



Family and Promises

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Phaedra Aster has a mission to accomplish. She's been charged by her aunt and uncle to get corporate raider Rand Scott-Thomas to stop the takeover of their family business. She accomplishes her mission, but in a totally unexpected way...she's blackmailed into becoming Rand's mistress.

Rand Thomas knew he was taking unfair advantage of the situation, but then Phaedra didn't know who he was when he approached her for a dance at the hospital fundraiser. And after a blazing hot encounter in a deserted hall, he will ruthlessly use her candid comments about her mission against her...anything to keep her in his bed.

Chapter 1

Phaedra looked into the large mirror above the lavatory sinks. She didn't focus on her face, makeup, or even her hair. She only saw the determination that filled her eyes. In less than a minute she would have to return to the party.

She finally forced herself to assess her hair and makeup. Her makeup was flawlessly and artfully applied, to appear as if she had on none at all. It had been done at the hair salon where she also had her hair done with equal skill and precision. The long and lustrous auburn locks had been arranged to cascade from the top of her head to the middle of her back in a waterfall of curls. She shrugged knowing this wasn't the "real" Phaedra, but a well-dressed package.

She turned to go and caught a glimpse of the back of her dress. It should have had a sign attached when she bought it...seduction.

>From the front it appeared to be the typical black dress that suited so many functions of this type. The bodice of the dress came all the way up, to the base of her throat. From a distance it appeared solid black. But up close you could see it was black stretchy lace, and looked as if that was all the wearer had on. But in reality, the lace had a lining of the very thinnest flesh colored fabric, in certain places.

The dress fit like a second skin, from its long sleeves down to where it flared just past the knees to allow for easier movement. It was the back of the dress that was the eye-opener. There was no back until the eyes traveled to below her waist. In fact, the dress ended just above the cleft of her ass. For the longest time she was sure that if she bent over, just like a workman in his too tight jeans, you would see much more than what was politically correct.

And right where her bottom curved into firm and luscious rounded cheeks was a red bow, about six inches across. And even though it had no function in keeping the dress on, Phaedra was sure she would hear nothing but jokes and offers to untie it.

Phaedra left the protection of the ladies room reluctantly. She knew her Aunt Alicia and Uncle Preston would be waiting for her. They had hated asking her to plead on her uncle's behalf. But it was a family-held company that was four generations old and the family was desperate to try and maintain control.

Phaedra was almost unbelievably beautiful, and it was hoped that if she pleaded with the corporate raider, she might persuade him to give them more time. She had argued that it would be a futile effort, but her uncle and her cousin Carter were convinced that she could make the difference.

Phaedra glanced around the large lobby of the hotel where the party was being held. The party was in celebration of the new wing of the hospital being opened. For a moment, she considered lying to her family and telling them that she had talked with Mr. Scott-Thomas and he had laughed in her face. But she knew she was a lousy liar. They would guess the truth, if she didn't break down first and confess.

Phaedra spun around, suddenly deciding to leave and tell her family later that she had gotten sick to her stomach. Her departure was halted as she walked right into a man who had come to stand behind her.

The first thing she saw other than his elegant tuxedo, was that he was holding two tall flutes of champagne. She flushed and mumbled an apology. The man smiled and offered her one of the champagne flutes.

Phaedra shook her head, insisting that he had obviously intended the drink for someone else. Rand smiled. "Actually, I was hoping to use it to gain an introduction to you." He inclined his head, "Rand Thomas."

Phaedra paused a moment before accepting the glass. "Thanks." She extended her hand to him. "Phaedra Astor."

Phaedra's breath caught in her chest as Rand enfolded her hand within his. In fact, she was so distracted by his touch that she missed the surprised look on his face as he heard her name. Phaedra looked up into his rough-hewn face, her attention held by the fact that he wore a plain black eye patch, concealing his left

eye.

Rand had recognized her name immediately and took a sip of his champagne, thinking what a joke fate was playing.

He had seen this beautiful woman across the room and felt an immediate attraction to her. As soon as he saw her come out of the restroom, Rand had gone for the champagne. It wasn't until he was a foot or so away that the crowd parted enough for him to have clear access to her.

He had still been dealing with the shock the vision of her backless dress had caused, when she had unexpectedly turned and bumped into him. He thought she looked amazingly hot from the front in the form fitting dress, but from the rear, the view was a down right cock teaser.

He was curious because a woman usually dressed like this for one of two reasons. She had a man she was dressing for; or there was a man she wanted to entice. Rand was sure he had heard she was unattached, so he wondered just who was her victim for seduction tonight?

Phaedra sipped the cool drink and tried to calm the hectic feelings this stranger had aroused in her. She took a deep breath before speaking.

"What brings you to this dedication?"

Rand gave her a slight smile. "I'm a contributor to the building fund. And you?"

Phaedra felt the start of emotion at his sexy, slightly crooked smile. "I'm a volunteer and sit on a few committees. I couldn't get out of it, and my aunt and uncle really wanted me to come." She paused, looking into the attractive stranger's single blue eye. "I'm tempted to find the nearest exit and make a run for it."

Rand laughed. "Now that would be a terrible waste."

Phaedra couldn't resist and asked him with a small smile, "Now why would you say that?"

Rand wondered if she were kidding or perhaps she really was unaware of her unusual, but captivating beauty. He cleared his throat before he answered.

"That's a knockout dress, and if ever I've seen a woman meant for dancing, you are it."

Phaedra felt a flush creep up her neck and smiled again. "Actually, dancing sounds like a great idea. Are they having music tonight?"

Rand nodded his head and gestured towards the far end of the open foyer. "I can hear the music through there. Care to try a few steps? I'll try not to tread on your feet every other step."

Phaedra laughed. "All right. Let's trip the light fantastic, and hopefully I can avoid the unpleasant task I was assigned to do tonight."

Rand disposed of their empty champagne flutes with a passing waiter. Phaedra curled her hand around Rand's arm, and started walking toward the lounge where soft strains of music could be heard. Once inside, after a moment of letting their eyes adjust to dimmer light, Rand turned her into his arms .

Phaedra let her muscles relax and Rand pull her close to his muscular chest. His hand pressed against the bare skin of her back, and she felt her full breasts press against his hard muscles beneath the expensive tuxedo. She settled her head into the curve of his neck, not questioning the comfortable and relaxed feelings she was experiencing with this stranger. As the first song blended into the next, she felt Rand's hand slide down her back until it rested at the curve of her back, just above the red bow.

"What's the unpleasant task you must perform before leaving this evening?" He asked softly once he felt her melt in his arms and become pliant and relaxed. "What could be so bad that you're willing to run away from it?"

Phaedra ignored the warning voice in her head telling her to keep quiet. Perhaps it was the rumbling of his voice through his chest to her ear. "Some corporate raider-type wants to take over our family's business." She sighed deeply and then went on. "For some reason, my uncle wants me to talk with him

and see if he'll back off. Uncle Preston is desperate not to lose the family business. He sees it as a personal failure, and that he's letting down his father and grandfather."

Phaedra lifted her head to meet Rand's gaze. "I don't know why my uncle thinks I might be able to convince a total stranger to change his plans just because I ask. I mean, honestly, I wouldn't change my business plans because someone I had just met asked me to."

Rand looked away from Phaedra for a moment. He suspected the old guy would try something like this, although he had to admit that he had not expected the attack to come in the shape and form of such a beautiful adversary.

When he looked back he found that Phaedra was still watching his face. He smiled a little. "Perhaps if there was something else involved, such as an incentive, or even a 'perk' as they say, I might reconsider."

Phaedra frowned. She had never considered herself naïve, but the tone of the conversation seemed to be setting alarm bells off inside of her. "What kind of incentive?" She finally asked Rand quietly, holding his gaze.

"Well, you are a very beautiful woman, and I'm sure if you offered something tangible in return, this corporate raider might reconsider."

Phaedra shook her head, causing the waterfall of curls down her back to dance. "What do you mean? Something tangible? The family is tapped out financially, trying to buy back stock and rearrange things. I've got some private funds from my grandmother, but I doubt this man would consider such a pittance worthy of his attention."

Rand paused before answering. What he would like to have with this beautiful woman would probably never occur now. Once she knew who he was, she wouldn't trust him, and probably resent him for not revealing himself sooner. But if he didn't tell her who he was, and let the evening progress, she would probably be even more angry and resentful.

He took a deep breath and pressed her lower body against his more

intimately. He saw in her eyes the instant she became aware of his arousal pressed firmly to her soft belly. He half expected her to fight and pull away, but she didn't.

As he held her gaze, he saw desire flare deep in her eyes. He felt her breath quicken and watched her tongue dart out to nervously lick her lusciously full lower lip. There was no mistaking the subtle move of her lower body against him in response.

Rand paused for a second, reconsidering honesty versus a night of what promised to be some pretty passionate sex. However, he had always been an honest and straightforward man in his dealings with people, even if he was somewhat cutthroat when it came to business. Deceit and deception never came to any good. He had to take a deep breath to regain some control over his body. He hadn't felt this aroused and randy since he'd been in college.

"You could offer yourself instead of something financial."

His words hung in the air between them. Phaedra felt a roaring in her ears. She wasn't sure she had heard him correctly, but she also had to swallow hard because the intense desire she felt had closed her throat. In fact, it was a struggle to keep from flinging herself at the handsome man who had so obviously revealed his attraction to her a moment earlier.

It was impossible to keep the image of him rising above her and holding her eyes as he thrust his hardness into her soft, wet pussy. The next instant, as if her thoughts controlled her body, she jerked against him, as she had truly experienced him coming into her body. Suddenly, it was hard to breathe. She surprised herself even more when she gently wiggled her lower body back and forth, feeling his hard cock pressed so eagerly against her.

Rand groaned and it reverberated deep in his chest, tingling against her taut nipples. He lowered his mouth to lightly kiss the side of her neck. He whispered to her softly, "I'm surprised your uncle didn't suggest it."

Phaedra was too aroused to be insulted. Damn it! She was too aroused to think! She shook her head no, looking up to meet his gaze once again. "It would be a workable solution..." She stopped suddenly as she felt him pull her even closer. "If it were you that I was trying to bribe."

Phaedra was shocked by her brazen words. For a moment, she wondered if she'd just made the worst faux pas possible? Rand abruptly pulled back from her. Phaedra was sure that she had just committed the single woman's greatest blunder, and appeared too eager. But Rand grabbed her wrist in his hand, and led them quickly through the crowd to a back entrance.

He didn't stop until they were halfway down a deserted hallway. As Phaedra heard the heavy door thud shut, Rand spun her around and pressed her flat to the wall. His hands captured hers, and held them on either side of her head. Allowing her only an instant to catch her breath, he was kissing her.

Phaedra had no time to think. She didn't want to think! She kissed him back, wiggling her hands free and sliding her arms up and around his neck. She gasped when he finally released her swollen lips and slid his mouth down her neck.

One hand was easing her dress off the shoulder and in the next instant, his mouth closed over the exposed, taut nipple. Phaedra cried out, feeling her legs buckle beneath her. She didn't fall because Rand had pressed a leg between her own. Her dress slid, or was pulled, up and suddenly her wet pussy was pressed against his hard, muscular thigh.

Phaedra tried to tell her body to push him away. He was a stranger, but her hands didn't listen. Her mouth pressed kisses to the side of his face and down his neck. She even sucked the skin between her teeth, and gave him a love bite that would be visible above his shirt. She didn't care. Especially since she felt his other hand drag her skirt even higher, caressing her thigh as he did so. His hand slid around to cup one full, round cheek and pressed her more intimately to him.

Rand paused as his hand caressed her firm, full bottom. He hadn't realized she wasn't wearing any panties until that moment, and it made his head swim with desire. For a moment he considered telling her who he was, but then Phaedra rubbed back and forth over his thigh. He no longer gave a damn and slid his hand around to her thigh, pulling her dress the last necessary inches upwards.

As he slid his leg back, his hand moved between her upper thighs; Rand wouldn't have thought it possible, but he almost lost control as he felt a completely smooth pussy, wet with arousal.

Rand lifted his head from her succulent breast and returned to her mouth. His tongue met hers eagerly as he slipped his fingers between her wet lips. His voice was husky and jerky as he spoke. "My God woman! You may drive me crazy..."

Phaedra couldn't help the laugh that spilled forth. She felt sexy and wanton. In fact, she'd never in her life felt this aroused. She heard herself reply, but couldn't believe the sexy, husky voice, let alone the daring words, were hers. "If they let us share a padded room, I don't think I'd mind going along with you." Her legs eased further apart and he slid two fingers up inside her hot, wet channel even as his thumb zeroed in on her clit. "Oh God!"

Rand's mouth swallowed her cries of passion as he worked her body with precision and skill. He seemed to know just where to touch her, when to touch her and how to touch her sensitive flesh. It was as if he had touched her before, but it was all so new and fresh.

Phaedra clung to his shoulders, his neck, whatever she grab hold of as he mastered her passionate responses. It happened so quickly. His fingers worked so skillfully inside her, massaging, his thumb never releasing her clit. She climaxed hard the very next moment, her body spasmed, and began jerking and thrashing in his arms.

Rand watched her face as her orgasm took control of her body. His voice was

low as he spoke to her. "Let go, sweetheart! Don't hold back! Give it to me... Cum all over to me!"

He felt her pussy contracting and drenching his fingers with her passion juice. He saw her swollen lips, red and free of any lipstick. He glanced down and watched as her breast jiggled and bounced from her motions. And most of all, he felt her aftermath as his hand still cupped and caressed her smooth pussy.

Rand watched and waited until finally Phaedra opened her eyelids and saw him staring down at her.

She blushed hotly as she realized how intimately they were still standing. She was intently aware of his hand, pressed so intimately against her pussy, even while she could still feel gentle spasms rippling through her womanly organs. Before she could react though, Rand lightly rubbed his hand over her slick flesh. It was almost as if he were petting her, soothing the quivering wild beast he had just captured.

He withdrew his hand reluctantly, and then wiped his fingers on his pristine handkerchief. He surprised her when he lifted her skirt once again, and this time used the cloth to wipe her moisture from her pussy. She had never experienced anything as intimate with a man before. She'd had sex before, but it sure didn't compare to this encounter, with a stranger. Although, she couldn't really consider him a stranger now, she argued silently.

She looked down and saw he was hard within his expensive trousers. She didn't think about consequences as she reached out and cupped her hand over his arousal.

Rand groaned loudly and braced both hands flat against the wall on either side of her. He told himself he would stop her in a few seconds, and then he heard his zipper being lowered.

Two soft hands were freeing his cock from the confinement of his trousers, only to confine it once again in her grasp. She curled her hands around him, caressing, pulling and tugging. She stared at his cock filling her hands as it oozed

drops of pre-cum. She wanted to caress him and please him, something she had never felt the desire to do before.

Phaedra felt her legs buckle and in the next instant, she was on her knees in front of him. She heard Rand groan above her, and his hands moved to her shoulders, trying to stop her. But she resisted and lowered her head to complete her journey.

Rand felt like he'd died and gone to heaven. He had to brace himself as her mouth opened and took him inside. His hands lifted to the wall behind Phaedra, steadying himself under the wild and sensual assault by her mouth. He felt her tongue caress the underside of his cock, even as her lips closed and sucked him more deeply. He had to stop her, and he moved one hand from the wall, where he was bracing himself, down to her head. His fingers threaded through the reddish strands to pull her back. But she slid one hand down and started to fondle his balls even as her head started to move.

He couldn't pull her away. So his fingers slid free, dislodging her neatly styled hair. He knew he couldn't last much longer. He was so hot and aroused now, with her mouth sucking his cock and her hands caressing and stroking him, he knew it wouldn't be long before his control broke.

Rand choked back a shout as his orgasm rampaged through his body, and his cock jerked within her mouth. Before he could pull free, or Phaedra was fully prepared, his cum shot free and she swallowed it all.

She pulled back, looking dazed. Rand opened his eyes and looked down. The woman kneeling at his feet didn't look like the ice statue he had first seen in the grand hotel lobby. Her lips were swollen and bare of any lipstick. Her hair was half falling down and mussed beyond any hope of repair. And she still had one breast bared to the cool air of the hallway.

Rand was no saint, having had his share of lovely women in his bed from time to time. But he had never felt anything this uncontrolled before. He reached down and pulled Phaedra to her feet. He watched the flush stain her cheeks as

she saw his eyes traveling over her. Hastily, she moved to pull her dress back up. Rand stopped her and pressed a light kiss to the taut nipple before covering it with the stretchy black lace. He started to lower his head to kiss her luscious mouth when a door at the end of the corridor swung open. Music and voices came through to remind them both of where they were.

Rand took her arm and turned her back towards the way they had come a few minutes earlier. Trying to avoid the bright lights and people, Rand found a way to the restrooms. Rand lightly touched her arm and spoke to her softly, wanting to show her that he wasn't deserting her.

"I'll wait for you here, honey." The hoarseness in his voice caused it to break slightly. It surprised him how difficult he was finding it to recover after the mind-blowing climax he had just experienced. His eyes followed Phaedra as she disappeared in the ladies room. He thought she nodded her head, as if she had definitely heard him, but she didn't say anything. As though she, too, was still enfolded in the mind-numbing fog of her passionate climax.

Phaedra walked unsteadily into the bathroom. She grabbed some wet paper towels and went into the bathroom stall. She cleaned herself as much as possible, peed and came back out.

She was washing her hands as she looked at her reflection in the mirror. It didn't seem possible that such a short time ago she had been in this same position, wanting to hurry home and forget the whole evening. And now, her hair looked like she had been dragged backwards through a briar patch. She dried her hands and tried to reapply her lipstick with trembling fingers. She stopped finally, deciding it was useless and blotted most of it back off, which only left her lips looking even larger and recently kissed.

She pulled the pins from her hair and shook it free. Using her fingers to sift through the long curly strands of hair, Phaedra tried to restore some order to the disheveled curls. She had just decided to leave it down when her aunt Alicia and uncle Preston's daughter-in-law entered the restroom. Clarice was the epitome of

style and grace and good upbringing. She was tall, slender and looked like a thoroughbred racehorse. She was attractive, but not pretty.

Clarice smiled at her thinly. She didn't like Phaedra, and seldom hid her feelings when the two women were alone. But she was aware that the family business was going "down the tubes" fast and that Phaedra was her father-in-law's last hope of convincing Rand Scott-Thomas to leave them alone.

"Why did you take your hair down, Phaedra? It looked so much more attractive when you had it up."

Phaedra grimaced. Clarice had perfected the art of making a compliment sound like a put down. She shrugged nonchalantly. She looked at the mirror, seeing Clarice's reflection next to her now.

The two women were night and day, in looks, and personality. She had often wondered what had attracted the svelte, sophisticated woman to her cousin Carter. He was a little overweight and inclined to be too nice. Since his marriage though, Phaedra had noticed that he was becoming more like his wife in his outlook and attitude. Phaedra stiffened her back, determined to keep her temper and be nice.

"I was getting a headache."

"If you would cut it, you wouldn't have those problems. After all, when a woman is your age, she should have a more mature haircut."

Phaedra had to bite her tongue to keep from lashing out at the other woman. But Clarice was oblivious and went on. "By the way, you really do move fast, I must say. I thought for sure you would botch this request of Preston's. And yet, the party's barely begun and I see you dancing with your prey. I must admit, Rand Scott-Thomas is one dreamy hunk of man, and with that eye patch, he looks like a marauding pirate. I wouldn't mind him capturing my vessel and claiming me as his pirate's wench!"

Phaedra thought she would pass out. Suddenly she felt as if she couldn't breathe and the roaring in her ears grew louder with each passing second.

Clarice was saying she had seen her dancing with their raider, Scott-Thomas. But the only person she had danced with was Rand Thomas.

The roaring grew louder as she realized how stupid she had been. Her hands moved down to rest against the cool countertop, but she still felt sick to her stomach. One part of her brain called her every name in the book while another part logically told that at least her "task" was done. She had "talked" with Scott-Thomas, at least.

