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Strip Poker for Two

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Edited by Helen Woodall. Photography and cover art by Les Byerley.

Electronic book Publication August 2008

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# STRIP POKER FOR TWO

April Ash

## Dedication/Acknowledgements

April thanks her family and friends for their ongoing encouragement and support. And special thanks go to her editor, Helen Woodall.

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# Chapter One

"I'm upping the ante. Bring underwear."

Did I say that out loud?

Melissa Foster glared at her two companions through a one-too-many-margaritas induced haze. Nancy and Gina had smirks covering their faces she'd love to erase, so apparently they'd heard her.

How in the hell did I get into this?

A whack on her head to get her brain in gear sounded like the conservative thing to do, but that would only result in her world spinning before her fuzzy eyes. Plus, Melissa was more than ready for sex after swearing off men for six months. She'd just opened mouth, inserted foot. After a week of trying to come up with a way to run their contest she'd agreed to snub work-related challenges for something involving more basic, primal urges and release pent-up hormones.

Each woman would seduce a man picked by the other two. A tell-all competition for the best sexual escapades would decide the winner. And that lucky woman would look forward to using their boss's condo in Hawaii for a week, all expenses paid.

Janet Simms, their boss at Excellent Travel Choice – better known as ETC – had left it up to the women to decide who would fly off and away from the doldrums of wintry Virginia in January for the sand and beaches of a tropical paradise.

The desire to renew her life fueled Melissa's determination. The fact that her body craved sex with a muscular male hunk only added to her accepting the challenge. A glorious seven-day trip away from everything loomed ahead like a golden ring labeled "fresh start".

Melissa swigged back her remaining drink and turned her attention to the bar counter. Chantilly Lace Hideaway lacked ambiance but teemed with patrons laughing and drinking on a Wednesday night. Raising her glass, she caught the eye of their waitress who promptly approached their table.

"Another round, please. This one's on me," Melissa stated. Inhaling deeply, she tried to concentrate on planning her week of seduction and sex with –

She turned in her seat and stared at Gina. "Don't keep me in suspense. You said you've already picked someone for me. So, who is it?"

A smile danced across Gina's face. "Remember my cousin, 'Dimples'? He's back from the Middle East and assigned to Fort Belvoir. Called me this morning and will be staying with me until he moves into quarters on base. I think it's time for you two to get reacquainted. He's coming Sunday."

"Dimples". Jason Molina. Melissa urged her sluggish brain to focus as she sought to come up with an image of the boy she knew in middle school. Energy drained from her tired body and she slumped in her seat. That quiet, shy nerdy kid must have changed by now. Right?

"Uh, tell me he's grown into some type of super hero and is not still like the tubaplayer I'm remembering now," Melissa pleaded.

Gina laughed. "Dimples played it through high school. He figured it was a good way to bug his family – and if I remember correctly – to impress you."

Melissa dropped her head back and closed her eyes for a few seconds. "He kept writing love songs he thought I'd like and tuba-serenaded me. Followed me everywhere. Even showed up at my front door lots of times. All I wanted was for him to disappear since I was madly in love with Billy Wagner."

"And you dumped my poor cousin," Gina said.

Melissa righted her head and stared at Gina. "I didn't dump him for Billy. I kept trying to be polite to him because he was your cousin but finally just told him he was too short for me." She bit her lip. "Geez. He couldn't still hate me, could he?"

Gina answered, "Don't think so. He mentioned your name when I spoke to him."

Great. What if he'd been harboring hurt feelings all this time and now wanted revenge? Too many ripples of panic cascaded throughout her body as she tried to remain positive about her intended target. Shit. If he showed up for a date with that lousy tuba thinking she'd be swept off her feet, how would she handle viewing him as a lover?

"Did he mention my name along with the word tuba?" Melissa asked Gina.

"Nope. Just your name. Wondered how you were," Gina replied with a giggle.

With a serious tone in her voice, Melissa stated, "You know how I feel about military life. Had enough as an Army brat not to want any involvement."

"Sweetie, this is just for fun. You need a man. He needs to have fun and relax." Gina shrugged. "Having sex and enjoying yourselves is the name of the game here. No commitments. No serious stuff. *Think contest*. Show him a good time and get laid a time or twenty."

Nancy cut into their conversation. "Fine. Melissa's got her man. Now you two choose someone for me but please be kind."

"Hmm." Gina smirked and glanced at Melissa. "You pick for her. Find someone wild. We know how our Nancy loves doing the PDA thing."

Nancy shrugged. "Don't knock it unless you've tried it. Adds to the excitement. Just the possibility of getting caught and having someone else watching makes me squirm in my panties."

Melissa searched her brain for someone who'd satisfy Nancy's exhibitionist requirements. Someone crazy like her. Someone living on the edge. She glanced around the bar and focused on a man across the room.

Yes.

"Him. Allan Miller from that shipping store next to ETC. He's for you." Melissa nodded in the direction of an Adonis-looking man leaning on the end of the counter. A smile covered his face as he flexed his biceps and showed off his tattoos while he spoke to two female patrons displaying ample chests.

"Miller? I thought he was married." Gina's blue eyes widened as she threw in her question.

"Not anymore. I heard that his wife caught him screwing her younger sister in their station wagon at the mall." Melissa shrugged. "Sounds like your kinda guy, Nance. Loves women and not afraid to screw in public."

Nancy squinted as she gave him a once over. "Great torso and apparently a goodsized bulge in his pants." She nodded her blonde head of curls. "He'll do. I'll win this bet for sure. I'm making a list in my head of places to try. Maybe Dulles airport. Already fucked at National with that cute pilot I dated last year."

Melissa closed her eyes briefly in disbelief. "Uh-huh. We heard *that* story before. Don't you ever worry about being arrested?"

"That part has my panties soaked before we even begin."

"You're crazy. But you're our crazy wild woman and we love you," Gina said as she laughed. "Okay. My turn. Pick someone."

Melissa scooted her chair closer to Nancy. "Any suggestions for our married friend?"

Gina gave a vehement shake of her head. "No. Not married. On the verge of divorce since my almost-ex screwed that bimbo secretary of his in our bed. I need someone to show me what's out there."

Nancy nudged Melissa. "What say we aim our friend in a younger direction? She's always talking about Adam, her nephew's soccer coach."

"You don't think I'm too old for him? He's just out of college and I'm an old woman of thirty-two." Hesitation colored Gina's worried comment.

"Forget age. Think sex as in a younger man lusting to keep up with you," Melissa offered.

"Well, he did ask me out for coffee last week but I refused." Gina grinned and nodded her head. "What the hell. I'll go for it." She turned toward Melissa. "You screw my cousin and forget he's in the Army." She aimed a glance at Nancy. "You get Allan." She licked her lips before adding, "And I'll do Adam. Maybe I can teach him a few positions I've wanted to try but Tony wouldn't even consider."

Melissa raised her glass across the table. "Starting Sunday, a week of sex and underwear. Winner gets the trip. Right?"

The women clinked their glasses together as a sign of agreement.

A calculating look spread across Nancy's face. "I want to add something else. We each need some type of love note from the guy. Something that gives details. That'll help prove our case."

Melissa processed all the "proofs" she'd need and stored them in the back of her mind. Hell. As long as her dumping Dimples and the tuba were out of the picture, she could make this work.

"Who'll judge?" Gina asked as she drained the contents of her glass.

"How about Janet?" Melissa offered. "I'll ask her tomorrow and if she agrees we can meet with her a week from next Monday to tell all, hand in our proof and let her decide."

Gina chimed in. "She's juggling two guys now and I swear the woman must have a better sex life than the three of us combined. We'll have to drag her away from her bedroom and Alejandro and Marcus, but we could offer her stories and maybe new encounters she could try out."

Nancy snorted. "I don't think she needs any suggestions. Unless it's to have an orgy at her place for all of us."

"You'd just love having all of us watch you and Allan go at it." Gina gave Nancy a slight shove and continued. "No thanks. No orgy and don't you go suggesting it to Janet."

"You spoil all my fun. Fine. No orgy." Nancy pouted and then looked over to where Allan sat ogling his companions. "Sunday can't come soon enough for me."

"Or me. I'll see Adam at Sunday's game and invite him out," Gina threw in.

Wheels turned in Melissa's head. Her friends each knew their targets as adults. She, however, hadn't seen Dimples since they were klutzy kids in middle school. He still couldn't look that gawky now, could he? Right?

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After leaving her friends, Melissa headed home. A smidgen of guilt crossed her mind about using Dimples for her own purpose but she'd make sure he knew up front that a relationship with a future wasn't her goal. Hell. If all went well, he'd have a whopper of an experience and go away satisfied. She had some primping and pampering to do if she wanted to whip her body into shape for her planned sexual adventure. Dimples didn't know it now but he had one hell of a welcome home party in store for him.

Melissa stood in front of her mirror and removed her clothes. Naked, she surveyed what her thirty-year-old body had to offer. Some changes would have to be made and done quickly.

Her face, still possessing smooth skin and void of wrinkles, needed some color. Pale and lifeless wouldn't do. A trip to the tanning salon would be necessary. Mousy brown hair hung in strands around her face, sorely in need of curling and style. Her hairdresser Monique – whom she hadn't seen in way too many months – would have to work her magic to transform dull into tantalizing. Adding highlights would help, too.

She had a few extra pounds here and there and had long ago resigned herself to never looking like a sick model. Melissa placed a hand under each breast and lifted them, cradling their weight in her palms. Her bastard of an ex-boyfriend Mac always reminded her that more than a mouthful was a waste but that hadn't stopped him from sucking on them and kneading them hard enough to cause pain. He seemed to enjoy that and his views on what was acceptable during the two years they'd lived together escalated to almost torture for Melissa. She'd hoped to be passionately worshipped while he only sought the utmost in self-gratification bordering on causing pain for her.

One night after getting home early from work, Melissa strolled into their living room and was greeted by the sight of her eighteen-year-old neighbor Brad shoving his cock into Mac's ass as he bent over their sofa's armrest. Brad's naked girlfriend lay on the couch with her legs spread wide for Mac's eager mouth. He ate away and enjoyed every second of being fucked by Brad while lapping Holly's pussy if his moans were any indication.

They hadn't noticed Melissa until she slapped Brad across his butt cheeks causing him to ram further into Mac. Mac, in turn, had smashed his face deeper into Holly's open slit. All three grunted with pleasure although Melissa had hoped for some reaction of surprised guilt. She'd only succeeded in heightening their pleasure.

Melissa had screamed at them, not wanting to appear the least bit entertained. Knowing that Mac had done this and made no excuses for his actions gave her the courage to do what she'd contemplated for weeks. She threw him out and he'd moved in with the horny couple. It was then she'd decided to steer clear of men for six months and concentrate on herself and work.

Melissa strolled into her kitchen still naked but full of aggressive eagerness to have her desires satisfied. She glanced at the window and decided to buck the system that had always controlled her. Months ago, she'd have donned a robe or made sure the blinds were closed. Giving into the urge to experience a small iota of exhibitionist behavior, she ignored the tiny word of caution threatening to have her run out of the room. Instead, she turned on the light and blinked at the brightness showering the kitchen.

Her window looked out into the parking lot. A rush of excitement coursed through her body at the thought of someone outside viewing her naked status. *God, this must be what Nancy feels like when she picks public places to have sex.* After a few brave minutes of standing by her sink counter, sanity took control. What if some family saw her? Or some pervert? She raced out of the room to get her robe.

Once back in the kitchen, Melissa sat at the table and wrote out a plan of encounters for Jason. Dimples would have quite a week ahead, and she needed to be sure she made the rules, he enjoyed himself, and she acted out fantasies stored in the back of her mind.

She'd stop in to see him Sunday after he arrived at Gina's and offer to take him out to dinner as Gina hoped to be out with Adam. Friendly—a way to welcome him home and spark his interest. Wearing something showing off her body meant a crusade through stores the next day while shopping for that one perfect dress.

Did he like blondes? Brunettes? Redheads? What color did he like on a woman? Crap. She really had nothing to go on before seeing him again so would keep her hair color and opt for the sexy but not trampy style of dress. Color? She'd go with blue—something she'd been told went well with her eyes—or basic black.

While eager to try some cute tight-fitting red dress that screamed "Look at me, here I am", Melissa discarded that thought. Gaining too much attention outside of Jason wasn't on her agenda. Although, what if he got horny knowing others craved his date?

Lord. Pros and cons of possible scenarios starring the two of them swam through her head. Melissa stretched, contemplating her sexcapades agenda. That's what she decided to call her Sunday to Sunday, seven-day list. She wanted to capture his undying attention, do some teasing and flirting, and have them work their way up from one frenzied encounter to another.

Hmm. What if she did something like that Christmas song? The one with twelve days of gifts? Only, they'd have seven days of sexual adventures. Could he last? Hell. Could she?

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"You look wonderful." Jason greeted Melissa with a bear hug and tender kiss after she entered Gina's apartment.

Shock registered in her head as she tried to concentrate on the man belonging to the strong arms surrounding her. Melissa sniffed, inhaling his strong aftershave, one that had always been a favorite of hers. Not that her ex would wear it.

Jason had grown and now towered well above her five-foot, eight-inch height. A hard, muscular chest was crushed against her body, and her breasts tingled at the contact. A huge bulge strained his jeans and there was no denying its hard, massive size as it pressed firmly into her.

She gulped. This couldn't be Dimples. An all-over quivering sensation rushed through her body. Every nerve ending stood at full-alert.

He stepped back and they stared at each other until she found her voice. "You look different." Melissa felt a blush careen up her cheeks after her statement.

A disarming grin spread across his face. "I hope that's a good thing." He gave her a thorough once-over. "You're a beautiful woman. Not anything like the scrawny kid with braces I remember."

Gina interrupted their staring match. "Hey, you two. Enough going down memory lane. Just say how sexy each other is and go from there."

"Sexy? Hell yes." Jason nodded and winked at her. "For a year I saw nothing but women covered from head to toe and then spent a week surrounded by relatives. You're something else."

"Oh, I see," Melissa teased. "You'd use that line for any woman crossing your path now. I just happen to be the lucky one. Can't say it makes me feel special."

Lust flared in his sky blue eyes. "Not a word of truth in that. You are beautiful. And sexy. And special."

"Uh, hello? Remember me? I live here. This is my apartment. You're supposed to say nice things to me, too," Gina mentioned.

Jason turned toward his cousin. "Hello. Go away. Aren't you supposed to be at a soccer game or something? That's all you talked about. Stalking this guy, Adam." Jason grabbed Melissa's hand and led her into the living room. "Melissa and I have to catch up on everything since eighth grade. You," he nodded toward Gina, "leave us alone. We don't need a chaperone."

Gina smirked and put her hands on her hips. "Fine. I'm going." She headed to the door and added, "Key's on the hall table. Come and go as you like. And, Melissa? He's still adjusting to the real world back home. Be gentle."

They heard her laughing as she left the apartment.

"Not too gentle, I hope. I'm ready for fun, so throw everything at me. Do you have time today to show me around the area?"

Melissa drawled in a sexy tone, "I'll show you whatever you want to see, Captain Jason. Just tell me."

He grinned. "Powerful suggestion. I'll keep that in mind. How about showing me the shopping mall? I need to get some real clothes. That is, if you don't mind spending your time helping me."

Wheels turned in her head. Sure, she'd help him buy clothes. Maybe even underwear – the sexier the better. Melissa plastered a smile on her face. "You're asking a woman if she wants to go shopping? You *have* been gone for awhile, Dimples."

"Uh, only a few people get to call me that now." He arched an eyebrow and asked, "Do you know how I got that nickname?"

Searching her memory, Melissa realized she never had been told why he'd been called that. "No. Gina and your family called you that and I figured it just sorta stuck." She cocked her head to the side. "Okay. So tell me. Why Dimples?"

Jason quirked his mouth to one side. "I have a feeling I'll be revealing that to you pretty soon, but for now, it's a secret. See if you can figure it out while you help me pick out civilian clothes. Hell. I don't even know what's in style anymore."

Melissa stood and reached for his hand. "C'mon. Let's go spend your money. I've always wanted to dress a man."

He got up and they walked to the door. "I'll need everything." He gave her a thorough perusal from head to foot. "Including something decent to wear when I take you out to dinner tonight."

"Maybe I already have plans," she stated nonchalantly.

"Then change them for me, please. I really want to spend time with you." Jason took her hand in his, raised it to his lips, and gently kissed it.

Heat rippled up her arm and cascaded through her body. Her plan was working better than she'd imagined. And faster. Hell. He'd become the pursuer and she loved every minute.

"Now, how can I resist? You've got me if you want me. Let's go."

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Several hours later they deposited his purchases at Gina's apartment and Jason changed into a blue sweater and gray slacks. Melissa figured she'd guessed right on his favorite color as he gravitated to clothes in that hue for himself.

Any of the underwear she'd convinced him to buy would do well as a contest entry. He'd allowed her to pick out several silken boxers and she'd gone with designs most likely to entice and tantalize.

Melissa suggested, "Now you're ready to eat out in public. How about Cowgirl's Steakhouse? Ever been to one?"

"They didn't have any of those in Iraq. Seems like a lifetime ago when I actually ate out at any restaurant in the US."

"You're in for a treat. Only female waitresses dressed like cowgirls. Most men drool over the short outfits. They sing, ride the mechanical bull, and really entertain you."

"Ah, Melissa," he mentioned with a leering glance, "sounds like what this womanstarved man needs. Now you're plenty to keep me interested, but I'll be able to look at them and compare them to you and see how lucky I am to be out with the most gorgeous female around."

She gave an unladylike snort. "So you've got charm and flattering talents oozing with every word. Haven't lost your flirting techniques. Maybe that's because the tuba's not around."

"Hmm. You've mentioned that thing quite a few times today. Maybe deep down inside you want me to serenade you like old times." He wiggled his eyebrows as he opened the apartment door so they could leave for the restaurant.

"No way. I prefer smaller instruments with more pleasing sounds."

"Honey, bigger can be better," he whispered in her ear as she sashayed out the door. "But enough about tubas for the night. Are you driving with me or are we taking separate cars?"

"Separate cars. We both have early mornings tomorrow."

### Strip Poker for Two

They walked to the parking lot in silence, with her hand snuggled in the crook of his arm. Melissa had enjoyed their day together, bantering about normal things with sexual innuendoes creeping into their conversations. He'd be fun to be around, date, and get to know really well—

She nearly stumbled as she stopped her train of thought. Yes, she would have fun. But daydreaming of a relationship in her future had to end. Military life would never invade her dreams of stability.

The contest. Think contest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Melissa watched as he ate like a man with a mission. He'd laughed at the jokes and songs filling the air in the restaurant. She'd actually had fun watching him relax and be thoroughly amused all night.

"Thanks for taking me here." Jason leaned over and gave her a soft kiss on her lips.

Sparks coursed through her body, and her lips tingled at their contact. "Anytime, 'Cowboy of the Night'. Aren't you lucky they picked you?"

"Hey. Can I help it if I know all the lyrics to that song and sang better than the other guys who tried?" He whistled a few lines from the song he'd sung to win the contest.

She gave him a wrinkled-nose expression. "Uh-huh. Must be something you played on the tuba years ago."

Jason leaned over and gave her a more urgent, deepening kiss before saying, "You're still thinking tuba I see."

Melissa made the first move. She reached under the table and placed her hand on his thigh and rubbed. "Maybe bigger *is* better."

Fire blazed in his eyes as he covered her hand with his. Slowly he guided it to his crotch so she could feel his cock as it strained against his zipper. "I've always thought so."

His gaze focused on her breasts. That made her inhale deeply and her nipples pressed through the material of her dress.

Sex, the need, want for fulfillment, hung in the air between them. His smell, one of cologne and soap mingled with his all-male scent, assaulted her senses.

"Time to leave?" His question came out as a plea.

"Yes. But I want to be sure we understand each other," she said. "You're all military. Mentioned it many times today. I grew up as an Army brat."

He removed his hand from hers and sat back in his seat. "Sounds like something serious you want to talk about so let's have it."

"I-I don't want this to be anything but fun. I don't want any serious relationship right now and have no desire to get involved with a military life again."

There. She'd made her feelings clear. Would that end their night?

He looked pensive for a moment and then responded, "Melissa. We're just two old friends getting to know each other better. I'm far from getting seriously involved with anyone again at this stage of my career." He brushed his hand along her cheek. "Having a good time with you, enjoying each other's company is all I'm asking. There's more to me than being in the Army."

She took his hand and held it in place on her face. "My place or yours?"

Jason slipped his hand out of her grasp and slid it behind her head so he could pull her head closer to his. "My place is Gina's. While I don't think she'd mind, your place might be a better choice," he whispered.

They got up to leave. Melissa's stomach did a tiny flip-flop. She'd had her say, got him to agree to her terms. And he'd done so very quickly. Was it disappointment that colored her satisfaction at having her terms being met?

Once in his car, Jason mulled over their day and night. Melissa seemed sincerely happy to see him again. Sex was a given. It would happen. The chemistry was there. The craving to make love blazed between them the whole time they'd been together.

She wanted no ties. Hated military life. He grimaced at himself in his rearview mirror as he backed out of his parking spot to follow her home.

What the hell had he expected? Passion and lust were there. But nothing more. Just like with Camille. Only she'd said all the right things to make him *think* she wanted what he'd wanted. At least Melissa was upfront about her terms.

A sinking feeling hit the pit of his stomach. Someday he'd find the right woman. Someone he'd trust, who'd love him and his career choice.

For now, he'd take what Melissa offered and give her what she wanted in return. No strings attached. For however long they wanted each other.

Disappointment pooled with anticipation for an evening of fast and furious sex. He wouldn't be able to hold back too long. He wanted to be inside her, plunging in and out like a mad man, meeting her equally urgent hip thrusts. They'd have wild sex, and hopefully have many more episodes. But no ties or future.

\* \* \* \* \*

Melissa unlocked the door and they entered the apartment. After removing their coats, she led the way into the living room. "Want something to drink?"

"No. Just you. Where's the bedroom?"

She reached out for his hand and he grabbed it. "I like a man who doesn't waste time. Promise me no tuba serenades?" she teased as she led him into her bedroom.

"I've got something big for you, but it's not a tuba."

"I'm opening the drapes for moonlight. Won't turn on the lights. Is that okay with you?" she questioned as her pulsed raced in anticipation.

