. Lying, cheating, award-stealing jerk. Making her feel so base for having dared get back at him for slandering her. Damn Alex Callahan.

He'd always made her miserable, always.

He was a threat to her career, her person, her creativity. Hell, even her sanity!

And what had Carly done to stop him? Absolutely nothing. She let him go on, let him get under her skin, into her mind, into her... Whatever!

She'd stupidly let him overpower her, until now the only thing she felt was confusion and longing and lots and lots of sick, unwanted feelings. Foremost among them...hate.

As she took the elevator upstairs, Carly suddenly realized she hated herself just as much or even more than she hated him. For *she* had been the fool who'd allowed this disaster to happen. The fool who'd believed she could make these wretched, painful, alien feelings go away. Perhaps it was past time Carly recognized there was a bigger liar in Yoodle, bigger even than Alex Callahan.

Her name was Carly Sanders.

She could always continue to pretend she hated him. She could always continue to pretend she didn't want him more than *anything*, and still, for all her pretending, for all her lying and her feigned contempt, she just couldn't make it true.

Not anymore.

Chapter Five

On the evening of the anniversary dinner, the lower floor of the Yoodle building had been successfully turned into a paradise. Arrays of sweet-scented flowers, flickering candles and glinting polished silver were scattered atop numerous round tables along the perimeter of the luxurious, marble-floored space. The ceiling had been topped with hundreds of pearly white balloons, crammed together even closer than the people on the dance floor below them. There was a spectacular waterfall wall on the far side of the room, the tune of dribbling water creating a calm, hypnotizing ambience for few precious minutes at a time whenever the live band wasn't playing.

But the truth was Alex couldn't have cared less. His was in such a somber, dreary mood he even thought of calling up Roy to see if he could borrow a tie that said, "Leave the Asshole Alone". Then he just figured he could achieve that statement easily without having to spell it out. His furrowed face said it clearly, gratefully keeping everyone at bay.

Overall, people were drinking, laughing, dancing to the music and having a good time. Alex seemed to be the only one having a rotten one.

Now Alex wasn't a party pooper, and he hadn't intended on calling anyone's attention by just sitting there like a sour candy. But he flat out wasn't going to dance, and he damned well hated having to watch Carly dance with every one of the bosses and Lord knows who else, so it was just better this way. It was better to sit here, solo, at his big round table, being left the hell alone. It wasn't like he was doing *nothing*—he was damned busy. Glowering at the floral centerpiece.

So let them dance and let them all leave him the hell alone. Wallowing in his misery. Deeply regretting every insensible and insensitive thing he'd ever said about her. She'd heard him—heard him speak loud and clear. She'd born witness to his

fabricated stories, lies that certainly didn't attest to the pitiful way Alex had spent his days, his nights and every minute in between thinking of her. Of making her smile. Making her laugh. Kissing and touching and making love to her.

But his actions at her apartment proved it. If his interests hadn't been clear to her then, well, hell, he didn't know how to make them any clearer.

He hated knowing the reason she'd seduced him was because of his lies. But he couldn't believe, refused to believe, it had been her only reason. Not when he remembered the pool of honey oozing from her sweet little cunt as he'd eaten her. Not when he remembered her body burning in his hands. Not when she'd taken his cock in her mouth and ate him so hungrily and so damned thoroughly. And certainly not when she'd said his name like she had.

She couldn't be that good an actress, that good a liar.

His gaze traveled across the tables, the people, and suddenly locked on her as she twirled over the dance floor with her friend Kukoo. Alex was certain she'd worn that pink dress just to remind him of the color of her nipples and the light pink shade of the dildo he'd slipped inside her. Or she might have done it out of complete and total cruelty. Like she wanted to kill him or something.

The silky dress stopped above her knees and was hardly appropriate as sleepwear, much less for wearing to a party attended by hundreds—at least half of them men. The barely concealing scrap of cloth hugged her curves like second skin, molding to her luscious female body and temptingly displaying her prominent boobs and round little rump. Every guy in the room was staring at her with a hard-on, just like he was. He was sure of it. Alex didn't even need to look at them or their tight-fitting pants to know it was true. They were *all* lusting after her, even the married ones, and their sole purpose in attending tonight was the same sorry one as *his*.

Her.

She glowed among the crowd like the finest gemstone, the sight of her almost blinding. Her face was flushed with exertion, her eyes deep green and sparkling. There

could be nothing worse to him than looking at her now and knowing every sleazy guy in the room wanted her, and *she* didn't want *him*.