Suddenly, she flushed as she realized how Rand had suggested she offer something beyond just words, and then he had taken her outside and made love to her. Her face paled as she remembered how she had reciprocated. And while Phaedra wasn't a virgin in the strictest sense of the word, her experiences limited to a few groping attempts, and one rushed coupling in a dorm room. Still, she had never been that intimate with a man so quickly and for it to turn out to be the man who was taking her family's livelihood away made her feel cheap and used.

She reached down and picked up her tiny beaded purse. Without a word to Clarice, she turned and walked out of the restroom.

Phaedra had only gone a few feet when she saw that Rand was talking with her uncle. She stopped, watching Rand as he talked with her uncle. Her mind enacted all kinds of unpleasant scenarios that he might be discussing with her uncle. None of which made her feel more relaxed or comfortable.

She cursed fate for not allowing this to have been the scene when she had exited the restroom a little over an hour ago. Hastily, she looked around, wondering if she could possibly reach the exit without either man seeing her. She had actually turned and taken a step when she heard her uncle called out to her.

"Phaedra! Come over here, dear. I want you to meet someone."

Phaedra closed her eyes for a moment and then turned slowly. She saw her uncle waving to her, with Rand on one side and Clarice on the other. She must have stood there longer than she'd realized. Her stomach wanted to rebel and

she promised herself that she would get back at Clarice somehow before walking towards them. Her uncle reached out and lightly kissed her cheek.

"Hello, Phae," Preston Astor greeted his niece as put his arm around her shoulder. "Rand was telling me you two have already been introduced. I hope you won't mind me deserting you, but I promised Clarice a dance." He winked at Phaedra and quickly left with Clarice on his arm.

Rand reached out to touch her arm, but she jerked away from him, refusing to look at him. "Don't! I hope you've enjoyed your little joke, Mr. Scott-Thomas. I'm surprised you didn't tell my uncle that it was no good, and that you would be continuing with the official takeover after all."

Rand cursed under his breath. He had known this would be a tense and uncomfortable moment, but he hadn't thought that it would hurt like this. Hell! Phaedra was a stranger to him, so why should he care what she thought or felt? It shouldn't matter that she might be feeling hurt, betrayed and humiliated.

"Let's get out of here and go somewhere and talk," he said briefly.

Phaedra looked up at him and he almost winced at the pain he saw on her face. "No thank you, Mr. Scott-Thomas. I've been made the butt of your joke once tonight. I don't need to be made to feel the fool twice."

She spun away from him and took off towards the main entrance, almost running. It was difficult in her high heels, but she had the advantage of being smaller and able to weave her way between people more easily than Rand could. She exited the lobby just as a cab dispatched its passengers. She climbed in quickly, and gave the driver her home address. She didn't see Rand exit a moment later.

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Phaedra entered her apartment and threw her purse onto the table near the door. She kicked her shoes off angrily and quickly stripped her dress off, letting it fall the floor. She walked straight into the bathroom and turned on the shower.

She washed quickly, not wanting to remember how Rand's hands had felt such a short time earlier, when he had been touching her. Climbing from the shower, Phaedora wrapped a towel around her wet hair, and another around her waist. Her nipples were still taut and hard and just drying them with the towel had seemed too rough. As she reentered the living room, Phaedora debated the advantages of having a stiff drink and thereby speeding her ability to forget the whole damned night!

Phaedora stopped abruptly, seeing she was not alone. Somehow, Rand had gained access to her apartment and was seated on her sofa – watching her. Her feet froze as he stood and started towards her.

"I told your aunt you'd dropped your wallet and she offered me your spare key so I could return it tonight." His gaze moved from her face, to her naked shoulders, then down to linger on her firm, full breasts that jutted so proudly from her chest. "I didn't realize you were in the shower until I'd come in and I felt it would be better to wait for you out here."

Phaedora heard his words, but didn't seem able to react. Suddenly, she remembered her state of undress and pulled the towel from her wet head and held it in front of herself as her long hair fell to her shoulders. She watched as Rand's eye moved back up her body, and she knew her face was flushing under his scrutiny.

"Please leave. We have nothing else to say to each other."

Rand shook his head slowly. "You're wrong there, Phaedora. We have a lot to discuss. For starters, I'll call my hounds of hell off your uncle's company."

Phaedora shook her head. She couldn't have heard him correctly over the roaring in her ears. She knew it couldn't be that simple. "Why would you do that? Forgive me if I seem a little slow, but I'll be the first to admit that business matters are not my strong point."

Rand reached out and lightly ran his fingers over her naked shoulder. He didn't say anything when she jerked back. "Well, I decided that you and I could

come to an understanding. Every so often a man encounters something that... Well, let's just say that I want what you're offering more than I want your uncle's company."

Phaedra froze at his words. "I didn't offer you anything." Her words sounded weak even to her. When he had suggested she offer herself in lieu of the family business, it had been a joke. Nobody did that kind of thing for real anymore. This was the real world, not some kind of prosaic romance novel!

Rand must have thought so too for he shook his head and smiled. "I think your demonstration in the hallway spoke louder than any words."

Phaedra closed her eyes in horror. It was her worst nightmare. It was true that sometimes life sucked. She did have the fleeting thought that if she not "sucked" earlier; she most likely would not have found herself in the present situation. But she pushed that thought away, and she shook her head negatively. She opened her eyes when she felt Rand's hands come up and close around her shoulders.

"I can't remember the last time I had such hot sex with a woman, and the amazing part is that we haven't even had intercourse yet." He paused as he saw the blush staining her cheeks. "Having you in my bed will be worth more than any failing company I could takeover."

He curled one long wet strand of hair around his fingers idly, almost as if he had nothing else on his mind. "Long, hot steamy nights of wild and unbridled sex with you will more than make up for the work invested. As for the money I've spent, well I'll consider that a fair trade off."

Phaedra stared at Rand in disbelief. His words destroyed the last lingering of warmth and hope she'd had that she might salvage something from this debacle. She struggled to find the words she needed. "You'll stop the takeover if I become your mistress?" She asked in disbelief, shaking her head.

Rand shook his head also. "No, not my mistress. I want something more than that. We'll live together until the fire fades, and then you can go on about your

life, and that will be it."

Phaedra took a deep breath and it rattled unsteadily in her chest. Why wasn't she yelling and screaming no? That would be the normal, logical, and surely the right thing to do in a situation like this? Of course, she'd never been in a situation such as this before. She did wonder for a moment if this was something he did on a regular basis?

Rand reached out and yanked the towel from her fingers. A moment later, the second towel was whipped away and she was standing naked in front of him. He looked her over, down very slowly and then back up. Phaedra was shocked more by his words than his actions. As he spoke, she realized that she must have spoken her thoughts out loud.

"No, my sweet Phaedra." He coiled one strand tightly around his finger, and then used it to pull her a step closer. As she took a deep breath, her taut nipples brushed against his tuxedo jacket. With a start of surprise, she realized how aroused she had become.

It felt incredibly naughty, she thought, for him to be so exquisitely dressed to the nines in his tailor-made silk suit while she was now completely naked. Into her jumbled brain came the seductive scenario that this was rather like the desert sheik and his newly acquired houri for his harem. On one level she was ashamed at her lack of feminist outrage. But on the other, she was aroused by his mere presence. "I've never done this before. This is a first for me, as well."

Phaedra shivered under his intense gaze. She saw that his eyes were focused on his finger as he slowly unraveled the curl of her hair. His fingers then moved down to lightly rub back and forth across one very taut nipple. Phaedra shivered under his touch. This should not be so arousing she told herself. She should be resisting or at the very least stealing herself to merely lie beneath his rutting body and not move an inch. That is what a modern woman would do, right?

Rand let his gaze move down over her naked body. His attention was caught and held by her smooth mound. Without forethought, he reached out and

covered her shaven flesh with his hand. His lips curled upwards as he heard her gasp of surprise. His voice was deep as he spoke.

"I admit I was delightfully surprised when I discovered this earlier. Have you been shaving for long?" His fingers moved against her soft, smooth skin.

Phaedra nodded her head, and found it difficult to speak around the lump in her throat all of a sudden. "Yes..." She stopped as Rand slid one finger in between the petal soft folds of skin and gently wiggled around until he found her clit. Her gasp alerted him to his success.

"How long?" he prodded gently while his finger continued to work magic on her sensitive flesh.

"A friend did it for me the first time, in college."

Rand stiffened and felt compelled to ask, "Male friend?"

"No," Phaedra shook her head. "Another girl, my roommate actually. We'd gone on spring break and splurged on those thong bikinis..." She looked up and met Rand's eyes. "She'd already done her's and offered to help me..."

Rand moved swiftly and lifted her into his arms. He strode in the direction she had come and found his way into her bedroom. He dropped her onto the bed and she watched in disbelief as he began tearing his clothes off.

When he moved to lie above her, Phaedra couldn't stop the vision she had had earlier of just this very scenario. But in that one, she had been...

Phaedra groaned as she felt his hands caressing her still damp flesh. His hands cupped and caressed her full breasts, pausing to tease and torment her hardening nipples. As Rand's hands massaged her sensitive flesh, he spoke to her, with his voice breaking with emotion and passion.

"You have the most beautiful tits, honey! So big and round..." He stopped as he caressed the tender globes. One hand shifted though, moving down to cup and caress her mound once again. Phaedra jumped in surprise.

"God, Phaedra! I don't know that I should tell you this..."

Phaedra was surprised at the unsure tone in this confident and usually very

assured man's voice. "What?" She asked, unable to resist her curiosity.

Rand smiled and kissed her hand that was cupping the side of his face. "The thought of you and another woman, naked and she shaving you... Damn! That makes me so horny!"

Phaedra couldn't help the laugh that spouted forth. It made her feel joyful, and aroused, to know that this man was attracted to her. Again her actions surprised her. "Why does it arouse you?"

"I want to shave your pussy. I want it to be my fingers caressing your newly shaven skin."

She didn't want to be aroused, but she could feel herself melting and a fire starting low in her belly. He moved one hand to her pussy and without pause, worked her clit until she cried out in passion. "Yes!" She shouted as her body was still jerking and coming as he shifted her thighs. "Oh, Rand..." He thrust into her contracting cunt, made wet and juicy from her orgasm.

Phaedra wanted to fight his touch and push him away. But instead, her hands moved up over his chest and shoulders. Her fingers plucked and tugged at his taut nipples, squeezing and pulling as she felt his manhood filling her belly with each thrust. She opened her mouth to tell him to pull out because she wasn't on the pill, when her breath caught in her throat and she began climaxing again. She wrapped her thighs around his hips and pulled him tightly into her heat.

The heat and sensual pull of her muscles on his cock was all that was needed. Rand shouted loudly, "God! Phaedra!"

Rand's release shocked him by its intensity and fierceness. He thrust forward, and filled her body with his seed. His hands cupped Phaedra's ass, tilting her hips to meet his thrusts, forcing his seed higher into her fertile body with each movement.

Exhausted, he lowered himself to lie atop her, letting his cock soften inside her sweet, wet flesh. She might deny an attraction between them with her words, but nothing could deny the soft contractions of her body still sucking and

milking his cock for several minutes longer.

Finally, Rand slid to her side and the sound of his flesh pulling free of her made a loud, wet sucking noise in the silent room. Phaedra flushed all over again. The sound seemed lewd to her, as if having sex wasn't bad enough. Noise merely proclaimed it to the world.

She could rant all she wanted about despising him for his deceit, but nothing could deny the response her body had to this man. She kept her eyes closed, thinking that he would probably get dressed and leave shortly.

Rand propped his head on his fist as he lay on his side beside her. He reached out and cupped her nearest breast. He ignored her flinch and began to fondle and play with her fleshy globe. "Such pretty tits. I wasn't sure earlier, but I am now." He paused, knowing that she would open her eyes. She did and he smiled. "That they're real. It's hard to tell these days, until you have the proof, so to speak, in your hands."

Rand's smile turned to a grin as she flushed brightly in embarrassment. But he continued to press his hands over her full breasts, massaging and squeezing the tender flesh. She felt his breath caress the side of her face as he started to speak again. "I like big breasts, but only if they're natural, like this."

He paused as she shivered in reaction to his words. "Do you like me talking about your pretty tits?" He whispered to her softly, moving his hand from one breast to the other. "Does it turn you on to have these lovely breasts played with and talked about?" He tugged on her nipple, lifting her breast upwards for a moment. He released the taut nubbin, watching as her breast jiggled and bounced for another couple of seconds.

Phaedra couldn't control the shiver that coursed through her at his words. It did turn her on to have her breasts played with and talked about. Rand didn't miss her reaction. He lowered his head and took her nipple into his mouth. He suckled and tugged and licked and pulled on the sweet nubbin, hearing her soft gasps and whimpers.

As he continued to suck her nipple, he slid his hand down to cup her smooth, hairless mound. He moved his fingers down to her pussy, slipped two into her sperm filled cunt. He worked her clit deftly, pushed her quickly and without pause to climax once again. Phaedra cried out as she orgasmed once more.

Hearing her name called, she opened her eyes and found Rand was watching her every move. She felt more exposed than she ever had in life in that moment, with her body climaxing and knowing Rand was watching her with an almost clinical detachment on his face. She realized that he could bring her to orgasm with so little effort, and it made her feel cheap.

She closed her eyes, wishing that she didn't want his hands to caress her body. But she did. His touch was like a drug, the more she had, the more she would probably need and have to have it. She never knew how long his hand continued to cup her mound, as she fell asleep a short time later.

Chapter 2

Phaedra awoke to bright sunlight. She moved in her bed and stopped abruptly. She remembered Rand coming to her apartment, and her bed. She felt sore between her upper thighs. He had awakened her twice more during the night and filled her body with his seed.

She hoped that either he was sterile, or they were lucky. She was right in the middle of her cycle. She knew that some women couldn't get pregnant, or it was very difficult. At this moment she hoped she was one of those women as she struggled out of her bed. She went straight to the bathroom and took a long hot shower.

Dressed in cutoff jeans and a short T-shirt, she made her way to her small kitchen. She saw her dress had been picked up and was lying over the back of her sofa. Maybe she could pretend it was all a bad dream, she told herself as she poured some juice. As she turned, she saw the note on the refrigerator. The time for pretending was over as she read the written words.

Pack your bags for what you'll need, and I'll have the rest put into storage. I'll arrange with your landlord to sublet the apartment. I'll be by to pick you up at seven. We have dinner reservations for seven-thirty, so wear something dressy.

She read his words silently the first time and out loud the second, but they didn't change. The note was signed a capital R.

Phaedra sat down at the small table. There would be no forgetting or pretending after all. Rand was obviously moving ahead with his plans. Phaedra was tempted to run away, but she knew her family would suffer the consequences. She stood finally, knowing she would have to get busy.

As she packed, she figured that he would get tired of her in probably three months, maybe six the absolute longest. She told herself she was strong and she could put up with anything for just six months. And hopefully, if she kept telling herself that, she might eventually come to believe it as well.

* * * * *

She was dressed and packed by half past six that evening. She considered defying him, but decided against it. She was still confused by his decision, not understanding why he considered her worth the money and time he had put into acquiring as much stock as he had so far.

She heard from her uncle in the early afternoon. He thanked her graciously, telling her that he didn't know what she had said to convince Scott-Thomas, but he had pulled off his attack dogs. About an hour later, she heard from her aunt, who wanted to know what she had said, and how she had said it, to convince the corporate raider to desert his nearly dead prize.

Phaedra found after the first few seconds though, her aunt was content to rattle on herself, pretty much concocting a story that Phaedra decided would work better than the truth. Her aunt was always good at filling in any and all gaps during a phone conversation. She ended the conversation gracefully, returning to her packing gladly.

At a few minutes before seven, the buzzer rang. She wondered why he didn't just use the key as he had the previous night, but answered the call anyway. She expected to hear Rand's voice, but instead it was the doorman, telling her that the car had arrived to pick her up and did she need any help with her bags. Phaedra refused any help, having only packed one suitcase. She was sure that it wouldn't take that long for Rand to tire of her and send her packing.

She arrived downstairs and found there was a limousine waiting for her. The chauffeur took her bag and held the door for her. As the car pulled away from the curb, the driver informed her that Mr. Scott-Thomas would be meeting her at the restaurant.

Phaedra eased back into the seat. She had never ridden in a limousine before. She began to wonder if she was dressed right. And then, she called herself a fool for thinking it mattered. She wasn't out to impress anyone, and especially not

Rand Scott-Thomas. She had spent the majority of her day arguing with herself, and trying to keep visions of the previous night from clouding her mind and distracting her.

She was startled from her thoughts by the door opening. Phaedra climbed out of the limo, glad that she had worn a pair of linen slacks and a silky blouse. She walked into the restaurant and was greeted by name by the maitre d'. Surprised, she followed him through the maze of tables. She was escorted to a table where Rand was sitting with three other men. They all stood when the maitre d' pulled her chair out for her.

Rand slid a glass of white wine towards her that he had already ordered. She tried to pay attention as he introduced her to three men who worked for him. "Phaedra, this is Mark Phelps. If I had describe what Mark does I'd call him my 'right hand'."

Phaedra smiled at the blond haired man. He had kind eyes, she realized immediately, and a smile that made you feel comfortable with him almost from the second you met him. Before she could say anything to him though, Rand was introducing her to the other two men. She missed their names, but did catch that they were lawyers for his firm.

But she felt awkward meeting three strangers at once, and pretty much bowed out of the conversation. After a few minutes, she blushed as she realized the men were discussing the suddenly called off takeover. Like a light going on, she realized that Rand had only introduced her by her first name! It became obvious to her that they had no idea who she was, or how she was connected to the real reasons behind Rand's pull back on the takeover. She never saw any of the men look at her in an odd or questioning way. She tried to relax and sip the wine, but when Rand moved his hand over and started caressing her upper thigh, any reasonable ability to relax was lost.

Phaedra removed his hand twice, but he persisted, shooting her a coaxing grin once. Each time his hand returned it would slip a little bit higher and more

towards her inner thighs.

She tried to concentrate on her dinner, but that was impossible when Rand slid his hand between her thighs and cupped her mound. She yelped in surprise and covered it quickly by coughing and pretending to need more water to drink. It was difficult to eat as Rand's hand lightly fondled her crotch.

When she frowned at him, he merely grinned and acted as if he had no idea what might be bothering her. Phaedra gritted her teeth and hoped she wouldn't moan out loud as his hand cupped and pressed her soft flesh.

As soon as their plates were removed, she excused herself for the ladies room. She was glad to see that her hair was still tightly confined and the only hint of what had been going on beneath the table was the heightened flush on her cheeks.

Rand was waiting for her when she came out.

"I made your excuses. I thought we would head home and get you settled in." He took her arm and steered her outside. Their limo was waiting at the curb and within a few seconds they were on their way.

Phaedra had scooted to the far side and was staring out the window. She felt compelled to question Rand. "It is obvious that you didn't tell your people why you suddenly changed your mind on the takeover. I am curious as to why." And as soon as the words left her mouth, she regretted them instantly.

Rand had set his briefcase on the floor and turned to look at Phaedra. "No. It's no one's business what I do. That's why I don't have stockholders to answer to."

Phaedra glanced over and saw that he was watching her. "I wasn't sure what you would do. I heard from my aunt and uncle, and they didn't mention it either. In fact, my uncle didn't seem in the least bit concerned about why you had changed your mind, but was just grateful that you had."

"And what did your aunt have to say?"

Phaedra turned to look back out the window. "She concocted her own tale of

how I must have convinced you to change your mind. I'm not sure how it all ended, she got so involved that I lost track."

"I had no intention of letting your family know anything about our arrangement."