"I don't need light. I'll feel my way."

"Take off your clothes. I want to watch." Melissa gave her order as she sprawled out on her bed.

Jason grinned and nodded in agreement. "What? Are you gonna sing, whistle a tune, or just stare?"

She kicked off her shoes. "Stand a little to the left. The light's better there. And I'm just gonna watch."

He gave her a sideways glance. "I expect you to strip for me, too, you know."

Melissa shook her head. "Uh-uh, cowboy. When you're done and naked, you get to strip me. My house, my rules."

He grabbed the edges of his sweater and pulled it over his head. "This won't take long. I'm a fast undresser and you'll be naked in no time."

"Undershirt, please. Then start with the belt."

His laugh penetrated the room. "Can I take my shoes and socks off before the belt?"

Melissa rubbed a hand up and down her leg and thigh. "Fine. But do it quickly. I'm getting impatient."

With lightning speed, he tore off his undershirt and then discarded his shoes and socks.

As he reached for his belt, she interrupted with, "I think I'd like to do the belt and zipper. That is, if you don't mind."

Without saying a word, he padded over to her reclining figure. As he stood before her, Jason said, "Anything you say."

Her fingers itched to take total control, but she restrained the impulse to whip off his belt, undo his zipper, and pull both pants and underwear down with one major yank. She slowed her hand movements even though blood rushed through her body at urgent speed, making her heart pound with desire.

She managed to unhook his belt and pulled it through the belt loops. Melissa tossed it aside and let her gaze wander up his body until she fixed her eyes on his face. "I'm gonna do the zipper now, but I won't be using my hands."

The devil woman giving his orders sported a saucy grin. No hands meant only one thing. She'd use her teeth. Her mouth would be traveling down the material barely containing his already stiffened shaft and it was more than ready to spring out once unleashed.

Melissa had to unbutton his pants and push the flap to one side with her hands in order to get her mouth near his zipper. He groaned when her teeth brushed against his cock as they sought the zipper pull. Once she had it secured with her teeth, she placed her hands to behind his legs and pulled him closer to her. Then she slowly lowered the zipper. Shoving himself into her face flashed through his head, but she backed away as soon as the zipper was undone.

"Step outta those pants. I'll do the underwear," she ordered.

Jason pushed his pants down and kicked them away from his feet. "Your turn," he practically growled.

Her focus riveted on his shorts and she remarked, "Hmm. Now Dimples. Wherever *did* you get hot dog underwear? Little wieners all around and one half of a huge bun along each flap? Very clever. And inviting."

"Just pull down the damn things. I'm already poking through. Some wanton woman picked these out. Guess she wanted to see what I could put between the bun."

"Should I taste what you have to offer?" Her tongue slipped between her lips and skimmed along them.

"I'd like nothing more, but if you do, I'll never get you undressed. I'll be gone in a second." In the moonlight he could see the fire burning in her eyes, the same one that seared his body.

With a quick pull, she yanked his shorts off and they puddled around his ankles. His cock sprang out at full attention and he watched as her eyes widened.

She purred her approval. "Even better without the bun."

"You need to stand so I can undress you." It was his time to give orders.

Melissa eased off the bed and turned her back toward him. "Zipper, please."

Jason unzipped her and he bundled the material at the hem in his hands and pulled the dress over her head. She turned to face him and in the soft light he saw her sheer bra, some nylon thing that hid nothing. Her nipples poked through the material and begged for his attention.

He got close enough to graze her body with his and put his arms around her back. "I'll undo your bra from here." He released the clasp.

Jason stepped back. The straps of her bra slid down as Melissa wiggled her shoulders. "Do I remove the rest or you?" she said suggestively.

"You. I'm gonna watch."

She grabbed the bra in front and pulled the material away from each breast. They bounced slightly as they were released from their confines.

"Full, ripe. Delicious." He lowered his head first to one nipple then the other, giving a mini tug to each one.

Melissa groaned. In a quick maneuver, Jason sought out her mouth and their tongues met in a frantic dance with their kiss.

"I've gotta get you naked now. I'm gonna pull the rest off together."

He put his hands under the waistband of her slip and pantyhose and pulled down. When he got to her feet, she sat on the edge of the bed and he knelt before her so he could remove the items and tossed them to the side of the bed. "Scoot up on the bed. I'm getting a condom outta my pants pockets." He put his hand on her pussy. "You're as ready as I am. Spread open wide for me."

Jason took a condom from his wallet and quickly rolled it onto his engorged penis before he got onto her bed.

Melissa had her legs spread apart, an eager panting sound coming from her that matched his. "Now. I want all of you inside me now."

She had to have him fuck her hard and fast as her need was so urgent. Foreplay? They'd done enough to have her breathing hard, pussy wet and slick for his entrance. "Oh, now," she begged as the desire to reach orgasm commanded her body.

"Now," he said with a gasp as he plunged deep inside Melissa.

She took his shaft as far in as possible and craved to feel his thrusts. "More. God, more," she moaned as the need to reach orgasm rocketed higher and higher. She bucked her hips to meet his in and out plunges.

Both panted and pushed their bodies together. He lowered his head to her breasts and laved each one as his balls slapped against her skin.

With a loud grunt, Jason climaxed inside her. Melissa gave a series of "Yes, oh yes," to mingle with his groans. Spasms of orgasmic pleasure jerked her body, enhancing her satisfaction.

After a few minutes their breathing returned to a slower pace. He remained inside her and she contracted her cunt muscles to tighten around his cock.

"If you keep that up we may be heading for round two." Jason gave a loud quivering exhalation. "Don't know if I can get it up too soon, though."

"That was wonderful. I can wait."

"Am I too heavy for you? I'm trying to rest on my arms."

Melissa drew his head to hers and kissed him. "Just another minute or two, okay? I love the feel of you inside me."

"And I love being inside you." He traced her lips with his tongue. "Thank you, honey."

When he rolled off her and to the side, Melissa's body shook from a light chill caused by the loss of his body heat. He reached over to circle her areolas and pinched the buds that were still beaded. "They stick out more than others I've seen. And that's a compliment."

"It's a family thing. My mother always made me wear padded bras to hide them. I don't worry about it now." She lowered her hand and grazed a fingernail along his shaft. "Glad you like them. I love having them sucked."

"Jason gave an "ah" sound as she reached his cockhead and feathered nail touches on it. "Love that, honey, but I have to leave." He took her hand and placed it on her stomach. I've got an early morning and I'm hoping to get quarters assigned so I can move in. I've got stuff in storage so maybe I can get settled in this week." He sat up and got off the bed. Melissa did the same. She donned a fuzzy blue robe as he dressed.

### Damn. I forgot the underwear.

She'd have to wait for their next sexual adventure to steal a pair. There would be more. She had plans to keep him interested and aroused for however long they could be together, satisfying each other without those ties that bind.

He'd mentioned quarters, a military term for housing. That had brought back the reality of their relationship – fun, sex and no ties.

As he left her apartment, they made plans to have dinner at her place the next night. Both had to work, so she'd buy Chinese food on her way home and they'd have the evening to play a new game she wanted to try. Something to spark his curiosity, intensify their foreplay.

Tonight they hadn't needed anything to take them straight to sex. Renewing their friendship, taking it to an adult level, having dinner, then the driving passion both had for sexual satisfaction left no doubt there'd be more lovemaking to come. Fast, quick, wonderful. Just what she wanted. And he'd agreed. No commitment in sight.

A sudden skipped heartbeat made her take notice. When he no longer wanted her and moved on, how would she feel then about her rules?

# **Chapter Two**

"So? Is my cousin good in bed? He sure came in happy last night but would only say he couldn't wait to see you again." Gina bombarded Melissa with questions as soon as she entered ETC.

"I had a very good time." She smiled and meandered over to the coffee machine for some eye-opening brew. "I don't think I'll tell too much right now. I'm saving it all for the contest."

"All? As in lots?" Gina asked her question with a chuckle of surprise. "Maybe my cousin wore you out or you did that to him. Poor Jason. Away all that time without a woman, now home adjusting to the craziness of the real world, and you're playing sex goddess, toying with his body."

Melissa glared at her. "Ha, ha. We did just fine." She sipped the steamy coffee and welcomed its descent down her throat. "God, I hope this wakes me up and clears my head."

Nancy marched over to them. "I hope you two did better last night than I did. Allan has a body I wanna play with, but he didn't seem interested in screwing at the airport." She flung herself into the lounge chair in their coffee area.

Gina asked, "You got him to the airport? How'd you manage that?"

Nancy replied, "Told him I wanted to see about a ticket to Bermuda—sorta doing undercover work for our agency." She shrugged. "He believed me."

"And?" Melissa questioned.

"Seems he gets 'nervous' in airports. Doesn't like planes. Can you believe it? We left right after I made a fool of myself at three airline counters." Nancy sank back into her chair.

Gina and Melissa stifled giggles. "Uh-oh. Sounds like you're gonna hafta find another public place to get him interested," Gina stated.

"Well," sniffed Nancy, "he did say he likes going to the movies. Maybe that'll work." She sighed. "I'm not sure you guys picked the right man for me. He said he 'wanted to get to know me' and that's the 'kiss of death' for any raunchy, fast sex I'm looking for. Where will I get stories to tell on Monday?"

Gina laughed. "Sweetie, maybe he needs to make sure you're ready for him. Wiggle your tail and grab his crotch or something." She shrugged. "Crap. Who am I to give you advice?"

Melissa eyed her friend. "Didn't things go well for you last night?"

"You know, being with a younger man got my juices going. If he'd asked to take me in the backseat of his car, I'd have gone for it." She frowned. "But all he did was act like a complete gentleman all night. Opened doors for me, gave me compliments, held my hand. You know. Like we were inexperienced teens on a first date or something."

Melissa eyed her two friends. "Good Lord. Don't tell me I'm the only one who had sex last night? Me? With Dimples? And you two got treated like queens from men wanting to get to know you better?"

"So," Nancy drawled, "tell us about it. So far, you've got the advantage in this contest. Where's the underwear?"

"Oh." Melissa leaned back against the coffee counter. "He put them back on. I completely forgot about grabbing and hiding them so he couldn't find them. But that would have been kinda suspicious on our first night together, don'tcha think? Hmm. Maybe I should –

"Stop!" both Nancy and Gina ordered in unison.

"Shit. You talk yourself in and out of everything. Stop analyzing. Just go with what feels right," Nancy suggested.

"I think she did and my cousin 'felt' right," Gina offered in a kidding tone.

A few minutes of silence permeated the room as all apparently scrutinized their first encounters for the contest. Finally, Melissa spoke.

"What's on the agenda for today? Got hot dates again?"

Nancy replied, "We're going for pizza and a movie. Maybe I can get him to sit in the back with me and do some crotch rubs to gain his interest." She paused for a moment and continued, "He said to pick what I wanted to see, so if I pick some lousy movie with few people in the theater, we'll practically have the place to ourselves." She gave the others a smug smile.

"Ah, that's our Nance. Always planning and on the prowl," Gina jokingly declared.

"And you're not?" Melissa asked.

"Sure. We all are." She shrugged. "I guess we're going to a soccer game Adam's coaching, then joining the team for ice cream. Maybe I can suggest we bring ours to my house and add some brandy to it. Hmm. Maybe he'd be intrigued by trying something new."

"Sounds like you both have great plans going." Melissa stretched and yawned. "We're having Chinese at my place and -"

She stopped there. Both friends gave her their full attention.

"And?" asked Gina. "What do you have planned for Dimples?"

"Nothing much. Some wine and we'll play a game I've chosen if he agrees."

"Huh? What game?" both friends questioned, but Melissa just smiled and walked back to her desk.

"Nice place. I didn't get much of a chance to see it last night after you jumped me. Have you been here long?" Jason asked. "I believe we jumped each other and no," Melissa answered from the bar area where she prepared two rum and cokes. "I moved here six months ago after dumping a loser boyfriend."

"Ouch. You dumped him too? I remember you dumping me."

"Yes, but I was thirteen and you played the tuba. I had good reason to dump you then and more than enough reasons to dump Mac."

Jason laughed. "You said I was too short for you."

"Well, you're definitely not too short for me now. And please tell me you don't have a tuba hidden in your pocket. I don't think I'm up for serenading."

"You're scrutinizing my pockets and you know it's not a tuba I'm hiding. And nothing about me is short as you found out yesterday," he drawled.

That statement had Melissa focusing in on his crotch area and doing calculations in her head as to the bulge size she'd sampled the night before. Shit. She wanted to follow her plan although all the voices screaming in her head yelled "screw him now".

Instead of letting her libido take over, she opted to go with her plan for the evening and offered, "Not a tuba but impressive." She walked over to him and handed him a drink.

"Thanks, Chinese food smells great. Need help getting it ready?"

"Nah. Just relax on the couch and I'll bring our dishes over," she answered.

Melissa entered the room a few minutes later with plates laden with food. "I gave you a little of everything."

"Just like I got a little of everything about you yesterday."

She rolled her eyes upward. "You turn everything into some sexual innuendo. Is that all you think about?" she asked between mouthfuls of food.

"Not all the time. Only most of the time around you. Or like today, when I was at work. Your beautiful body keeps rampaging through my brain." He shoveled food into his mouth. "This stuff's great. After we eat, do I get you for dessert?"

"Back down, Captain. Tell me about your housing. Did you get quarters?"

"Hmm. Glad to see you don't hate everything about the military since you're using military lingo." He picked up an egg roll and chomped into it.

She shrugged. "Can't help it. That stuff's imprinted into my brain. But like I said, I've had my fill of military life."

Coolness hung between them as they ate in silence for a few minutes.

"You asked about housing. Yep. Got my place and the stuff here in storage will be delivered tomorrow. I paid extra to have it done fast. Wanted to get settled so I can get you over to my place and ravage you there."

Melissa was happy to see the light bantering return between them. "How did you just happen to have stuff here? You weren't working in the area before, were you?"

"No. But I knew I'd be assigned here after Iraq, so I had everything shipped to a storage facility in Alexandria. Also had stuff stored at home and it'll arrive Wednesday."

"I'm impressed, Captain Dimples. Not everyone can plan that far ahead. And no. I haven't figured out why you're called that so when will you tell me?"

"I'd have to be naked to explain that."

"Uh-huh. Nice clue. Now I'm wondering what I missed in the moonlight last night."

"Let's clean up and maybe I'll show you. If you're *nice* to me, that is," he said with a leer.

Before Melissa could respond, he got up and carried his dish and hers to the kitchen. She brought their empty glasses and put them in the sink.

"Haven't I been nice to you?"

Melissa wrapped her arms around his neck and drew his head closer for a tantalizing kiss. A rush of heat soared through her body and urged her to move her hands lower to caress his arousal as it stretched the fabric of his slacks.

Jason released her and stepped back as he panted to match her own rushed breathing. The air separating them cooled, causing her to shiver.

He ran a hand through his hair. "After last night, the only thing I can think of is how I want to make love to you right now, this very minute." He reached out and stroked her cheek. "You're a beautiful, sexy woman and I want you again. But I don't want you to think I only want to eat with you and fuck. Although we do that so well together."

Melissa gulped. She craved his arms around her, his lips on hers, his cock inside her once again, pulsing furiously until they were both satiated. But he'd stepped back.

She smiled and grasped his hand that touched her face. Turning it, she planted a light kiss on his palm. "We need to get to know each other a little better. Maybe a different type of foreplay – and not so rushed like last night – would make things more interesting."

"Uh, what do you suggest? Watch a movie or something while we have another drink? Look at family photo albums you have so I can see how you've grown over the years? Hey. Now that's a thought. I could see pictures of you from middle school." Jason surveyed the room.

She shook her head. "No television. And no albums until you have yours. I want to see you as that high school tuba player. In your band uniform."

"I doubt I kept any of those pictures. Sorry." He gave an insincere grin.

"Not to worry. I'm sure your mother has some and I'll persuade Gina to get them." She flashed back a look to match his.

"Troublemaker. Fine. What'll we do if no TV or albums?"

How about a game?"

Surprised registered on his face. "You mean like Monopoly? Scrabble?"

"A card game." Hoping to entice him with a seductive tone added to her answer, she spoke softly. "Let's play strip poker."

Jason let out a series of laughs. "Man. Here I'm thinking you wanna play some sedate game so we could talk more about ourselves." He bundled her in his arms and gave her a soft kiss. "You're just full of surprises."

"So you'll play?" she taunted.

"Hell yes. I'm a great poker player."

Melissa moved out of his reach and raised her eyebrows. "Maybe I'm a good player and you'll lose your shirt. And everything else."

"Bring on the cards." He clapped his hands and rubbed them together. "I'm willing if you're willing."

She decided to add some ambiance to their game. "While I get the cards, please start a fire in the fireplace. We'll turn off the lights and play on the rug. I'm opening up a bottle of wine." She hugged her arms around herself and lifted her shoulders. "I love warming myself by the fire."

Jason couldn't believe his luck. Not only had he made it out alive from his missions in the Middle East, but here was his first crush, the woman he'd never really gotten over losing, ready and willing to shed clothes—again—leading toward another fucking session.

He watched as she sashayed out of the room in a tightly-fitted dress that emphasized every well-placed curve she possessed. Jason couldn't help smiling, amazed at his good fortune in returning to the area he'd dreaded since moving after his eighth grade misery. She'd dumped him once, crushing his then budding masculine ego by calling him short. He knew that hadn't been the only reason. That damn tuba fixation he'd had drove her away. And her wanting Billy Walker, his best friend, had been well-known.

Melissa was a beautiful woman and he craved to possess every inch of her again. Explore her body, every luscious curve, with gentle, caressing touches. Maybe she'd tire of him soon and they'd drift apart. Maybe she'd want to elevate their relationship to a different level once she got to know him.

He ended that train of thought really quickly as if someone smacked him across his head. What the hell was he thinking? Camille and her betrayal had set the standards for how not to expect honesty, loyalty, and that happily-ever-after commitment he'd wanted.

Melissa set the rules for their being together. At least she'd been honest about her intentions upfront although a tiny spot in his heart had hoped for more. But he'd adhere to her wishes. Just living for the moment was all she wanted, and he'd agreed.

There'd be no heartache, hopes and dreams dashed by trusting someone to be there for him the next time he called and found out he'd been wrong.

He shook those thoughts from his head and lit the wood-stacked fireplace. Flames shot out and licked the edges of wood that would eventually be consumed and provide them with heat and mesmerizing flame dances. He wanted to warm her body, and have Melissa reciprocate the action. Running his tongue over every inch of her body sounded like an excellent plan too.

She entered the room with a deck of cards, a bottle of wine, two glasses and turned off the lights. "For starters, shoes off. That'll be one less thing to remove. Hope you don't mind using these cards. They're all I could find." They removed their shoes. Melissa poured the wine into their glasses and handed them to him. "Put these on the fireplace step." Then she threw some pillows on the floor and sat down after handing him the deck. He sat across from her.

"Where did you get Hawaiian cards? Been there on a vacation?"

"No. But I hope to someday soon." A mixture of guilt and determination warred in her head. Use him to win the contest. Forge ahead and consider their time together as another love affair episode in her life as she sunned herself on the beaches of Hawaii. Would there be regrets?

With a charming smile, he handed her a glass of cabernet and clinked his glass to hers. "Drink up. Here's to a mighty interesting night." They chugged the liquid and set down their glasses. Jason shuffled the cards. "Since it's your house, you set the rules."

A sense of panic took over and Melissa found her heart racing as she fought to remember what little she could about the game. "Uh, five cards. Nothing wild. Loser takes off one article of clothing winner picks. No doubling."

Even in the flickering light she could detect a mystified stare masking his face.

"I'm okay with the first three but I'm not familiar with any doubling in poker. Is it some form of poker you've played before? Or are you thinking of bridge?"

Her cheeks burned and not from the heat of the fire. A bit flustered, she apologized. "Oh, sure. Sorry. I watched my parents play bridge all the time. Guess I confused the two."

*Great start. Say something else stupid.* She watched as he dealt and positioned herself on the pillows into what she hoped would be a distracting pose. She needed something to turn his attention away from cards and her upcoming exposure as poker-rules challenged. Since her dress clung to her body, Melissa slowly inched the hem up her thighs to allow more of her legs to show.

There was no denying the naughty leer he aimed in her direction, one even the shadows of wavering firelight couldn't hide. The soft crackle sound of the wood splintering in the heat and the light smoky smell it created charged the air between them.

### Strip Poker for Two

Melissa shivered in wicked anticipation. Body heated and yearning for another erotic romp, she returned his tempting gaze as she detected the light fragrance of his aftershave starting to mingle with the burning wood scent.

"How many cards do you want?" A seductive quality shaded his tone.

Jason's question stopped her heartbeat for a second. Cards. How did this game go again? "Oh. Give me a minute. I'm counting my points."

He arched one eyebrow. "Something tells me you know more about bridge than poker." A devilish smile appeared on his face. "You said poker so I'm holding you to it. I should have you naked in four hands, depending on just how many clothes you have on. I'm guessing four."

Her heartbeat sped, and a quick mental check had her agreeing with the number four. Dress, bra, half-slip, pantyhose.

She reached down and readjusted her body on the pillows while tugging her hem upward again. "I guess I'm mixing up the two games because it's hard to concentrate on poker while I imagine you losing every hand before I have to take anything off."

With deliberate slowness, she let her eyes meander a path along his body. "Yep, four's my number. I'm thinking you have on four things, too besides your socks so make the count even. Take them off. Shouldn't take you long to lose and I get to watch firelight flicker all over you, just for my viewing pleasure." She leaned in closer to him. "Maybe I'll have you pose for me and take pictures."

"Honey," he drawled, "only if I get to do the same. Then with the poses I have in mind for you to do, I'll have some lewd but tempting pictures for my album."

Melissa stretched back on the pillows. "I think we'll keep the picture taking for another time. Posing sexily for each other might require new rules being added to our game and I need to think about it some more."

"Figure out a 'strip and pose' version. I'll have to find my damn camera."

After discarding his socks, Jason cleared his throat and repeated, "How many cards?"

She studied her cards and tried to recall how the hands ranked. Aces were good to keep, right? Two of a kind had to be important. "I'll take three."

He gave her three cards and took two for himself. "Satisfy my curiosity. Tell me what happened with Billy Wagner. You broke up our friendship, you know. I figured he'd stole you from me and never forgave him."