When their gazes met, Carly froze and stared back at him as if she'd been hit, a feeling Alex reciprocated as he fell back in his seat, breathless. Something sank its claws into his gut at the same time his heart swelled, expanded in his chest, and then he knew, as clear as he knew his name, that he'd gone ahead and fallen in love with her. Deeply. Indisputably. In love with Carly Sanders.

And then he couldn't take it. Couldn't take the pain of this distance, the pain of her thinking he was such an asshole. Determinedly pushing back his chair, he crossed the room within seconds, heart pumping in his chest, blood simmering in his veins.

She waited for him in the middle of the dance floor, her lips slightly parting in a silent gasp when she noticed the determination on his face, how he wore it like armor. Alex wasn't going to let her go. He'd told her as much that night he'd made love to her, and he hadn't lied.

* * * * *

Whatever she did, Carly would not look at him, not even as he shoved his way through the crowded dance floor toward her. Touching him was of course out of the question. Thinking about him and reminiscing on that wild, crazy night of sex was also not an option. And whatever she did, Carly was not going to talk to him.

"Dance with me, Carly?"

His soft, tender words turned her body into the consistency of pudding, which was about the same outcome her brain experienced. At this unexpected turn of events, she couldn't even say no—besides, she was *not* going to talk to him—so she nodded helplessly. His hands were gentle, taking hold of hers and placing them on the back of his neck before coming to settle around her waist, pulling her closer to him. Heat from every hard, lean inch of his body stole into her insides, his musky male scent fluttering past her nostrils, making her feel dazed and needy—and aroused.

Shifting his hands to her lower back, he splayed his fingers so the tips gently pressed against the swelling mounds of her buttocks. Bending down to her ear, he lightly kissed his lips over her earlobe. "You look beautiful," he murmured. "I can't even look at you without wanting to make love to you."

His words melted her body further and Carly rested her brow on his shoulder, closing her eyes and trying to block the renegade butterflies inside her. His lips grazed the skin on her neck where it met her collarbone, his tongue flicking out to taste her.

She shuddered in his arms, melting against the hungry, damp strokes of his tongue on her skin. God, how she wanted him. She couldn't—*wouldn't*—lie to herself this time. It felt too good to be in his arms, to feel his thighs brushing against hers as they slowly rocked to the lazy rhythm of the music. The thin material of her pink silk dress proved no barrier against the fierce erection rubbing against her lower belly, making her yearn to be naked and in his arms like that night she'd gone crazy, that night she had...

Followed her heart.

"Want to go outside?" he whispered. His hand curled around her elbow possessively, as if he didn't expect her to even say no.

"Yes," she quickly said.

She couldn't blame the sex drops for that. Nor the tarot card. Nor her plan for revenge. There was no one but herself to blame. Or to thank.

His hold firm on her elbow, he guided her across the room until they stepped outside, where the sky was clear and the breeze soft and mellow. Slowly, they walked across the basketball court toward a bench. Before they reached it, he pulled her into his arms and kissed her, stealing the air right out of her lungs.

Starved for him, she responded by tunneling her fingers into his hair and pulling him closer as she met the thrusts of his wet, starved tongue one by one. Her heartbeat accelerated tenfold and she could've just kept on going, kissing him forever, if it weren't for the loud male voice coming from nearby, pulling Alex away from her.

Someone, some *man*, was singing his silly head off as he...dear god! Was that Georgina Harrison and Rock? Fucking on the grass? While he was singing so horribly?

"Don't even look," Alex grumbled as he briskly guided her along the side of the building to a narrow, blissfully empty walkway between their office building and the next in the complex. Halfway down, he pressed her back against the wall, his eyes almost gobbling her up.

The truth was, Alex looked impossibly gorgeous in formal attire. Black contrasted with his fair looks, somehow enhancing the golden color of his hair and the crystal blue pools of his eyes. He'd removed his tie and opened the top two buttons of his shirt, and just looking at the taut, smooth skin that had pressed so close to hers made her sex sting with the memory.

"Carly," he whispered, framing her face with his hands. There was a loose lock of hair that had fallen on his forehead, and among the tension in his face, the silky strand seemed endearing to her.

"Alex," she began, wanting to beg him to kiss her, *willing* to do so unlike the time in the conference room when she hadn't been able, but he interrupted.

"Carly, I'm so sorry," he said seriously. "I shouldn't have said those things about you."