Phaedra stiffened at his use of the word *arrangement*. It sounded worse than *mistress*. Suddenly, she felt heat against her side and realized that Rand had slid across the seat. He had one arm behind her and the other was lightly tracing circles on her leg closest to him. She felt the hand behind her start to lightly caress the bare skin of her neck. He lowered his head and pressed a kiss to the side of her face. She felt his hand sliding up her thigh, across her waist, and pausing just below her breasts.

"I don't think I got a lick of work done today. All I could think about was how sweet your body smelled and how hot your mouth felt when you sucked my cock in that hallway." He slid his hand under one of Phaedra's sensitive breasts and cupped the soft, round globe in his palm. "It was almost too tempting not to come back and see you over the lunch hour." His hand began squeezing and molding her firm flesh. "I probably should have and then I might have gotten something done."

He paused as he felt her nipple hardening beneath the silky shirt. "Hmmm, no bra I see. Nothing I like better than seeing breasts bouncing and jiggling as a woman walks. I might make that a rule. No underwear while you're with me. That way you'll always be willing and available for my lovemaking."

Phaedra flushed hotly at his words. She had left the bra off because her breasts had felt too tender to be confined. She had hoped her stiff nipples would pass unnoticed.

As if Rand could read her mind, he commented softly, "I could see your nipples poking at your shirt all through dinner. I was tempted to say to hell with dinner and drag you out of there. Every time you shifted on your chair, or scooted on it, I got an instant hardon watching how your tits jiggled with each

move." His mouth nuzzled her neck, sucking on the tender skin.

"Every little jiggle and bounce made me want to reach out and move my hands under your blouse. Do you know how sexy it is to watch you walk? It's poetry in motion, drooling over every single bounce, shake and jiggle of such magnificent tits. I watched my employees watching you."

Embarrassment flooded through her at his words. She hadn't seen any of the other men looking at her. Knowing that they might have seen what Rand had, or felt what he had was embarrassing to her. "I didn't intend to..."

Rand smiled slightly. "I know you didn't. I knew almost from the very beginning that you're not that kind of woman."

Phaedra wasn't sure if that was a compliment or not. Suddenly she felt cool air across her chest and looked down. Rand had managed to unbutton her shirt, and was tugging her camisole down. He pulled until her plump breast popped free. He didn't wait any longer. He lowered his mouth to suck her nipple into the heat of his mouth.

She wanted to resist his touch, but the feel of his sensual tugging went straight to her loins and she shifted restlessly on the seat. His hand pressed her plump and luscious flesh upwards to his mouth.

Rand lifted his head as the car went over a bump. "We're here, sweetheart. Just a few more minutes and I'll take care of that ache for you." He quickly covered her breast and buttoned her shirt. He opened the car door nearest her and climbed out first, Rand was too impatient to wait for his driver. He extended his hand and helped her from the car.

Phaedra almost tripped as she took in the large, modern house. There was a lot of glass everywhere to take advantage of the sunlight, and enjoy the view of the ocean that she could hear, but not yet see. She'd never lived next to the ocean before. She turned as Rand took her arm and led her into the house.

The door was opened by a man that Rand introduced as Fernando, and if she needed anything to just ring for him. Phaedra nodded, but felt immensely

overwhelmed. She'd never lived with servants in her home. Her uncle had a large home, but they only had a cleaning service that came twice a week. She followed Rand as he gave her a brief tour of the house.

"This is the living room, and it opens up onto the deck. This is the kitchen," Rand paused to turn on the light. "You can see that it opens onto the deck as well. There are chairs and tables out there, but you'll be able to see it better in the morning."

Phaedra nodded. "All right. Uhm, do you grill outside much?"

Rand laughed and curled his hand around her arm. Leading her closer to the French doors, he flipped the outside light on. He pointed to the elaborate outdoor grill. He grinned when Phaedra murmured "Wow!"

"I love cooking outside, but since I'm often alone..." Rand turned the light off, and started back towards the living room. Phaedra paused as she realized that Rand was not the man she had assumed him to be—leading a frantic life, filled with work and parties and lots of people. She wasn't completely comfortable seeing him as a regular guy. Taking a deep breath, she hurried after Rand.

Rand was waiting for her in the living room. "You'll be able to see everything better tomorrow, in the daylight. I think you'll find it fairly comfortable." He turned and started down the hallway. Phaedra followed him but stopped suddenly upon finding herself inside a bedroom.

As she looked around the immense master bedroom, it all seemed to become real. She had agreed to live with this man she barely knew. It didn't seem right somehow. She had always presumed that when she did live with a man it would be someone she loved, even if they weren't married. Instead, she was going to be living with a stranger.

Rand was pointing out the large walk-in closet. "If you need more room, just let me know. I can move my clothes to another empty room, or even put some into storage." Stopping abruptly, Rand realized that he probably sounded

pathetic and needy. Turning, he then showed her two empty drawers in a bureau. "Same here, Phaedra. If you want more drawer space..."

Phaedra nodded, but felt uneasy and didn't really know what the proper thing to say was in a situation like this. An involuntary smile curved her lips as she thought it was doubtful you could find an answer to this question in a book by Miss Manners!

Looking around so she could avoid meeting Rand's eyes, she saw the large television that hung from the ceiling, so you could easily watch it from the bed. When she finally turned from the blank screen, unable to shake the thought of watching some erotic movie while copying the actions in bed with Rand, she found that he had begun to undress. She flushed and quickly turned away. She saw her suitcase had been set by the closet and went over to pick it up.

"Just leave it for now, Phaedra." He took the case from her cold hand and set it back down. Standing behind her, his hands stroked up and down her arms.

Phaedra shivered in nervous reaction. She almost laughed as she realized she was acting as nervous as a bride on her wedding night. She felt Rand's mouth at the side of her neck, kissing her skin softly. His touch on her arms was gentle, coaxing, and not demanding as she had half expected. She closed her eyes, realizing in surprise, that none of "this" was going as she had thought. He hadn't tossed her on the bed and ravaged her. A giggle almost escaped as she thought that he hadn't 'jumped her bones'. Yet, she reminded herself.

She looked down and saw that Rand had unbuttoned her blouse and pulled it free of her slacks. She didn't notice that Rand's hands were shaking a little in his eagerness to make love to her again. The edges of her shirt were parted and you could see the lacey camisole she wore beneath it.

Almost like it was a movie, Phaedra watched his darker skinned hands slide up from her waist. They paused for just a moment and then cupped her full breasts. As his hands gently massaged and molded the firm flesh, she could not stop the sigh that escaped her lips.

Behind her, she felt Rand press his arousal against her soft bottom while his mouth sucked on the soft, white skin of her neck. And even though her prim and proper upbringing was telling her not to respond—that she was being forced into this relationship and it was wrong to enjoy it—her body pressed back against Rand, actually moving her rounded ass back and forth across his hard cock. Rand's groan in response should have repelled her, but it did not. Instead Phaedra could feel her body softening and responding to Rand's arousal.

Almost as if from a distance, Phaedra heard Rand whisper into her ear. "I don't think I've ever felt skin as soft as yours." He lowered his mouth the silky column of her throat once again, sucking on the tender skin.

A tiny voice of reason told her it would probably leave a mark, but then his hands were turning her to face him. She had but a glimpse of his intense face as he lowered his mouth to hers. The patch he wore made him seem mysterious. And in the next second, his kiss was hot, possessive and demanding.

Phaedra felt the room whirl as he picked her up and carried her to the bathroom. Setting her down beside the large tub, Rand turned on the water and adjusted the temperature. Turning to smile at Phaedra, he spoke softly, aware that his own passionate emotions were affecting him much more than he had anticipated. He didn't want to be embarrassed by having his voice break.

"I thought we might relax in the tub first."

Phaedra could only nod in response. Her eyes were glued to Rand's muscular and so obviously aroused body. When he turned unexpectedly and saw where she was looking, a grin curved his sensual lips. Phaedra felt she should protest, or do something, but as Rand's hands lifted and finished undressing her, it didn't seem to matter.

A moment later Rand turned Phaedra to face the large mirror above one of the matching sinks. As he stood behind her, all she could see were his broad shoulders, his hands resting on her shoulders, and a glimpse now and then of his hip as he shifted his position. Her eyes seemed glued to the mirror as Rand

slipped the shirt from her shoulders and tossed it towards the clothes hamper. Looking at Rand's face she could see that his attention was focused on her and his hands were now unfastening the closing of her slacks.

Feeling her slacks slipping off her hips, with Rand's fingers easing the process, Phaedra lifted her eyes to see the other reflections in the mirror. The bathroom was large, and reflecting in the mirror was the large Jacuzzi style tub, a glass enclosed shower, toilet, and two sinks. Rand's voice drew her gaze back to their reflections.

"You are so beautiful, Phaedra." His hands were lightly stroking over her hips. Her high cut panties allowed his flesh to touch her warm skin briefly as his hands formed circles over her hips. But then his hands slipped backwards and curved around to cup her pert, rounded ass cheeks.

Phaedra gasped out loud as his hands covered her buns, and then squeezed, molded and finally massaged the rounded cheeks. Before her knees buckled though, Rand slipped his hands back around her waist. Catching the silky camisole in his hands, he dragged the material upwards. For a moment, her hard nipples caught and stopped the silk. But they were no match for his determined need to witness Phaedra's naked beauty. Her camisole went flying through the air and her eyes followed it for a scant second until his hands claimed possession of her naked full breasts.

"Oh!" Phaedra cried out before she even had the thought to do so. Her own hands lifted to pull his down, or that is what she told herself. Instead her smaller, paler hands rested atop his hands, lightly caressing as he began massaging her sensitive flesh.

"You are so beautiful, Phaedra. Your breasts so delicious..." Rand paused to caress them. "I dream about sucking your nipples. Hell! I daydream about playing with your tits! Have you thought about how I would make love to you?"

Rand moved his hands and his fingers began flicking across the tips of the sensitive pink buds, and then rubbing palms across the distended peaks. His

voice was hoarse as he whispered close to her ear. "Do you like soft and light touches, or perhaps..." he paused to catch each nipple between his fingertips. "would you prefer something a little rougher?" His voice seemed to drop an octave, revealing that he was not as aloof as he appeared. "Take your panties off for me."

Phaedra froze at his words. She had been lost in a sensual fog until his words brought her true situation back to the forefront of her consciousness. Her hands moved slowly, unaware of how much more sexy the slowness made the striptease. The panties shifted as her fingers slipped under the elastic band. A moment later, her fingers were dragging the panties down until they could drop freely to the floor. Looking up, she saw that Rand's eye seemed to be blazing at her reflection in the mirror. Phaedra felt her smooth pussy lips flooding with her eager wetness. The strength of her response to Rand was unnerving, to say the least.

Suddenly, Phaedra noticed the level of water in the tub. She had to clear her throat twice before she could speak. "The tub... the water..."

Rand cursed and quickly turned the water off. The water was lapping at the rim's edge, threatening to overflow any moment. He couldn't believe that he had been so distracted by Phaedra, and his response to her, that he had almost flooded his bathroom! He turned back around and saw that Phaedra was leaning against the counter, her hands braced flat on the top, her forehead against the cool glass. She obviously had no idea how tempting that pose was! He stepped close behind her, letting his cock ease between her slightly parted thighs. As he felt her wetness along his cock, he groaned in passionate response.

"God, Phaedra! I want you..." His hands slipped up and cupped her breasts, squeezing and massaging them eagerly. "Rest on your elbows, darling!"

Phaedra responded to his hoarse demands, and this caused her full breasts to rest in his eager and grasping hands. She had to spread her feet more to steady herself, and this allowed Rand's cock to slip more fully forward, and between her

swollen lips. "Oh, God! Phaedra! Yes, baby... That's it..."

Phaedra moaned as her body eagerly accepted Rand's cock. Her hips tilted to give him better access, and as he entered her more fully, she cried out hoarsely, "Yes! Rand!" Her next words surprised her to her core. "Fuck me!"

Rand's body responded instantly to Phaedra's demand. Her words surprised him as well. His hands slipped to her hips and he began sliding in and out of Phaedra's body. Leaning further into Phaedra, he moved one hand around her body and down to cup her shaven mound. "I love your hairless pussy! I don't think I've ever been that surprised or horny as when I first touched this sweet, bald pussy!" One finger eased down and between the wet, slippery lips and found her clit.

Phaedra's body jerked wildly as Rand's fingers began working sensual magic on her sensitive bud of flesh. Hips flexing and rotating in response to his erotic touch, she felt Rand's cock slid into her more deeply, butting into her G-spot. Several more thrusts forward and Phaedra climaxed hard and fast. Rand's hands moved to her hips to support her, but as her cunt muscles began grabbing and pulling on his cock, he could hold off no more. His own body took over and he began thrusting faster and faster.

"Oh, good God! Phaedra!" Rand cried hoarsely as his balls tightened and the next moment he was shooting stream after stream of hot, life-producing sperm into Phaedra's fertile womb. But right then, contraception was the last thing on their minds.

It was a few minutes before Rand straightened and his soft cock slipped from her body. Phaedra stood and looked at their reflections in the mirror. Her nipples were hard and probably poking out three quarters of an inch. Her pussy lips looked swollen and she could see the wetness beginning to seep from within her body.

Rand leaned over and kissed her shoulder. "Want to hop in the tub to clean off, or the shower?"

Phaedra felt weak in her knees, and opted for the tub. The water level had gone down, and as she settled in, the swirls and heat made her feel incredibly relaxed. She felt almost boneless as Rand settled into the water next to her. Her head lolled forward and then back as her tiredness swept through her.

"Come here," Rand said quietly, and eased Phaedra around in the tub until she was between his legs and reclining backwards, resting against his chest. Her head rested against his chest, nestling most naturally against the side of his neck. The long strands of her hair floated on the water and some were plastered across Rand's chest. Her eyes closed.

Phaedra had no idea how long they stayed like that. But Rand's hands gently shaking her shoulders awoke her. On one level she'd been aware of Rand constantly stroking and playing with her breasts. She also knew she'd spread her thighs and welcomed his fingers playing with and exploring her pussy.

Standing by the tub, feeling Rand rub the towel over her body, Phaedra felt like her knees were made of jelly and legs of rubber. She was half aware of Rand emptying the tub, and then they walked back into the bedroom. She knew it didn't make any sense, but the room felt different to her, more like she belonged!

Phaedra started towards the bed and her feet tripped over one another. Rand swung her up into his arms and strode to the bed. Rand came down beside her, and his hands began caressing her skin once again. This time there was a drag of damp skin against damp skin. It added a new element of awareness to her passionate arousal.

As she felt his hot skin next to hers, she became aware that Rand was aroused once again. His hot flesh burned into hers as he slid one strong muscular thigh between her pale white ones. As she felt his hand caressing her stomach, one part of her brain told her to push him away before he captured her soul. His hand slid between her thighs and cupped her womanhood still damp from the bath and the combined fluids of their earlier joining. She feared that it was probably too late already. She couldn't shake the feeling that she had sold her

soul to the devil and now she would have to pay the consequences.

She opened her eyes as she heard Rand's groan of arousal. She felt his fingers caressing and teasing the smooth flesh that she seemed to offer to him as she spread her thighs wide. It was surprising to realize that if this were the payment, then she wouldn't mind. Rand seemed to be able to touch her body and take her places she'd never been before.

Rand wanted to go slow and savor this first time of making love to her in his bed, but the need was becoming too great. He slid his hand down and insinuated his fingers inside. The jerking of her hips proved he had found the pleasure point again, and he didn't let up until Phaedra climaxed hard. He moved above her and between her thighs. She seemed to know just how to move without his asking as her thighs lifted and encircled his hips.

He heard her call his name, "Rand!"

He tried to hold back for a moment longer, but her legs tightened and she pulled him down and into her body. As her body swallowed his hard flesh, Rand had to close his eyes. Sensations swamped his mind and he was only aware of her scent, the softness of her body and the hot flesh squeezing his cock.

Rand opened his eye and looked down at the woman beneath him. For a moment, he almost ripped the patch off, but he held back. Instead, he distracted himself by praising her body.

"God! Your body is so perfect! The way you respond to my touch excites me all the more!"

He moved within her heat and watched as her face revealed her feelings. Her lips were parted as she breathed quickly. He lowered his gaze and watched as her breasts jiggled and her taut nipples rubbed against his chest in between the downward moves. He thrust again, and her breasts jiggled and bounced with each move. He lowered his head and sucked one hard nipple into his mouth. He used his tongue against the silk to stimulate her taut, but tender nub. As he pulled her nipple into his mouth, sucking on it, he felt her muscles clamping

down and squeezing his cock.

"You taste so sweet..."

Rand released her nipple, wanting to slow things down. But Phaedra's legs tightened and pulled him into her body. As her second, smaller orgasm began to ripple through her, Rand started thrusting faster. He wanted her to enjoy this as much as he, but knew he could hold back no longer. His body took over and he moved faster, harder, and deeper until he stiffened and shot his cum deep into her body, unable to stop the thought that he was planting his seed in her.

He looked down and saw her eyes were closed. He couldn't push away the vision of Phaedra with her belly getting bigger as his child grew within her. He glanced down at her heaving breasts, which were bouncing and jiggling while she still struggled to calm her breathing. He was overwhelmed with the need to watch her suckle his child at her breasts. He could imagine her breasts getting bigger and filling with milk.

Suddenly, Rand shook his head to rid it of the erotic and emotional thoughts. He pulled from her body and fell to the bed beside her. He closed his eyes, letting the sweet after effects of lovemaking wash through him. It was several moments later that he felt Phaedra roll to her side, away from him.

He realized that she hadn't said more than a few words the whole time he had made love to her. He had whispered sweet praises of her body to her as he touched and caressed her, but she had remained silent.

Phaedra lay on her side, away from Rand. Her body was still shaking from the onslaught of emotions his touch gave her. And even though she closed her eyes, he was in her head. She could visualize him as he thrust into her body with his face set and intent on his actions. She shifted a bit, not wanting to disturb him and felt the wetness seep from her body. Tomorrow she would have to call her doctor, she told herself silently. It wouldn't do to leave this arrangement pregnant and unwed.

Suddenly, she felt the bed shift beneath her. A second later, Rand was curled up behind her, pressing close to her. She felt his head come to rest behind hers, and his body spooned behind her. One hand slid around her waist. She felt him lightly stroke and caress her tummy and then his hand slid upwards to cup her breast.

He didn't massage or squeeze it, but simply let the soft flesh rest in his hand. Phaedra felt a tear slide down her cheek as she realized how intimate his gesture was. It was a sign of possession. And even though she could lie and tell herself that it didn't mean anything, her heart and her mind were already telling her that it was too late for denials.

Chapter 3

Phaedra awoke Sunday morning to find she was alone in the king size bed. As she turned over, her body reminded her of its unexpected overuse the last two nights. She grimaced at the tenderness. Rand had awakened her twice more during the night. The last time he was already inside her body, and she felt him cumming before she opened her eyes. Each time though, his touch was tender and considerate. She knew she always climaxed because that was when she usually awoke.

She left the bed slowly, making her way to the bathroom. She wrinkled her nose, as she smelled the after effects of so much sex. She looked at her reflection in the mirror. She immediately saw she had two very visible love bites. One was on the side of her neck, and the second was lower, just above her left breast. She turned quickly and got into the shower. She had no choice but to use his soap and shampoo. She sniffed and realized she would now smell like Rand. As she rinsed off she reminded herself it was better than smelling like a prostitute.

Phaedra froze at that thought. Why shouldn't she smell like a whore since she'd behaved like one! Feeling emotionally vulnerable, she wrapped the towel around body, securing the knot between her breasts and returned to the bedroom. Opening her suitcase, she found her comb and began unknottting the tangles. She usually braided it loosely to prevent it from getting too badly tangled, but she had fallen asleep before remembering to do it. When it was finally completely combed through, she braided it loosely. She next pulled on a pair of cotton shorts and a T-Shirt. Slipping socks and sneakers on, she decided to find the kitchen and hopefully some food.