"I-I broke up with him right after you moved away. And you're trying to distract me." She shook a finger at him and glared.

"Not me," he countered with a laugh. "You said we'd talk and get to know each other better while playing. I'm just trying to make conversation. Besides, you've been distracting me with your short dress and long, beautiful legs."

"I want more cards." Melissa eased one leg up and down against the other in a slight rubbing motion.

"Christ. Keep that up and I'll forget everything including my name. But that's what you want, right? You're out to keep me from concentrating and winning. You don't get more cards. Lay down your hand." He sounded like a man on the verge of desperation.

"Before I do, tell me how many girls you played tuba songs to in high school."

Jason bellowed with laughter. "You sure know how to cool off the moment, don't you? The word tuba always bring me back to the reality of how obsessed I was with that stupid thing and thought girls would love my dedicated charm in performing for them."

With a wink Melissa said, "Maybe they wanted you to perform some other way – minus the tuba."

"Many women have enjoyed my performances without a tuba present." He wiggled his eyebrows and leered at her. "Okay, lady-who-doesn't-really-know-how-to-play this game. Show me your hand and be ready to show me more than that."

Melissa laid down her cards. "I have three aces. Is that good?"

Jason's jaw dropped before he mumbled, "Shit. You beat my two jacks."

"So take off your pants."

He frowned and seemed a bit baffled as he stood, probably still trying to figure out how she'd beaten him. As if making sure she watched his every movement, he slowly unbuckled his belt and slipped it through the loops. Melissa's eyes riveted on his zipper as he leisurely slid it down.

Melissa couldn't stop her tongue from passing through her lips and gliding along them. Anticipation heightened every nerve fiber in her body. Her gaze strayed to his face.

"Enjoying the spoils of your victory?" Jason inquired as his eyes locked with hers.

"How about I help you out of them?"

"Oh, no. Your rules. No touching. Just watch."

Melissa hunched forward from her half-laying pose on the pillows for a better view. "I didn't say no touching."

"Well," he explained as he pushed his pants down, "you figured we needed to get to know each other better and I agreed." His pants puddled around his ankles. "Touching each other would rush things. So just use your eyes." The next sentence was announced in a tempting whisper. "But don't touch."

She focused on his boxers, one of the ones she'd picked out for him. Cute little devils with pitchforks pointed to the flap opening barely containing his cock's delectable girth.

"Nice underwear. You have good taste."

He bent over and picked up his pants. "Nope, not me. I have an excellent dresser. How about another glass of wine?" "Sure. Are you ready for a second hand? I deal this time." She batted her eyelashes. "Get ready to lose your devils."

Jason sat down and tried to keep his boxers from gaping open. Melissa giggled at his attempts to position his body so his penis wouldn't poke through. He grabbed a small pillow and plopped it into his lap to hide his crotch.

"No fair." Melissa shook her head. "Move the pillow." She scooted her body and the pillows behind her closer to him.

"Pretty soon I'll be pointing straight at you and that'll leave nothing to the imagination." He leaned forward and caressed her cheek.

"Sit back, my almost naked friend. I'm dealing. Pointing at me is something I don't wanna miss so no covering up." Her body tingled in anticipation and she felt a moistness wetting her pantyhose.

He shrugged in resignation and picked up his cards without trying to hide his cock. Its tip poked through his underwear, right between two large red devil pitchforks.

Even in the dim light given off by the fire, Melissa could see the glisten of pre-cum on his cockhead. Her breathing sped up and her nipples tightened. Her mouth watered as her eagerness to surround what the pitchforks bordered consumed her thoughts.

"I'll take one card." Jason reached down and tugged at one side of the flap opening. "Stop looking like I'm dessert and tell me about your sex life in college. I think we've covered high school."

Melissa pulled her gaze from his boxers to his face, hoping he'd see the desire screaming through her body. "One card for you and three for me." She rubbed a hand along her hip and inched the hem of her dress up more than mid-thigh.

"I was a slow learner. A prude really. Had all those childhood 'Fire and Brimstone' warnings about the sins of sex flashing into my head. I avoided sex, except for some heavy petting. Until Greg."

"Oh? What was special about him?" Jason glanced from his cards to her face, and then riveted his attention on Melissa's ever-creeping hemline.

"He showed me how vibrators could help. I was hooked after the first time. We did each other. Not real screwing as far as I was concerned. He seemed fixated on using them and not actually fucking me. So we just helped each other along using toys. Loved the damn things then and still do."

"I never had a need for toys. Always found a willing partner. I was wild and crazed in college, but settled down once I went into the Army. More selective and careful." He laid his cards down. "Flush."

Melissa stared at his cards and put hers down. "Three queens. I win. Take off the boxers."

"Whoa. Not so fast, Miss Toy Lover. My hand beats yours. Take off your dress."

Warmth from the fire or a blush made her cheeks burn. "Are you sure? I thought three things were good."

"They are, but a flush is better in poker. "The dress." His eyes blazed with lust.

Melissa stood up and began unzipping her dress. "I know we said no touching, but I need your help with the zipper. I think it's stuck."

Jason got to his feet and his hot hands seared her skin as he touched her. "Yep. Stuck halfway down. Give me a minute." He loosened it and zipped it down, allowing one hand to continue its trek to her backside where he stroked both cheeks as his other arm circled her waist. "You feel good."

"So do your hands."

"Do we finish the game?" He wrapped both arms around her and pulled her tightly against his crotch.

Melissa weighed the options. She could go with the moment drawing them so close to having sex now, or play out her plan. The need to have him caress every inch of her, worship her body and allow her to do the same to him overwhelmed her control.

She turned in his arms and reached up to draw his face toward hers. Their kiss started out as a tender one at first, but soon exploded into a battle of tongues dancing for possession. Hands roamed each body, and Jason helped her slide her dress down.

Melissa stepped back and out of her dress. Both panted in unison. "Uh, maybe we could advance to some touching. Along with the game, I mean."

Passion flashed in his eyes and with a sigh of resignation, he accepted her terms. "Your plan is to drive me wild, right?" He nodded his head. "Okay. I'm game. I've kept myself in control for so long, taking things slowly won't be easy. It'll be one hell of a foreplay adventure, though."

She glided her index finger along the waistband of his boxers. His sharp intake of breath gave her the powerful in-charge feeling she wanted. "See? You can handle even a tiny finger touch. And I'm not even close to anything vitally interesting."

"Oh, really? I'd say you're pretty damn close to my ready and willing cock but I'll manage." He lifted a finger and ran over the top edge of her bra lightly grazing her skin. "Does this do anything for you?"

Heat rushed through her veins and nerve endings did cartwheels throughout her body. Her nipples tightened as she craved to have his mouth caress and suck each one. "Very nice. I'd say you know your way around ladies underwear."

With a tease in his voice, Jason answered, "Love ladies undies. Especially taking them off to unveil what lies beneath." He drew his finger down along the material. "Ready for our next hand? I'm anxious to unleash these beauties and maybe touch a little closer to my goal."

Every she-cat fiber in her body stood at attention as Melissa debated whether to lose the next round on purpose so she could feel his hands on her again, or, win the hand and have him lose his shorts. Then she could run a finger down from his navel, head along his thighs, encircle his hard-on— A shudder rampaged through her. Touching him sounded like the best option.

Melissa took his hand and moved it away from her body. "Dimples, use those wonderful fingers to deal. I'm ready to win your boxers."

"Sit closer to me. I want to be able to reach out and give you a rub—here and there." Jason cocked his head toward the pillows on the floor. Both got down and scooted within arm's length of each other. She could reach out and touch him, but more importantly, he'd be able to stretch his arm and let his fingers do a little dancing on her full breasts.

Distracting Melissa was his goal. Having her glide a finger along his boxers' opening while not really touching his ever-growing cock would require tons of self-control, but he'd struggle to do it. The agony of anticipation would lead to the sweet release of satisfaction. He'd do it and make that bra disappear before she could think straight about her card hand.

Jason dealt while Melissa let a finger run up and down the inside of his legs. She'd been careful not to let any part of her hand get too near his balls or penis. Every card dealt flew from his fingers as shaky hands and a quickened heartbeat screwed with his control.

"Take your damn cards and use both hands," he managed to squeal.

She picked up her cards and studied them as if deeply contemplating their significance. She hiked her half-slip, almost up to the crotch area. "I think I'll keep all of these." A wanton smile spread across her face.

Jason shuffled his cards around and held them in one hand. "I'm not sure how many I want yet."

He reached out with the other hand and began the tender finger strolling he'd done before on her breasts. This time, however, he let his finger circle the material covering the areolas of both breasts making sure he avoided touching her nipples.

"Now, do I need one," he made a circle around one areola, "or two?" He circled the other.

Delight streamed through him as he watched Melissa's eyes close. She sighed with need as her breasts swelled inside the flimsy bra trying desperately to contain them. He heard her audible intake and outtake of air, knowing a yearning for him to really touch her controlled her breathing.

"Hurry and pick, almost shorts-less guy. I'm in a hurry here," she managed to say with a hint of desperation.

Jason grabbed his cards with two hands and discarded two of them. "I think I'll take two," he said with a wink.

Melissa's mouth went dry. Her brain cavorted in all directions. That body she yearned for like a crazed, sex-starved nymphomaniac was within inches of her wandering hands, fingers, and mouth. Her heart beat like a drum inside her chest.

*The contest.* If she allowed things to happen too fast, would he get bored?

There was no doubt Jason turned her world upside down, made her horny, brought out the sex cravings and fantasy desires she knew dwelled deep inside her. Would he move on and dump her in the end? Her experience with Mac had wounded her ego. He'd gotten bored with her – so he'd told her – and she wasn't able to hold onto him.

What about Jason? If she let her heart lead the way and managed to keep him interested for a week, what guarantee did she have that he'd still want her? Did she want him to?

The Army. He was into that military life she never wanted to be part of again.

Men couldn't be trusted with her heart. The fragile pieces had been locked away in the back of her mind, not to be toyed with. Jason had been without a woman, by his own account, for some time. She could just be that convenient body in the right place at the right time for him.

The contest. Hawaii. Soaking up the rays and not dealing with relationships. While Melissa repeatedly ran those sentences through her head, a smidgen of remorse at using him and wondering about his eventual feelings for her tagged along to crowd her thoughts.

She gave her head a mental shake and decided to go with the contest and see how long Captain Jason would last.

"Before we continue, we need another glass of wine. I'm feeling all warm and cozy by the fire. How about you?" She placed her cards in her bra, turned her back to him, got on her knees and grabbed the bottle. She made sure her rear end jutted out close to his face and hoped he would feel the urge to run his fingers anywhere within reach. "Ready for another drink? Want something stronger?"

Clearing his throat, he said with a rasp, "Wine's fine. Nice rear end. I'm sitting on my hands so I don't grab you and pull you onto my lap."

She laughed. "Sounds exciting. Maybe I'll sit on your hands sometime. I wonder what you'd do?"

"Everything you'd let me," he answered quickly.

"Is it getting warm in here?" It wasn't the warmth from the fire scorching her body.

"Want me to close the glass panels?"

She poured cabernet into their glasses and handed him one before settling on the pillows again. "No. Leave them open. When you lose your boxers you might be cold. Wouldn't want you to tell Gina I didn't take care of you." She gulped down two large swallows of wine.

"As a matter of fact, Gina said you'd take *very* good care of me." He matched her two mouthfuls of wine. "I'm counting on that."

Had Gina mentioned the contest? Panic hit her for an instant until she realized her friend wouldn't betray her trust.

With a cocky grin on his face, Jason ordered, "Time to lay down our cards. Ladies first."

Full of self-assurance, Melissa placed her cards on the carpet one by one. "I have a flush. Let's see you beat that, Army guy." She added what she hoped translated into a brash smile on her face. After lifting her glass in a salute to him, she chugged down the rest of her drink.

Before he could respond, she refilled her glass. Feeling a little woozy, Melissa was glad she didn't have far to go to reach her bed. Without turning around she asked, "Want more wine before losing your devils?"

"Well, sweetheart, I'd love another glass. Just finished mine to match your drinking pace." Glass in hand, he leaned over to her as she turned to pour more red liquid for him.

Smug with confidence, she tried to peer at his cards. "I can't see your hand."

"You might want to chug your drink before you take off that bra." He carefully fell back to the pillows without dropping any wine from his glass. "I have four jacks. Strip away, darlin'."

Her ripe full lips parted into an "O" position. Bewilderment flitted across her face before she did as he'd suggested and drained her glass. He reached out to her and traced a finger over the lace ribbon at the top of her bra.

"Need help undoing it?"

A dribble of wine pooled in the corner of her mouth and Jason couldn't stop from moving close to her face and capturing the drip with his tongue. He then gave her a quick kiss. "You didn't answer my question." Jason wiggled his fingers in front of her face. "I'm pretty good with my hands."

A Cheshire cat grin greeted his question. "Aren't you army types supposed to help?" She stood and turned her back to him.

Jason rose and placed his hand on the sides of her body. He then ran them to the bra clasp in the middle of her back. He undid it and waited for her response.

Melissa held the bra in place and turned to face him. "Don't stop now. Take it off me. Remember, touching is allowed, but only close touching."

When had his hands started shaking? He reached for the straps and drew them down her arms. She wiggled her shoulders so the cups barely held in place before Melissa put her arms at her sides. With deft fingers under each plump globe, he pulled down the material until her breasts were released and swayed slightly as he held the silky bra in his hand.

"Beautiful. Full. Round. Sucking on them comes to mind. May I?"

Melissa's heart skipped a beat. Having him take her breasts into his mouth would be pure heaven, but this was a game of anticipation—although she wasn't sure how

much longer she could continue without having him ram his cock into her. "Touch with fingers only. Those are the rules – for now."

Jason ran his fingers over the milky globes jutted out to meet his hands. He cupped their fullness and traced his thumbs along her skin. Her protruding nipples hardened and stood out in wanton need, but he avoided even a faint flicker of a touch and circled them carefully without actually grazing them. "God, I want to suck on them forever." His eyes widened and glazed over. "And I will. Soon."

She closed her eyes, reveling in his soft caresses. Foreplay was wonderful, but this version had her horny like an animal in heat. "We-we need to play another hand. And this time I'll win. Then I get to play 'circle the wagons', so to speak."

Jason drew her into a bear hug and the fuzzy threads of his sweater tickled her sensitive skin. "Your turn to deal. And no cheating. I'm getting kinda fond of these devils circling my wagon."

They stepped away from each other and sank to the pillows. Melissa's breasts swayed as she moved and she watched him rivet his attention on them. Moving her glance down to his shorts—he no longer tried to cover his erection—she eyed the enormous head sticking out between the boxers' opening. That cock would fill her, pump in and out of her, and bring her to a glorious orgasm again. *Soon* a voice shouted in her head. She'd have that delicious shaft one way or another soon.

"More wine? I can't have more since I need to drive back to Gina's apartment and I have my stuff being delivered early in the morning. But you can finish the bottle. I'll make sure you get tucked in before I leave." He winked. "After I get you naked and finish our touching game, of course."

Her head swirled with rosy images of him caressing her without actually fondling her nipples or cunt. The wine had her mellowing and the warmth of the fire relaxed all her muscles.

"Sure," she agreed. "Fill my glass. And you're right. You shouldn't have more. I'm gonna have it even if I go into work with a happy buzz." He refilled her glass. "Do you want coffee?" Her head told her that was the right thing to say but she was sure her body would confront difficulty maneuvering to the kitchen.

She smiled to herself then guzzled the remnants of her glass. She'd tried being nude in the kitchen before and panicked after a few minutes. If she made it to the kitchen tonight, nothing would stop her from parading partially naked and feeling good about her body and its ability to give and receive pleasure.

"No coffee. Deal." Jason's order broke through her brain ramblings. She shuffled the cards as he reached out and held his hands under each breast. "I love more than a mouthful."

Melissa dealt the cards, flinging them as he continued to rub the underside of each breast. "Pick up your cards. With *both* hands. I need to concentrate."

### Strip Poker for Two

He grabbed his cards and began moving them in place. She couldn't resist a momentary urge to break his concentration so Melissa used one hand to grab one flap opening of his boxers and tugged it aside. More of his shaft sprang forward.

"Enjoying the view?" he groaned.

She heard the breathless way he asked his question and never stopped her fingers from running down the pulled-over side of the silky material of his shorts.

"I love a mouthful, too." She licked her lips.

"Two cards. Play the damn game before I jump you."

The numbers started to blur on her cards. Did she have threes? Eights? Fives? Sixes? She had to win so Melissa pushed the cards closer to her face. "I'll take two."

He gave her cards and then laid his on the rug. "Three tens. Can you beat that?"

Focusing became a definite problem. "Uh, I have three eights." She put her cards down. She lost again?

"Sweetie, you have four eights not three. You win."

She bent forward to take a get a better view of her cards. Those three eights had actually morphed into four. Melissa looked up. "Devils be gone. But I wanna help."

They stood and he gave her a deep kiss. When it ended, Melissa sank to her knees.

"Honey? Feeling dizzy or taking this to another level?"

Melissa smiled up at him from her kneeling position. "I'm fine, Captain Dimples. I'm gonna remove your devils from here." She ran her hands up his legs to his upper thighs then returned them to her sides. "But I'm not gonna use my hands."

# **Chapter Three**

Jason's legs almost buckled under him. Her face stood inches from his engorged cock and he wanted nothing more than for her to take him into her mouth. He inhaled deeply, not knowing what to expect but ready, willing, to accept whatever this woman wanted to do to him.

Melissa eased her face up his boxers along his hip, then grabbed the waistband with her teeth and started pulling them down. She moved her head back and forth from one side of his body to the other, easing the shorts in a careful descent while making sure to stick to their "touching" bargain. Finally his devil boxers hit the rug around his ankles and she stood.

"My. Aren't we standing at attention. Learn that in the Army?" She waved her hand toward his erect penis.

"Nope. That's something that comes naturally. And with some incentive—and gives rewards to nice girls."

Jason stretched out his hand to help her up. Melissa stood, wobbly at first but gained her footing, and a few silent moments of stares and panting crossed between them.

He turned his back to her and strolled toward the fireplace and pillows. "We're gonna finish this game with the next hand. Winner gets to remove the loser's two things. Any objections?"

Melissa's eyes widened as she homed in and tried to focus on the man's rear through shadows cast by firelight. "Uh, sure. We'll do it your way. Hmm. Why Captain Jason. I think I just figured out where 'Dimples' came from."

He swiveled his head back to glance at her and gave her a devilish grin. Jason stretched and put his hands on his hips. "Yep. My secret's out. Now you know."

Walking closer to him, she feathered light touches along his butt cheeks to dip into each dimple. "One on each side. A matched pair. You've got an interesting front and rear. What more could I ask for?"

Jason lowered his body to the pillows. "Sit, lady. I'm glad you like my dimples but the front's center stage for all *important* activities. I'm dealing. *Now*." He quickly gave each of them five cards.

As she lowered herself opposite him, Melissa made up her mind to lose the hand. Time to get completely naked. She picked up her cards and said, "I'll take four."

He gave her a questioning look. "You wouldn't be trying to lose on purpose, would you? Not that I'd mind, but I said no cheating."

She hiked the slip up to her waist. "No. None of my cards match anything so I want four. And I'm getting hot in all these things, anyway."

Melissa reclined on the pillows, elongating her body along the softness of the material. His eyes raked her body from head to toe. "Will you spread out like that for me after you lose and take it all off? I want to see you in the light from the fire. Maybe turn on all the damn lights so I don't miss anything." He took a quick glance at his cards after giving her four more. "I'm taking one."

"Dimples," she purred, "I'll spread for you if you win." She ran a hand along her leg. "Tell me why that nickname stuck? Surely you hated it as a kid."

He stared at her hand, mesmerized by its movement. "Huh? My nickname? Hell, as a kid they told me it was about my face dimples. I was too trusting and believed them."

Melissa leaned over and placed her five cards on the rug. "I don't seem to have anything. Do I lose?"

Jason raised an eyebrow. "With a hand like that, hell yes. I have two kings." He rose and reached for her. "Are we done talking about my dimples? Something else you want to know before I strip you?"

She remained on the pillows, but bent her body and took off her half-slip. "That's pinching me. But I'll let you do the rest." They both stood. Melissa inhaled deeply and met his look of urgency as they made eye contact. "So are you still so trusting, Captain Dimples?"

"No." His face took on a hardened, serious countenance. "I got screwed by someone I trusted, a fiancée I was loyal to. I had it all figured out. We'd have a wonderful life together but never knew she'd been sleeping with an old buddy of mine behind my back. Married him after I'd been in Iraq three months. No honesty from her. Just lies. Played me for a fool." Softness and desire returned in his demeanor and speech. "And you're trying to distract me from my task."

Jason's fingers started at her ribs and worked their way up to trace circles around her nipples. They then traveled down her abdomen and to her sides near her waistband. "While I strip you, let's see if you can think straight. Is trust important to Miss Melissa Foster? Do you trust me to play by your rules?"

She closed her eyes as strong fingers slid under her waistband and started pulling her pantyhose down her body in slow, agonizing steps. A quiver of anticipation raced through her body. "I-uh-I'm sure you will. I trust you," she managed to barely breathe out above a whisper.

But I'm using you. For this damn contest.

His voice cut into her thoughts and she opened her eyes. "You're beautiful. Turn toward the fire so I can see you."

She tried to move, but stumbled into his arms. His penis rubbed against her pussy and she had all to do not to spread her legs, reach down, and help him find the slick spot ready to take him in again.

Her knees buckled and Melissa's vision became blurred. In an instant, she found herself lifted into his strong arms and held tightly against his body.

"As much as I'd like to continue our game, you need to be tucked into bed."

Melissa's heart raced. Bed. *Ask Him.* "Wanna join me?" She traced a finger along his lips and he opened his mouth to take it inside. He sucked gently on her finger before she removed it.

"In every possibly way. But you made the rules for tonight. Do you wanna break them?"

He strolled into her bedroom and gently placed her on the bed. "You didn't answer me." Fire blazed a path along her cheek as he touched her. "I'll accept your decision, although I want nothing else than to feel myself inside you again, giving you pleasure."

To hell with the contest. To hell with the game. To hell with rules. "You still have clothes on. I want to feel all of you when you plunge inside me."

He laughed and quickly tore off his sweater and undershirt. Jason stood naked before her as she scooted up on the covers. "Pull down the bedspread while I go get protection outta my wallet."