"No, you shouldn't have," she agreed. "But maybe I shouldn't have taken it so seriously and maybe I shouldn't—"

"Carly, listen to me," he interrupted, pressing her cheeks with his hands, his face fierce with passion. "I swear on my life I meant no harm. I was desperate to keep the guys away from you, though that was damned stupid and you have every right to hate me."

"I can't hate you," she said softly, her gaze falling to his lips. When would he just shut up and kiss her? She could swear she would die if he didn't kiss her now. "But I admit all this time, I've really wanted to, Alex."

"I hate *myself*," he admitted. "All I really needed was a little courage."

"Courage for what?"

Gently, he brushed his thumbs across her cheekbones. "For this." He captured her lips with his and kissed her, slipping his tongue inside and claiming every inch of her mouth, every breath. "I'm crazy about you, Carly," he whispered against her lips, planting a soft kiss to one corner of her mouth. "If I've made mistakes it's because I've been crazy not knowing what to do to make you feel the same."

"Oh Alex..."

"I tried, god, I swear I did. But you kept giving off such mixed signals."

"That's because..." Somehow looking at his collar seemed much easier. "I didn't know what I felt. Or maybe I did know, I just...you just..." Drawing in a deep breath, she lifted her eyes to his. "You make me weak, Alexander Callahan. And sometimes I don't like it."

Fisting his hands in her hair, he brusquely yanked her head back, his eyes darkening with emotion. "You've no idea what I feel for you, Carly," he gritted, his voice hoarse and ragged. "I swear it just *eats* at me, eats me up inside."

She trembled against him, stunned that all the time she'd been confused and overwhelmed by all these emotions, he'd been feeling them too.

Her heart swelled at the knowledge, suddenly accelerating its beat, pumping torrents of red-hot blood through her body.

The way he made her feel...it was so baffling and unexpected. How she could feel so weak one second and then look into his eyes and feel so powerful the next, as if she could take on the world, accomplish anything, dare to be anyone?

Was this because of the influence of the Two of Wands? Bringing forth her hidden feelings, urging her to follow her instincts, inviting her to make a choice that would dramatically change her life and the way she saw it...

"Alex," she breathed, linking her hands behind his neck and pulling him closer. "Make love to me. Now."

“Carly.” Tightening his hold on her hair, he pulled her face toward his and closed his lips over hers. As she slowly yielded to the smooth, velvet pressure of his lips, she opened her mouth and moaned when his tongue slipped inside her.

His tongue was slick and powerful, stroking and rubbing against her own, his hunger evident in every thrust. If the wine-tasting lessons had served her at all, he tasted just like a Franciscan 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon from the Napa Valley, and god, was it her favorite wine now.

“Suck me, Carly, suck my tongue,” he breathed against her lips.

Pressing her hands to his nape and pulling him a little closer, Carly drew his tongue into her mouth, sucking it as if her life depended on it, shuddering with arousal as torrents of thick, creamy liquid pooled down to her sex. His taste, his nearness, every living, breathing inch of him made her whole body ache with yearning. She’d taken only a sip of him, but god, she felt drunk already.

Groaning, he clamped his lips fully around hers, withdrawing his tongue then dipping it into her mouth again. His kiss turned urgent, each thrust more vicious than the last.

Dragging that wet, scalding tongue across the plump skin of her lips, he swirled it along the corner of her mouth then dipped it inside her again, locking his lips to hers and making her moan while every fiber of her being ached for his attentions.

Lifting her dress up to her hips, he nudged his knee between her legs and braced it on the wall behind her. Roughly, he gripped her waist and set her down on his thigh, rubbing her soaking cunt against his leg while he laved her neck with kisses. His fingers dug into her pelvis as he dragged her sex against the length of his muscle, the hot, liquid lava simmering in her panties seeping past two layers of fabric and onto his skin. For a moment she worried she would literally set his pants on fire—her pussy was smoking.

But she was preoccupied with other matters too, like the imminent risk of fainting. She was gasping for air, the whole world not having enough to fill her lungs.

Clutching the collar of his shirt with her fists, she held on to him while every nerve in her body throbbed with awareness at the heavenly feel of her aching, burning cunt scraping against the hardness of his thigh.

"Touch me," Alex breathed, parting his belt and waistband and guiding her hand into his underwear. "I want you. I need you."

Moaning with fever at the heat inside his underwear, Carly curled her fingers around the head of his cock and gently began to work it. Holding her hips with an iron grip, Alex ducked his head to trace her collarbone with his tongue, then the hollow at the base of her throat. "Yes, Carly...touch me, squeeze me."