* * * * *

The kitchen was deserted and she wondered if Fernando got Sundays off. Phaedra opened the refrigerator and saw a last remaining piece of pie. She

decided to hell with her usual healthy breakfast and pulled the pie out. She quickly found a fork and sat down at the small nook style table. She savored the first bite, discovering it was cherry pie. She was halfway through her sweet treat when she heard a noise. She turned her head and a moment later Rand entered the kitchen. From his damp T-Shirt and wet hair, she guessed he must have been engaged in some kind of physical activity.

Rand was obviously surprised to see her sitting at his kitchen table, but he smiled at her as he ran fingers through his hair.

"Good morning! I had planned on letting you sleep in this morning. Ahh, I see you found the pie. Fernando's wife Carlita is a great cook. I have to work out regularly or I'd show how much I enjoy it."

Phaedra watched as he poured a glass of juice and drank it straight down. She found herself watching his throat as he swallowed. She turned away quickly, thinking he even looked sexy drinking juice. And she finally acknowledged what her true fear was. She was afraid that she would fall for Rand and end up nursing a broken heart.

Phaedra lifted her fork, thinking that sweets never solved anything. Her hand was stopped though. Her eyes darted to Rand, who had captured her hand. He moved her hand with the fork and leaned over to take the bite of pie. Her eyes watched as his mouth closed around the food. Suddenly, in her mind she saw his mouth taking her nipple inside his heated mouth. Her breath quickened as she saw his tongue dart out to lick away a stray crumb. It seemed so erotic to her that she felt a stirring of arousal chase through her body.

Rand grinned. "What are your plans today?"

Phaedra felt confused at his behavior towards her. He seemed to be treating *this* as if they were two normal people who were now living together, and had known each other for some time. He was relaxed and casual around her. She shook her head in reply, but was unaware that confusion was apparent on her face. "I have nothing planned. I usually do laundry and grocery shopping on

Saturday and Sunday."

"Great!" Rand's grin got even bigger. "We have a regular football game in the park. It's usually on Saturday, but we had to get some work done yesterday. And everyone still wanted to play, so we moved it to this afternoon. I thought we could pack some lunch and head over around eleven. That would give us time to eat before the game starts. If you want to scrounge around and see if you can find anything edible, I'll go ahead and shower. I'd have Carlita do it, but I gave them the day off." He leaned down and kissed her surprised mouth.

When Rand returned about twenty minutes later, dressed casually in old jeans and T-shirt, Phaedra had found the bread, cold meat and cheese and put together a few sandwiches. She had also set out a couple pieces of fruit and some bottled water on the counter as well.

"This looks delicious!" Rand complimented her, but she just laughed.

"I really don't cook. I'm not very good at it at all. I took a class, but they kicked me out when I almost burned down their kitchen twice. Once was forgivable I guess, but twice showed an alarming trend?" She shrugged apologetically.

Rand laughed, gathered everything together into the basket he'd brought into the kitchen with him and added two cold beers and two chocolate bars. When he saw Phaedra watching him, he grinned guiltily. "Beer for after the game, and chocolate always goes well on a picnic." Rand picked up the basket, and then added. "I've got several blankets in the car that we can use to sit on. Do you need to get anything else before we take off?"

Phaedra shook her head. "No. I guess there isn't anything else. I don't need a purse since you are driving." Rand nodded and a few minutes later they were driving towards the park in the center of the city. She was a little surprised at the car Rand drove. It was a low-slung dark green sports car. From the deep-throated purr of the engine, she guessed it was expensive. The top was off, and the wind felt good.

Rand parked a short distance from the open field. He carried the picnic basket and she had the blanket. As they reached the area where he said they usually played, several people were already there. Almost immediately, people began waving to Rand, calling out greetings and offers to join them. Rand greeted everyone warmly, but appeared to have a particular destination in mind.

A few moments later they approached a small family. Phaedra noticed the two children who were dressed alike, and crawling around their parents, and all over the blankets. The blond-haired man with the family called out as soon as he had seen them to come over and join them. Rand paused, a short distance away. "Do you mind joining Mark and his family? You met him at dinner yesterday."

Phaedra shook her head. "No, that would be fine." She didn't say anything but knew that she would enjoy playing with the children. Quietly, they walked over to the family.

The man stood and helped spread the blanket out with Rand. Rand introduced him again as Mark Phelps. Mark grinned at Phaedra. "It's nice to meet you again. This is my wife Naomi and these wild boys are Chad and Chet."

Phaedra smiled and greeted Naomi. She watched the pretty blonde woman manage to rescue a dandelion from one of the boy's hands just in time. Naomi grinned when she met Phaedra's eyes. "Chet knows no fear, I'm afraid."

Rand was already spreading out their food when Phaedra moved to sit at the far edge of the blanket. She accepted a sandwich and a bottle of water. Naomi offered each baby his bottle while Rand and Mark started talking.

Phaedra listened and watched Rand's face as he talked. At first, they talked business and she soon learned that Mark not only worked for Rand, he was Rand's right hand man. She also couldn't help but think that the two men were probably good friends. They then started talking about the game for the day. She nibbled her sandwich until she felt a touch on her knee. She looked down and saw that one of the babies had crossed the grass and reached their blanket. He was grinning up at her, quite pleased with himself.

"I'm sorry," Naomi said, seeing where her explorer had gone. "If he's bothering you, just say so. I know not everyone is as 'into' kids as I've become lately."

Phaedra shook her head. "No, he's fine. Actually, I like children. I work with them." She set her food aside and picked up the young man. "Hi there, handsome. Which one are you?"

Mark answered, the men having stopped talking. "That one is Chad who's always going places he shouldn't be."

Naomi nodded. "What do you do, if you don't mind my asking?"

Phaedra flushed, suddenly aware that Rand was listening as well. "I work at the hospital several days a week, in the children's unit."

Rand frowned. "I thought your uncle told me you didn't have a job?"

Phaedra glanced at Rand and then at the gurgling baby. "I guess it isn't an official job. I don't get paid, but I go in almost everyday, at least for a few hours."

"You volunteer then, at the hospital?" Naomi asked.

Phaedra nodded. "Sort of. The hospital's had a lot of cutbacks recently and they lost funding for their child life therapist. I have a degree in childhood education and have taken a lot of additional classes in working with ill and recovering children. I met their department head through a committee I was serving on with my aunt, and we started talking. Next thing I knew I was working steadily to help out."

Naomi gaped at her. "Wow! That sounds like fun. How long have you been doing it?"

Phaedra picked up the bottle Chad had dropped and offered it to him. He settled into her arms and started taking it eagerly. "A year or so. If something else comes up, I don't go in. But I tend to arrange everything around my time there, so I go in at least four times a week."

"Isn't it hard though, working with sick kids?" Naomi continued, passing Phaedra a burp rag.

"Everyone always thinks that, but I love it. It's hard when we lose one, of course. But the joy you see in their faces when something special happens is worth the heartache." She paused and put the baby to her shoulder to burp him.

As she did so, she saw Rand was staring at her intently and realized that he had probably been assuming she would stay at his house all day while he was at work. Well, she didn't plan on altering her schedule unless she absolutely had to.

She opened her mouth to tell Rand she would be going in on Monday when a shout caught their attention. It looked like the game was starting. She surprised herself by asking if it was men only.

"Do you let the ladies play, or is this a boys only club?"

Mark grinned and then laughed at the surprised look on Rand's face. "Please join us, Phaedra. A couple of wives play every now and then. Naomi used to play, before the boys came along."

Naomi laughed. "I'm tempted to bring a sitter with us to the game. That way I could play and get a rest!"

Phaedra met Naomi's gaze and the two shared a knowing look. They both laughed when they saw the confused look on the men's faces. Mark tried to look affronted as he added, "There are also a few women from the office who play, and a couple of the guys' girlfriends play once in a while."

Naomi smiled. "The only problem is that they change it from tackle to touch only, when the women are playing. "

Phaedra stood and handed the baby back to his mother. "It sounds like fun," and started over to where the other players were gathering missing the frown on Rand's face.

A few minutes later, they were going over the rules. It appeared that Rand was one team captain, and the other was a young man whose name was Joe. There were about 4 women playing today, and Joe won the first pick for team members. Phaedra didn't see the flash of impatient anger that appeared momentarily on Rand's face as Joe picked her first for his team. But Mark did,

and hastily covered his laugh with a cough. Joe worked for Rand, as did all the men playing, as well as two of the women.

Phaedra joined in happily, feeling quite relaxed for the first time since Friday night. She clapped her hands to welcome each of the other team members. Before they started, Rand pointed out again that it would be touch football only, no tackling. There were a few good-hearted laughs and Joe spoke just loud enough for a few people to hear.

"Damn! I should have let the other team have you Phaedra. Then I could have enjoyed 'touching' you."

Lots of people laughed as the two teams separated. Mark realized that his boss quite possibly had a "new girlfriend" and no one knew it yet. He was sure no one suspected because Rand had never brought a woman to the game before. He didn't doubt that pretty soon Rand would let it be known that Phaedra was "with" him in more ways than just riding to the park with him.

Phaedra was good at sports. She had been a natural athlete in school, and had often played football with her friends. It soon became obvious she had a talent for the game, and whenever possible, Joe would pass or hand off the ball to her. He started having her hike the ball to him, so he could rest his hands on her hips and casually adjust her position. And it was impossible to miss the huge grin on Joe's face, each time he reached between Phaedra's thighs farther than necessary to grab the ball from her.

Finally, she got a break and was running for the invisible goal line. Just as she crossed it, she was tackled from behind. She managed to hang onto the ball though, and they still scored. She rolled over angrily, and saw that Rand was the offender. Somehow, from the look on his face, she knew it had not been an accident.

Rand stood and helped her to her feet. He leaned down to whisper to her. "Forget what I said about you not wearing a bra. From now on, any football

games, wear one!"

Phaedra stared at him in amazement. She didn't know what she had expected him to say, but that wasn't it. When she had dressed that morning in the cotton shorts and shirt that came only to her waist, she had not anticipated going out. She should have changed once she found out about the football game, but maybe she was just being stubborn. Obviously, Rand had noticed the bouncing going on as she ran with the ball. She shrugged it off to his just being possessive. He probably considered her "his property" for the next six months.

Joe reached them and asked if she was okay. He reached out to begin brushing some of the grass off her clothes. His hands whisked over her rounded bottom a few times on the pretense of helping, but when he reached towards her heaving breasts, Phaedra quickly stepped away. She laughed and said she was just fine and it would take more than one little tackle to take her out of the game. She added with a smile.

"When I used to play in high school and college, we played tackle, no matter who was playing." Several of the women laughed. Phaedra shrugged, letting her gaze wander to Rand. "You'd be surprised fellas, if you knew how much we women enjoy a good tackle!"

Joe grabbed the ball and announced unnecessarily that it was six to zero. The game restarted.

Phaedra saw the looks Rand kept shooting her way. She wasn't completely sure why, but she assumed he was either angry because she chose to play instead of just watch. Or, Rand could be pissed over the "casual" touches she'd been receiving from Joe. What Rand didn't know was that she couldn't have cared less about the attention Joe was giving her. Phaedra had found herself watching Rand. She noticed how supple his muscles in his thighs were. And every time his hair flopped forward onto his forehead, Phaedra's fingers ached to push the errant locks back. As they took a half time break, Carol, the other woman playing on her side, grabbed her arm and waited until everyone else had gone ahead to

get something to drink and rest for a bit.

Carol smiled at her as she spoke. "I think someone should warn you about Joe."

"Why?" She asked casually, already liking everyone she had met so far. Perhaps she'd be proven wrong later, but she had a feeling that these weekend outings could easily become something she would miss once Rand dismissed her.

Carol shrugged. "Well, he can't seem to keep his eyes off you. He's quite the 'ladies man' if you know what I mean. He can also get pretty touchy-feely too. At work, we're all aware of how he is and take everything he says and does with a grain of salt. Whenever there's a new girl around, he always zeroes right in. I'm sure he's already looked to see if you had a ring on."

Phaedra smiled and patted the other woman's arm. "Thanks for warning me, but I am pretty immune. I've had all my shots."

Carol laughed with Phaedra. "Would you like something to drink? I brought extra. My fiancé, Mike, can drink like a horse."

Phaedra laughed and the two started walking towards the others. She noticed that while a few were stretched out on their blankets, a small group had gathered around Rand and Mark's blankets. The babies were gathering a lot of attention, but most of the adults were sprawled on the blankets and talking.

As they neared the group, Carol's fiancé saw them first. He walked to them and handed Carol a cold soda.

"Have you been giving Carol some lessons on how to play football?"

Carol lightly punched his upper arm. "Hey!" she protested.

Mike kissed her cheek. "You're one hell of an accountant, honey. But your talent doesn't lie with football."

Both women laughed. Before either could reply though, Naomi was calling out to Phaedra. "I'm afraid you've made a conquest Phaedra. The minute Chad heard your voice he's been trying to crawl over to you."

Phaedra blushed, as everyone seemed to have stopped talking. She walked over and held out her arms. The baby truly did seem to recognize her for he reached up to her and wiggled his hands to indicate his urgency. As she cuddled him to her breasts, she smiled down at Naomi. "So long as they're this age I can handle them."

Everyone laughed and she noticed that Rand's blanket had as many bodies as possible already crammed onto it. The picnic basket had been shoved to the side, so she walked over and leaned down for a bottle of water. She was surprised to find they were all gone. She stood and moved back towards Naomi.

"Do you have anything extra to drink? It looks like all the water's gone from our basket."

"Sure," Naomi told her and offered her a choice of beverages. "I learned the hard way to pack extra."

Phaedra accepted a glass of lemonade and was considering sitting on the grass. Before she could decide, she heard Joe's voice. "Allow me to assist you, fair maiden." Joe gallantly spread an extra blanket on the grass. He held her glass while she sat down.

Naomi turned and smiled. "You have to watch out for that one, Phaedra. He's a hopeless flirt."

Joe tried to look wounded and pressed his palm to his chest. "Naomi! You wound me with such cruel words."

Several people heard the interchange and laughed. Carol added that she had already warned Phaedra about the company wolf.

"I'm crushed, ladies!" Joe protested loudly, pressing his palm to his chest.

Phaedra laughed. "Not to worry. I've been vaccinated against attractive sweet-tongued men."

All the women laughed and Phaedra lifted her glass for a drink. She saw Rand was now standing and staring directly at her. Their eyes held for what seemed like a long time to her. Only when Chad squealed for more attention, did

she look away. She lifted him to face her.

"And just what's your opinion, little man?" The baby jabbered right back to her. Before she could reply, an attractive woman who was on Rand's team, sat down on the blanket, and she introduced herself as Kelly.

"I need to get that vaccine, Phaedra. Who is your doctor?"

Everyone laughed loudly and good-naturedly. Joe groaned out loud. "Have mercy people! You are crushing my ego."

Kelly laughed. "It would take the rock of Gibraltar to crush *your* ego."

Before anyone else could reply, Rand announced their halftime was over and it was time to get started.

After a few moans and groans, everyone started back to the field. Joe offered his hand, but Phaedra told him to go on, as she needed to finish her drink real quick and see where Naomi wanted her to put Chad. She caught the look of longing and hurt that crossed Kelly's face at Joe's offer. When she was alone with Naomi and the babies, she handed Chad to his mother.

"Naomi, this is none of my business, but is Kelly interested in Joe?"

Naomi looked at her in surprise. "Wow! How did you manage to pick up on that?"

"I can't say for sure, but there was something in her words and body language." Phaedra shrugged. "I better get over there before Rand declares a forfeit or something. Thanks for the drink." She paused a few steps away and looked back. "And thanks for letting me play with the baby."

Phaedra made the winning touchdown, which broke the tie that had persisted the entire second half. Rand almost caught her, but something gave her an extra burst of speed and she just missed his reaching hands. Of course, everyone was quite gracious, but it was also obvious that this was the first time, ever, that Rand's team had not been the winners.

In the car on the ride home, Phaedra was silent and she stared out her side window. It was only as he pulled into the driveway, and switched off the car,

that he turned to look at Phaedra. Slowly, she met his gaze and finally burst out laughing. She could tell instantly by the look on his face he was still perturbed.

"Never lost a game before, huh champ?" She couldn't resist the dig.

Rand stared at her, seeing for the first time the artless animation that had so attracted him to her when they had first met, before she knew who he was. He had been aware of her stilted behavior and reactions to him since Friday night. Her grin found its way into his heart. He was no longer perturbed about her not having a bra on and every man who had been at the game today ogling her bouncing tits all day. He couldn't have cared less any more that Joe had spent all of his time, when he wasn't calling plays, flirting and hitting on her. He lifted one eyebrow, and fought the grin trying to answer her back.

"Accusing me of being a sore loser?"

Phaedra acted like she was considering the question seriously. "No, I don't think you are a sore loser. I just think you weren't real happy with the way the day went."

"Well, I was pretty surprised that you wanted to play at all. And I was downright pissed that Joe picked you for his team first thing. We usually fight over Tom or Will, since they're both good players. And I guess I never realized how much flirting he actually does with the women before. I came close to slugging him the one time I saw him pat your fanny. It was not just a friendly slap on the ass between football players."

Phaedra smiled. "He's a nice guy, but I don't think he knows what he wants. And one woman there is so lovesick for him that I couldn't help but feel a little sorry for her."

Rand looked surprised. "Who's that?"

Phaedra shook her head. "I'm not going to tell tales." She turned and opened the car door, stepping out. Rand quickly followed and met up with her at the house. The door was unlocked and Rand opened the door, then stood back for her to walk in. Phaedra chided herself, reminding herself that of course since he

had servants around, he would not need to lock his doors each time he came and went.

Phaedra stood, waiting and wondering what Rand wanted to do now. She didn't feel comfortable in his home. She didn't feel comfortable with the entire situation. She wasn't sure how a "kept woman" acted. And then, almost as if he could read her mind, Rand suggested they go and clean up.

Inside the bedroom, she sat down on the bottom of the bed, watching as Rand began tugging his clothes off and tossing them into the hamper. He looked surprised when he saw her still dressed and seated on the bed.

"Aren't you coming?"

Phaedra paused, not sure what to say or do. Should she go with him, or what? It was very obvious what he had been thinking. She stood and walked towards him.

"I wasn't sure if I was to wait until you were done, or not."

Rand shook his head, but didn't realize that she was nervous and unsure. He reached out and without a word grasped her shirt and pulled it up and over her head. Her shorts were next, and since she had already taken her shoes and socks off, she stood before him naked. It was impossible to stop her hands from coming up to cover her breasts.

But Rand still seemed oblivious to her discomfort and gently pushed her towards the huge bathroom. He turned on the shower, adjusting the temperature, and then stood holding the door open.

Phaedra flushed and walked past him into the larger than normal shower. She edged to the corner, and watched as Rand wet himself down completely, then reached for the soap. He seemed so unselfconscious, that it only made her more so. She flushed when he passed her the bar of soap.

Phaedra tried to concentrate on what she was doing and not on his tanned and muscular body. Suddenly, the soap was taken from her limp hand. And before she could protest, Rand muttered in ear. "I'm sorry honey. I didn't realize

that you were so worn out."

To her further embarrassment, he began running his hands over her shoulders and down her arms after filling them with lather. He lightly reached around her and washed her back and then moved back around to wash under her arms. His hands paused briefly before gliding over her breasts.

Phaedra closed her eyes as her breasts firmed and her nipples hardened under his sensitive and light touch. She knew he had to feel the change, and knew she had a blush staining her cheeks. Instead of commenting or turning the light touch into something more deliberate, he moved his hands down to wash her legs and feet. He had her turn around so he could get the backs of her legs.

As he reached her bottom, she felt his touch change for the first time. There was something in the glide of his fingers over her full cheeks that she had not felt before. And when he stepped closer to slide his hands around her waist, she felt his hardness pressing between her cheeks. She would swear she didn't tighten her ass muscles just then, but they tensed and pressed more firmly against him. In the next second, her breath caught as his hands slid upwards to cup her breasts. This time there was no mistaking his touch.