She sat up and ran her hands down to her pussy. "I'm ready for you. Does the Army train you to prepare for *anything* that might happen?"

A whoosh of air escaped his lungs with an audible sound. "Yes, ma'am. Stay right there. Get real comfortable but save me a place."

Melissa stuck one finger into her pussy. "Oh, your place is saved."

Jason practically scrambled from the room. Melissa quickly pulled off the bedspread and got on top of the sheets. Satin ones had always made her feel sexy. Smooth, slick, slippery. Her flowing juices spreading on them would make things even more interesting.

She jumped up before he returned and opened the drapes. She wanted the same setting as the night before, although clouds hid some of the light she'd hoped would filter into her room.

Jason came back, condom in hand. They both slid onto the satiny sheets.

Grabbing the condom, Melissa said, "Let me do that. I can be very helpful."

"Baby, if you do it, I'll be gone in a second. Just lie back and spread those gorgeous legs like you did yesterday. We've had enough foreplay, your style. Now it's time to fuck like there's no tomorrow."

He took back the condom and rolled it on. Melissa watched with exaggerated interest and then reclined on her back. She spread her legs, eager to have sex. "Come inside me again," she begged.

Jason straddled her and she lifted her hips. He pushed her legs further apart and plunged deep inside, his balls slapping against her.

"God, you feel so good. I've thought about this all night. That was one hell of a foreplay game you devised." He began thrusting in and out.

Melissa raised her hips and met his movements with urgent ones of her own. "Oh, God, more. I want more. Don't stop," she moaned as friction stroked her clit and elevated her into a frenzy to reach that over-the-edge-goal of blissful sexual satisfaction.

Panting, Jason answered, "Hell, no."

With three more thrusts, they climaxed together. Bodies shook, quivered, released pent-up sexual desire and need that had built throughout their night of teasing.

After a few brief kisses, he rolled off her body and onto his side. He took in some deep breaths. "I'd love to stay and do this a thousand more times, but it's getting late."

Mind-blowing sex. That's all she could come up with to describe their repeated coupling. The night of teasing, building up anticipation, then actual lovemaking—

### *He's leaving?*

"Oh. I-uh-I'll make you some coffee. No. You didn't want any before." She got up on her elbows and peered over his body to her alarm clock. "Maybe you want some now? It won't take long and I-"

"Jason put a finger to her lips. "No coffee. Feasting on you would push itself back into my head and I'd never leave." He bent his head and sucked on one nipple then the other. "See what I mean? If I don't leave now, I'll be here all night. There's so much more of you to touch and taste." He moved his face nearer hers and ran his tongue over her lips and darted it into her mouth. "And I'm gonna do it all. Slowly. Everyday you'll see me."

He rose from the bed and picked up his sweater and undershirt. Melissa got up and put on a short pink lacy robe – one that hid nothing and barely covered her rear.

"Touching and tasting sounds great to me. I kinda like the strip poker thing. Maybe we can do that again, but next time add tasting for the winner."

He laughed and they both caught sight of his cock regaining strength and growing larger as it stiffened. "I've got to get my devils and pants back on—if I can get everything back inside and make sure nothing pokes through." He pinched the underside of his penis. "Gotta calm myself down or let a cold shower do it." He leered at her. "But I have a feeling you'd jump right into that shower with me and I'd be a goner in seconds."

Melissa giggled as she wiggled her way out of the bedroom. "Follow the leader, Captain. I promise to be good." Once they reached the area near the fireplace, she bent over – making sure her ass was in his view – and picked up his shorts and pants.

"Very nice. But that's not being good."

"Oh? Just trying to be helpful," she explained playfully.

Jason dressed as she toyed with the ties of her robe, easing them apart very slowly until the robe practically hung open.

"You said you'd tuck me in and I'm so tired." With an exaggerated stretch and yawn, she angled her arms so the robe opened to reveal her naked body.

Now fully dressed, Jason hung his head and groaned. "Lord, you're making this difficult. I'll put you to bed and let myself out."

She grabbed his hand and led the way into the bedroom where she quickly divested herself of her robe. Melissa stood before him, naked. "Pull down the sheet please."

He did as told and she got into bed. "Comfy?"

"Uh-huh. Now make sure the sheet is tight around me." She closed her eyes and licked her lips.

Jason began by pushing the sheets in tightly around her body, encasing it in the smooth material. Then he ran his hands all over her covered body. "Just wanna make sure you're covered. Everywhere."

His hands caressed her chest and her nipples pebbled at his touch. When he ran his hands down her thighs, she opened them slightly, allowing him the opportunity to reach between them to push the sheet up close to her pussy.

"If I don't leave now, I'll jump right back into bed and we'll be fucking hard and fast." He trembled with a loud sigh and then added, "We'll play your game tomorrow. With tasting."

Melissa opened her eyes. "I work a little later tomorrow. How about meeting me at work and we'll eat at the Italian place across from the office. Call me tomorrow at 555-2368 for directions."

"Go to sleep, Melissa. Talk to you at work and see you for dinner. Then we'll start getting reacquainted all over again." He winked and strolled out of the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Well, I had another *wonderful* night." Nancy trudged into the office. She dropped her purse on her desk, removed her coat and hung it up, and sat in her chair.

Melissa and Gina exchanged glances and hurried over to Nancy's desk.

"So what the hell happened?" Gina asked as she plopped onto the edge of Nancy's desk.

A dejected look covered Nancy's face. "I picked a really awful movie so almost no one was there—kinda like I figured. Only, he wanted to sit right up front and talked constantly about the high quality film I'd suggested."

"Nothing happened?" Melissa asked with surprise.

"Oh, sure. He held my hand and put his arm around me. Kept thanking me for a wonderful time. Christ. I sat through the damn movie and I still can't tell you what it was about."

"Poor Nancy. What about after the movie?" Gina questioned with an unsuccessful attempt at stifling a giggle.

"I suggested we go somewhere more private and he obliged." Nancy slouched in her seat. "Allan took me to the back table at The Chantilly. You know. The one near the pool table."

"And? Did you try something there? Seems like it's so crowded at that spot all the time," Melissa offered.

"He yelled at the guys to watch their language around me. Told them he had a real *lady* with him and they should watch themselves. Everyone was so pleasant and gentlemanly I nearly fainted." She snorted. "Me. Again with the queen treatment. Why the hell is he doing this to me?"

"Nance, he sees you as classy material. Maybe he's had a crush on you and is looking for an honest relationship. Who knows? Guys can change their image. Maybe he's been all show all this time." Melissa gave her friend a hug.

"What about his screwing his wife's sister at the mall?" Frown lines appeared on Nancy's face.

"Well, uh, maybe that was just a rumor. He's divorced and who knows what really went on? Ask him if you want to know," Gina suggested.

Nancy seemed pensive. "Hmm. A real relationship. Getting the queen treatment might not be so bad. But I'll be outta this contest unless I can get him naked and have shorts to prove it."

"Hey," Gina reminded her, "you've got until Sunday. Things could heat up. Do you have plans for tonight?"

"No," she replied with a pout. He's got some bowling tournament so we won't see each other until Wednesday. I suggested meeting him there but he said I'd mess up his concentration. Says he'd rather not have me around his bowling buddies. They're too crude for me." She gave a small smile. "So maybe the guy respects me. That's something different I'll hafta get used to."

"Well, *my* night was interestingly bland," Gina mentioned.

"Don't tell me we both didn't score." Nancy started rocking in her seat.

"Adam seemed happy to come to my house after the game. We had the ice cream and then I put some on my finger and suggested he lick it off." Gina hopped off Nancy's desk.

"And?" Melissa asked.

"He took a napkin and gently cleaned it off. He had a cold and didn't want to spread germs."

Nancy bellowed with laughter. "Shit. We're not doing so well, are we?"

"Adam cuddled with me on the sofa, but other than a peck or two on my head, he avoided my lips altogether. Very concerned for my health. Said he wouldn't do anything to hurt me. No shorts for me either."

"What a gentleman," Nancy replied sarcastically.

Gina sniffed. "Actually, he was all night. He's courteous, attentive, made sure I was comfortable at the game, pulled out the chair for me in the ice cream place, opened -"

"You're defending him and he sounds like a treasure. Maybe you'll have to really take things slowly with him." Melissa shrugged. "He might be afraid of rushing you and wants to show you he respects you." She bit her lip. "Geez. You two have men worshipping you and all you're doing is bitching about it."

Gina quickly threw in, "Not really. I like being treated so well. Tony never showed me any gratitude or respect. Adam may be younger, but if I train him right, he'll always be nice to me. I could get used to that real fast."

"And like I said, you two have men looking for something other than sex. These guys might be keepers," Melissa offered.

"And how was *your* night? You're already one night of sex ahead of us," Nancy observed.

"You already heard my Sunday story. I suggest we keep the rest of our adventures quiet until Monday when we tell all to Janet." Melissa turned to head for her desk.

"Wait a minute. I have an idea." Gina stopped her in her tracks and she returned to Nancy's desk.

"Why don't we all get together on Saturday night? We'll do pot luck at my apartment and get to meet everyone." I'd like to meet Allan. And maybe Nancy would like to meet Jason."

"Sure," Nancy readily agreed.

The women agreed to their triple date although Melissa wondered how that would work out. Would having all the players in their contest meet lead to complications? What if the guys compared notes? Notes? Weren't they all supposed to write one? What about the underwear? Would they all mention missing a pair?

Shit. Now she didn't know if Saturday would work at all. Would Gina and Nancy finally have sex with their guys? What would she do about Jason? The military man? The man whose body she now craved day and night? Could she walk away from him? Would he do that to her?

His military life had wedged itself between them. Although, she was the only one who hammered that wedge in tightly. He'd accepted her terms and that made her unhappy.

Had her life as a military child been that bad? Was she dwelling on memories that might be shaded by a child's point of view? Had her mother or siblings regretted their Army life the way she remembered it?

The jarring ring of her phone pushed her doubts and worries to the side. Right now, she had a job to do.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Strip Poker for Two

After everyone left the office, Melissa relaxed in her seat, daydreaming of her next meeting with Jason. The need to have him touch her again, pump hard and fast inside her, made her body ache with desire.

A burning rush urged her to do a little foreplay on her own while thinking of his hands and mouth gliding over her body. She glanced at the clock. Her office was closed but she was on phone duty so was staying late and waiting for Jason's call.

She locked the front door, figuring he'd call soon and tell her when he'd arrive. Melissa then went into the bathroom and removed her pantyhose and half-slip for easy access to her clit. It already throbbed in anticipation and she needed relief in a hurry.

Returning to her desk, she lay some paper towels down on the seat and hiked up her skirt to her waist. Then she sat down for a quick session of self-release.

Melissa spread her genital lips and slid one hand inside. Then she began a frenzied stroking session centering on her clit. Faster and harder she rubbed, panting and rolling her head as she sought release.

Startled when her phone rang, she almost jumped up from her chair.

She picked up the phone. "Hello?" she managed to barely breathe into the receiver.

"Don't you say who you are when you answer the phone? Are you all right?" Jason's voice caused her heartbeat to race even faster.

"I – yes – usually I do. But I'm alone. Uh, I was busy with – " Her voice trailed off.

"Are you starting something there without me?" he teased in a sensuous, whispered tone.

"Oh, God, yes. Please. Tell me what you want to do to me. Now. Please. Hurry." She heard a whoosh of air over the phone before he spoke.

"All day long I've thought about you lying naked by the fire, flame light dancing on your skin. You said we'd be tasting tonight, and my mouth's watering just thinking of running my tongue over your nipples and pulling them into my mouth so I can suck on them."

"More," Melissa groaned, as she worked her fingers furiously over her engorged clit and soaked her hand in pussy juices.

"I'd then work my way down to your thatch of curly hair. I'd let my tongue lick spots along the way."

"Hurry!" she begged into the phone.

"Then I'd spread those lovely legs and lips wide and sink my mouth into your juices to taste until—

That's as far as he got. Melissa moaned in raptured release and almost dropped the phone. She bucked wildly in her chair, panting as one wave of ecstasy after another traveled through her body. Slowly her breathing calmed and she felt ready to speak.

"God, that was the most fun I've ever had by myself."

"Hey. Don't I get credit for anything? Now I'm all hot and horny and I can't do a damn thing about it because I'm back at the office surrounded by people."

"Oh. I'm so sorry. I was only thinking about myself. What can I do for you?"

"Say you'll return the favor someday when I call for help," he drawled.

"Absolutely."

"Not to rush you through your fun, but I wanted to let you know I'll be there in an hour. Just gotta go change and I'll meet you at the office."

Melissa cleared her throat. "Fine. We can go eat and then play cards again. With the new rules. But don't ply me with wine again. I had too much last night."

"Me? You kept saying you wanted it," he laughed.

"Well, yes, I guess I did. But I want to be fully awake for poker tonight."

"Okay by me. Hey. How about we make things a little simpler tonight? Only wear three things. Less stuff to come off. We're starting this game a little later than last night."

Melissa ran the thought through her head. Three things. Shirt, pants—and underwear. He had to wear boxers because maybe she'd remember to hide the damn things. "Interesting idea. You wear pants, boxers, and a top. I'll wear a skirt, pantyhose, and sweater."

"Sounds fair. I plan to have you naked in three hands. I've been sharpening my poker skills all day while I've been unpacking."

She jokingly replied, "No fair. I've been working. You'll have the advantage."

"Lady, all's fair in sex and war. Or however that saying goes."

"Okay, Dimples. I'll see you soon."

"I need to find a nickname for you. Anyway, no more going it alone tonight. Wait for me. I promise you'll enjoy my magic touch."

"You mean mouth," Melissa corrected.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jason arrived sharply dressed in a cranberry sweater, jeans hugging his body and a smile that warmed her heart. Melissa sat in her chair by her desk as he strolled over to her.

"Nice place. Where's Gina's desk?"

She pointed to one across from hers. "Your wonderful cousin sits there and bugs me all day. But I love her dearly."

"I don't know about you, but I'm starving. Been that way since getting back from Iraq. Food I need now." He narrowed his eyes and gazed at her. "You'll be my dessert."

Melissa grinned, got up, and headed for the door. "Never let it be said I kept you starving. You'll love this place. Even Gina says it's got great Italian food."

#### Strip Poker for Two

She had him exit first, then set the alarm and locked the door from the outside. "I'm hungry, too. Do you like cannoli? Maybe we can get some and bring them home. I can think of a few places I could spread the filling and really enjoy dessert." She grabbed his arm as they crossed the street. "You see, I plan on winning tonight and *you'll* be my dessert. Or, part of it."

Once again, their meal was excellent. Jason commented on the great selection of authentic Italian dishes and they shared a bottle of Chianti. Before they left, he ordered two cannoli to go. Melissa took the box and they headed for their cars to drive to her place.

In her car, Melissa went over in her head the order of poker hands to try to keep her chances of winning better than the night before. If he'd been working on his skills all day, she'd have to keep the ranking order of hands memorized to stand a chance against his expertise.

"Oh, Captain Jason. I know plenty of places I want to spread this cream on you and use my mouth to lick you clean," she voiced to herself. "Now, poker order. Four of a kind is great. No. Royal flush is better." She stopped at a light and glanced at her list of poker hand rankings. "Crap. Maybe he'll let me use a cheat sheet?"

\* \* \* \* \*

"I'm scooping the cannoli cream out of the shells. It's the cream that's important for what I have planned," she teased.

Jason nodded in agreement. "It suits my plans, too. So, are we by the fireplace tonight?"

She considered his suggestion. "Hmm. How about my bedroom? I'll take off the spread and pull down the top sheet. It might get a little messy, but sheets are washable. And the bed's soft."

His eyes blazed as he stared at her. Jason took off his socks and shoes. "So I'll have soft you on a soft bed, where I get to drop some sweet filling on your strategic places and feast away." He walked over to her. "Let's get started. Where's the cards?"

Melissa dipped her finger into the filling and placed it in her mouth, sliding her finger in and out in slow motion. Her second finger dip into the mixture was offered to Jason. "Care to sample what's on the menu? See if it suits your taste?"

He took her hand and raised her finger to his mouth. Jason licked the top portion of it and then turned her hand to her face. "I'll guide you."

He placed her finger into her mouth. "Now, suck it off. Whirl your tongue around your finger and get every drop of it."

Like a woman mesmerized, she did as told. Her body tingled with each taste she took. Wetness pooled in her pantyhose.

"Done yet?" he asked, as he gently pulled her finger out of her mouth.

A small dot of filling remained on her finger and he deftly removed it with his tongue.

"Ready to play cards? Have I distracted you enough so you'll lose big time?" she teased.

Jason let out a loud series of laughs. "Oh, honey. Ready, willing, and absolutely geared up to have you naked in three hands."

"Hmm. I'm adding something to this game so we don't get too bogged down with each hand. I want to finish this more quickly than last night."

He quirked an eyebrow. "What? I have thirty seconds to taste but have to do it blindfolded?"

It was her turn to giggle. She gave him a tap on the arm and said, "No. Of course not. Well, no blindfold although I have to admit I hadn't thought about that. Hmm. Now that you've mentioned it, maybe-"

"Melissa," he pleaded. "Just tell me what you wanted to do. No blindfold. Maybe we can use that technique another time."

"Good idea. I'll save that performance maneuver for future games. Anyway, I'm getting a timer. Winner gets two minutes to taste before the next hand."

"Only two minutes? I'll have to spread and taste pretty quickly." He leered at her.

"Fine. We'll start the two minutes *after* I spread the filling on you since I'll win. I've been going over the hand rankings and I'm more ready than yesterday. I'll aim for nothing but flashes and beat you."

With a smug feeling coursing through her body, Melissa held the cup with the filling in one hand and wiggled a finger of the other hand at him. "Follow me, Dimples. Get ready to strip."

He let her pass him to take the lead. "Uh, Melissa? There's no flash in poker. Unless you mean flasher as in showing it all. And if that's what you want to do, you'll get no objection from me."

Flash? No. That wasn't what she meant. "You know I meant flush. You're trying to confuse me but it won't work." She tapped her forehead. "I've memorized all the hands. So I'm hoping you're wearing one of those sexy boxers I picked out 'cause I'm dying to take them off you."

He smiled. "Take off your shoes. You can't have on more than three things."

She kicked off her heels, relieved at stretching her toes and unleashing them from the confines of her sexy but totally uncomfortable shoes. Melissa placed the cream-filled cup on her nightstand. Walking around the room, she lit candles to give a soft glow to her room.

They grabbed the bedspread and placed it on a nearby hope chest. Jason pulled down the top sheet as she went to retrieve more pillows from her spare bedroom. Before entering the bedroom again, she dashed into the kitchen for her timer. "Hop on and deal." She slid her body onto the bottom sheet and positioned two pillows in front of her to lean on.

Jason sat cross-legged and dealt the cards. Each studied their cards in silence. "Now, concentrate. No talking. And no touching until it's taste time."

"I might want to talk. It's my bedroom. Why the Army? Family thing or something?"

"Woman, it won't work. I'm a man hell-bent with one purpose in mind. My mouth's already watering so if you want to talk, fine. I'll still win."

Melissa grimaced as she looked at her cards. "I want three cards, please. And you didn't answer me."

He glared at her through the hazy light filtering throughout the room. "I did ROTC in college. Loved the discipline and order of military life. Guess I'm just real patriotic. Anyway I was assigned to a joint command overseas. Came home. Went to West Point and taught. Did one year in Iraq. End of story. I'm taking one card." A sly grin covered his face.

"Well? What do you have?" she almost squeaked as she put down her hand showing nothing but two nines.

"Three twos." He clapped his hands and wiggled his eyebrows. "Darlin', get ready to toss that top 'cause I'm feasting on cannoli à la boobs."

## **Chapter Four**

Melissa batted around the thought as to whether it was good or bad to lose. He'd use his tongue and worship her breasts. That sent a ripple of yearning through her. She'd lost the hand and wouldn't be able to have him lose his jeans. So, no placing small amounts on his penis tip, allowing her the opportunity to do some tasting of her own.

Either option had blood coursing throughout her body at top speed. She'd welcome his winning the first taste. She grabbed the ends of her sweater and pulled it off, discarding it on the floor.

"As beautiful as I remember. Lie down."

Melissa settled onto the pillows and watched as he grabbed the filling cup and dipped a finger into it. He moved to her side and spread the creamy mixture on each breast taking particular interest in dolloping some on each raised bud.

She strained her body upward to meet his finger and each nipple beaded under the slightly cool filling dropped on top.

"Here." He placed his cream-covered finger by her mouth. "Wanna taste before I start the timer and get my first part of dessert?"

Melissa's chest swelled with a huge intake of air, and she sensed her heart beating a rapid tattoo. "Yes," she whispered, and he inserted his finger into her mouth for her to lick clean.

When he removed his finger, he grabbed the timer and set it. "One minute per breast. I'll set it for one and then the other. I'll have my fill, although I'd love it to last all night and have you beg for more."

She watched his head as it lowered onto one nipple and nipped at it. He tapped it, teased it with his tongue and gently pulled on the protruding bud. Groans escaped her lips, barely audible but ones of pleasure.

Jason's head rose and their gaze met. She noticed a smidgen of cream in the corner of his mouth and he stuck out his tongue to capture it. He then descended to the same breast and she shuddered as he circled it with an open mouth, sucking it inside. Jason held it in his mouth as his tongue danced circles around it, licking off the cannoli cream.

When the timer went off, he raised his head and grabbed it. The cool air hit her suddenly released breast and Melissa wanted nothing more than to have him replace his mouth where it had been.

"Now for dessert part two." Jason set the timer and lavished the same amount of attention to her other breast.

She pushed her chest upward, trying to fill his mouth. He used his teeth, taking tiny nips along her flesh.

The dinging of the timer caught her off-guard. Melissa reached for his head and held him in place. He gently took her hands and placed them by her sides.

"If I keep going, how will I ever win the next hand? You deal," he told her.

Her breasts tingled from the tongue-lashing he'd done. She calmed her breathing, hoping to clear her head and become the next hand winner.

"Are you sticky? Do you wanna wash up?" he offered.

Melissa dealt their cards. "I'm fine. You must love cannoli."

"Hmm." He frowned. "That I do but I don't like these cards at all. I'm tempted to ask for five new ones."

"Oh," she said with a giggle, "I'm sorry to hear that. Especially since I *love* mine. Not even gonna take any."