Throwing her head back, Carly rubbed her aching pussy against his thigh, moaning in pleasure as his velvet lips dragged across the skin on her neck, burning everywhere they touched. Brazenly, she dipped her hand lower, grazing his scrotum with the tips of her fingers, lightly playing with his balls before she ran the heel of her palm up the full length of his staff. He was smooth and slick and moist for her, and she wanted him inside her.

"Carly," he groaned, eyes closed, as her little hand closed around the head of his penis and moved up and down. He pulsed in her palm, the carnal heat in his member seeping into every pore of her body. "No one's ever made me feel like this," he whispered, his voice low and unsteady as he slowly rocked his hips against her hand.

"Alex, I want you so much," she breathed, squeezing his cock, her pussy clenching desperately for it.

Not able to stand his need for her any longer, he clutched the sides of her face and looked into her smoldering green eyes with a wild, savage glow in his. "I need to fuck you," he rasped. Within seconds, he pulled his cock completely out of his pants and braced her back against the wall, tearing her panties before sinking deep inside her.

She cried out his name with a high, needy sound when he filled her, stretching her wide until every muscle of her cunt was wrapped snugly around his hardness. With her

dress up to her waist, Carly locked her legs behind him and shoved her hips to his, wanting more of him.

Like it was her sole purpose for living, she kissed his face, his ears, his neck. He was salty and sweaty, the taste of his skin completely drugging her senses. Fisting her hands in his silky golden hair, she held him still while her lips sought his earlobe, nipping and kissing before he groaned and dipped his head to do the same. He nuzzled her neck, his stubble scraping her skin as he moved upward and slipped his tongue into her ear, wetting and sucking her. Shifting his hands to her rump, his fingers dug into the sides of her buttocks as he gripped her tightly and began to move inside her, repeatedly withdrawing that thick, swollen cock up to the head then diving it up to the balls, stretching her cunt completely when he filled her.

Slick, slippery noises echoed in the night as he pumped his hips against hers, her cunt so creamy the liquid oozed and pooled around the base of his cock. The inner walls of her sex clamped around his rod, tightening around him every time he pulled away and slowly easing to receive him when he entered her again.

Jerking the sleeve of her dress down one shoulder, he exposed one heavy breast and purred at the discovery, hungrily latching onto the nipple and suckling it like a starved man. "God, you taste good," he murmured against her flesh, drawing the pointy little crest deep into his mouth and sending red-hot tingles all the way down to her toes as he nipped and kissed and sucked it. "I want to eat you, eat all of you," he breathed, bringing his head up to run his tongue along her collarbone.

He dipped his head again but she quickly clutched his face to halt him, gazing deep into his eyes. "No. Stay with me, kiss me, Alex. Fuck me."

"I can't. I can't hold back..."

"Come inside me," she urged.

Growling, he crushed her lips and kissed her, holding her firmly by the waist as he began to pump inside her faster, harder, breathing harshly against her face while their loud, deep groans echoed in the night.

When he pulled his face back to look at her, his forehead was creased, his nostrils flaring as if holding back was straining him to the brink of madness. His face was shadowed, yet his eyes glowed with fever. "I need to come, Carly," he said in a pained voice. "Please come with me, baby."

"I'm there, Alex, I'm there..." she breathed, clutching his jaw with her hands and pressing her brow against his, closing her eyes. "I'm there."

He slowed his pace, suddenly moving with an aching lack of haste that made every muscle in her being tense with the need to climax. "Come...come now..." he breathed, moving his hips so utterly slowly she thought she'd die of the pleasure.

"Alex, please fuck me, fuck me harder," she cried, shoving her hips against his, sinking her nails into his shoulders in desperation. "Alex!"

Growling, he made one harsh, final thrust and she climaxed, his name tearing from her lips while a rocking shudder took over her body for several long, blissful seconds. Alex came with her, crying out loud as he shot a spurt of warm semen inside her and trembled against her body, holding her close.

They could have remained there in the dark walkway the whole night if it weren't for Gregory Hutchinson, who came hurrying around the corner a few minutes later. Gratefully, Carly had already lowered her dress and had been in the process of running her fingers through her tangled hair when he appeared.

"Alex, your prize!" Gregory froze when he saw her. "Umm...hi, Carly."

Carly was *not* going to look at his crotch. Yet it did appear to be a little stiff. She forced her gaze upward and smiled at him. "Gregg."

"Aw, shit," Alex groaned, taking her hand in his and dragging her around the building and back toward the lobby. "Hate that damned prize."

"Liar," she said with a knowing smile.

He smiled crookedly, squeezing her hand.