His large hands curved around her full breasts, and began squeezing, and molding the firm, responsive flesh. "You are the most beautiful woman I have ever known, Phaedra. You were completely oblivious to all the looks you kept getting this afternoon."

He paused to trace a finger around each nipple before testing its hardness with two fingertips. When he did that, Phaedra felt her knees give way and she leaned back against him. Rand chuckled and told her "not just yet." He shifted them so he was seated on the built-in bench in the shower, and pulled Phaedra to stand between his thighs. He soaped his hands again, and Phaedra felt her eyes were glued to them as they came nearer.

One slipped between her parted thighs. The other hand slid under her arm, washing the sensitive flesh under one and then the other. As that hand moved

once again, this time to her breast, the hand between her thighs stopped all pretense of washing. One slippery finger moved between her smooth folds and straight to her clit.

"Oh, God!" Phaedra whispered as Rand's touch started its path to making her crazy. Phaedra cried out in reaction, and her body responded instantly.

Rand smiled and slowed his hand movements. "I knew that I wasn't the only guy out there with his eyes glued to your tits. I could argue that you provided too much distraction for my team."

Rand didn't pause in his movements, slowly increasing his tempo and continued to work her without mercy until she climaxed completely and without reservation. He then pulled her forward, only this time he pushed his legs between hers, spreading them. He grabbed the handheld showerhead, and directed it between her legs. Phaedra gasped as the water turned her on even more. He poised her over his hard cock, and redirected the water flow at her breasts. As her body enveloped him, she pushed the water away and slid her arms around Rand's neck, pressing her body close to his.

With his hands on her hips, she let him direct the rhythm and flow of their mating. With her eyes closed, she listened to the water around them, and the feel of their bodies rubbing against each other. She didn't want to think, or worry, just feel. Moving a little, she could force his hardness to stimulate her clit with each movement. She didn't stop to think about her actions. Her hands moved to caress Rand's face as she lowered her mouth to his. Her tongue entered his mouth eagerly.

Rand was surprised by Phaedra's sudden aggressiveness. She was once again surprising him when he least expected it. He realized that he was no longer directing her hips. She was moving in circles and then up and down. Phaedra's mouth slid to his neck and she bit him lightly and then sucked his skin into her mouth. Her fingers curled into his muscular chest as her palms rubbed over his hard nipples.

"Slow down, honey," he whispered to her softly. "There is no need to rush." Rand moved his hands to just above Phaedra's waist, trying to resume control as he felt his climax building. He had wanted to make this last longer, but things were escalating too fast thanks to Phaedra suddenly taking control of their lovemaking. But she wouldn't let him slow the pace and moved her hips deliberately, flexing and squeezing muscles that made him groan loudly.

Phaedra covered his mouth once again as she moved on him even faster. He gasped and pulled free of her lips and tongue to cry out her name.

"Phaedra!"

Phaedra smiled and pulled back to meet his gaze. She was feeling out of control and at the same time she had never before felt so powerful. She circled her hips, flexing and squeezing her muscles, to pull him even deeper into her body. She spoke without thinking.

"Fuck me, Rand! Fuck me now...!"

Rand was caught in complete surprise by her words. He never would have expected her to even whisper the words, yet alone cry them out in fierce demand. In the next moment, he was climaxing hard and fast, shooting his seed into her body. He couldn't think beyond this moment even if his next breath depended upon it.

As his arms wrapped around her body and pressed her breasts flat to his chest, he closed his eyes and leaned his head back against the tile. It wasn't until he felt Phaedra moving that he opened his eyes. Rand had no idea how long they stayed like that. He watched though, as Phaedra slid off his lap and stepped out of the shower. His eyes appreciated the firm, round cheeks as she walked away from him. He had to physically resist reaching out to caress her ass.

Rand quickly turned off the water and followed Phaedora. With a towel wrapped around his waist and a smaller one drying his hair, he walked into the bedroom. He wasn't surprised to find her already under the covers of the bed, with a towel wrapped around her wet hair and sound asleep.

He watched her for a few moments and thought about all the things he usually did on a Sunday, after the game. But suddenly, with a start of surprised revelation, he knew the only thing he really wanted to do on *this* amazing Sunday was curl up in the bed behind Phaedora and sleep with her. It didn't take Rand more than a few seconds to ease into position right behind Phaedora, spoon fashion, while one of his hands cupped her upper breast, holding it possessively, even in sleep.

Chapter 4

Phaedra was up and gone the following morning when Rand awoke. He was surprised to find that the bed was empty. He remembered slowly, that Phaedra had talked yesterday about her work. He jumped out of bed and glanced at the clock. Assuming she must be downstairs having breakfast, he showered and shaved quickly.

He was surprised again to find the kitchen empty. He paused for a glass of juice, and then went out to his waiting limo. He usually took the limo to work. It was easier and faster and left him free to take calls on the way to work and deal with a few things before reaching the office. He wondered how Phaedra had gotten to the hospital. He knew she didn't have a car.

As soon as he reached the office, Rand had his assistant place a call to Phaedra's uncle. He acted casual as he spoke to Preston. He spent several minutes in conversation before he could ask about Phaedra and her work. He resisted hanging up as soon as he learned the name of the hospital where she worked, and continued making small talk with Preston for a few more minutes.

He should have guessed it was the same hospital where she did all the committee work that she had told him about that first evening. Rand then called his assistant into the office, and told the surprised that woman he was leaving for the day. He delegated all the scheduled meetings, and told her to send all inquiries and problems to Mark Phillips.

Rand called Mark from the limo. "Mark, I'll need you to take over some of the meetings I had scheduled for today. My assistant will be contacting you with the information. And if you have questions, I have my cell phone with me."

Mark was stunned to hear Rand was leaving the office on a Monday morning. Mark listened to Rand's instructions, but he still had a hard time taking it all in. For as long as he'd known Rand, he'd never taken a day off, even when he was sick. His vacations were usually working business trips. To hear the boss

saying he was taking the whole damned day off was more than a shock.

"Sure, Rand, no problem." Mark paused for a moment, knowing he could be pushing his friendship with his boss. "Is everything all right? Is Phaedra okay? Uhm," Mark couldn't resist the urge to tease him though. "You didn't injure anything important during the game yesterday, did you? Or last night?"

"What? No, everything is fine, Mark. And I'll check in with you later, to see if anything has come up." Rand hung up just as the limo stopped at the hospital entrance. Climbing out, he told his driver to standby and he'd call him on the phone when he was ready to leave. Glancing at his watch, Rand was surprised that in spite of his hurrying, it was nearly eleven.

Inside the hospital, he got directions to the pediatrics ward. On the second floor, he emerged from the elevator, and looked around, not sure where he should start to look for Phaedra. He didn't have to wonder for long. Being male, and attractive, his presence was unusual, and quickly noted. One of the nurses, dressed in a print top approached him. She smiled at him, which turned into a grin upon learning that he was looking for Phaedra.

Rand soon found himself standing outside a playroom. It was brightly painted, with some child-sized furniture scattered about. He saw that Phaedra was seated at a table with two children. They were doing something, but he couldn't tell what it was. He did notice that one of the children was wearing a scarf on her head, and had an intravenous drip next to her. The other child was in a small wheelchair, and had one leg sticking out, encased in a bright green cast from toes to thigh. The young nurse at Rand's side encouraged him to go in.

"Go on in if you want. Phaedra usually welcomes all the help she can get in the playroom. We all love to help out, when we have time."

Rand nodded, his gaze still fixed on Phaedra. "Thanks for you help," he told the nurse, and then after another pause, and a deep breath, he finally pushed open the door.

Phaedra had her hands immersed in a large plastic bucket, mixing something

that sounded squishy. Once she got it thoroughly mixed, she would scoop out a portion for each child to add his or her own choice of color.

It was the kids stopping their chattering that got her attention. She looked up and found a pair of masculine legs, obviously dressed in very expensive suit pants standing by her side. Her eyes traveled upwards over the expensive material and found that she was looking into Rand's intense gaze. She felt the hot flush rush up her cheeks. It was Charlie, the small child with the cast, who drew her attention.

"Is it ready, Phae?"

Phaedra looked at the small boy and smiled. She kneaded the gooey mess for another second. No matter how many times she made the cold, slimy goop, she still didn't like the feel of it in her hands.

"I think it should be fine. And it will continue to firm up as we knead the color into it." She scooped up a big handful and set it on the plastic table that had been fitted across his wheelchair. Phaedra looked at her hands, and then up at Rand.

"Can you open the dropper bottles, please?" She indicated with her head towards the small bottles on the table. Not sure if he would do it, Phaedra watched as Rand moved around the table. He saw the bottles held food coloring. He then looked at the young boy, who was looking up at him eagerly.

Charlie smiled up at the big man, who reminded him of the doctors he usually saw too many of. "I want red on mine.... Please." And being Charlie, he added guilelessly. "You look like a pirate I saw at Disneyland."

Phaedra flushed and wondered what Rand would say to the young boy. She watched as Rand smiled, nodding. He opened the bottle marked for red, and lifted out the dropper. He paused and looked at Phaedra. "How many drops does this take?"

Phaedra smiled. "Just two or three. Start with just two though." She looked at Charlie. "Don't worry. We can always add more if you want it." That seemed to

satisfy the little guy, and he eagerly put his hands into the gooey slime and began turning it from a bluish white, into a reddish blue color. Phaedra handed a big glob of the gooey stuff to the girl at her side, who was holding her hands out. The girl turned to Rand. "I would like yellow, please."

Rand smiled at the skinny girl, feeling a touch of sadness as he realized all the treatments and therapies that she must have been through so far, in her short life. He added two drops of the yellow dye, and watched as her small, and obviously weak hands tried to knead the gooey mess, and blend in the color that would make it the color she wanted. Without considering his expensive suit, Rand pulled another small chair over, and sat down at the girl's side. He slipped his jacket off and rolled his shirtsleeves up.

"You mind if I help you with yours?" he asked her softly. "I'd like to learn how to do this, if you'll tell me what to do."

Phaedra looked at Rand in disbelief as he plunged his fingers into the gooey junk, and began to knead it until the color was spread through out, making it a pretty pale yellowish green color. She quickly wiped her hands, and helped Charlie add more color to his concoction. The young girl, Shelly, requested more yellow, and Phaedra stood to come around the table. She leaned over Rand's shoulder, and added two more drops of yellow. She was still surprised to see this wealthy and powerful man sitting on a kiddy's chair, making silly putty. She had seen so many different sides to this strong man in the last two days, that she wasn't sure just who he really was anymore.

Phaedra moved around the table, helping here and there, as she was needed. She finally sat down opposite Rand and watched him mixing the gooey mess for Shelly. Shelly told Rand that she liked yellow because it was the color of sunshine, and sunflowers, and bananas. Shelly was on her third round of chemotherapy to fight the persistent cancer eating at her body. The girl was ten, but looked about seven. As Phaedra continued to watch, Rand carefully placed the gooey mess into Shelly's hands, and slowly helped her work the mixture.

Shelly laughed, and Phaedra couldn't stop the tears that smarted her eyes all of a sudden.

At that exact moment, Rand looked up and caught her watching him and she felt color bloom in her cheeks. His penetrating gaze held hers, even though she wanted to look away. It was almost as if they were suddenly connected by something no one could see, but Phaedra could feel it, all the way to her toes. She finally pulled her eyes away, and quickly asked Charlie if he needed any help.

Phaedra was relieved when Charlie started talking about his family's trip to Disneyland. With just one comment from Rand, Charlie went on to tell them all about the pirates ride and how much fun it had been. And when the nurses came to gather their charges a short time later, Phaedra felt as if she had run a marathon, she was so drained.

Rand was a big hit with the nurses, of course, and he helped Charlie to clean his hands, before he had to go back to his room. Once they were alone in the playroom, Phaedra stood suddenly and started to put her things away. She quickly washed and cleaned everything up, and stored them away in her locked cupboard. When she turned around, she saw Rand was looking out the bank of windows of the playroom.

The playroom was a sore spot for all of the nurses as well as Phaedra. It was a last minute "add-on" and one they had had to fight for. It overlooked a portion of the roof of the hospital, and you could only see a tiny bit of the park, some distance away. It was a rather depressing view seeing the low roof, surrounded by the newer, and higher wings of the hospital. But pediatrics was not a "money-maker" and anything extra was a battle to the finish, and often long past the peace treaty.

Phaedra came over to stand next to Rand. She looked at him in his three-piece suit, designer made and very expensive from the look of it. Somehow, he had managed to stay as pristine as when he had started, unlike Phaedra, who always seemed to need a shower after she'd been doing crafts with the children.

"I'm hungry." She told him softly, unable to tell from his face what he was thinking.

Rand turned slowly, and it seemed to take him a few moments to focus on Phaedra. He smiled finally. "That is exactly what I came here for. To see if you wanted to join me for lunch." He paused to look at his watch. "Are you done here for the day, or should we eat in the cafeteria?"

Phaedra almost told him she had to work longer, just to have the pleasure of seeing him confront a hospital cafeteria, and the food. But she shook her head. "I'm finished. But I'm afraid I'm not fit for public viewing," she added disparagingly.

Rand smiled, his eyes crinkling. "I want you strictly for private viewing, my sweet." He laughed when a bright flush ran up Phaedra's neck and stained her cheeks. "I am curious though."

Phaedra frowned at his suddenly serious tone. "About what?"

"How the hell did you manage to get here this morning? All you needed to do was let Fernando know what time you needed to arrive and be picked back up."

Phaedra stewed for a moment, as she considered just how honest to be with Rand. She was inherently honest, in all her dealings with people. But, it was probably for the best that he didn't know that she'd checked the bus schedule, and finally reached the hospital after three bus transfers! Instead, she decided to only tell him part of the truth. "It was easy to hop on the bus. No problem!"

Rand met her gaze, and knew there was more to the story immediately. But he also hadn't become as successful as he was by not learning which battles to fight to win the war. Nodding his head, he leaned forward and kissed her lips softly. "In future, we'll set up a schedule so you don't have to ride the bus. You finish off here and I'll call for the car." Rand turned away, and took his cellular phone from his jacket pocket.

Phaedra walked out of the playroom, and made her way to the nurses'

station. She no sooner reached the desk than she was assailed with questions.

"Who is that gorgeous man?"

"Is he married?"

"What's his name?"

"Has he got a brother?"

Phaedra laughed and held her hands up in protection. "Aren't you all married?" She asked her friends with a smile.

Jeanine smiled at her and laughed. "A girl can still dream, can't she?"

Phaedra stood at the tall counter as she signed a few papers, and quickly made a note in Shelly's chart regarding something the young girl had said to her. As she closed the file, she felt Rand standing beside her. She turned her head and saw her friends were all staring at him, and a few even had open mouths. Rand smiled at the women and greeted them warmly.

"Good afternoon, ladies."

Phaedra grimaced as they all answered eagerly. She looked disgusted as she introduced Rand to the nurses' by name. She was glad when Rand made their excuses a few moments later though, and escorted her down the hall. He was quiet on the ride down in the elevator. And Phaedra wasn't surprised to see the limo parked in a no-parking zone. Rand held the door for her, and as soon as they were seated, the car pulled back out into traffic.

"Do you want to go home and change first?" Rand offered quietly.

Phaedra had to laugh. "I look that bad, do I? All right, I wouldn't want to embarrass you in public."

Rand shook his head, but leaned forward to use the intercom to direct his chauffeur. He started to say something, when his cell phone rang. He answered it, and it was obviously something he had to deal with. Phaedra turned her head and watched the passing scenery. He was still talking when they arrived at his house, and Phaedra hopped out of the car without waiting for the door to be opened for her.

Rand found her a few minutes later already in the shower. He propped his hip against the counter and watched silently as Phaedra lifted her arms to wash her hair. His eyes went immediately to her up-tilted breasts, and watching them jiggle with the movement of her hands through her hair. He groaned. Watching her was difficult, and not stripping naked and joining her was even more grueling. He was rock hard by the time Phaedra finally turned off the water.

She saw him as soon as she opened the shower door, and realized he must have been standing there for a while. Seeing that he was holding a towel out between his hands for her to step into, she came close to him. A moment later she felt him fold the edges of the soft, warm towel around her, his hands coming together at her back. He pulled her close and inhaled her clean scent. Phaedra could feel his hard manhood against her, and was surprised that he hadn't joined her in the shower. She looked upwards and met his gaze.

"I was so tempted to join you in there, honey. But then, we'd both be starving and possibly fainting from hunger."

Phaedra laughed as he had intended with his jest. But she was finding that being this close to him was having an effect on her. And coupled with the turbulent feelings from earlier, she realized with a start of surprise that she was not only aroused but she was becoming emotionally involved, which shook her. She wiggled her arms free and encircled his neck. She saw the surprise on Rand's face at this first voluntary gesture of hers towards him.

"I'm not that hungry..." Phaedra smiled and pulled on his neck for him to lower his head. She stopped with their mouths a breath away from one another, before she added, "for food anyway."

Rand groaned loudly and released the towel. His hands threaded through her wet hair and held her head as he kissed her mouth. Or perhaps, it was Phaedra who was kissing him. He wasn't sure, but it didn't take long for them to end up back in the bedroom, on the bed, and his clothes literally tossed wildly as they crossed the room. Phaedra didn't pause as she lay back on the bed. As Rand

moved over her, her legs came up and encircled him. She tilted her hips and could feel the head of his cock pressing against her wet, shaven pussy lips. Her smile was as old as time as she tightened her grip and literally jerked him downwards, impaling her with his shaft. Or perhaps it was really the other way around and Rand found himself embedded within her eager body.

They both cried out as flesh entered flesh, wet, hot and eager. Phaedra was already moving her hips, and lifting them, moving him just a bit, in and out of her. Rand rose up on his hands and straightened his arms. He quickly took charge and set the pace of his thrusts to be slow, and deeper. He looked down at Phaedra, and saw her eyes were closed, with her lips parted as she breathed in and out quickly. He moved his eyes down, and watched the bouncing and jiggling of her breasts with each thrust. He felt Phaedra's hands move to caress his chest, and then curve her fingers inwards squeezing him. And then, she started to pluck and pull at his hard nipples. Her eyes opened and met his.

Phaedra held his gaze as her body accepted his thrust. She moved her hips, rotating them, deepening his penetration and stimulating her clit as well. She squeezed his cock with her cunt muscles, his nipples with her fingers and told him softly, "Fuck me! Cum in me! Take me!"

Rand lost his edgy control, which had been miniscule at best, and thrust deeper and deeper, making sure each slide in and out rubbed her clit. Phaedra screamed his name as her climax crashed through her. As he felt the muscles of her cunt grabbing and holding his cock, he moved with shorter and faster strokes. And when he felt her cunt start sucking the end of his cock even more deeply into her womb, he groaned and filled her belly with his hot cum.

Rand felt his body spasm with orgasmic release as his cum erupted from deep within his balls. His hips jerked over and over, as he shot five, no six streams of hot, sticky and hopefully, baby-making seed into her body.

When he stopped, he rolled them in the bed, plugging her cunt with his cock and draping her across his chest. His arms held her tightly as their breathing slowed. He realized that he wanted to get Phaedra pregnant! He wanted to find a way to keep her in his life. And a baby seemed the only sure fire method in his mind.

Rand fell asleep listening to Phaedra's deep breathing, and imagining her belly beginning to round and her breasts to swell. He would happily volunteer to help her bring her milk supply in, and toughen up her nipples for breastfeeding!

Chapter 5

The next few weeks passed in much the same fashion. Phaedra became an accepted addition to the weekend football games, but she always ended up on Rand's team after the first time. Her playing improved with practice, and the other team started protesting that it wasn't fair. So she started switching teams after the fourth game Rand's team won. Phaedra even volunteered to sit the game out, because she was having so much fun playing with the twins during the half-time break. But no one would let her.