His eyes narrowed as he raised his head, leaned toward her, and tried to peek at her cards. "Sounds to me like you cheated if your cards are that good."

Melissa bent forward and kissed the top of his nose. "I don't need to cheat to win. I have the poker gods on my side this time. They know I'm hungry for cream – and what will be under it."

"Stop gloating and give me four cards. I'll keep my best one," he challenged.

She gave him the cards and then placed her hand on the sheet. "Full house. Let's see you beat that, tuba guy."

He spread his cards on the sheet. "Nope. That beats the nothing hand I have." Jason slid off the bed. "Okay, cream lady. What comes off?" He put his hands of his hips and rocked back and forth on his heels.

"Big choice here. Do I make those jeans or sweater disappear?" She tried to look pensive. "No choice really. Jeans. I'm in a hurry to get my two minutes."

He loosened his belt, unzipped his jeans, and pushed them down and off his body. "Now what? Do I lie on the bed? Stay standing? Your pick."

Melissa considered her options. Lying on the bed would have him stretched out to her advantage. Having Jason stand wouldn't be a bad thing, either. "Hit the sheets, Captain."

He lay flat on his back, his penis poking through the underwear opening. Jason made no effort to push it back beneath the material. "So, cream away. Don't forget to set the timer. I don't want you using more than your time. I'll have enough to do to control myself for two minutes."

He placed his hands under his head and closed his eyes.

Melissa scooped some of the cannoli filling onto her fingertips and gently began spreading it onto as much of his cock as poked through his shorts. Each stoke caused his shaft to jerk slightly. She couldn't help wetting her lips in anticipation.

"Done yet? You have me crazed, woman. Start tasting," he begged.

After setting the timer, Melissa placed her hands on either side of his body. Then she lowered her mouth to what slipped through the flap of his lightning bolt-covered shorts.

She flicked her tongue around his shaft, taking in tiny tastes of cream filling. "Yummy. This stuff's pretty good," she murmured.

"With every tongue taste, his erection became more engorged, and she knew he had a hard time restraining himself from shoving his cock upward to meet her mouth and lips.

"God, that feels so good," Jason moaned.

She let her hands drift to his legs and laid them gently on his thighs. She could feel his muscles tighten as he sought for control. Covering him with her mouth and letting nature take its course flew through her mind, but Melissa wanted to prolong their game.

"Oh," she whispered. "I see a tiny chocolate chip in the filling. Sometimes they have them in cannoli filling but maybe they settled in the bottom of the mixture in the cup. But here's one, right on the tip and I'll just have to have it."

She moved her mouth to his cockhead and lightly grazed it with her teeth. The chocolate chip entered her mouth and she swallowed it. She then licked the tip area clean.

The timer rang as they both were breathing hard and fast.

She sat up and shifted away from his body. Jason hadn't budged, just remained spread out before her, his eyes slowly opening and his hands thrown out to his sides.

"God. That was the most erotic challenge I've ever gone through. Your mouth, lips, teeth, on me made me want to pump away but the desire to win and get my turn next held me back." He managed to speak even if his voice shook.

Melissa leaned over and gave him a kiss. He ran his tongue over her lips. She tilted back and plopped down on some pillows. "I don't know if I'll last more hands. How about winner gets the other naked first for two minutes then you can do me?" she teased.

He sat up using one elbow for support. "You mean I'll get you naked first for two minutes before I strip. You deal. And make it fast." He wiggled his eyebrows.

The hand was dealt and each took two cards. "Show me your losing hand, Dimples."

Jason spread his cards on the sheet. "Can you beat a full house?"

Her shoulders slumped as she presented her hand. "Nope. Only two aces here."

He scooped up the cards. "Darlin', take it all off while I straighten the sheet and stir the filling. Hmm. Not much left but I'll leave some for you." He grinned as she stood.

Melissa got up and shivered in anticipation. Her body was his for two minutes. Everywhere was open to tasting. She pulled down her skirt and pantyhose and left them on the floor before getting onto the bed. "How do you want me?" "Jason rubbed his hands together as in deep thought. "Hmm. On your tummy or back. Both pose interesting possibilities." He took her hand. "On your back. I have some traveling to do from top to bottom."

Blood rushed through her veins as every nerve in her body stirred to attention. He helped her lie down with a pillow under her head and placed another under her rear end.

"I might need some help reaching places without using my hands," he explained.

It was Melissa's turn to close her eyes as she listened to her heart pounding in her chest.

Without another word, Jason began covering her nipples with cream. He then traced a finger down her abdomen to her patch of curly hair. "Spread your legs a little for me so I can reach."

Not only did she spread her legs but Melissa also arched her pussy upward using the pillow as leverage. She let her legs fall open wide to each side and reveled in his sharp intake of breath.

"Open enough for you?" she asked.

"Hell, yes." He then began spreading some of the creamy mixture into her.

Moans escaped from her lips. Her cunt muscles contacted with each touch, urging her to grab his fingers and hold them in place.

"Ease up, Melissa. I'm almost done. Then my two minutes start."

"Hurry," was all she could say between urgent whimpers.

She heard him set the timer and waited impatiently for him to start his tasting.

"You smell of cream mixed with woman scent just waiting for me." He then leaned over her body and began sucking on one nipple. After that one was cleaned from cannoli filling, he moved to the other.

Of its on volition, her body jerked and arched to meet his mouth. Her pussy, already moist from the creamy mixture, felt even wetter as her juices mingled with the filling.

"Go down. Get the rest. Oh, God. I don't know if I can wait," she urged him to continue, hoping to have him delve into her and have his fill.

She heard his laugh before his tongue licked its way down her body. "Don't open your eyes for a minute," he ordered, and she heard him jump off the bed. Sounds of clothes being removed caused a smile to cover her face. Then he returned to her, but straddled her chest. She opened her eyes.

His head bent down to her pussy and his tongue started lapping at the cream on her genital lips. She grabbed both his ass cheeks positioned near her face and began planting kisses on them as she pushed her hips upward to have her body meet his eager mouth.

His penis hung down to her chest, and she grabbed the engorged member and rubbed it against each nipple.

Moans of ecstasy filled the room, mixed among the sounds of heavy breathing.

"Wait. Stop," he pleaded urgently as he removed his head from between her legs.

Melissa dropped her hands.

"I want you on top. Straddle my face. Take me in your mouth." His demands spurred her cravings to do as he told her and satisfy both their needs.

She positioned herself so she could place her pussy directly over his mouth. He ate like a man feasting, eager to please and get his fill. Melissa wiggled her cunt feverishly into his face, pushing herself deeper into his mouth.

Jason grabbed her hips, grinding her into his face. Before doing her tasting, she grabbed the cup of filling and spread it on his swelling cock. Ready to take him into her mouth, she bent over and lowered her face. Easing her body so she could reach him and still have him enjoy his tasting, she arched a little and opened her mouth wide.

Melissa pumped her mouth up and down his rod, using her tongue to lick off the cream. She made little sucking noises as she tried to catch each spot of cream. His hands went to her breasts, and he teased and pulled on the nipples, escalating her pleasure.

"Oh, yes. Now. God, I can't wait," she groaned as she collapsed onto his body and wave after wave of release shook her. Her face brushed against his cock, but she couldn't do anything but twitch from the delightful sensation overtaking her body. Jason kept her pussy in place, nipping at her clit and encouraging her into more spasms.

"Jason," she breathed out in a jerky voice, "that was wonderful but please stop. I need to relax a minute and then it's your turn."

She lifted one leg over him and sprawled out next to his side. "Just stay put. I have to finish my filling."

He stroked her hip. "Forget the cream. I'm ready to burst. And I wanna come inside you."

She got off the bed and opened the drawer of her nightstand. "I bought these, large size," she informed him, showing him some condoms. "Wanted to be prepared."

He took some calming breaths although lust blazed in his eyes. "Wipe me clean, slip one of those on me," he pointed in the directions of the condoms, "and let me take you." Jason grabbed more pillows and stuffed them under his head.

She opened the package and held the condom, ready to slide it on him. After giving him a wink, Melissa took his shaft into her mouth and whirled her tongue around its length. She worked from bottom to top, and spread the pre-cum circling the tip. "You're ready, big boy," she said, and then pushed the rubber on him.

"Get on top," he growled.

Melissa straddled his body and he grabbed her waist as he helped her take him inside. Her breasts jiggled with each thrust he made and her pussy sought to keep him encased inside her.

He leaned forward and took one breast in his mouth. Sucking and then nipping at its budded tip, he fought to keep his mouth where it was.

The air between them became heavy with deep panting and the smell of sex. Jason released her breast as he exploded with pleasure. Melissa keep riding him, contracting her muscles to give him full satisfaction.

Finally spent, they both resorted to kissing and fondling each other's body until sheer exhaustion had Jason rolling them to their sides, still joined.

She loved the feel of him in her. The filling, satisfying pleasure of joining him as one. He hugged her to him, and neither seemed eager to dislodge their connection.

Jason kissed her on the forehead. "We'll never make it through a full game of strip poker, will we? Shit. I hope I can walk again. You've drained me completely."

"Well," Melissa nuzzled her face against his chest, "maybe we should play just one hand, winner take all. All off the other, that is."

"You're only after my body. Don't you wanna know anything else about me?"

How much did she want to know? Would that get her more involved with him—as in some type of boyfriend-girlfriend, couple thing? Was fantastic sex enough for her? Did she want more than that? And that damn military thing still caused her to step back.

The contest. Sex is enough.

"Your body's my playground. Why spoil a good thing? Can't we just enjoy what we give to each other?"

He gave a deep sigh. "I want to know Melissa Foster. What she thinks. What she likes. I already know she likes sex and hates the tuba. There's more in life. I want to know all about you."

"I know you're in the Army. And you like sex, cannoli, and losing at poker. What more do I need to know about you?" She eased herself out of his reach and he slid out of her.

"There's that roadblock you keep putting up. So, I'm in the Army. That's only part of me. There's more to find out about." He got up and grabbed his clothes. "I want us to go on a real date. Dinner, dancing, movies, something like that. I love the sex, but why can't we see what else we have in common?"

She mulled over his request, wondering if she wasn't being fair by focusing on just his career as a way to keep him at arm's length—except for sex. "Hmm. A real date? Okay. Why don't you surprise me tomorrow? Tell me what time to be ready and show me a good time, Dimples."

He gave her a sly grin. "You've seen nothing but good times with me so far. But tomorrow will be different. I'll pick you up here at seven. Dress casual. We'll end up at my place for a drink or two. I want you to see where I live."

Melissa smiled, hoping to cover the anxiety and guilt warring inside her. Seeing his quarters—she'd never shed the automatic switching to military lingo when the opportunity arose—meshed her into his life. Knowing that part of her wanted to win that contest above all else fueled her sense of panic.

Had she just admitted to herself that only part of her wanted to win? What was happening? Had Jason gotten under her skin, burning a permanent place in her heart? Could she want him for real?

She made the decision then and there to speak to her mother. Someone who'd gone through military life with her, and even before she'd been born, might help Melissa define her dislikes and give her good advice.

When all else failed, her mother would be a source of strength and issue words of wisdom.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Mom, tell me about military life. Wasn't it hard on you? Didn't you hate all the rules, moving, hard times when Dad was gone?" Melissa called her mother from work the next day on her lunch break.

"Well hello to you too, dear."

"Uh, sorry. Hello. How are you and Dad? Will I see you at cousin Lisa's wedding?"

"That's more like it. We're fine, although your father's fighting a nasty cold. We'll be at the wedding as will all of you. Nice that I get to see my children together once in awhile."

"Mother, you're the ones who moved to Florida. We're still scattered around and you could have moved nearer to one of us."

"No, no. We didn't want to cramp your styles of living. At least I get to travel and see everyone although I would like seeing my grandchildren more often."

Melissa rolled her eyes as she knew what her mother's next comment would be.

"Of course, we'd see you more often if you visited or got married or something."

"Mother. I'm not ready to get married. Can we talk about what I want to ask?"

Her mother sighed into the phone. "Certainly, dear. I'd just like to see you settled. Now. Military life? I loved every minute."

Huh? "I thought you hated all the moving and when Dad was gone. We all drove you nuts while he was away."

Her mother laughed into the phone. "No, no. You have that all wrong. Don't you remember all the fun we had when we moved? Traveled so many different places. You kids had friends all over. Still do, don't you?"

That part was true, if Melissa really thought about it. She had friends in twelve states, and some still lived overseas. And with each move, one child got to pick his or her bedroom first so no one was shown any favoritism. "What about being alone with us kids?"

"Dear, your father was never gone so long that I couldn't handle things. And we did fun things to make the time go faster. Don't you remember going swimming until

late at night at the base pool since I didn't have to rush home and make dinner? A little break now and then worked out fine."

Melissa slumped in her chair. Had it been as her mother described? Why did she only have negatives lingering in her head? "But the rules, always rules to follow."

"Melissa, honey. When don't we have rules to follow in our lives? What's all this about?"

"I-uh-remember Dimples? From middle school? Gina's cousin?"

"What a nice boy although he had a crush on you and you turned him down because of that tuba. You weren't very musically inclined."

"I dumped him because I didn't like him."

"Oh? Maybe you were just embarrassed because he liked you so much," her mother retorted. "But you were about to say something about him."

"He's here and stationed at Fort Belvoir. I've seen him a few times."

"And?"

"Well, we're kinda seeing each other. But I don't want a military life?" Melissa made her statement come out as a question.

"Sounds like you're not sure. What's holding you back? Do you love him?" her mother asked softly.

"I-we-just started dating." She sighed into the phone. "Maybe I'm worried he'll take up the tuba again."

Her mother laughed. "Oh, honey. His job, whatever it is, is only part of his life."

"That's what he said." Melissa frowned to herself.

"Sounds like an intelligent man. If he's career Army, he'll be moving. You know that happens. If you're together and happy, what difference does it make where you are?"

"I have a job - "

"And you can always find another one. What about a family? Do you both want one? Do you want to stay home and raise a family? Work? What?"

"Mother, you're giving me a headache. We haven't gotten that far into our relationship yet."

"So, now it's a relationship?" her mother questioned.

Melissa slumped at her desk and massaged the back of her neck. "You're rushing things. We're, oh, I don't know what we are."

"Honey, when Dad and I got serious, we made decisions to live by. His career came first. We'd follow the bigger paycheck—and that was his. I could work if I wanted to, even after you children came along. But I wanted to stay home with you."

"You taught school at different places."

"Uh-huh. Always found a teaching job and then just tutored from home after your brother was born. I kinda liked watching all of you grow but put my teaching skills to good use."

Melissa ended her conversation with her mother and pondered her viewpoints. Some things still worried her, especially her ability to compromise on careers and living locations. But wasn't she rushing things? Marriage? Moving? Military life?

Hell. She turned off her cell phone and glanced at the clock. Five more hours to work.

"Can't wait to go out tonight?" Gina asked.

Melissa gave her a smile. "Jason's surprising me and taking me on a bona fide date. Wants us to do fun things together and get to know each other better."

Gina snorted. "You two have strolled all over each other's body already. What's left to know? Get his underwear yet?"

Melissa plopped backward into her chair. "Damn. I keep forgetting. He always grabs them and puts them back on. And," she grinned, "we need to know other things about each other besides how great sex is."

A look of suspicion crossed Gina's face. "You're not falling in love with Jason, are you?"

Brain freeze hit Melissa as she pondered her friend's question. Was she? Had she let him into her heart? What the hell was she doing? "No. Of course not." Her answer sounded unclear, even to her. "There's a contest going on. I, well, don't think about his underwear."

"Ha! Like hell you don't. You manage to get them off him. Maybe you're not sure if taking them really makes your relationship just contest material." Gina leaned in close to Melissa's face and added, "You're in love with tuba guy. Admit it."

An alarm dinged in Melissa's head. Love? Now? So soon? She gave a definite head shake to ward off her friend's line of thinking. "No. And I mean it." *Do I*? "I can't be in love. I have plans. And a contest to win. Hawaii is calling."

"Hmm. Sounds like your heart is, too. But keep fooling yourself until love hits you over the head. Anyway, the sex must be great. My cousin's a real hunk, isn't he?"

"Sex? Did I hear someone mention sinning right here close to our nation's capitol?" Nancy rushed over to join their conversation.

"Where you've probably done it at every major intersection?" Gina said sarcastically.

"Not lately. Haven't you heard? I'm a *lady* and will be treated with respect." Nancy sighed. "I like the queen treatment but even queens get horny. I'm hoping Allan's ready for me tonight."

Melissa held up her hand. "Now don't tell us what you have planned. We're not trading stories until Monday."

"If *we*," Gina pointed to Nancy and herself, "ever get lucky enough to have something to tell."

"I'm sure we all will," Melissa stated. "But underwear trophies seem awfully hard to get."

"Hey. It was *your* idea," Nancy reminded her.

Melissa nodded. "I know. But so far I get them off him and he keeps putting them back on."

Gina and Nancy peered at each other and yelled in unison, "So hide the damn things!"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Surprise. Flowers for a beautiful woman." With a captivating swagger, Jason ambled into ETC dressed casually in jeans and a deep purple sweater and handed Melissa a bouquet of red roses.

Melissa brought them up to her face and took a sniff. "They smell so wonderful." She stood on tiptoes and gave him a kiss. "Thank you." Was he blushing?

"Uh, hi Gina. Didn't see you there."

Gina stuck out her tongue at him. "What? I'm so hard to miss? You're outta my apartment for a day and don't recognize me?"

He tapped the tip of her nose. "You're just family." He pointed to Melissa. "She's someone I'm out to impress."

"Go away. Have a good time and do everything I wish I will be doing," Gina sighed as she spoke.

Jason walked Melissa outside and helped her into her car. "I know I said I'd pick you up at seven at your place, but I couldn't wait to see you. I'm following you home so you can leave your car and put those," he pointed to the roses, "in water. We'll take my car."

She spied mischief in his eyes. "Where are we going?"

"Ah, it's a surprise. Just drive home and I'll follow."

Melissa decided to test his "dating" rules for the night. "What? Don't I get a kiss? Quick rub here or there?" She reached out to touch him as a challenge.

He caught her hand and his eyes crinkled in the corners as he grinned. "Lady, none of that on our first official date." He bent over to reach into her car and stroked her cheek. "We kinda jumped the gun—not that I'm complaining—and I want us to spend an evening out enjoying each other's company."

She wrapped her fingers around his hand and snuggled her cheek into it. "I love warm hands," she teased in a sultry voice. "But first date it is and I expect you to show me a good time."

"Always, Melissa. Oh. Make sure you dress warmly. You're in for a surprise evening." He backed away and closed her car door.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I've never been here. How'd you find this place?"

Melissa inhaled deeply, taking in all the mouth-watering smells of the fondue restaurant Jason had ushered her into. They sat at a table for two, cooking pot heating up in the middle of their table.

"Friend at work told me. He mentioned it was a good place to impress a woman and I immediately thought of you."

She toyed with her long handled forks and organized them in a row. "I'm definitely impressed and hungry. How do we do this?"

"First we drink a toast." He pointed to her wine glass. "To wonderful beginnings. And no tubas."

"I'll drink to that." She saw the sparkle in his eyes as he took a sip. "And to sexy underwear. Especially ones I'm fond of." Melissa threw in a hint of mischief to color her comment.

Jason coughed, indicating her remark had left its effect. He leaned over the table to get closer to her and smiled. "While that's a fascinating idea you've just paraded through my head, these table are kinda close together. Keep my underwear talk for when we're alone together, sweetheart."

Portraying what she hoped was a look of innocence, Melissa said, "Did I mention you? Hmm. But I *do* like hot dogs, and devils, and pitchforks, and -" She stopped speaking and drank some wine.

"Moving on," he cleared his throat and continued, "I've already told the waiter we'd do their combination special. This way we get to sample everything from appetizer, main course, to dessert. Hope you don't mind. I figured I'd get to find out what you like this way."

Pleasant. Considerate. Fact-finding.

The first two made him good date material. The last one had her wondering if this was some type of military maneuver training mission he'd mastered—seek out, get the facts, destroy. Only in her case it was seek out nicely, get the facts in an unsuspicious, friendly manner, conquer her misgivings to soften her up and win her over.

"I guess I'll get to find out what your tastes are, too." She sat back in her seat and let her tongue slip out between her lips and moisten the top one.

He winked and mentioned in a lazy tone, "You already know what I like tasting. Cannoli cream."

Warmth zipped up her cheeks as memories of them enjoying the sweet filling à la their bodies filled her head. "Same here. I especially like it on top of -"

#### Strip Poker for Two

Jason rocked forward and whispered, "Shh. I think we need to talk about something else." He let his gaze wander around the room and spoke louder. "Nice place. So tell me. How come you've been here all this time and never fondued?"

Melissa angled her body across the table to get in closer. "Did you say fondledued?" she retorted in a low sultry tone.

"You're determined to make me crazy and we haven't even really started our evening yet." Laughter shook his body.

"Oh, I'm just testing you. So," she pretended to check out the ambiance of the room, "this is a nice surprise. And to answer your question, I don't think this place has been open very long. According to that," she nodded to a poster hanging on a wall near them, "those opening reviews listed means it's only been around for a year." She shrugged. "Guess I need to get out more."

Their appetizer plate arrived and a sauce was poured into the heated pot in the center of their table. The waiter explained how to skewer their food and cook it.

That course was followed by their main meal and both ate eagerly while talking about childhood memories including their time together in school.

"I really had a crush on you. Never got over your dumping me," Jason said as their last course, chocolate fondue, steamed in their cooking pot and sent a heavenly aroma into the air.

"Now I know you're teasing me. I was gawky. Tall and thin. No chest to speak of. Braces. What in the world was there to like?"

"You were nice to me. Kind to others. Helpful. Always smiled even with those damn braces. How could I help but be madly in love with you?" Jason popped a chocolate-coated strawberry into his mouth.

A soothing calmness flowed through Melissa as she savored a few dessert-coated mouthfuls while pondering his answer. "Umm. This is wonderful. You really were hurt when I pushed you away, weren't you."

"Uh-huh." Jason put his hand across his heart. "The love of my life preferred my best friend. My life was empty. I gave up writing tuba serenades all because of you."

Melissa smirked. "Oh, sure. Like I believe you. But I am sorry for hurting your feelings. Hey. I was thirteen. What the hell did I know? You scared me with all that attention. And," she pointed a skewer at him, "I didn't like tuba music."