Tenderly, he kissed her temple before pulling the glass door open and leading her inside. All eyes present settled on them and it made Carly just a wee uncomfortable, having just been fucked against the side of the building. She could swear everyone knew.

Alex sat her down at his table and strode toward the podium, where one of the bosses stood with a sleek, clear glass trophy.

"Ladies and gentleman, this year's Yoodle Creative Award goes to Alexander Callahan!"

Everyone clapped and Carly suddenly felt so very proud, so very excited, so very...in love. She lowered her startled gaze and stared blankly at the place setting when it dawned on her. It had to be love. Nothing else could feel like this. It was beyond imagining, beyond compare.

She'd never been in love before.

And wow, it felt so real, so...true.

"Thank you all so much," she heard Alex's husky, deep voice say through the microphone. "It's such an honor to work here, with all you fine people..." His eyes swept over the crowd. "Such an honor that you should give me this prize...for the third year in a row. Is that a record or what?"

Everyone clapped and Alex smiled one of his signature smiles, taking not only *her* breath away, but apparently the collective breaths of dozens of others as well. Carly thought she heard several sighs in the room.

"But this year, I feel like I owe you guys the truth—I don't deserve this prize. Not really. Not unless I admit to all of you present that I've been doing such fine work at Yoodle because of...someone." People were silent, and Alex paused, scanning the crowd once again, until his eyes finally settled on her. "I have a muse. A muse, people. She inspires me, makes me want to be...hell, a better man. Makes me want to just flat out impress her. If it weren't for that muse...you might find me at the wine tasting every day instead of behind my desk thinking my head off."

Everyone laughed – except Carly, who saw absolutely *no* humor in this. Joining her across the table, Kukoo smiled knowingly, and Carly felt the threat of a smile curving her own lips. Now she knew what Kukoo knew. What Kukoo had known all along. Perhaps her tarot card hadn't failed her after all. But damn Alex, if he even mentioned her name in public, she would –

"That muse is Carly Sanders, and if you'll permit me, I would like to share this prize with her. For it would be my great honor to do some extensive, collaborative thinking with her, and I'm certain that together, she and I, and all of you, will take Yoodle far and wide and above the competition. Carly?"

Carly didn't remember considering hiring someone to kill him. She didn't remember stumbling up to the podium and nearly falling to her knees, making a fool of herself in such a pretty dress. She didn't remember whispering a shaky thank you into the microphone, and she certainly didn't remember holding the trophy along with Alex while everyone cheered and clapped. She didn't even remember the totally wild, totally French kiss he gave her in front of everyone afterward. *Oui!* A long, swooping kiss with tongue – in front of everyone, even his groupies, who were probably planning Carly's murder right now. But she did *not* remember any of that. The only thing she remembered was riding home from the party and, playfully or not, hitting Alex on the chest for the way he'd embarrassed her.

"Muse? How do you even come up with this stuff?" she scolded as soon as they strode into the darkened entry of her apartment.

"You inspire me, Carly. Plain and simple."

Scowling up at him, she slipped off her high heels while he pulled off his jacket. "I should've known, the way you went on and on with Gregory and Rock that day. You seemed *very* inspired."

"Oh and I suppose the day you invited me over you weren't? I'm not the one with the bagful of sex toys, remember?" He gave her a cocky grin, his brows arching upward. "Want to play, by the way?"

"No, I don't want to play," she muttered. "I'm not sure I even want to remember. God I'm such a slut!" she cried, torn between smiling and scowling.

Chuckling, Alex grabbed her shoulders and easily pulled her to him. "You're beautiful. Sexy and fun and strong. Everything a man could want and then some."

She swatted his shoulder but found herself smiling up at him. "Stop being such a liar, Alex."

"I'm not lying."

"Yes you are. You're a liar," she teased.

"Fine," he said huskily, sliding his hands up her neck and brushing his thumbs along her jawline. "Then I hate you."

"Oh yeah? Well, I hate you too!"

He kissed her, slow and thorough. "You're going to have to prove it," he dared.

Having expected that challenge, Carly pulled away and began dispensing with fabrics and formalities, just so she could prove to him how very much she hated him – and what a bona fide liar she was.

The End

About the Author

Red Garnier is a multi-published erotic romance author. She's also a happy wife and proud mother of two little handfuls. Writing has been her passion since she read her first romance novel at the age of fourteen. Red loves a good laugh, a good cry, but most of all, she loves a good romance. She's thrilled to be able to share her very own stories with others, and hopes you will enjoy reading them as much as she does writing them.

Red 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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