She maintained her regular schedule at the hospital. Their mornings were usually hectic, with them both hurrying around to get ready. It was difficult to remember that they didn't have all the time in the world to fool around in the shower. To save time on the mornings when temptation beat the clock, they both sat down at the table for a quick breakfast with wet hair. Carlita never let on, but she always got a big smile on her face whenever she saw their wet heads.

The ride to work was usually in the limousine. Phaedra was finally getting over her self-consciousness about getting out of the limo at the hospital. But she was still asking Fernando to use the quieter side street entrance, even though she had to walk longer to the door, and she was at the wrong end of the hospital for pediatrics. But since they let Rand off at his building first, he didn't know about the change.

Phaedra was completely caught off guard one day when she visited Shelly in her room the second day after they had made silly putty. She was making her rounds to see who felt well enough to come down to the playroom. When she entered Shelly's room, Phaedra was reading the notes she had gotten from the day charge nurse. And when she looked up to greet Shelly, she dropped her clipboard.

She saw what had to be the world's biggest bouquet of flowers. The flowers were all yellow. On the note with the flowers, Rand apologized for not being able

to find her real sunflowers, but he hoped the picture he included helped. Shelly had eagerly pointed out the framed, signed print of some beautiful sunflowers. Shelly had even offered her one of the out-of-season bananas in a lovely basket that had come, but Phaedra declined.

Phaedra had left Shelly's room, reeling under the obviously caring gesture of Rand's. She hadn't gone far when she saw Charlie coming down the hall in his wheelchair, dressed in a pirate's outfit, complete with eye patch, hat, rubber sword and leather sash across his small chest. The nurses were all a twitter with the presents that had arrived for the children. It appeared that he had sent something for every child on the ward: fruit, a stuffed animal or an electronic game.

At the nurses' station, she saw three large baskets of fruit, and a large gold box of chocolates. She had of course then spent most of her time at work that day explaining just who the man was that had visited her the other day.

Rand also started dropping in unexpectedly causing many a female heart to flutter, and several times she would come from the playroom and discover him chatting with their department head. Her friend would never tell her what they'd been discussing, and neither would Rand.

When he learned that she needed to do some repairs in the playroom, he helped her do some repainting on one of the walls of the playroom. Phaedra explained that if they waited for the bureaucracy of the hospital, they'd be ready for something else to be done. She had explained that it was cheaper and easier for her to buy the paint, and come in when the administrators were home in their beds.

They came in late in the evening, after all the children had been settled for the night. They had spread their drop cloths, and with frequent visits from the evening, and then the night shift, nurses they had finally got the wall painted. After cleaning up, they headed back to Rand's house and bed. Neither bothered to shower, they just stripped off their clothes and climbed into bed.

When they finally woke up late that afternoon, Rand grabbed her hands and pulled her into the bathroom. Grinning at her, he started the water running into the tub. "I thought we could soak for a while, and then pick and scrub the paint off each other."

Phaedra smiled, nodding her head. She giggled when Rand added soap that bubbled up under the jets of the tub. They had a lot of fun in the double size bathtub under the pretense of scrubbing the paint flecks off each other. At times, Phaedra had to remind herself how this relationship began in the first place. And then, she'd have to tell herself that she wasn't going to fall for this handsome, heart breaker. He had a lot of charisma and sexual appeal. Resting in his arms while they turned into matching prunes, Phaedra knew she should live for the moment.

Every time he appeared at the hospital, on some pretence or another, Phaedra often found him talking to the nurses and just as often she saw him talking to the patients and their families. Over and over, she heard from her little patients, and their families, how nice "her friend was." Many times she was confused and didn't know which was the real Rand Scott-Thomas. Some times she felt as if she knew who he was. He enjoyed arriving early at the pediatrics ward, and would spend time playing with one child or another.

One day she returned to the unit late. She had been attending a meeting about funding, which was going to be cut again, and was in a bad mood. Slamming her notes down on the desk, the department head looked over at her, smiling. "Maybe this will cheer you up, Phaedra. Your man got here early, and he's helping out the mom of the twins in room 1502."

Phaedra asked what she meant, but her friend refused to tell her more. Leaving her notes on the desk, she walked quickly down the hall. Outside 1502, she peaked through the window of the closed door. Inside she saw the young mother who was overwhelmed with twins, let alone ill twins, was asleep in her lounge chair. Seated across from her, finishing feeding one of the twins was

Rand. She knew it was against policy, but if the mother had accepted his help, that was different.

As she peered through the window, she watched as Rand stroked his finger down the baby's cheek as it took the last few sucks of its precious formula. Rand removed the bottle and lifted the baby to his shoulder for burping. She almost opened the door when she saw him lean over just a bit and press a soft kiss to the infant's head. In that instant, tears flowed from her eyes, and sobs clogged her throat. Abruptly, she turned from the door, rubbing her fingers over her cheeks. Wanting to deny the ache in her heart, she walked quickly to the restroom.

Pretending to wipe the smeared makeup from beneath her eyes, she tried to avoid meeting her reflected gaze. But she couldn't. In her eyes, she saw the love she felt for Rand, and had been working furiously to deny and suppress. Turning away from her accusing gaze, she quickly dabbed a cold paper towel to her eyes and face, and then returned to the desk to await Rand.

* * * * *

After about four weeks of living with Rand and seeing him meet surreptitiously with the department head, Phaedra refused to be misdirected and confronted her friend. With some intent questioning and letting the other woman know she could not be put off again, Phaedra finally discovered what the meetings had been about. Phaedra's mouth dropped open as she listened to her friend explain to her the future plans for the unit, and especially the playroom.

Phaedra stood out front a few hours later, waiting for Fernando to pick her up. Her mind and her emotions were awash with confusion. She had to see Rand and she couldn't wait until this evening. She had Fernando drive her to his office. Feeling very self-conscious, she made her way to the top floor, where Fernando had told her his office was. She was stopped by security at least twice before she finally reached the outer doors of Rand's inner sanctum.

His personal assistant took her name and told her to be seated. Instead of

calling Rand, because she had never seen any woman other than Mr. Scott-Thomas' mother come to visit, she called Mark.

Less than three minutes after she'd sat down, the far doors opened and Mark walked quickly towards her. He grinned when he saw Phaedra. He had been pretty stunned too, and had come to see the woman who was trying to see the boss. He realized that Rand's assistant must have gotten the name wrong, the second he saw the pretty woman with the long auburn hair.

"Did you bring the football?" Mark asked.

Phaedra smiled back. "No, but I'm still waiting for my chance to baby sit. I thought you two were going out for a romantic dinner. I'm free most of the time."

Mark shrugged. "Can I blame it on too much work?" he joked as he sat down next to her.

Phaedra shook her head. "No, but if I have to, I'll call Naomi myself and we'll plan your evening out."

"Women! Good thing I've got sons or I'd go crazy when they turn into teens."

Phaedra laughed. "If need be, I might have to bring force to bear through..." She leaned close to whisper to Mark, "Your boss."

Mark really laughed at that. Before he could reply, the double doors that Phaedra had suspected led into Rand's office flew open. Rand came through the doors a moment later, speaking loud enough for the next floor to hear him. "Where the hell is Mark? I've been calling..."

Rand stopped as he saw Mark. But his mouth dropped open when he saw Phaedra sitting outside his office. Mark laughed out loud. "Hey, boss, we've got company!"

"Is something wrong? Why are you here? How did you get here? Are you all right, honey?"

Phaedra smiled. She knew it was silly, but she found his outlandish concern endearing. Before she could answer Rand, he turned and started in on Mark.

"Why are you here? I've been calling your office... How did you know

Phaedra was here?"

Luckily, Mark was keeping a level head. "I was in my office, until Mrs. Singer," he paused gesturing to Rand's assistant, "called me, wondering what to do about a visitor for you. A female visitor, no less."

A slight flush stained Rand's neck as he nodded and walked over to his assistant's desk. "Mrs. Singer, this is Phaedra Astor, and any time she comes to the office, or calls, have her come straight into my office, or put her call through to me. I'm sorry I didn't mention this sooner."

Phaedra had come over to stand next to him. "I don't think he thought I'd just show up, out of the blue." She leaned forward and offered her hand in greeting to the gray-haired woman. She shrugged and smiled at Sara Singer. "But we all know how men can be..."

Rand took offense, jestingly. "Hey!"

Mark patted his shoulder. "Forget it, buddy. Women have us all beat. I think they have some kind of secret society going on."

Phaedra and Sara both laughed. A few moments later, Rand escorted Phaedra into his very large office. Phaedra walked over and gazed out the large bank of windows. She whistled impressively at the view they afforded. Rand though didn't wait and crossed to her immediately. His hands on her shoulders turned her to face him.

"Are you all right? Why did you come here?"

Phaedra felt that funny feeling she kept getting whenever she was around Rand and he acted the caring lover. "I'm fine, but I've come to find out what you have been planning behind my back."

Rand looked surprised. But Phaedra shook her head. "I had a nice long chat with my friend, Marcia. All she'd tell me is that you have been asking her all kinds of questions about the unit, and administration. What are you up to?"

Rand gave her an innocent look. "Why do I have to be up to anything? By the way, sweetheart, have you had lunch? I was thinking of ordering in, but we

could run out for lunch if you like."

Phaedra squinted at her lover. He was so damned attractive, especially when he used that innocent, little boy look that just screamed out unjustly to the accuser-*Who me?* She shook her head.

"That won't work. Just tell me what you're doing."

Rand took her hand and led her over to the large sofa. He sat next her, turning towards her with his arm propped along the back. "You don't think that I could have been just interested in your work, and wanted to learn more about it."

Phaedra shook her head. "No, I believe that you are interested. I just am sure there is more to this than meets the eye."

"Hmm. You have no idea how many times I've imagined you on this sofa. The only difference is that in my fantasy, you have on that pretty red teddy I bought you."

Phaedra held back her grin. "The teddy and what else?"

Rand smiled, shaking his head negatively. "Unless you count red high heels."

"Oh, my! Did I come here wearing only that, or you managed to get me to this point?"

"In my fantasy, you showed up wearing a black trench coat."

Phaedra choked back her laugh. "You do have a vivid imagination, Rand. Are you trying to distract me from my purpose?"

Rand grinned and leaned forward to kiss the side of her neck. "Yeah, how am I doing?" His fingers had stopped toying with the buttons on her shirt and unfastened the first four. He pulled the fabric edges apart, and looked down the opening. What he saw made him jerk slightly in surprise. He had seen the edge of red lace, and quickly unbuttoned the last few buttons, pulling her shirt free from her skirt. Sliding both sides back, Rand grinned as he saw that Phaedra was indeed wearing the red teddy that he had purchased.

"I didn't see you put that on this morning."

Phaedra smiled. "I know. I've been carrying it in that extra bag I use. I

changed before I came over here." She paused, looking guilty. "I admit it, and I'll probably be condemned by my feminist sisters, but I was not above a little seduction to find out what I wanted to know."

Rand laughed. He slid his hand inside the part edges of the shirt and cupped her farthest breast. "You don't have to dress to seduce me. Just having you in the same room, gets me hotter, hornier and harder than any other woman I've ever known." He tugged downward on the lace until the one breast popped free. "Red lace and silk is merely icing on my cake."

Phaedra responded to Rand's press of his body, and shifted to lie flat on the sofa. She was so aroused from his teasing that she had been feeling the wetness between her thighs for the last few minutes. She lifted her bottom as Rand's hands pushed her skirt up to her waist. His groan of arousal when he saw that she wasn't wearing any stockings or pantyhose only heightened her own senses. In the silence of the room, she heard the slide of his zipper. A moment later, his fingers were dancing over the wet crotch of her teddy. Phaedra knew he was surprised by the pause in his touch. She was glad that she wasn't the only one in this relationship that was still being surprised by the other.

Phaedra kissed the side of his neck. "What if someone walks in? How would that look?"

Rand lifted his mouth from her breast. "No one would dare open that door, without calling first."

Phaedra started to reply, but stopped abruptly as she felt his fingers tugging the three small snaps apart. In the quiet room, everything they did seem more sexual and illicit. She threaded her fingers through his hair, pulling to lift his gaze to meet hers. "Surely someone might possibly walk through that door..."

Rand paused and she could see him thinking. She felt the change in him instantly as he thought of someone. His face changed and he felt like a kid who might be caught doing it on his parents' sofa. He grinned at Phaedra, guessing what she'd been doing. He wiggled his finger on Phaedra's clit, stroking her wet

lips. The jerking of her hips was his signal, and Rand thrust forward into her heat.

"Yeah, my dad could walk in. He'd be the only person who could just walk in." He groaned as he pulled back slowly. Watching Phaedra's face, he waited to see what she would say or do next. She didn't disappoint him.

"So it's like we're 'doing it' on the family sofa, late at night, your folks asleep upstairs. We both know that if we make too much noise, your dad will come down to investigate." Phaedra grinned. "We're just two naughty kids fooling around on the couch, huh?"

Rand groaned as her legs encircled his hips, keeping him close. "God, honey, I want you!"

Phaedra tilted her hips, easing up and down, sliding along his hard cock. "If we get caught..." she caught her breath.

Rand smiled, getting into the pretense. "We'd be grounded for sure."

Phaedra whispered, feeling her climax getting close. "So long as we got grounded in your bedroom..."

Rand flexed and moved in just the right way and Phaedra gasped. Her body quivered and shook as her orgasm literally took her breath away. Later, she told herself, she'd wonder why it got her even hotter to play the little game with Rand. For right now, she held him close and savored the after shock of sweet pulsations coursing through her. Rand stiffened above her and then began short, quick thrusts into her body as his cum shot forth into her body. Out of breath, he lowered himself to rest half on her body, not willing to part from her just yet.

"I'll never be able to look at this sofa in the same way again." Rand kissed Phaedra's parted lips, which were still gasping for oxygen. "You have surpassed my fantasy, honey."

Reluctantly, he parted from her, standing by the leather sofa. Phaedra didn't move right away and it was the most amazingly erotic sight to see her with one tit bared and skirt shoved above her hips. One leg was resting high along the

back of the sofa and Rand could see his sperm beginning to seep out of her body. "Don't move," he told her quickly, and walked over to grab some tissues off his desk.

Phaedra watched as Rand, seeing that he had already righted his clothing and now looked ready for a board meeting, crossed back over and kneeled next to the sofa. He gently used the tissues to wipe between her tender and still swollen lips and upper thighs. She looked up and saw that he was watching her face.

"How am I supposed to work the rest of the day with this damned sofa reminding me of what I'm missing?"

"No way to take off early?"

Rand shook his head regretfully. "No, damn it! We have a big meeting this afternoon and I can't shove it all off on Mark."

Phaedra lifted her hand and caressed the side of his face. Her thumb moved back and forth across his lower lip. She finally let her arm fall above her head, to the sofa. Rand's gaze moved down to her naked breast, which was jiggling from the movement. Her nipple was still hard, taut and very distended. Rand couldn't resist and lowered his mouth to cover the puckered skin. He suckled her flesh, feeling her hips move as his one hand still rested between her thighs.

After a few moments, he lifted his head. Dropping the tissues to the carpet, his hand came up to cup the breast. His other hand was tangled in her hair as he watched her. "Have I told you that you have the most magnificent bosom I've ever seen?"

Phaedra giggled at his use of the word bosoms. She shook her head and at the surprised look on his face she spoke. "I think I heard you mention something about 'great tits' once..."

Rand growled at her playfulness. "They are great tits, magnificent breasts, fantastic jugs! And your nipples drive me crazy! They seem to be poking out your tops all the time, reminding me how nice it is to suck them and roll my

tongue around each bud. When I suck them long enough, I bet they are more than half an inch long. I love playing with your pretty tits. I like to rest my head on your pretty plump pillows, flicking my tongue out to catch a nipple.

I want to take you to Victoria's Secret and buy you all kinds of sexy lingerie to wear. That way I can see that you put on pink frilly bra in the morning with the high cut panties, and I can spend the day sitting at my desk imagining the way the pink silk is cupping and holding your breasts when I can't."

Phaedra was so turned on by his words, but she knew she had to go. "Promise you'll tell me what's going on with you at the hospital when you get home?"

Rand nodded his head. He leaned down and kissed the quivering nipple and then pulled the red silk cup bra back up. "Ruin my fun," he jested. He ignored Phaedra's blush and gasp of surprise as he snapped together the crotch of her teddy. Rand then helped Phaedra to her feet. While she buttoned and tucked her blouse back in, he grabbed her shoes. Passing them to her, he went to his desk and used the phone to call Fernando. "I'll make sure the meeting ends early and I'll be home by six. Maybe we could talk Carlita into making us something we could eat on television trays."

Phaedra frowned as she slipped her feet into her shoes. "There's something you want to see on television?"

Rand came back to her and threaded his arm with hers. "No. I want to eat in the bedroom..."

Phaedra grinned and felt emboldened by their lovemaking on the sofa and their playful banter. "I'll talk to Carlita." She stopped him at the double doors. "I can make it downstairs by myself. You just get all your work done so you can get home early." She kissed him lightly and was gone.

Chapter 6

Idyllic times like those confused Phaedra more than they reassured her. She kept telling herself that all of this was just temporary. They had nothing to base a real relationship on, and therefore, they truly had no real future together. More and more, when Phaedra was sitting quietly, by herself, she felt a sadness wash over her. It was becoming more difficult to keep her tears at bay. And if she stopped to think about the future, when her life once again returned to normal, she often just started crying.

The last two times she had done this, Rand had come upon her unexpectedly. He had tried soothing her, and when that didn't work, he'd tried demanding that she tell him what was wrong. But Phaedra refused to tell him the real reason she was crying, and always put it down to either monthly PMS or another time about a child she had met at the hospital. But when Rand had wanted her to talk to him about the child, she had said it was too painful, not wanting to add to her lies. She did admonish herself later, and actually got pissed that she had not been able to come up with a better excuse!

When she got really down, she'd remind herself of the sweet times they'd had together. Phaedra didn't think she'd ever forget the Saturday afternoon Rand took her to Victoria's Secret. He had gone into the dressing room with her; mainly because he didn't want any of the nosy teenaged boys he'd seen lingering about to see her. Rand would go out and find two or three new sets for her try, insisting on the matching ones only. They had been laughing and giggling in the dressing room for nearly an hour and the pile of things Rand was insisting on buying was getting to be ridiculous.

One of the sales clerks had come to see if they needed any help. Rand had grabbed all the things he wanted and handed them to the startled woman. He also asked her about something, and then looked back at Phaedra and told her he'd be right back. At the last second he turned around and reminded her not get

dressed just yet. When Rand returned, Phaedra had restored order to the items they weren't taking. Rand passed those to the woman who'd followed him back, with some things in her arms. They exchanged bundles, and Rand proceeded to show Phaedra the sexiest lingerie she'd ever seen. Rand told her that they had a separate area, where no teens could get into.

By the time they left thirty minutes later, Phaedra had more lingerie than she could ever use. And quite a few pieces were the kind you wouldn't want to be seen in other than a lover, or the staff in the emergency following an accident!

That night Phaedra put on the black merry widow corselet, complete with stockings and lacy garter belt. Since Fernando and Carlita had the night off, she came down to dinner dressed like that. Rand had volunteered to heat up their dinner and get it on the table while she put her purchases away.

"Oh my God!"

Phaedra smiled at hearing Rand's surprised exclamation when he first saw her. She was seated on the table, not at it. His eyes almost popped out as he saw that Phaedra had adjusted the top, reaching in to shift her breasts. Seated atop the table, her legs were crossed and her nipples naked and pointing at him.

"I must have died and gone to heaven," he whispered to her softly. He moved further into the dining room, and set the salad off to the side.

"Take a seat, sir, and I'll serve you your dinner."