"See? We're getting to know a lot about each other. This was a good idea. And the evening's not over yet. I have another surprise in store for you." He chomped down on a piece of brownie covered in dripping chocolate.

"Another surprise? What? Cards at your place?"

Jason grinned. "Maybe later. No. I have something else in mind that you liked doing when we were in school." He speared another piece of brownie.

He'd remembered something about her from school other than the tuba connection they'd had? What was it? And had she just admitted he'd scared her with all the attention he aimed at her at school? Just like her mother had told her?

He broke through her mental ramblings. "Now be honest. Do you trust me? Ready to go?"

Trust him? Yes. Ready for him? Yes. Having a great time? Yes.

Using him? She cringed slightly as that part crept into her mind and trickles of guilt cooled off her enthusiasm. If trust and honesty were important to him she was already on the wrong end of that scale. She wiped her mouth on her napkin and offered a bright smile. "Sure. Let's go," she said and noted the ache forming in her heart.

# Chapter Five

"I haven't ice skated in years. How did you remember that?" Melissa asked her question as they skated across Mount Vernon Ice Rink.

Jason grabbed her hand. "You don't remember skating with me? Teaching me how not to fall on my rear?"

She thought back to those early teen years when she'd taken skating lessons. Many times she and her friends would skate on a weekend afternoon. Gina had dragged her cousin along one Saturday to join them on the rink.

The cold air of the rink nipped at her face but he'd made sure she'd left her home with a hat and gloves and not just her coat. "You were so afraid of falling. Gina skated like a pro and the others all knew how to skate."

He squeezed her hand. "Yep. My talents focused on tuba playing. I was petrified about making a fool of myself but you took pity on me. Showed me how to stand and slide my feet." He gave her a sincere smile. "I never forgot your kindness. I think that's the day I fell in love with you."

Melissa missed a step and almost fell. His strong arms steadied her until she righted her footing. Those memories of teaching him to skate flooded back to her. She had laughed with him—not at him—and how special, good about herself, he'd made her feel.

"Oh, Lord. And then I went and dumped you." She cuddled up closer to his body.

Jason wrapped an arm around her waist as they circled the ice in silence for a minute. "I know a lot about you. Gina's kept me updated and I'm so glad you told her you wanted to see me when I got into town. Made this assignment something to look forward to."

A sense of panic washed over her. Melissa kept her feet moving, not wanting to show any uneasiness. Gina had talked to him about her? He'd asked and she gave him a constant rendition of her life?

"I'm glad you're here." She said that with complete honesty. "I'm afraid she didn't tell me much about you. Good Lord, sometimes she'd start in about all her cousins and by the time we got to the middle of the alphabet, names and faces blurred before me and I lost track of what she was saying."

"That's what happens in large Italian families. My mother's letters to me while I was gone were page after page of family updates. I had more to read than most guys and shared my letters." A quick grin formed on his face and then vanished.

"Want to talk about your time there?" she asked.

He inhaled deeply before replying. "I'm still processing it all. Saw some things I don't want to share with anyone but there were some happy times. Great people I worked with. Civilians who were wonderful to us. Kids we taught how to play baseball."

Melissa decided a diversion needed to be thrown in to take his mind from dwelling on his year away. She grabbed his hand and led him to the doorway so they could exit the ice. "I'm a little cold. This has been wonderful. The whole night has been." She stepped onto the floor and sat on a bench.

"Yep. Fun evening. But you're right. It is cold." He sat next to her as they unlaced their skates. "Would you like to come back to my place? You haven't seen it yet." A spark of lust flashed in his eyes as he asked.

"Are there more surprises for me to see?" she asked coyly.

"My decorating style. Early whatever-fits."

"Got any cocoa? I'm still in the mood for more chocolate."

"Hmm." He rubbed his chin as he gave her question some thought." Actually I do. Got some today when I went to the commissary during my lunch hour."

"Then what more could I ask for? Cocoa and you. Sounds like enough to keep me warm," she teased.

"Damn right." He leaned over, gave her a quick kiss, and then whispered in her ear, "Maybe we'll even fool around some. I'm aching to touch you again, be inside you. Getting harder by the minute."

Melissa stood up and stretched out her hand to him. "Then let's go, former Cowboy of the Night. She gazed at his cock as it pressed against his jeans. "I'm ready to help with your problem. Got cards?"

Jason groaned as he got up. "You're gonna make me play cards again?"

She put her arms around his waist and tugged him closely to her. Getting on tiptoes, she reached up to kiss him. Keeping her voice low, she drawled, "Cowboy, I'm ready to ride whatever you have. And we can make this just one hand of poker. Winner takes all."

\* \* \* \* \*

"You've done a great job. The place looks nice." Melissa walked around his small living quarters and made her comment. "There's just enough furniture to make it cozy."

"Cocoa's coming up. Sorry, no marshmallows. I didn't think about that."

"Should we sit on the sofa or at the table?"

"Sofa. I want to be comfortable while we drink and talk before I win at poker and strip you. Need to save up my energy."

She stuck out her tongue at him. "Ha. Ha. Dream on, Dimples. I spent my free time today reading stuff about poker on the internet. I'll win and strip you. But you *will* need all that energy because I plan to keep you very busy."

They sat on the sofa and sipped their cocoa. Jason pulled her close to him and she snuggled up to his side.

"Jason, do you mind telling me about your ex-fiancée? What happened? You mentioned something about her." Curiosity and a desire to catch up on his life prodded Melissa to ask.

She put her cup on his coffee table and he did the same before settling back into their seats. She heard him inhale and saw the frown crossing his face.

"I trusted her like a loyal puppy. Catered to her. Agreed to everything she wanted because I thought she loved me." He shrugged. "Guess I didn't see the lies behind her sweet manipulation. She only wanted something from me and in this case it was my unquestioning adoration. And money. And I was her cover for her affair with my friend. No one suspected a thing, least of all me."

His story cut through Melissa's heart. Jason had loved someone who used him and now she was using him for the contest.

But was that still true? Had she changed her mind about his being in the military, the contest, just having fun? Was she falling in love with an old friend?

What about him? He'd said he wasn't ready for commitments and mentioned his career. Was he still thinking along those lines? Just fun? Nothing more?

"You're awfully pensive. Something wrong?" His question cut through her confusion.

"I— What do you want or see in your future? Guess I'm just thinking how people can change and nothing stays the same." She moved her hand to his thigh and felt his muscles constrict at her touch.

"Some things stay the same. Like me wanting to strip you now and make love again." He pushed her hand to his zipper and pressed her fingers down so she could massage his erection.

"That's definitely the same. But that's not what I meant."

Jason's breathing quickened the harder she rubbed. "I know. But serious stuff I can't concentrate on right now."

Melissa removed her hand. "Your future? What do you see – now that you can concentrate." She laughed.

He rested his head on the back of the sofa. "The future. Fine. I'll stay in the Army and make it my career until I retire. Then go into something else. I want a wife and kids, but moving's part of the game and that has to be accepted."

Jason lowered his head and began nipping at her breasts, paying particular attention to her nipples. They immediately beaded and pressed through her sweater.

He raised his head. "Tell me about your future. Now let's see if you can think straight while I distract you." He lifted her sweater. "This thing's too fuzzy. I need to take a mouthful but wet wool isn't what I have in mind."

Melissa groaned as he laved and licked the material of her bra. She grabbed his head and held it in place over one nipple. "Oh, God. Just suck. I love it."

He did as ordered and her heart raced as blood coursed through her veins. Becoming more breathless with desire every second, she kneaded his swelling erection with her hand.

Jason backed away and breathed hard and fast. He once again dropped his head back to rest on the sofa's top. "Answer my question fast. Then we'll play one hand and continue where we left off."

Future? All she wanted was to satisfy the lust rampaging through her body for him. She took some calming breaths before answering. "I want it all. A career. A family. Love from a man who loves me."

He jokingly said, "Sounds like we want the same things. Career. Family. Love. We're pretty well-matched."

Jason made it sound so easy. So right. "All those things come with compromises."

"What doesn't?" he asked softly.

A moment of silence permeated the space between them. Melissa wondered if their evening would end right there and then.

He turned his head toward her. "Cocoa's getting cold. Ready to warm up?" He wiggled his eyebrows.

She gave him a shove and stood up as she pulled down her sweater. "Let's finish our cocoa and then bring on the cards. I'm ready to see you naked."

Jason stood and chugged his drink. "Drink up. I'll go get the cards. Where do you wanna play? Here on the rug or on my bed?"

"On your bed. But shoes and socks off now." She wiggled her rear end as she sashayed into his bedroom. "And to make it even more interesting, you take off everything but your shorts and I'll leave on my bra and panties."

"Hey. No fair. You'll have two things to take off," he called after her as he removed and dropped his shoes on the floor.

"This is a compromise I'm making. You get to strip both off me if you win. But I plan to win so you'll just have to watch and wait while I ravage your body first."

They entered his bedroom and pulled down the comforter and top sheet. Jason took a condom out of his nightstand drawer and placed it on the bed. "Gotta be prepared," he explained, and then undressed down to his shorts.

Melissa stared at his underwear. Yep. Another one of her picks. "Love those hearts and arrows. Nice heart around the flap but what happened to the arrow?" she teased.

"It'll pop through the opening any time now. Don't worry. It's there and waiting for you."

#### Strip Poker for Two

She ran her hands down her sweater, grabbed the hem and pulled it over her head. Her breasts bounced in her bra, the material still moist from his sucking on her nipples. She then shimmied out of her slacks and turned to place her clothes on a chair in the room.

"Nice thong," he growled with need, and swaggered over to her. Jason pulled her to him, her ass cheeks flush against his shorts. "Can you tell where the arrow is and where it wants to go?"

His rod poked her cheeks and she craved to bend over, shuck the thong, and have him ram his shaft into her for a pleasurable ride. She shifted her body up and down his, eliciting moans of desire that escaped from his lips.

He used one hand to hold her in place as his other hand reached around to lightly pinch each nipple until they hardened.

Almost breathless, Melissa asked, "Poker? Yes or no but decide fast. It's your house and your rules tonight." Wetness pooled between her legs.

Jason stilled his hand and stopped her body from rubbing against him. With a shaky voice, he answered, "Poker. Don't want you to think I'm easy. You have to win to get the rest of me."

They stepped apart and got on the bed. They lay facing each other, stretched out and within reach. Jason grabbed the cards and dealt. He bent one knee up and so did she. Each had a great view before them.

"Are we allowed to touch or just look as we play?" Melissa asked as she alternated between studying her cards and staring at his erection poking through the heart opening.

"Just look. But you need to pull that patch of thong to the side for me. I want a better view." His eyes widened as he focused on her triangle of curls barely covered by satin cloth.

Melissa pulled the material over to one side, leaving no doubt what lay behind the silken front. "Better? I aim to please," she purred.

He stared as a man mesmerized. She swung her bent leg back and forth, allowing her genital lips to part slightly with the motion. Jason dropped his cards and his cock twitched as it pointed at her.

"I want three cards please."

He let out a staggered breath but otherwise remained motionless. His full attention riveted on her pussy.

"You'd make a terrible casino dealer. You let a little distraction break your concentration?" she teased.

"Huh?" His eyes darted to her face. "I can't make up my mind if I want to look at your beautiful face, watch those nipples beg for my mouth, or lean forward for a better view of your open invitation."

"Men are so easily distracted." She sighed and then laughed.

"Oh? And you're not? I see you hungering for something I have growing bigger with every minute. You're drooling waiting to get a taste but it'll just be me tonight. No cannoli cream."

"Melissa pointed to the three cards she'd thrown down. "My cards? And tasting you is my goal."

Jason gave her cards and took two for himself. "Before we see who wins, I want one minute to touch you. And you can have one minute of me."

"Just hands?" she asked with an impish tone.

"That's all I can take."

"Who goes first?" She placed her cards on the bed.

Searing passion dwelled in his eyes. "Me. I came up with the idea."

"Fine. Dimples, start your one minute now." She lay flat on the bed.

Jason ran his hands over her body, molding her breasts as his thumbs toyed with her nipples. He then placed one hand over her thatch of hair by her cunt and slipped a finger inside.

She breathed fast, her pulse quickening as she writhed at his touch. One minute? Ten? Who knew? Who was counting?

"I'm stopping now only because you need your turn. Then we'll finish the hand." He backed off and lay on his back.

Melissa wasted no time in spreading the flaps of his shorts so she could feather touches up and down his stiff cock. While the fingers of one hand continued to do this, the other hand caressed his balls, one at a time. He moaned with pleasure and she enjoyed the jerky movements his penis made with each touch. She used one finger to trace circles around his cockhead and spread the pre-cum pooling in the area.

"Enough. Please." A mixture of pleasure and desperation colored his plea.

She sank back to her side of the bed and picked up her cards. "I have a straight."

A devilish grin crossed his face. "And I have a full house." He grabbed the cards and tossed them to the floor as he got up. "You're mine."

Melissa stood up on shaky legs. Desire flared as heat coursed through her body. He'd touch her, do whatever he wanted. She wanted him to. Now. Tomorrow. Forever.

Jason undid her bra and she removed it. He then knelt in front of her and drew her thong down her body. She stepped out of it and he told her to sit on the edge of the bed. Jason had her lie back and propped her head up on a pillow.

"Close your eyes. I'm gonna start at the top and work my way down. I want you to feel me tasting you as I go. I'm leaving the lights on because I want to see all of you."

Her heart pounded in her chest. She closed her eyes, the anticipation driving her near the edge.

His kisses started as soft ones and soon his tongue darted into her mouth to meet hers. She tried to wrap her arms around him but he gently placed them at her sides. "No. You just lie there and enjoy."

He trailed kisses down her face, her neck, and her chest. And then he took her breasts, one at a time, into his mouth and sucked. Melissa couldn't stop her body from heaving up to shove each breast further into his warm mouth.

"Pull on them while you suck," she begged.

Jason did as instructed and a wave of erotic pleasure made her writhe with hunger for more.

He left her breasts and she opened her eyes to watch as he kissed his way down to her genital lips. Wet with desire, she spread her legs wide.

"Wanna watch?" he whispered in between deep inhalations.

"Yes."

He grabbed a pillow and placed it under her ass to prop her pussy up. Jason also got another pillow and put it under her head so she could see what he was about to do.

"I know we had a great meal tonight but now I'm tasting and eating you. Don't stop me. Just go with it and enjoy." His eyes burned with desire.

"Please." She reached down and stroked his face. "I want to feel your tongue inside me."

Jason held her legs apart and lowered his mouth. He spread her lips and nipped at the sides, the middle, her clit. He flicked his tongue faster on her pleasure bud.

Melissa tried to remain still, not wanting to miss watching his head between her legs as his mouth gave her pleasure. She forced her legs further apart in a desperate desire to have him delve deeper and give him better access to her aroused nub. She bucked into his face, urging him to go faster, harder.

About to lose control and climaxing, she closed her eyes. Jason grabbed her legs and put them over his shoulders as he pulled her nearer to him. Hands on her ass cheeks, he held her firmly in place as she squirmed.

"Yes, oh yes," she cried out as wave after wave of heavenly satisfaction flowed from her body and fulfilled her need for sexual relief.

Jason kept a tight hold on her, laving her cunt and licking her until she sought to calm her breathing.

"Thank you," she murmured, using her hands to lift his face so she could see him.

Jason's face glistened with her juices. "My pleasure. Eating you was better than chocolate fondue. Maybe sometime we could try combining the two. Warm chocolate all over you. Me feasting. Sounds like a plan." He wiggled his eyebrows as he lowered her back onto the bed.

"And I'd get to do the same. Can I have your shorts?" She scooted her body off the bed as he stood.

"What? No sexy teasing? No seducing me?"

Melissa reached down and traced a fingernail along his engorged member. "Of course I'll tease and seduce." She turned around and wiggled her fanny. Then she faced him and bounced each breast in the palms of her hands. "You need to relax. I'm gonna help you outta those hearts, if you don't mind. I need something mouthwatering and I know where I can find it." She winked.

"I'm gonna explode in no time," he warned.

"Oh, we'll go real slow so you don't race on ahead before I'm done." Melissa put her hands on either side of his shorts and pulled them down. He kicked them to the side. "Take my place on the bed."

Jason's eyes widened with carnal craving as he sat on the edge of the bed. He removed the pillow from under his rear but shoved another one under his head. "I'm bigger than you and need more to boost me up so I can watch."

"Oh, you're bigger all right," she said and placed her hands on his thighs as she knelt in front of him.

"Don't I get a kiss?"

She shook her head. "Nope. No time. I'm on a mission here."

Melissa tugged his hips nearer to the bed's edge. "I need a good angle. My, what a big boy you are."

"Yeah. And I play better poker than you do." His voice squeaked as she feathered a touch on his erection.

"Umm. But I can do something that you can't."

"God. What?" he asked as his rod twitched.

"This."

She began licking his cock, trailing long lines from top to bottom and up again. Her hands spread his legs, giving her easier access to his balls. Melissa mouthed each one, rolling her tongue around the flesh. She then returned to his cockhead, pursing her lips over it and sucked gently as Jason groaned with pleasure. His penis jerked, and she wrapped her fingers around it to keep it still.

Jason reached down and pushed her head down the shaft. She opened her mouth wide, sliding it in and out as she took him as deeply as she could.

"Oh, God. Stop. Hurry. I need to fuck you now," he begged.

Melissa got up and Jason quickly donned his condom. He pushed her onto the bed and she needed no invitation to open wide for him.

One quick shove had him encased in her warmth, her wetness making it easy for him to pump faster and faster. He used one arm to hold him up over her as the fingers of his other hand found her clit and massaged it with a furious passion.

They climaxed together, moans of fulfillment filling the air with each shaking movement.

#### Strip Poker for Two

He wrapped his arms around her and held tightly as he lifted her, still encased in her cunt, so he could change places with her. Melissa dangled her legs over his knees as he sat on the bed. She raised and lowered her body, loving the full feeling of having Jason inside her.

"Don't move just yet. I wanna stay like this a little longer." Melissa lifted one breast and held it in place for his mouth.

She knew what she wanted in life. She'd told him so before. Love. Family. Career.

But this, this wonderful, satisfying sense of lovemaking to surpass anything she'd ever dreamed about or experienced, hadn't been mentioned. Jason inside her. At her breast. Making her feel like a complete woman. His woman. And him, her man.

Her mind wandered into dangerous territory as her heart more and more became his. Jason had strolled back into her life, swept her off her feet, and made her forget the damn contest. The only thing that mattered now was being with him, loving him, pleasuring him as he pleasured her.

She sighed with contentment.

Jason released her breast and she leaned in to kiss him. After a few sweet kisses, he helped raise her body off his and sprawled backward on his bed. "Woman, you wear me out. I'm sure gonna miss you."

Melissa stood still. He laid in blissful contentment while her body constricted with pain. Miss her? He was leaving?

## **Chapter Six**

"Are you going somewhere?" she said in a troubled tone tainted by anger, panic, and hurt. Or, was it frightening sorrow at the thought of losing him?

Jason stood up and strolled over to grab a robe hanging on a hook attached to his closet door. "Yeah. Gotta go where I'm sent. I have three days of meetings to go to. Can't tell you much more. You know the military." He shrugged into his robe. "Trips happen."

Those old negative feelings and memories about military life crept back into her head and shivers careened down her body. Constant trips. Secret visits. Families left to take care of themselves without their husband and father. Like her life had been.

"Where are you going?" she asked in a voice that echoed the emptiness filling her heart, the dull ache pitting in her stomach.

"You're cold. Want a blanket?" He avoided her question with one of his own.

She began grabbing her clothes. "No. I'll just get dressed." She averted her glance, not wanting him to see the hurt and anger warring inside her that surely he'd see in her eyes. "You're going where?"

"Hon, you know sometimes things can't be discussed. This is one of those times." He walked over to her and bent down to place a kiss on her closed lips. "If I told you, I'd have to kill you," he teased.

Not finding it a bit amusing, Melissa ignored his attempt at making a joke and donned her sweater and slacks. She decided to throw the bra and thong in her purse to allow her to leave more quickly and before he had a chance to touch her again.

"Can I ask when you'll be back?"

Icicles dripped from her question. What the hell had happened? Jason tied his robe and padded out after her as she left his bedroom. He watched in confusion as she pulled on her socks and jammed her feet into her shoes.

"What's going on? I'll be back for the party on Saturday. That much I can tell you." He tried once again to keep things light.

A look of anger aimed directly at him. She trembled slightly then seemed to get control of herself before speaking.

"You're leaving. That's what the military does. Moves you here. Moves you there. Secret trips. Families left alone. I-" Her voiced trailed off and tears glistened in her eyes.

#### Strip Poker for Two

Jason wanted to take her in his arms but the minute he took a step toward her she backed away. "Yes. This is all part of military life. But civilian jobs get pretty involved with traveling, too. Hell. My dad was gone almost every other week. We coped. Learned to adjust. Are you mad at me?"

Sadness covered her face. "No. Just at myself." She wiped a tear skirting down her cheek. "We're just having fun together. You said it before. No ties. No commitments." She grabbed her coat and purse. "I'm at fault here. Got my mind thinking too far ahead about a relationship."

Jason raced to the front door to block her exit. "Hold on. I *want* a relationship with you. I've wanted it since we were kids. We're good together and not just the sex part." He wrapped his arms around her and gave her a crushing hug.

"I'm not sure about what I want now." She sighed. "We've had a wonderful time but it's late. I've gotta go."

"I'll see you on Saturday, right? I won't get in until right before party time so I'll meet you at Gina's. Please say you'll miss me. I plan to call you every night and I'd like to know you'll answer the phone." He skimmed his hands along her body. "I'll miss you. What else can I do?" he pleaded.

Two things popped into Melissa's brain. Well, three. One, underwear. Two, the note. And three, debating all the pros and cons of a possible future with Jason. The last one would take time to sort out but right now she was pushing thoughts of any relationship to the recesses of her mind and concentrating on herself first. And that meant the contest and getting away from all men for beach time in Hawaii.

"I, uh, left something in your bedroom. Be right back."

Melissa practically jogged out of the room hoping Jason wouldn't follow. She spied his shorts, grabbed them, and stuffed them in her coat pocket. Jason had remained at the door.

"I'll miss you terribly. Are we still friends?"