Rand felt his legs shaking as he walked over and took the chair directly in front of her. His eyes dropped when she uncrossed her legs, so he could scoot his chair closer to the table, and therefore right between her widespread thighs. Glancing up from the temptation in front of him, he found Phaedra was holding out a lettuce leaf, with just a touch of salad dressing upon it. Rand leaned forward to take it from her fingers, when she surprised Rand and herself, by laying the lettuce leaf on her exposed right nipple.

Phaedra held her breath as she waited to see if Rand would follow her unspoken request. A second later, Rand's mouth captured the lettuce and

managed to give one gentle suck on her nipple before he pulled away. Phaedra's soft groan of arousal caused him to smile.

"Maybe we should try and finish dinner a little more conventionally..."

Phaedra smiled and nodded. "All right. But I don't want any arguments over what we have for dessert."

Rand's carefree grin and laugh caused her heart to skip a beat. Her legs were weak and quivering as she slid from the table, already feeling the wetness at the top of her thighs and along her smooth lips. As she took her seat, she realized that every day she spent with Rand, another part of her heart became his, even if he was unaware of it, and perhaps didn't even want it.

As he thrust in and out of her sweet body less than an hour later, with the dishes shoved out of the way, Rand noticed how pale her skin looked against the dark wood of the dining room table. Her hair was spilled across the dark wood, and her nipples were still poking up at him from the half-cups of the merry widow. Rand did manage to ask her a question though.

"This didn't look like that when you tried it on this afternoon!"

Phaedra grinned. "I know. I just lifted these big tits you seem so fascinated with until my nipples were showing." She groaned as he thrust more deeply. "You were doing so well, staying in control. I thought for sure we'd make it to dessert."

Rand shook his head. "It was when you decided to put butter on my roll before you passed it to me. I'd never seen a roll buttered like that before!"

Phaedra giggled. "Which reminds me, you didn't even take a bite of your roll!"

Rand nodded, laughing back at her. "It was the leftover butter on your nipple that got to me. If you'd removed it all..."

Phaedra made a sound like she understood. "Ahh... Oooohhh!"

Rand started thrusting faster and deeper into her eager cunt. He felt her contractions start the instant after Phaedra cried out. He couldn't hold back any

longer and jerked quickly and shallowly, emptying his hot creamy cum into her body. As he lowered his head to suckle the previously buttered nipple, he felt Phaedra's body still contracting and sucking his cock inside. He couldn't stop the thoughts of impregnating Phaedra that seemed to be dominating his thoughts more and more lately. He lifted his head when he felt her fingers threading through his sweat-dampened hair.

"What?" She asked when she saw Rand watching her.

"I've never done this in my dining room before. I think you're corrupting me."

Phaedra snorted unladylike. "Me!"

"Yes you, my sweet lady. It was you who bared your breasts to me when I was nearly faint from hunger." He ignored Phaedra's snort again. "I'll have you know that before you I was strictly a 'bedroom only' kind of guy."

Phaedra looked at Rand, and seemed to be considering his words seriously. "Then I guess you wouldn't be interested in what I was thinking about doing in the kitchen with dessert, huh?"

Rand groaned out loud. "Arrrgggghhhhh! Woman you will be the death of me!"

Phaedra smiled. "Is that a complaint?"

Rand looked at Phaedra and she couldn't miss the change on his face to complete seriousness. "Never, my sweet. Every thing about you, with you is perfect." He kissed her lips gently, almost reverently. "Now, I really need to get out of this position. I'm not as young as I used to be."

They put off their dessert experiment in the kitchen until Fernando and Carlita's next evening off.

They had been together three months, and Thanksgiving was coming up. Her aunt was talking about Phaedra joining them for the holiday. Rand hadn't mentioned anything about his plans, and she knew he had family that lived

about an hour north of the city. On Tuesday, Phaedra called her aunt and agreed to join them for Thanksgiving dinner. She was sitting around, not doing anything except feeling sorry for herself, when the phone rang. She rarely answered it, because it was always for Rand. But she also couldn't help listening to the messages people left though.

"Hello, Rand darling!"

Phaedra stiffened hearing the woman's voice and the words she was saying. She turned on the sofa to look at the offending phone, as if that would make a difference. It didn't change anything, and the message continued.

"I hate your machine, Rand, but anyway... We're expecting you for dinner, on Thursday. I'm not assigning you any food to bring, because I know how you are. Now, we haven't heard from you in ages, so if you have a little sugar bun you want to bring, please do. Mother and Dad just want to see you, and they'll put up with whom ever you want to bring. We're eating at two sharp and don't be late!"

Phaedra turned back around on the sofa. If she'd needed proof of the shallowness and limited nature of her affair with Rand, she had just received it. He'd obviously not told his family about her. Granted she had not gone out of her way to inform her aunt and uncle, but she knew that through the business grapevine, her uncle had become aware of her new living arrangements. And when Rand had backed away from her family's business, she was sure her uncle would have investigated why.

She had managed to avoid seeing them though since she had moved in with Rand, and only talked with her aunt on the phone. And after all, they had asked her to intercede... She didn't think any of her family had really considered just how that intercession might occur. It had been stupid to think that just talking to the man would be enough to convince him to walk away.

Rand found Phaedra sitting on the sofa when he got home. He had run late and left a message on the machine for her to go ahead and eat supper. He was

surprised to find her sitting in the dark. Turning on the lights, he caught Phaedra rubbing her hands over her cheeks once again. Rand didn't say a word as he came over and sat beside her. Her eyes were reddened, as was her nose from rubbing it. Obviously she'd been sitting here for some time, crying, by the pile of tissues she was trying to shove between the sofa cushions.

"Sorry the meeting took so long, honey. Have you eaten?"

Phaedra shook her head. "I'll make us something if you want. I let Carlita and Fernando off early." She stood up before Rand could reach her. "I'm sure she probably even left a few things to just warm up in the fridge. You have time to shower and change first if you want."

Rand was surprised at how quickly she moved. He stood and thought he'd go upstairs and get comfortable when he saw the light flashing on the machine that there were 2 messages. He hit the replay button. Hearing his sister Jeannie's voice over the phone surprised him. He had forgotten about the annual holiday dinner at his folks' house. There was no doubt that Phaedra had heard the message. She probably had taken exception to being called his "latest little sugar bun," but it seemed out of character for her to get that upset. He erased the messages, and walked out to the kitchen.

Phaedra was making a salad to accompany the casserole Carlita had left for them, which she had just put into the microwave for warming. She turned as Rand walked in. "I thought you were going to shower."

Rand nodded but came over to stand next to her, leaning his back against the counter. "You heard the message from my sister, no doubt."

Phaedra jumped a little at his abruptness, but she should have known better. Rand didn't beat around the bush about anything. She nodded her head and went on with tearing the lettuce.

"They want to eat at two, so we'll need leave around 12:30." He reached over and took a piece of the torn lettuce and popped it into his mouth.

Phaedra turned to look at Rand. She didn't want to lose her temper over this.

"I already told my aunt I would go to their house for dinner." She sensed the stillness in Rand. She saw him nod and finish chewing.

"You accepted for us both." He spoke to her softly.

Phaedra finished the lettuce and picked up the remaining head and returned it to its container. Hoping to keep her calm demeanor, she walked over to the refrigerator and put the lettuce away. She took out some carrots, tomatoes and green pepper. Starting to chop them up, she shook her head. Out of the side of her eye, she saw Rand fold his arms. She sensed he was losing his patience with her though.

"I'm going by myself. I've not told my aunt about us."

"Us? You mean about you living here with me?" Rand watched as Phaedra nodded. He had suspected she was keeping their arrangement secret. But he didn't like learning that he was right. "Were you going to tell me about going to your aunt and uncle's?"

Phaedra turned away abruptly. She had added the cut up vegetables to the salad. She moved over and took down two plates from the cupboard above the sink. Rummaging in the drawer, she brought out two sets of cutlery. She set the table, finishing just as the alarm on the microwave sounded. She moved to take the dish out when her arm was grabbed by Rand. He pulled her around to face him.

"So you were going to traipse off Thursday, and leave me by myself."

Phaedra flushed. It sounded really awful hearing him tell it like that. True or not, it made her sound petty and selfish. "I would have told you... My aunt only invited me today. You called saying you would be late, and then I heard the other call. I didn't know it was your sister. She didn't say after all." She stopped talking abruptly, realizing how silly she sounded.

Rand stared at her down bent face for several long moments. It was as much his fault. It was a standing invitation for Thanksgiving at his parents. He should have told Phaedra about it weeks ago, but he hadn't. "What time are you due at

their house?" He asked her softly.

"They aren't eating until late, around six. That's because Carter and Clarice are going to her family earlier in the day."

"Then let's drive to my parents, eat there, and then leave around five to get back here in time for your family dinner." He picked up a bite of carrot and fed it to Phaedra. "Did you happen to notice what else was in the fridge?"

Phaedra finished chewing and shook her head. It had been a sobering feeling when she first acknowledged that she didn't like it when Rand was upset with her. Not that his temper scared her, its just that he was usually so easy going, the rare times his temper showed made her wish to help him. She wasn't so foolish to think she could solve his problems, but she did want to ease his way. She feared that meant she was falling for him...

"No, I didn't notice anything in particular."

Rand grinned. "I asked Carlita to make us a chocolate cream pie. I thought it might be fun to check out that idea you had about kitchens and dessert."

Phaedra looked at Rand, grinning. It all sounded so simple when Rand took control of the problem. Of course, it didn't dawn on her until later, after a fun hour in the kitchen, that she would be meeting *his* family for first time!

Chapter 7

Phaedra looked over at Rand for perhaps the thousandth time since they had started the hour drive to his parents' house. She then asked him the same question for the hundredth time. "Are you sure we aren't supposed to bring something?"

Rand turned his head and smiled at Phaedra. This degree of nervousness in her was rather unexpected. He considered telling her that as far as his family knew, he was coming alone. He had decided the element of surprise would probably be the best approach today. Instead, he just shook his head from side to side.

"No, honey. My mom and sister take care of everything. We just show up, look beautiful and eat."

Phaedra couldn't shake the feeling that he wasn't telling her everything, in spite of the almost constant barrage of questions she'd been asking about his family. She had learned that his parents, Robert and Jennifer, were both retired and living on a small, working farm.

Their younger son Roger, lived in the small town nearby, and he helped his father work the land when needed. Roger had been working with Rand's business until their folks bought this farm. Roger had then moved his small family north also, starting to telecommute into the corporate offices when needed. He and his wife, Carol, had two children, Randy, 16, who enjoyed helping out on the farm as well, and Lisa, 14. Unspoken was how difficult the move must have been on his niece and nephew, going from the big city, to the small.

Phaedra had asked about Jeannie, and learned that she was the youngest, and full of vinegar. She and her husband, Peter, had already been living here, on a farm that Peter had inherited from his grandfather. When the property next to his had become available, after some discussions, Robert and Jennifer had

purchased the land for when they retired in a few years.

But Jeannie and Peter hadn't been able to have children until Jeannie started taking a fertility drug. And when she'd been put on bed rest at five months along, his parents had chosen to retire early, and begin living on the farm full time. That was **so** Jennifer could be close to her daughter. In fact, until the babies were three months old, the four adults had lived together. Jeannie had needed all the help she could get with the triplets, and the house. She'd given birth to the triplets two years earlier.

Phaedra shifted uneasily in her seat as they turned onto a gravel road that had his family name on the mailbox. She worried again whether she was dressed appropriately or not. Rand had said casual, but with men, casual could mean a whole range of things.

So she had gone with her gut instinct and was wearing a silk blouse in a soft-green shade, which highlighted her eyes. Her slacks and matching short-waisted vest were made of a matching shade but in suede and had splurged when she had seen that there was a pair of matching ankle boots. Her red hair was pulled back into an elegant chignon that formed a figure eight.

Rand was dressed in jeans and cotton shirt, with a sweatshirt tossed on the back seat for when it got a little cooler.

Phaedra was finally feeling a little more relaxed when they pulled into the front yard. Phaedra realized her idea of a small farm, and Rand's were obviously different. She could see at least four barns scattered on the immediate property, and the house was a huge, rustic styled log cabin. Off to one side of the property, she saw a large field, where there were at least twenty horses. Phaedra turned to glare at Rand, but he was already climbing out of the car.

As Phaedra watched, Rand was greeted with a hug from his niece Lisa, who was being followed by three toddlers, all with bright red hair. Phaedra exited the car, slamming her door. She saw a young man starting towards them, and realized he must be Rand's nephew, Randy. With one toddler in his arms, Rand

shook hands with his nephew, and then turned to look at Phaedra. He held out his free hand towards her.

"Phaedra, honey, come and meet my nieces and nephews."

Lisa smiled shyly, immediately appreciating the stylish woman. It had been a while since she had seen a woman with such obvious town chic. Her brother Randy though, was staring with his mouth open. He was old enough to appreciate the womanly charms of his uncle's girlfriend.

Phaedra smiled in return. "It's really nice to meet you." She stopped as she felt hands on her pants leg. She looked down to see a red-haired little girl tugging on her pants leg. She was dressed in a matching pair of overalls, like her brothers, only hers was worn with a pink T-shirt. When the child saw Phaedra looking down, she raised her hands, wiggling them and spoke her demands clearly.

"Up! Up!"

Phaedra grinned down at the lovely little girl. She picked the little girl up, ignoring the muddy smudges on her clothes. The little girl reached out to pat her cheek when a woman screamed from the front steps.

"Tessa, no!"

Phaedra looked from the little girl to her mother. It was obvious the pretty woman coming towards them was Rand's sister Jeannie. They looked so much alike that it would be impossible to miss the familial connection. Jeannie reached them a moment later. She was dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt.

"I'm sorry. Tessa doesn't know a stranger."

"Oh, no!" Lisa spoke up, more concerned about the incredibly chic outfit. "Tessie got some dirt on you."

"I'm so sorry. Let me take her, and we'll go up to the house to get that cleaned up," Jeannie offered in the next instant. She was going to kick her brother the moment they were alone. He hadn't said a word to anyone about this beautiful woman!

Phaedra shook her head. "No, I'm fine. And a little dirt never hurt anyone. If Rand can be brave enough to risk one of his silk suits for my kids, I can surely risk this old outfit!"

Of course, Phaedra's statement only raised more questions for Jeannie, but she grabbed her third child, placing him in a side hold, braced on her hip, she told them to come on inside. The redheaded boy just squealed with laughter as he rode his mother's hip. This was obviously a favorite game they played. Inside, Phaedra was bombarded with people. There were a lot more people inside, than what Rand had told her about. His father and Roger separated Rand from her, in spite of his best intentions.

Lisa had adopted Phaedra though, and started introducing her to all the friends, family and extended family that had been invited. Randy, at 16 years of age, didn't want to miss out on the opportunity of being in the presence of such a worldly, hot looking woman and quickly became plastered to her other side. But Phaedra was used to adolescents, as well as younger children, from her work at the hospital. Other than being a little overwhelmed by the number of people, Phaedra quickly felt at ease with Rand's family. And when it was time to eat, Tessa refused to leave her newly adopted parent, so they scooted chairs and moved her high chair in between Phaedra and Rand's.

Rand found himself only half listening to the people who came over to talk to him. His eyes kept moving around the rooms, until he'd located Phaedra. If he couldn't find her in the same room, he would move to the room she was in. He kept being struck by the strangest feelings every time he saw the both red heads, Phaedra and Tessa's, so close together. He was suspicious of what those feelings meant, but he wasn't sure he was ready to deal with it just yet.

But during dinner, he turned and saw Phaedra laughing at something Tessa had done, realization hit him like a landslide. He was in love with Phaedra! And in the next instant, he knew that there was nothing more he wanted in the world than Phaedra, and a child with her. For the first time in his life, he was seriously

imagining being a father! He was not just thinking about getting Phaedora pregnant so she would feel obliged to stay with him. He was actually wondering about life with a child in it. Not just any child though -- it had to be a child that he had created with Phaedora. It was a very startling revelation, and he wasn't sure which was shocking him more -- falling in love or discovering his desire for parenthood!

After the meal, before Rand had a chance to intercept him, his father was asking Phaedora to join him for a casual stroll around the property to work off their meal. Phaedora nodded and Lisa took the unhappy Tessa from her arms. As they walked across the open front yard, there was a slight breeze, but it didn't really have any chill to it. Phaedora couldn't help but notice all the things that his father did that were just like Rand. And while she might have wondered about walking alone with his dad, the senior Mr. Scott-Thomas was the epitome of the country gentleman.

Phaedora enjoyed hearing about the different aspects of taking up farming at his age, and managed to ask some very intelligent questions. They were laughing as they came back towards the house about thirty minutes later. Rand was standing on the front steps, arms folded across his chest. His father jested that it was a good idea they came back when they did because his son had the decided look of his prize bull defending its female.

In the car during the ride back into the city, silence reigned between them. Phaedora was trying to remember whom all the people were that she'd met. Rand was still trying to make sense out of his jumbled emotions. He jumped when Phaedora finally spoke, breaking the silence.

"Your family is incredibly nice."

Rand glanced over at her, and noticed the smudge on her cheek. It must have come when she finally had to let Tessa go, who was quite unhappy. Tessa, just like the baby Chad at the football games, had heard her voice when she returned to the house. She had immediately demanded a return to Phaedora's arms, and

wouldn't be deterred. Tessa had been eating a piece of cherry pie though, and now Phaedora had a smudge of goo on that cheek. "You say that like you didn't expect them to be."

Phaedora shook her head. "That's not it, Rand. I just can't help but compare them to what we're going to experience at my aunt and uncle's. It won't be the same, at all."

"Should we stop at home, and change clothes?"

Phaedora chuckled softly. "No, you'll be fine, although I'm sure Clarice will note every smudge and wrinkle on me, and take great pleasure in pointing them out." She stopped abruptly, realizing how petty that sounded. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. It's just that Clarice can be quite a stickler for what she believes is correct etiquette and so on, especially for someone her age."

Rand reached over and tried to wipe the cherry smudge from Phaedora's cheek. "You've got a cherry kiss on your cheek, honey."

Phaedora laughed, and then lowered the passenger visor, using the mirror to remove the smudge. "Sweetest kiss I've gotten all day," she murmured softly.

Rand grinned. "Don't worry, sweetheart. I'll give you something even better when we get home tonight." He laughed when Phaedora blushed in embarrassment. He added with a devilish grin. "Maybe we could even play 'desert sheik and captive maiden' again."

Phaedora felt her blush turn red-hot. About a month after they'd been together, she had casually mentioned to Rand the impression she'd had that first night. He had responded, to her complete amazement, by coming home a few days later with two large boxes. He wouldn't tell her what was in the boxes until the weekend, and it was Fernando and Carlita's night off. Upstairs in the bedroom, waiting for their dinner to heat up, Phaedora had come up to change her clothes.

It had been a very hot day, and the heat from the afternoon wasn't disappearing very quickly. In the bedroom, she had stopped in her tracks.

Spread out on the bed was a bejeweled costume that looked like a harem costume. On top was a paper that stated:

"Dress in your new clothing because your desert sheik is awaiting his captive maiden in the dining room."

Phaedra had shivered as she finished reading his note. Feeling breathless, while her heart beat wildly in her chest, she quickly dressed in the diaphanous silks. The top turned out to be a tiny jewel-encrusted vest that barely came together in front. There was no way to fasten it shut, so she left it alone and quickly pulled on the small matching flat slippers. There was a long, layered piece that covered her hair and a small silky piece that had two circle elastic end pieces that she figured out went over her ears. The silk covered her face from her nose down.

Entering the dining room, she stopped abruptly. There was a note on the cleared table directing her to come immediately to the sheik's tent, which had the word "den" in parenthesis just next to it. Giggling and feeling butterflies in her tummy, Phaedra skipped to the den. She knocked softly, and was told to "enter."

Inside Rand's normally cozy den had been transformed into a "tent" of sorts. There was a large plush Persian rug covered with lots of overstuffed brightly colored pillows. In the background, she could hear "mood" music that seemed to come straight out of the desert. Closing the door, Phaedra looked around and appreciated the many different kinds of candles and pseudo candles used to set the mood. From behind a large draping of fabric, Rand appeared a moment later.

"Welcome to my oasis, my sweet desert flower."

Phaedra fought the grin that wanted to cover her face. She was torn between mirth, delight and the distinct knowledge that if his intent had been to woo her heart, he would have succeeded with this. Her eyes traveled over Rand, acknowledging that he made a better sheik than Rudolph Valentino. And with his eye patch, he looked mysterious and exotic, and able to make any red-blooded gal swoon!

Phaedra moved forward, appreciating all the effort he had to go to for this to come together so wonderfully. "I hope you will forgive your harem girl for her tardiness."

Rand grinned and held out his hand for her to grasp. With his free hand, he gestured to the food spread out on the low tables. The dinner she had started to heat had obviously found another fate. She saw that everything to eat was some type of finger food, and many had sauces or cream for dipping into first. Champagne had already been poured into two tall, slender crystal flutes. Rand handed one to Phaedra after he helped her to be seated on the piled up cushions. He came down beside, reaching for his glass.

"The good thing is- no sand!"

Phaedra smiled behind her diaphanous veil. "How does one drink with this thing on though?"

"Ahh, the woman's place is to serve her master, and her desires and needs will be fulfilled once he is sated."

Phaedra lifted the lower edge and sipped the champagne. "Sounds like a workable plan so long as the master doesn't doze off with all that satiation he is getting."

Rand laughed and reached over and grabbed a strawberry, dipping it first in whipped cream. He held it just in front of Phaedra's mouth. "You happen to be the lucky girl in this sheik's harem."

Phaedra knew there would be a catch but she moved quickly, lifting her veil and taking a big juicy bite of the strawberry. Rand merely smiled and finished it off. Phaedra asked in between chews, "How am I lucky, sheik?"

Rand chuckled as he prepared another strawberry; only this time he dipped it first in chocolate and then into the cream. When he looked at Phaedra, he could see her lick her lower lip in anticipation. Holding her gaze, he smiled at her and then deliberately ate the entire strawberry in one bite. As he chewed he saw the surprised look on her face. He needed to do little things to keep her off kilter.

God knew that since she had come into his life he had been feeling like he was on a roller coaster of emotions. Just when he thought he knew what she was thinking, she'd go and surprise him all over again! Licking his fingers, he informed her languidly, "You are lucky because your master has unusual stamina."

Phaedra barked her laughter and Rand couldn't feel insulted when he saw the gleam in her eyes. She reached past him and grabbed a strawberry, pausing for chocolate and cream. Moving back as if to eat it, she pushed it forward suddenly and Rand had to open his mouth quickly or end up wearing it! As he chewed, he watched Phaedra nibble at the remaining strawberry in her hand. In her movements, she had disheveled her top. Her one breast was now partially revealed, the taut pink nipple peeping around the edge. Rand couldn't resist temptation and reached over. His hand unerringly curved around the nearly naked plump breast, caressing it gently. Pressing against her body until she lay back on the pillows, Rand eased closer to her.

She was now slightly bowed, her chest thrust upwards by the pillows. The small vest gave up and fell to the side leaving her breasts completely exposed. She saw Rand move his hand again and a moment later she felt coolness on each nipple. She lifted her head and saw that he had topped each white mountainous breast with a healthy glob of cream. Her nipples were concealed, or at least for about thirty seconds. Then Rand moved his mouth to the nearest breast and began to lick the cream from the nipple. He ignored her groans and sighs, refusing to speed up his sensual feast. Even when her hips moved upwards longingly, he still didn't desert the lush, big breasts.

Neither knew how long they lay like that, with Rand stroking, caressing and playing with her sensitive tits. But finally, he eased one hand down to the slit in the harem pants. He had inspected the outfit before he had given it to Phaedra, and he knew its secrets. Phaedra had meanwhile shoved his clothes out of her way, eagerly caressing his hard flesh. She lifted her legs, spreading her thighs.

When she whispered to him softly, "Take your harem girl, please!" Rand responded immediately. He thrust into her wet, hot flesh, groaning as he became buried in the tight womanly passage.

He tried to hold still, but Phaedora kept thrusting her hips against him, and he felt her hands and fingers curl and bite in his ass cheeks, pulling him even closer. With a shout, that might have resembled a victory cry in the desert, he jerked forward and climaxed deep inside Phaedora's body. As he pumped the last jet of hot seed into her body, Rand felt Phaedora's orgasm over take her. Her body jerked wildly beneath him and he could feel her inner muscles squeezing and working his cock as it softened inside of her.

Abruptly, the car went over a pothole and she was jerked back to the present. Glancing over at Rand, she was glad to see that he was watching the road. She rolled her window to cool off her face.

Chapter 8

Rand tossed his car keys onto the tray on his dresser. He had been relieved when Phaedra had announced that they needed to get going. Talk about an uncomfortable experience! It was obvious they had not been expecting him by the way he was greeted by Preston and Alicia. There had been no missing the sneer on her cousin's face. And his wife had made no effort to veil her insults to Phaedra. Rand had started to say something one time, only stopping when Phaedra had squeezed his thigh hard, beneath the cover of the table. He had looked over and seen the negative shake of her head.

Rand had kicked his shoes off, and was unbuttoning his shirt when he heard the water running in the bathroom. He smiled, thinking Phaedra had the right idea. A nice hot shower would be relaxing before bed. He quickly shed the remainder of his clothes, planning on sharing the shower. But he stopped abruptly upon entering the bathroom. Instead of a shower, Phaedra was already in the tub, filled with bubbles and swirling water, resting her head on the rim. As he watched, she lifted one foot and quite adeptly turned the water off.

"Have you got room for two in there?"

Phaedra opened one eye, seeing Rand standing just inside the bathroom door, naked. She closed her eye. "Well, I guess you had better get in. I can see the cooler air is having an adverse effect on you."

Rand laughed and joined her in the tub. He made her move though, so he was resting against the porcelain, and she was lying back on his chest, between his legs. She did ask if he was comfortable, and he said "no problem." He proceeded to cup both her breasts in his hands, adding a complacent "there."

Phaedra shrugged, feeling too drained to ask why he said that. It did feel much nicer though, leaning back against Rand. It took her a few moments to get up the courage to tell him her thoughts.

"I wish we had not gone to my aunt and uncle's. It really spoiled what was

one of the nicest days I've ever had."

Rand felt a knot form in his throat. He had been thinking the same thought, but to hear Phaedra voice them, seemed worse. The way her family had acted was really bad. Her aunt and uncle had spent all their time sucking up to him. And her cousin Carter had been sneering and made several suggestive remarks that he had wanted to punch his smug face over. None of them could top the vituperative comments from Carter's wife, Clarice. Talk about the original dysfunctional family! It amazed him that Phaedra had turned out so well. He knew that her parents had died when she was quite young, and she had spent holidays with her aunt and uncle. But her formative years had been spent in boarding schools.

"You quite impressed my niece and nephew, you know."

"I really liked Lisa. And Randy was sweet. Teenage boys can be quite endearing."

Rand laughed. "I'll have to tell Roger you said that. He'd probably let you adopt him!"

Phaedra smiled. She lifted her hands and curled them over Rand's, which were still cupping her breasts so gently. "The triplets were really precious."

"Tessa was ready to come home with you, I think."

Phaedra shook her head. "We would have gotten to the end of the road, and she would have wanted her mommy back. She was always looking around, making sure her mommy was nearby."

Rand paused for a moment, and then decided to speak his heart and mind. "She could have been your baby, seeing your two heads so close together sometimes."

Phaedra gulped a little sob. She had felt the same thing, several times during the day. But her thoughts had strayed more to wondering what a child of Rand and hers might look like. She had immediately been aware of the warm and gushy feelings that had come over her. She'd had to force herself to remember

that she didn't have a future with Rand, and that what she did have would end eventually. It was only a business arrangement, right?

Rand continued to lightly cup and massage her breasts, leaning down to press a kiss to the side of her neck. He lost track of how long they stayed like that. He did watch with surprise as Phaedra used her toes to release some of the water from the tub, and then turn on the tap for more hot water. He murmured to her gently, "That must surely be a marketable skill."

Phaedra turned in his arms. "You would think so, wouldn't you? But I'm afraid I've never discovered the right market, nor anyone willing to pay the proper price."

Rand reached out with his hand to curl around her neck, pulling her face close to his. He kissed her mouth slowly, gently, and then easing his tongue inside to explore the warm, wet recesses. His hands scooted Phaedra around until she was lying partially over him. Phaedra lifted her mouth from his and her eyes moved to the patch he always wore. In the three months they'd been together, she'd never seen him without it. She knew he had spares, because she had seen them one day while helping Carlita put away the clean laundry.

Phaedra shifted further around in the tub, until she was straddling Rand's thighs. Rand was still surprised whenever she made overtures towards him. But he was even more surprised when her hand moved from caressing his chest, up his neck, to the side of his face, and finally stopping just beside the velvety patch. Phaedra moved her fingers beneath the edge, starting to move it, when Rand's hand shot up and grabbed hold of her hand. He was shaking his head no, but before he could speak, Phaedra had lifted her other hand. She was sliding the string upwards slowly.

Rand looked into her eyes. He didn't let anyone see the scar that he had borne for so long, other than his doctor and family. He didn't think he could bear to see the repulsion on Phaedra's face as she looked at the puckered scar. But in the next instant, Phaedra was leaning forward and kissing his face, all around the

patch. Her fingers were no longer trying to remove or dislodge the patch. Instead, her lips moved softly, like the brush of a butterfly's wings, against his skin.

Phaedra spoke softly, in between kisses. "I want to see all of you, Rand. You've seen all of me. You've seen my emotional scars, and you've survived a day with the original dysfunctional family. Please let me see all of you."

Rand shook his head no. "It's a bad scar, honey. That's why I never replaced the eye with a glass one."

Phaedra didn't have to hear anymore. He obviously believed that hiding was better than risking people's reactions. He probably felt confident dealing with their reaction to the patch. But Phaedra had seen how cruel some people could be when it came to physical scars. She lowered her head to lie on his shoulder, caressing his face and neck with her hand. After a few moments, she asked him softly, "If it were my scar, what would you do?"

The silence in the bathroom was overwhelming. Rand admitted that he wouldn't care. He would want to know all of her. But then, he added reluctantly, he loved Phaedra. He would accept all of her, no matter what.

"I would want to see it. Nothing about you could ever be anything but totally beautiful to me, darling."

Phaedra felt his arm lift, and she heard the sliding of the string over wet skin. She didn't lift her head immediately, but continued to lie against him. After a few minutes, Phaedra lifted her head until she was facing him. Slowly, she let her gaze travel from one side of his face to the other. She saw the scar, which traveled from his forehead across his eyelid and partially onto his cheek. Inwardly, she cringed at how painful it all must have been. Aware of Rand staring at her, she leaned forward, and again began pressing soft kisses all around the surrounding area. She moved her lips gently up his cheek, kissing her way along the puckered skin.

"From now on," she told him sternly, looking him straight into his good

eye. "You don't have to wear that patch around me, if you don't want."

Rand shook his head though. "Honey, you don't have to say that. I saw enough people's expressions when I first got this damned injury to know how people really react. You don't have to pretend..."

Phaedra pulled away angrily. "I'm not pretending or faking anything, Rand. What if I found out I had breast cancer tomorrow and had to have a mastectomy? Would you turn from me, as you seem to expect me to turn from you?"

Rand groaned as the reality of her words hit home. He didn't want to think about anything ever coming between the two of them. His heart thumped painfully in his chest and he spoke from his heart and without guarding his thoughts and words.

"God, Phaedra! No! I love you and nothing would ever make me turn away from you."

He stopped abruptly seeing the startled look on Phaedra's face. Slowly, he realized what he had said. He watched her face as his words sank in. His spine straightened as he half-anticipated her rejection of his feelings. He wasn't sure what she would say or do next. He groaned when her hand suddenly slid over his chest, moving straight down to his hard cock, which had been prodding her for some time. Phaedra smiled up at him.

"I know a cure for this affliction that seems to be plaguing you, sir."

Rand swallowed hard, not sure how to react. Was she rejecting his pronouncement by ignoring it? He forced a laugh. "Since I've come to know you, milady, it appears that I am constantly plagued by the affliction. But I believe I have the solution to your marketable skill, and my chronic affliction."

Phaedra was already feeling much better, and beginning to lose the depression that had been plaguing her since their return from her uncle's home. But her head and her heart were still reeling from what she believed she had just heard Rand say. She was still in shock and couldn't believe that he had told her that he loved her. Reminding herself sternly that this wasn't some romance

novel, but her real life, and things don't happen like that in real life, she replied with a slight smile. "You think you have the solution, do you?"

Rand nodded, and took a deep breath. "Marry me, Phaedra."

Phaedra froze in his arms. The sudden change from their intense emotions, to playful game and now back to such a serious topic had her reeling. She pushed away from him, sitting upright in the tub, in spite of the tangle of legs. "Don't kid about such things!"

Rand sat up also, facing her. "I'm not kidding. I want you, and I don't want to lose you."

Phaedra gave him a weak smile. "I'm not going anywhere." She managed to get up and stepped out of the tub. Grabbing a towel and wrapping it around her body and knotting it above her breasts, she quickly left the bathroom. She looked up when Rand followed her a few moments later. "I don't welch on my business deals," she added unnecessarily. But she was hurt, and angry. And she was also feeling the need to push Rand, for some reason.

Rand glared at her as he crossed the bedroom. "Damn it, Phaedra. I'm not talking business. Let's forget all about how we met, or why we came to be together. I don't give a damn about your uncle's business."

Phaedra shook her head. "You invested too much time to just let it go. You're a business man, and you won't get ahead if you keep this up."

Rand came down on one knee in front of Phaedra, and the significance wasn't lost on her. Her face paled as she saw how serious he looked.

"Rand, please, get up..."

"No. I am going to do this right. We seem to be remarkably good at skirting the important issues. I am in love with you Phaedra, and I love you. Maybe they're the same thing, but this is a real first for me. I find myself looking at you and wondering about next year, and five years from now. In the middle of the day, I realize my mind is wandering and I am lost in reverie about you. Today, with my folks, I knew that I wanted to be with you, when I am as old as my dad.

I was envious of the times my parents must sit quietly together on their front porch, just holding hands. I want to share my life with you." He saw Phaedra parting her lips to speak, but he pressed his fingers against her lips to stop her. "Wait, honey. When I saw you with the baby, Tessa, in your arms, I was jealous. I wanted it to be our child in your arms!"

Rand moved his hand to caress the side of her face, sliding his hand down her neck and chest. He loosened the towel and it fell to her waist. He cupped one large breast in his hand, holding her tenderly, almost reverently.

"I daydream about how you would look pregnant. I've imagined your breasts getting bigger, and more sensitive. I think about your belly getting rounded, when we first find out about the baby. And then slowly, your tummy starts getting bigger and rounder. I want to feel our baby kicking inside your womb, knowing that he or she is just as eager to come out to meet us, as we are to welcome them. I want to show off the ultrasound pictures of our baby to our friends and everyone at work. I've even been talking to Mark about childbirth classes, and what it was really like in the delivery room."

Phaedra gasped, his words astonishing her. She had daydreamed about having Rand's baby too! At the hospital, she had found herself spending more of her time with the babies, just wanting to hold them. Of course, the nurses had been grateful for the help, and Phaedra had been perfecting her feeding and diapering techniques. But her thoughts had not taken her as far as childbirth classes!

Rand smiled. "And when I think about you nursing our baby, I feel something deep down inside of me, yearning for the reality. I want the dreams to become our real life. Please, Phaedra, marry me."

Phaedra realized she had tears running down her face. Her heart and her soul were telling her to say yes, but she had to point out something. "What if I can't have a baby? Children seem pretty important..."

Rand's fingers stopped her once again. "There are lots of ways to have

children these days. And if we never manage it, one way or another, I know we'll find ways to enrich our lives. But there is one more thing I should tell you, my love."

He paused and gently pushed her hair back off her face. "I own a large parcel of land, near where my folks are. I want to leave my business for others to manage, and move there. Not tomorrow, but in a few years. I've discussed this a lot with my family. If you feel you can't live outside of the city, then we'll work something else out."

Phaedra took a deep breath. "I love you, Rand." She quickly shook her head as he started to move towards her, this time pressing her fingers to his lips.

"Wait, please. You haven't been at all what I expected you to be. I've enjoyed being with your friends from work every weekend, and I'd like to know your family better. And your understanding about my work..." her voice cracked for a moment, and she gulped to hold back her tears. "But I come from a really dysfunctional family, as you saw today. I hope to God, nothing of that will affect how I am, with my kids... but I can't guarantee it."

Rand smiled. "I've seen you with children, in several situations, and I have no doubts. Marry me, and take a chance on life with me! Please, my love..." He paused and did something he'd never done before. He quoted the only line of poetry he'd ever been able to remember. "Come grow old with me, the best is yet to be."

Phaedra was crying as she nodded her head yes. Rand hugged her close, showing her how much he loved her with long, eager kisses and tender caresses. Holding her close to his heart, he whispered that he was quite anxious to start their life together. Phaedra grinned and slid her hand between their bodies. She lay back on the bed and guided him into her body. As he thrust into her hot, wet flesh, Phaedra told him that she was quite eager to get to work on his addition. Her arms wrapped around his neck and shoulders, and her thighs circling his hips, Phaedra pulled him into her rising hips. He groaned half in arousal and

half in laughter as she whispered into his ear.

"And if you want to do this every day until we're a hundred, well, that sounds all right to me!"

Epilogue

Phaedra was watching the football game from the sidelines with Naomi. The twins were busy in the nearby sandbox. It was a hot day, and they had had to take frequent breaks during the game. Phaedra was feeling particularly pregnant today, dressed in a loose fitting sundress, to accommodate air movement more easily.

Naomi passed her some more lemonade. "I can see that you miss playing."

"It's okay. And even after the baby comes, it will be awhile before I can play again."

Naomi shook her head. "As soon as your doctor says okay, I'll be happy to add your baby to my blanket full of babies!"

Phaedra laughed, looking down at the sleeping baby at their feet. While the twins were old enough for the sandbox, and light supervision, Carol's three-month-old son was happy to sleep until half time, when he could be breast fed again. "Well, if I have a boy, we're halfway to the next generation's football team already!"

Naomi laughed. "What's happening with work?"

"The new unit will open while I'm on maternity leave, if everything stays on schedule. And after I come back, I'll either use the new on-site daycare the hospital has, or just go for two hours and let Carlita take care of the baby while I'm gone."

"She will love that, I have no doubt!"

Phaedra nodded. "She and Fernando have even set up a small nursery in their quarters so we can get some rest if we need it."

Naomi looked at her friend. "Girlfriend, you have it made!"

Phaedra watched Rand calling another play out on the field. Her hand was resting on her swollen tummy. She answered softly and almost reverently. "Don't I know it, and I thank God every single day!"

Suddenly, Rand raced across the imaginary goal line and made a touchdown. Phaedra jumped up and started clapping and yelling. But she stopped abruptly as she felt something, and looked down. Beside her, Naomi was calling out to Rand, to get over there. Over the roaring in her ears, Phaedra heard her friend shouting, "her water's broken."

Eight very long hours later, Phaedra gave birth to a lovely little girl, weighing in at just over seven pounds. Rand got to cut the cord, and place the baby on Phaedra's chest. A tiny hand curled around his finger as bright blue eyes opened and gave her daddy the once over. And from that moment on, she would hold her daddy in the palm of her hand. But Rand didn't care as he looked from his daughter to his wife. His life was better than he had ever thought possible, and he couldn't wait for the next moment to begin!