Friends. Not lovers. Not committed to each other. That generalized, sterile word "friends". "Yes," she answered with a forced smile.

"I can't lose you, Melissa. I could always work at writing a tuba serenade in my free time in the next few days and surprise you when I get back." Mischief danced in his eyes.

"While that sounds thrilling," she uttered with total sarcasm, "how about writing a letter to me and tell me all the things you liked about our time together and what you'd like to do to me when you get back."

She toyed with the ties of his robe and undid them. Melissa used a hand to grab his cock and squeezed and it instantly swelled and stiffened. She glanced at his face. "This is to say goodbye for now and stay safe."

Melissa knelt before him and he gasped as she shoved his now erect shaft into her mouth. She reached around to his buttocks and pulled him closer, listening to his moans as she moved her mouth faster and faster.

"God, baby. Suck it harder," he pleaded with desperation in his tone.

She did as he asked, enjoying the power she had over him. To heighten his arousal, she gently bit his aroused flesh and dug her fingernails into his ass cheeks.

"I'm gonna come. Pull away fast." His body shook and she knew only seconds remained before he'd lose control.

Melissa remained kneeling, ready to take him all the way to ejaculation, and clamped her mouth over his throbbing cock. He exploded inside her with wave after wave of release. As he bucked, she held firmly onto his rear end and applied sucking pressure along his penis.

She took it all, tasting and swallowing, the pungent flavor of his semen filling her mouth. Melissa raised her eyes up at him and noted a look of pure bliss covered his face. He put her head in his hands and shifted it back and forth along his shaft, eager to prolong his pleasure. She obliged, not willing to let go of her prize too quickly.

Licking him clean, she swallowed the last bit of cum and slid her mouth off him.

Jason helped her up. "Thanks, sweetie. Will you always say goodbye to me like that? I'll have to go on more trips." His words came out amid his rapid breathing. "Should I say goodbye to you now?"

Desire and want filled her heart. But she needed to escape and figure out what she really wanted from him or what she'd accept.

"That was a little something extra for you." She pulled his head down to kiss him. I really have to go."

She tried to open the door but he blocked her way. "Uh, aren't you forgetting something? I drove you here."

"Oh. Right. Well, Captain, go get dressed and take me home."

She smiled at him and he headed for the bedroom. Her heart missed a beat as she thought about his underwear. The pair hidden in her coat pocket. What if he asked her about it?

"Babe," he said as he walked to the door in his jeans and sweater. Damndest thing. I must've kicked my hearts shorts under the bed. Sorry I took so long but I had to get another pair to put on." He laughed and put on his socks and shoes.

"Yes, that is funny." Melissa forced a laugh and hoped he'd forget about them completely.

\* \* \* \* \*

"So, all set for Saturday night?" Gina confronted Nancy and Melissa during their lunch break the next day.

"Sure. And Allan's even a gentleman in bed. Big hands to match an equally marvelously enormous penis." Nancy sighed and a look of contentment covered her face.

"Hey. No stories yet." Melissa winked at her. "But I'm glad you two still aren't virgin daters."

"Hell, no. We fixed that last night and he worships me in or out of bed." She frowned. Maybe I could get to like this lady treatment and forget my wild and crazy cravings from before. I could train him, you know. Gradually get him to try something new to spice up our fucking."

Gina rolled her eyes up in disapproval. "Can't you just enjoy normal sex? Sounds like that's what he wants."

Nancy pondered her question. "Maybe. I don't know for sure." She dropped back into her chair. "It's weird, but when I'm with him, I don't want to share him with anyone else. Not even to screw in public and have others watch."

Melissa put down her sandwich and wiped her mouth with her napkin. "You're getting older. Changing. Thinking long-term affair."

"Me?" Nancy bolted upright and rested her arms on the table. "Is that what I want?"

"Could be, honey. Sounds that way to us," Gina added.

"What about you and Adam? Get him into bed yet?" Melissa asked.

A flush covered Gina's face. "Good Lord. I never knew how much a man could please me. Tony was nothing compared to Adam. The man always thinks of my pleasure first. Asks lots of questions about what I want, is he satisfying me enough." She inhaled deeply and let out a sigh. "If I knew a younger man would be this pliable, I'd have divorced Tony years ago and hunted for one."

All three laughed. Melissa continued to finish her lunch as the other two stared at her.

"Well? Still enjoying Dimples?" Nancy questioned.

Melissa swallowed and mentioned, "Yes. We're good friends. He told me so. Anyway, he'll be gone until your party," she nodded to Gina, "so I won't see him until Saturday." She took a sip of her iced tea.

"Friends? Isn't there more going on?" Gina asked.

To avoid any prolonged explanation, Melissa waved for their waitress so she could bring them their bill. "Seems we haven't figured that out yet," she answered with a heavy heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

Melissa dropped her coat and bag on her sofa, peering at the fireplace. Not long ago she'd sat before its blazing heat with Jason. Everywhere she looked something

reminded her of him. She strolled into her bedroom, inhaling deeply. She hadn't changed the sheets since they'd made love and swore his scent still remained in the air.

On her dresser lay his hearts underwear, her entry for the contest. She picked it up and rubbed the silky material along her cheek. Oh, yes. It smelled of Jason's all-male scent.

The phone rang and startled her. She picked it up and plopped down onto her bed.

"Hello, dear. I just wanted to check up on you."

Her mother's voice warmed her soul. Melissa glanced at Jason's shorts still being dangled in her other hand and she quickly put them behind her.

"Mom. I'm fine. How about you guys?"

"We're fine and you're not. I can tell just by listening to you. What's wrong?"

Yep. Her mother always could when she was troubled. "It's Dimples. Jason." She flopped backward onto the bed. "I don't know what to do." She let out an exaggerated sigh.

"Are you still anti-military? I thought we discussed this last time."

Melissa threw one arm across her forehead. "I'm not anti-military. Oh, I don't know. I want him. He seems to want me and -"

"He's loved you for a long time, Melissa."

"Huh? How would you know?"

"I have a confession. Gina's mother told me. We always talk and she's told me all about him. I never mentioned anything to you because I didn't know if you'd ever be anywhere together."

"Mom. You should've told me last time we talked. Shit," she swore into the phone, "why is he making this so difficult?"

"I love you but don't swear. Now. Do you love him? Simple answer. Yes or no." Leave it to her mother to get down to business.

"Yes."

The admission came spontaneously. No thinking was involved. Her heart told her brain what to say. No debating took place. She *did* love him.

"You're confusing me then. What exactly is the problem if you love each other?"

"He hasn't told me. And I haven't told him. And now he's gone for three days and - "

"So tell him when he gets back. Melissa. Love travels. You can be in love and make it work in Virginia. D.C. Alaska. Somewhere overseas. Just be honest with each other."

Honesty. Melissa groaned as she remembered the shorts she'd stolen and plans to use his note to win the contest. "You don't think it'll be 'outta sight, outta mind'?"

Her mother laughed. "After all these years of hearing how he loved you it's more like 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'. Or were you referring to you and how you feel?"

#### Strip Poker for Two

"No, mom. I love him and miss him even though he just left today. Isn't it crazy though? We've only started seeing each other a few days. That can't be enough time to really know if you're in love, can it?"

Her mother sighed. "How many times did I tell you the story about how after the first day I met your father I told my mother I'd marry him? And then did six months later? Sometimes it happens that quickly. And I think you've never admitted to yourself that you really did like him back in school."

Melissa closed her eyes and reached behind her for Jason's shorts. She massaged the material between her thumb and fingers. She had to admit that as a frightened, early teenager she *had* been flattered by his attention. She'd only dumped Jason and said she'd wanted someone else to avoid the jokes others made about him and his infatuation of her. Damn that tuba.

"You're so wise. How do I get along without you?"

"Sweetie, you already knew all this and just needed to bounce it off me and have me say it aloud. If you love him, don't let him go. Period. End of story. Now, I need to go. You're father's taking me to dinner. Something to do with a new restaurant attached to a military museum. I don't know how he finds all these places but Lord knows, there's enough retired military in Florida for these places to pop up."

Melissa ended their conversation and called off the battle raging in her head. Her mother was right. She wanted him, loved him. And she would do everything in her power to keep him.

She took a shower and enjoyed the warm steady stream of water that caressed her body. That made her think of Jason and his strong, heated hands caressing her body. As she dried her hair, the phone rang again.

"Hi, sexy lady."

Jason's low growl made her smile. Are you okay?"

"Sure," he huffed. "Just real tired. It's been a long day and lots of time spent traveling."

"I had a pretty busy day at work. Scheduled quite a few trips. Seems like cold weather here makes people want to escape to somewhere warmer."

"I'd be lots warmer inside you. Can you schedule that?" he drawled.

"I'll see what I can do when you get back and *if* I'm available. I have such a hectic dating schedule that I-"

"No you don't. I'm listed for all your days. Didn't you see I penciled myself in on your calendar?" he teased.

"I have a calendar? Where?"

"It's a head calendar. We date. We make love. We do things together. We make love. We eat. We make love. You getting the picture? It is okay with you, isn't it?"

"I'll let you know when you get back," she purred.

#### April Ash

"Hmm. In the meantime, I've been writing this note to you but it's turning into a book at this point. I've decided to write down every moment we've spent together, what we did, what I want to do in the future."

Crap. *He's writing the contest entry.* "You don't need to do that. I just meant that —"

"No, no. I want to. Keeps my memory fresh and my creative juices flowing thinking of things I want to do for you. And what you can do for me." He breathed loudly into the phone. "Shit. Just talking to you has me hard."

"Want help? I owe you," she said with a lusty tone.

"This'll be fast. I'm stiff and ready just hearing your voice."

Melissa took a deep breath before speaking. "Close your eyes. Put your hand on your cock and remember my hand being there, my mouth closing around the tip. Now I take tiny little nips and then swivel my tongue around so I can taste you."

Heavy breathing accompanied his plea. "Don't stop."

"You're starting to buck, trying to get me to take all of you into my mouth. But I'm just starting. I lick my way up and down your shaft. Can you feel me? How wet I'm making you?"

"God. Yes," he moaned.

Her own breathing quickened and Melissa thrust her hand between her legs to find her clit. "I fondle your balls as I work my way up to the head. It's moist, waiting for my lips, my mouth."

Melissa found her nub and pinched it repeatedly between her thumb and finger. Almost out of breath she continued, "Oh, God. You're so ready for me. I take you in my mouth and suck, faster and faster I go-"

That's as far as she got as he mumbled, "Yes," with a series of groans and she skyrocketed to a wonderful orgasm.

Neither talked for a minute as both panted into the phone.

"Babe, that's the best obscene phone call I've ever listened to," Jason laughed.

"Hmm. Listen to many?" she quipped.

"Nah. Just yours. I hate to run after such a wonderful time, but I've gotta get some sleep and get up in a few hours." He sighed. "Miss you, Melissa."

"And I miss you too."

"I'll call tomorrow. Will you talk dirty to me again?" he teased.

"We'll see. I'm trying to come up with a way we can play strip poker over the phone. Any ideas?"

He bellowed with laughter. "You are something else. I'll have to think about that and we'll discuss it tomorrow. I wanna write one more thing in my now novel for you and then I'll hit the shower and go to bed."

"Alone?" she whispered.

"With thoughts only of you."

#### Strip Poker for Two

Jason hung up and she turned off her cell phone. She loved talking to him and knowing they'd climaxed together. The only thing keeping her from truly enjoying the moment had to do with his writing the damn note – now book as he called it – per her request.

That brought to mind the stupid contest and all it entailed. She wanted him and not because of any idiotic game.

But she'd stolen his underwear. How could she explain that?

\* \* \* \* \*

Jason rested on his bed, totally spent after having her talk him through a session of self-relief. He knew she'd been playing with herself, matching his breathing rhythm. He wanted her. Years ago. Now. Tomorrow. Always.

But she'd backed up at times, mentioning misgivings about military life. Any woman he'd marry had to accept his career and harbor no regrets.

A catch in his breathing had him focusing on the word "marry". As in to Melissa. Forever together.

He smiled, wondering how she'd react to his updating his future plans. Now they'd include her if she'd have him. Hell. He'd always loved her no matter how hard he'd tried to forget her over the years.

Strip poker over the phone? She'd tantalize him, make him crave to please her and play her games of seduction and foreplay. Her amusing ideas promising lust-filled possibilities would keep him on the edge of every minute of their lives.

One thing troubled him and he just couldn't figure it out. When he'd taken her home last night, he'd gotten a glimpse of his hearts underwear – the ones he couldn't find when he'd gotten dressed – hanging out of her coat pocket.

Why'd she take them? Was it a trophy kinda thing? He shook his head. No. That would be too weird.

A thought popped into his head. Had to be the reason she'd stolen his shorts.

Melissa wanted something of him to hang onto while he was gone. Yes. That had to be it. She'd probably been too shy to ask.

Shy? After they'd roamed all over and in and out of each other's bodies?

He got up and stretched. Too much thinking over a simple pair of shorts. Maybe she figured he'd laugh or something if she'd asked for them.

"Shit." He glanced down and confirmed his cock's rapid hardening. Just having her stroll through his head made him want her again.

To hell with the underwear. He'd give her all she wanted, anytime she wanted them.

"Damn. Cold shower," he ordered himself, musing over her choice of keepsake. Hell. She'd picked them out. Kinda made them hers to begin with anyway. That had to be her reason to keep them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Melissa held up her hand as Nancy and Gina approached her as soon as she got to work. "No, you two. No stories of romps in bed. I have work to do and I need to concentrate." She purposely strutted to her desk like a woman with a mission, sat down, and tried to appear completely absorbed in the papers strewn across the desk.

"Nance, I think our friend here is going through withdrawal. Jason's away and that means only one thing—no sex." Gina chuckled, walked behind Melissa, and massaged her shoulders.

"I guess we can't gloat and tell her we both got very lucky last night. No big details, mind you. Just that we got laid." Nancy added her comment while she slid some papers along the desk to make room for her rear end.

Melissa aimed a glare at Nancy and then grabbed Gina's hands and moved them away. "While I'm utterly pleased you both enjoyed yourselves, save those stories. I really need to take care of some things here so I can leave work early."

"Why? What's up?" Nancy hopped off the desk.

"Jason said he'd call and I want to be sure I'm home when he does," she sighed.

Nancy and Gina exchanged glances and burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?" Anger tainted Melissa's question.

"You love him. Just like you did in school. Picking up from there and racing to play catch-up after all these years." Gina winked and laughed again.

"Go away. Both of you. Or I'll tell Janet I'm doing all the work and you're bothering me." *Lord, do I sound pathetic or what?* 

"Nancy," Gina mentioned as they strolled away from Melissa's desk, "Melissa isn't playing nice with us. Let's leave her to sulk. Hey. I have an idea. I'll ask Jason to rent a tuba and play her a song when he gets back. That'll cheer her up," she giggled.

"Huh? I thought she craved sex and that's why she's so miserable," Nancy asked in a confused tone.

Melissa groaned, placed her arms on her desk, and lowered her head onto them. "You're both quickly becoming ex-friends," she mumbled.

\* \* \* \* \*

The day seemed to drag out for Melissa. Clients wanting to make travel arrangements and not understanding why at the last minute they couldn't get what they wanted. Then there were others wanting to change what they'd arranged, getting angry with her when she couldn't immediately meet their desires.

She knocked on Janet's door and entered before finally leaving that night.

"Uh, I need to talk to you about something. Is it okay if I close the door?"

Janet finished her call and waved Melissa in. "Sure. Sounds important."

Melissa dropped into a seat across from her boss. "Yeah, it's important to me."

"Go ahead," Janet urged.

"Well, it's about the contest you're judging on Monday."

Her eyebrows arched as confusion covered Janet's face. "And?"

Melissa sighed as she shrugged her shoulders and sank back into her seat. "Crap. Where do I begin?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Melissa's phone rang, waking her up out of a deep sleep. While at first disoriented, her brain finally cleared. She'd fallen asleep on her sofa as she waited all night for Jason's call. She grabbed for the ringing phone as she blinked her eyes to adjust to the one light she'd left on.

"Hello?" she mumbled into the phone.

"It's me."

She glanced at her watch. "It's three thirty. Are you all right?" Although upset that he hadn't called earlier, she couldn't help worrying about him. Her heart pounded in her chest as she tried to get her sleepy brain to remain focused.

"Sorry. I forgot what time it is there. Just didn't want you to think I forgot you." He blew out a deep breath. "You're the only thing that's keeping me sane this trip."

Melissa curled up against some pillows and willed her pulse to calm down. "Bad time? I can't wait to see you tomorrow. Wait. That's really tonight."

"Bad time, bad news, hon. I won't be home until Sunday. I miss you like hell."

The tiredness in his voice was evident. Disappointment surfaced on both sides of their call.

"I miss you too. Sat up waiting to hear from you." She lolled her head back against the sofa as her heart plummeted at his news.

"I'm so tired I could sleep standing up. Couldn't use my phone almost all day. Let's just say I had no service everywhere I went."

"I want you," she whispered while an ache at missing him filtered through her body.

"Same here. I can't really say much but I'll be back Sunday night. I know Gina wants to do that party thing, so see if she'll wait until then."

Melissa asked, "Too many people around you there?"

"Yep. Hon, I'm bushed. I've gotta get some sleep. I'll call tomorrow. Don't know when but I will. Is that okay?"

She cradled the phone as she hugged a pillow to her chest. "Uh-huh. I'll talk to Gina. Jason, I love you." There. She'd said it.

"Me. Too. I've felt that way since you wore those braces and skated circles around me like a ballerina."

Happiness and passion flooded her system. "Hmm. Braces. Ballerina. Tuba. Short guy. Yep. We should've gotten together back then."

He laughed. "G'nite, sweetie. Talk to you tomorrow."

With her heart full of love, she ended their call by saying, "I'll dream of you. 'Night, Dimples."

\* \* \* \* \*

A constant knocking on her door woke Melissa up from her attempt to sleep late Saturday morning. She yelled out, "Just a minute!" and stretched out the cramps that had settled in her body since she'd remained on the sofa after Jason's call.

She rubbed her eyes and ran fingers through her hair. Not that she planned to actually open her door, however. Peering through her door's peephole was all she figured would be needed. Melissa yawned, thinking it would be some tenant's child standing at her door, wanting to sell her something.

Padding her way to the door, she couldn't stop a smile forming on her face. Every child in her building knew she was a soft touch when it came to selling her something, especially if it was edible. She blinked her eyes before peeking through the peephole.

"Mother!" she cried out. What are you doing here?"

Her mother leaned closer to the door. "Well, if you'll open the door, I'll tell you."

With as much speed as she could muster given her brain and body still hadn't reached full coordination status, she unlocked the door to let her mother in.

"You look a mess. Are you ill? Why are you still sleeping at this hour?" Grace Foster bombarded her daughter with questions.

"Where's Daddy?" Melissa peered around her mother but couldn't see him.

Grace came inside and rolled her suitcase into the living room. "Your father's at home. I told him I needed to come." She gave her daughter a thorough once-over. "I was right. You *do* need your mother."

Melissa was enfolded in her mother's arms. She hugged her back. "What do you mean?" She shook her head to clear the sleepy cobwebs still taking residence in her brain. "I need you?"

Her mother gave her a no-nonsense glare that had always made her pay strict attention to what was about to be said. "First, I need to unpack. Second, you need to shower and dress. Third, we need to eat. And then we'll talk about Jason, the Army and why you think your life was so terrible. Or mine."

Like a whipped puppy, Melissa caved in to her mother's orders. There was no considering objecting to her mother's list of what would be done. And this way, Melissa would have the chance to really become fully alert to face her mother's questions, answers and advice.

"Yes, Mom. You take the extra bedroom. I'll just call Gina and tell her to postpone the party tonight."

"No, dear. I don't want to make you miss a party. Will Jason be there?" Grace's eyebrows arched as her interest in the topic became evident.

"He's on a trip and won't be back until tomorrow. That's why I want Gina to have her party on Sunday instead." *She's here two minutes and already got information outta me.* 

"Well I would think his cousin would feel the same way. Go ahead and call and then take that shower. Did you sleep in your clothes on a chair?"

Melissa rolled her eyes upward as she dragged her feet over to the phone. How did the woman know all about her night? Was it "mother radar" that made her so quick to figure everything out?

Grace went into the extra bedroom as Melissa dialed Gina's number.

"Hey. Can we postpone the party until tomorrow?" Melissa had no time to dawdle. Her mother would expect her showered, dressed, and ready to eat in no time.

"Huh? Something wrong?" Gina queried.

"Jason's delayed getting back. If the four of you wanna party, go ahead. I just thought and he asked me to ask you if -"

"Stop. Yes. I'll postpone it until tomorrow. Are you okay? You're rambling."

Melissa left out an audible huff. "My mother's here. Just arrived for a surprise visit."

"Uh-oh. What'd you do this time?" Gina jokingly asked.

"Nothing. Well, I did ask her about military life—"

"And she's here to straighten you out. I told you she and my mother talk all the time. They both know how he's felt about you. She's here to play matchmaker I'm betting."

"Gina, we don't need to be matched. We already are."

"Are you gonna tell her about the contest? The underwear? Where'd you put his shorts?"

Crap. "I washed them. They're drying in the bathroom. And she'll be heading in there any minute so I'm hanging up."

Melissa ended their call and raced to the bathroom but it was too late. Her mother was already inside. She slumped against the wall as her brain reeled with reasons she could use to explain Jason's hearts underwear drying in her bathroom. Everything she came up with sounded ridiculous so she figured she'd just have to tell the truth.

Scooting into her bedroom, she took off her clothes, put on her fluffy robe, and waited to have her turn in the bathroom. Her mother knocked on her door.

#### April Ash

"Melissa, I'm done in there now. You can shower. Oh. Don't worry. I moved the shorts to hang on the door hook so you won't get them wet."

That's all her mother said. Melissa listened for the sound of her mother's bedroom door closing before opening her door and racing into the bathroom. She closed the door behind her and leaned against it. Jason's shorts fell directly on her head.

\* \* \* \* \*

The more she listened to her mother talk about their life as a military family, the more Melissa recalled the things she'd enjoyed and how the negatives were outweighed by the positives.

Jason hadn't called all day, although Melissa jumped each time her phone rang as she longed to hear his voice. After her last call—one from Gina verifying their party time for the next night—she slumped back against her kitchen counter.

"He'll call. Stop moping." Grace gave her a hug. "It's nice to see you so in love with someone decent but I hate it when one of my babies is hurting."

"Decent? As in none of the others I've dated have been decent?"

Her mother stepped back and put on that all-knowing, parent look. "Maybe some. But that Mac," she titled her head up and sniffed, "not good enough for you. Neither your father nor I ever liked him. Too arrogant."

"How come you never said anything?" Melissa asked.

"Why? Would you have listened?"

Melissa hung her head. "Probably not. I thought I loved him and he loved me."

"Stop counting the tiles in the floor. Jason's a different story. Dependable. Stable. Loves you." She nodded to confirm her statement. "Got it all from Gina's mother. And she knows her family."

The ringing of her phone stopped Melissa before she had time to reply.

"Hello?"

"Hi, hon."

She couldn't help smiling at her mother. "I'm gonna go in the bedroom and talk."

Grace smiled back and went into the living room and turned on the TV.

Melissa hurried into her room, closed the door, and leaned against it. "I've missed you all day."

"Who's there with you? Not seeing one of your other boyfriends while I'm away, are you?"

A streak of jealousy? "Why? What will you do about it?" she teased.

"I'd be crushed. I love you. Told you so already." He inhaled deeply. "I know we've only been together a short time -"

"This time," she interrupted.

"Yes. *This* time, but I know what I want and it's you. I want to marry you. Don't answer now. It's too soon and I'm rushing you."

Melissa slid down the door. She loved him. Told her mother that all day. Told him that yesterday. Why wait?

"Yes." She sighed and a warm rush flowed throughout her body.

"Yes, what? I'm rushing you? It's too soon? You don't want to answer?" he sounded desperate as he spoke.

"Yes I'll marry you." She laughed as she confirmed what was in her heart. Her head might wonder if things were going too quickly but her heart never doubted what the answer would be and wouldn't take a chance on losing him.

"Thank God," he said with a lilt in his voice. "I miss seeing you, talking to you, loving you."

The vixen in her asked, "Wanna fool around? I have some time. Are you alone?"

"All alone and hard as a rock. But you're not alone."

"Oh. Yeah, but my mother's in the living room with the TV turned up real loud. She won't disturb me."

"Talk sex to me. Or have you figured out how to play strip poker by phone?" He gave a soft chuckle.

"Umm, pretend poker. If you follow the rules." Her mind whirled with ways to play their game.

"Tell me the rules. But make this fast."

"Take off your pants."

She listened as he unzipped his pants. "Gone. Now what?" he spoke in a hurried tone.

"What shorts are you wearing?" she purred.

"Hon, I'm on a mission. No fancy ones like someone we both know and love picked out for me."

"In that case, take them off now," she demanded.

He took thirty seconds before replying, "Gone. So far I've done all the work and what about poker?" he asked.

Melissa used one hand to pull off her pants along with her panties. "There. I've just removed my pants and underwear and I'm wet just waiting for you."

He groaned. "And now?" he pleaded.

She pulled up her sweater and bra. "I've pushed up my sweater and bra so my breasts are free. My nipples are puckering, waiting for your mouth to suck each one," she moaned as her breathing rate doubled.

"Poker? What?" he asked with urgency.

"You have three kings and two anything cards. I have three aces and two anything cards."

"And?"

"And first, we need to touch ourselves and make sure we're ready," she whispered. "Tell me what you're doing before I give you two more cards."

# **Chapter Seven**

Breathing heavily into the phone, Jason said, "I'm running my hand slowly up and down my cock. I'm so ready for you. The tip is wet, and I want your mouth there, lapping up the pre-cum."

Melissa moaned and she almost dropped the phone. "Wonderful."

"What are you doing, hon? Tell me now. Are you rubbing your clit, pushing your fingers in and out of your pussy? Getting ready for my mouth, my cock to ram into you?"

"I'm so wet and waiting. I'm pinching each nipple and they point out, waiting for your mouth."

"Deal the damn cards. I'm almost there," he pleaded.

"You, uh get two threes." She stroked her clit with increasing speed and spread her legs wider. "I get another ace and a king."

"Good. I lose." You go first, babe. I hear you panting and ready. Go faster. Make that pussy burn for me. I want to taste those flowing juices after I suck your nipples until you writhe with pleasure. Go faster. Stroke harder, hurry—"

Melissa's orgasm had her knocking against the door. She somehow had enough presence of mind to will her body to the floor and away from banging on the wood. She repeated, "Yes, oh yes," into the phone as wave after wave of pleasure soared through her.

"Me, babe. Oh, now," Jason grunted.

"I want it in my mouth, and I'd pump up and down, faster and faster. The tip is smooth and I nip at it right before I suck hard. I keep it held between my teeth as I suck and you-"

"God," he cried out.

After a few seconds her breathing slowed down and Jason finally spoke again. "Lucky thing I had the shorts to use otherwise I'd be spurting all over."

"I love how you taste."

With a sexy drawl he replied, "I love tasting you too, darlin'."

She sat back up against the door. "I'm thinking we have to try something like honey or chocolate or more cream again. You know. Something to spice up our sex life. Don't want you to get bored," she giggled.

"Never. Shit. I want you again right now."

"Umm. Me too. Tomorrow. I mean, even though we'll be at the party and my mother will be there, I think we can sneak off somewhere and -"

"And I can fuck you in private. Hey. There's a laundry room down Gina's hallway. Need a key to get in."

She couldn't help laughing. "Uh, Captain Jason? And how do we keep people from coming in to do their laundry?"

"Easy. You write a sign that says 'Out of Order. Use laundry facilities downstairs' and I'll get the key. We won't need the lights on. I know where your parts are."

"Sounds like an Army plan for a secret meeting. And," she uttered, "I know where your strategic body part is and can feel my way there."

"Don't wear underwear. It'll make things go faster," he suggested in a sexy tone.

"I won't if you won't."

"Deal. No undies for either of us. I hate to end this but I've gotta leave."

"I know. I understand. Really I do. And I love you."

"Love you more. We're gonna hafta get serious about planning a future when I get back."

"Whatever you say, Captain. I'll see you tomorrow at Gina's. Party starts at seven."

He cleared his throat before speaking. "I'll be there. You be there. Smile nice at everyone. Chat politely. We'll slip away and tell people we're going for ice, beer, cake, whatever. Have that sign made and bring tape. I'll steal the key."

"Yes, sir." She closed her eyes and let happy visions of seeing him again flood her mind. His body. His arms around her. Making love once again.

"Our codename is poker. Time is twenty-one hundred. Mission is sex. Got it?"

"I'm saluting right now. Yes, sir," she answered before ending their call.

Melissa got up and quickly managed to get her clothing back in order. She fussed with her hair a few seconds and spritzed on some perfume before opening her door.

"Mom? Ready to go for dinner? I'm starved." She lightly sprinted into the living room and grabbed her coat and purse.

A puzzled look crossed Grace's face before she shrugged. "I've been hungry all day. You're the one who kept saying you didn't want much to eat." She put on her coat. "Guess talking to Jason helped your mood."

"Mom," Melissa mentioned as they left her apartment, "you're definitely right."

\* \* \* \* \*

"About time you got here," Gina announced as Melissa and her mother entered Gina's apartment.

"Mom wanted to stop and buy something to bring even though I made my famous banana bread. She had to add something from her." Melissa tried to hide the minor irritation dwelling inside her. Their trip to the store had made them late. Guilt assailed her senses and she felt instant relief realizing her mother hadn't heard her comment. "Where's Jason?" Melissa asked quickly after doing a preliminary search of the hallway entrance leading into the living room.

"Well hello to you too. Take off your coat and head into the kitchen. I'll take care of your mother."

Melissa practically flew into the kitchen, graciously waving to Nancy, Allan and Adam who were being introduced to her mother. Jason gave her a big grin as she walked into the room.

"You're late. I thought you'd run off or something," he teased as he cut Gina's lasagna into portions and then put down the knife.

"No. Just got mother-sidetracked." She moved over to him and he folded her into his arms. "You smell good. Something like Italian and aftershave mixed together. Powerful combination."

"I taste like lasagna. Been sampling Gina's masterpiece." He squeezed her tighter in his arms.

"Give me a sample." She raised her head.

"I'd have to let go to grab a forkful for you," he quipped as laughter twinkled in his eyes.

"A kiss will do," she suggested.

Jason crushed her lips against his, and all the hunger they'd stored up for each other took over their actions. Tongues darted in and out of each other's mouths. Melissa placed her hands behind his head and pressed closer, trying to keep their kiss from ending. He responded by using one hand to slip under the elastic waistband of her pants and cupped one cheek. His other hand fumbled under the hem of her sweater and swept a path to a breast. He squeezed and she moaned into his mouth.

She lowered one hand and caressed his cock as it pressed against the material of his slacks. Heavy breathing from both of them filled the air signaling a need for satisfying, pleasuring each other. She lost all sense of time.

"Uh, I hate to interrupt you two but the only one allowed to have sex in my kitchen is me. Joining you two isn't on my agenda. I've got my hunk out there. Anyway, people are getting hungry," Gina informed them with a chuckle.

Both stepped away from each other as Gina unsuccessfully tried to control her amused reaction. Melissa glared at her but nothing stopped her friend from enjoying the moment. Jason blushed, probably embarrassed at being caught by his cousin.

"Don't talk, you two. Get yourselves decent and carry in the food." Gina glanced at Jason. "You might want to wear an apron or something," she giggled as she grabbed a tray of food and left the room.

"Shit." Jason ran a hand through his hair as he lowered his gaze to his unmistakable bulge. How will I hide that?"

Melissa looked around. "Grab that big tray with the long sides. It'll hide what's waiting for me."

"Woman, are you trying to make things worse?" he groaned. He pressed back on his zippered area, took the tray and walked into the living room.

Melissa carried another tray and followed.

"Hey, Jason. Sit down and relax. You had a long trip home," Gina suggested in a casual tone and winked at him and Melissa.

Introductions were made and soon everyone was talking about jobs, places they'd been, and all the food they were eating. Melissa found herself surprisingly impressed by both Adam and Allan.

Adam fitted right in. He didn't shy away as some younger men might have done. He spoke intelligently and aimed loving looks at Gina. She in turn basked in his compliments and attention.

Jason seemed curious about Allan's job and Melissa realized she'd misjudged him. He spoke to Jason not only about work but also of the time he'd spent in the Army. Their connection and Adam's interest in the military posts the men had been to kept the conversation flowing.

Grace caught up with Gina's family and seemed to enjoy finding out all about Nancy. Nancy listened intently to everything the women said to each other but never let her eyes stray too far from Allan. Occasionally, Melissa saw him turn to Nancy and quirk a one-cornered smile. She sighed like a teenager in love with her first crush.

Jason kept peeking at his watch and then would steal a glance at Melissa. She took peeks at the clock hanging on the wall. The food had been wonderful, the company, pleasant.

However, when nine o'clock came, she was ready for action. Everyone helped bring the dishes and trays back into the kitchen. Once there and things had been cleaned up, Jason announced, "Gina, Melissa and I will just go run out and get more ice. We won't be long."

He winked at Melissa and they both looked at a confused Gina.

"Uh, okay. Don't take too long. Wouldn't want the ice to melt." A wide grin cracked her face as she apparently figured out something other than ice would be involved.

"Be back soon, everyone." Jason nodded to the others, Melissa grabbed her coat and purse, and they rushed out of the apartment.

"Key?" she questioned as they hurried down the hallway.

"Yep. Note and tape?"

She opened her purse. "Here." She thrust them at him.

He taped the sign on the door and unlocked it.

She grabbed a small towel out of her oversized purse and held it up for him to see. "I didn't want either of us to get cold butts, depending on where we land," she informed him. She then dropped her purse and coat by the door.

#### Strip Poker for Two

"Smart thinking, although I can just take you standing up, right now." He checked out the room. "There's some light coming in through that window and I want to see you. Let's head for that table," he ordered as he gently pushed her in the right direction. "Will you be cold?"

"No. It's warm in here. Pants and shoes off, Dimples." As an afterthought, she added, "You can leave the socks and sweater on."

Jason kicked off his shoes, unzipped his slacks and pushed them down his body. He picked them up and placed them on the edge of a counter. He grabbed a condom from his pocket and held it in his hand. When he turned to face her, his shaft swung in her direction and pointed straight at her.

"Get those damn pants and shoes off, lady. Socks can stay if you're wearing them." The gruffness in his voice expressed his urgent need.

Melissa shucked off her shoes, removed her pants and placed them near his. "Socks will stay on. What's your pleasure?" she murmured.

"Top up or off. But I need to suck your breasts. Now."

She gave him an order. "Captain Jason, remove my sweater. You need to work before having fun."

He took the edges of her sweater and pulled it up and over her head. Her breasts tingled in the cooler air and swayed just a tiny bit. He moaned as he bent his head and pulled a nipple into his mouth.

"Don't forget the other one. They both missed you," she whispered and drew his head away from one breast and closer to the other.

Jason teased first one then the other nipple and laved each with his tongue. Moving his head upward, he captured her lips and nibbled on them before asking, "Where and which way? You're giving the orders."

She wiggled her hips enticingly as she sauntered over to a chair, grabbed it and ambled back to him. "Press your rear end against the table. And put your hands on top of it."

He did what she said. His mind reeled with want, need to be inside her, taste her. His cock twitched as he realized what was in store.

"Stay still. Don't push. I'm doing all the work now. And don't come until I say we're ready."

He spread his legs apart, wanting to give her full access to his genitals. She pushed the chair in front of him and sat, inches away from his body. She ran her fingers along his thighs and brushed against his balls. They tightened with desire, and his shaft bounced by her face.

His pulse raced and his heart pounded in his chest. "In your mouth, please," he begged.

"Shh. I'm in control." She wiggled her eyebrows and nipped the skin of each ball.

#### April Ash

Control. That's what he needed. Secret missions were nothing compared to foreplay with Melissa.

She reached around him and made sure his rear end rested on the table. Tiny pinches were given to each cheek as she licked each thigh. He heard her pant and knew their game tonight would go quickly.

Taking him by surprise, she grasped his cock with both hands and shoved it into her mouth. She took him in deeply and ran her tongue along its length. Melissa moved her head back and forth and he felt the tip hit the roof of her mouth. Groans escaped his lips.

She took his shaft out of her mouth and flicked small tongue taps at the head. His need became stronger and he struggled with the desire to shove his cock into her mouth and climax.

Melissa released him and stood. "It's your turn to sit. I'll need the towel to put on the table or my fanny will be too cold." She smiled and swayed like an alley cat on the prowl.

He took her place on the chair, happy to be off his feet before his legs buckled under the strain of being pleasured. She put the towel on the table and hopped onto it. Then she spread her legs wide before him and leaned back on her elbows.

"I'm wet and waiting for you."

Jason lost no time in opening his condom and rolling it onto his cock. He spread her waiting lips and mouthed his way around her pussy. He lapped, bit, and tongued every inch as he felt her wiggle. She shoved her body forward, pushing his face further into her. Her clit beaded perfectly, and he sucked and stroked it.

Her moans became louder and more urgent. "Now, Jason. Oh, now. Fuck me."

Jason stood and lifted her off the table. Almost breathless he said, "We can either do it on the chair or you lean over the table. Lady's choice. But make it a fast one."

She turned her back to him and bent over the table leaving her ass and pussy at his disposal. Her legs spread wide, Melissa edged toward the end of the table. "Now," she commanded.

He stood behind her and angled his cock to enter her in one big thrust. Melissa lifted her body for better leverage and he grabbed her around the waist to keep her from sliding.

Faster and faster he shoved in and out and the only sounds in the room came from the grunts interspersed with their heavy breathing. He came inside her, shaking them both. But he realized she hadn't climaxed.

"Sorry, babe. I just couldn't wait." He pulled out and turned her around to sit on the table once more.

She lay back on the table moaning and he lifted her legs over his shoulders before delving into her slit. Jason sucked her clit harder and harder until she writhed in wave after wave of orgasmic pleasure. He removed her legs from his shoulders and sat back, satiated. "I could do this all night but I think we'll be missed if we don't get back soon." He tried to calm his breathing.

Her legs dangled over the table's edge and she got up on her elbows. "People? You want me to face people again? I only want you," she pouted.

"Hon, we gotta go. Your mother's there and I don't want her to come looking for us."

That dampened any wanton ideas Melissa had rampaging through her head. "Oh. Right. I missed you so."

"I know. Me too. But we better hurry."

They used the towel to wipe off and Melissa threw it into a trashcan. "We have lots of things to talk about," she said as they got dressed. "The future." What had he planned for them?

"We're getting married. We'll have a family. We'll move." He stopped and stared at her. "You understand how our life will be? We can live anywhere, love anywhere, as long as we're together."

She sighed and then smiled. "I know. I understand. Had a long talk with my mother and went through the positives and negatives. It's funny how I didn't remember all the good times we had as a military family. Somehow I dwelled only on the negatives, maybe out of fear of the unknown."

Jason helped her into her coat. "No unknowns between us. Just complete honesty, trust, and no secrets—unless it's one of my missions. I love you. Always have, always will."

Melissa's heart warmed at his declaration of love. "And I'll always love you."

A sudden feeling of guilt crammed her brain and she knew she'd have to come clean about the stupid contest. No secrets. He wanted honesty and so did she. "Jason, there is one thing I need to talk to you about."

"Are you already married? A serial killer? Spy?" he quipped.

"No."

"Then it'll wait until tomorrow. We really gotta go or your mother will think I kidnapped you."

As they walked down the hallway to Gina's, Melissa figured one more day of keeping her contest secret would have to do. Love had entered her life and nothing would spoil her fun or future with Jason. She'd explain it all to him the next day.

They knocked on Gina's door and she opened it. "About time, you two. Don't you know a quickie is supposed to be fast?" she whispered as they stepped inside.

Melissa took off her coat. "We went for *ice*. We'll tell everyone the machine was broken and we couldn't find another store."

"Never mind, sinners. See that melting bag over there? I put some ice in it and you can carry it inside."

They went into the living room and Melissa frowned at her mother. "Mom? What are you doing?"

Grace focused her attention on her daughter and grinned. "Oh, I brought some pictures of you from middle school. Had Gina's aunt send some to Gina so she could print them off. We all wanted to see you three as teenagers."

Melissa groaned and Jason went into a coughing fit. Gina stuck out her tongue at both of them.

"Mother! I'm sure no one wants to see those."

Nancy, Allan and Adam went into hysterics. Grace nodded at them. See? They've been enjoying them while you went for *ice*."

Embarrassment flooded Melissa's system and she felt a wave of heat rush up her cheeks. They'd guessed about the ice. They were looking at her pictures. And Jason's. She turned to see his reaction as he'd stopped coughing.

Instead of watching the others, his concentration seemed focused near the TV. "Gina, what the hell is that?"

With an air of innocence, Gina replied, "Has it been that long and you don't recognize a tuba when you see one?"

Everyone in the room laughed except Jason and Melissa. She stood with her gaze transfixed on the tuba and he aimed a look to kill at his cousin.

"And why is there a tuba in your home? Taking up a new hobby?" he asked sarcastically.

Grace interrupted his assault on his cousin. "No, Jason. Actually it was your mother's idea. She thought we could surprise you and have one here tonight for you to play for us."

All but Jason and Melissa yelled, "Surprise!"

Jason dropped into a nearby chair and wiped his hand across his face. Melissa placed her hands on her hips and glared at her mother.

"You talked to his mother?"

"I talked to Gina's mother and she had his mother call me and –"

Melissa aimed an apologetic look at Jason. "Whose tuba is it? Jason doesn't have a mouthpiece to use." Where the hell did that come from? I remember him talking about the damn thing?

"Gina bought a new mouthpiece and the tuba's borrowed from one of Adam's soccer kids," her mother went on to explain.

Adam had the good sense to blush and Nancy just glanced around the room as if she'd had nothing to do with the tuba conspiracy.

"Maybe he doesn't want to play." Melissa glared at all of them and got nothing but grins in return.

"Well, I promised we'd have Jason play for us since his mother went through all that trouble sending those pictures and she wants one with him and the tuba now so-"

"Mother. You're giving me a headache." Melissa turned toward Jason who'd been silent all this time. "Jason?" she pleaded. It really was his call.

He rose from his chair. "Mrs. Foster, for you and my mother I'll play something. But I need some music to follow so I can join in."

"Gotcha covered, coz. Your mother told me what your favorite band song was," Gina quickly mentioned as she got up and pushed a CD into the player. "Allan burned this song into a CD for me."

Allan shrugged and appeared remorseful before Nancy caressed his arm and said, "Thanks, sweetie."

Jason closed his eyes and slumped as if resignation had set in. "Damn." He glanced at Melissa's mother. "Sorry, ma'am." He got up and lumbered over to the tuba. "Gina? It's not what I think it is, right?"

Gina giggled and couldn't contain a laughing fit that exploded from her. "Uh-huh. Even Melissa knows our middle school's fighting song."

Melissa sank into the nearest seat without any semblance of grace. "Not 'When the Saints Go Marching In'?" She hung her head and didn't dare look for Jason's reaction. His audible, "Of course," was enough to tell her how he felt.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jason and Melissa only had time for a brief kiss before she left with her mother. Allan and Nancy left soon afterward. Jason and Adam helped clean up before they too departed and headed for the parking lot.

"Sorry about the tuba thing, man. Gina kinda convinced me it would be a surprise for you."

Jason heard his contrite apology. "Yeah, well, she has a way of making lousy ideas sound right. Not your fault. Women do that to us all the time. Sometimes I think they're so good at manipulation they should run the military."

Adam checked the sky. "Shit. Looks like rain. I've gotta get this tuba in the car fast. The kid who plays it needs it in the morning for school."

Both men walked to Adam's car and got the instrument inside. "Thanks for helping me carry that other stuff. Gina keeps giving me food. Thinks I'll starve or something."

"Hey, at least it's good. See ya around." Jason began his trek to his car.

"Which one of them do you think will win the contest tomorrow?"

He stopped dead in his tracks and pivoted toward Adam. "What?"

"Uh, you know. That contest thing they've got going. Get our shorts, have us write notes, then their boss will listen to their stories about our dates and choose a winner."

#### April Ash

Ice gushed through Jason's veins. Contest? "What's the winner get? I don't remember." He tried to keep his voice nonchalant as his hands fisted at his sides.

"That trip to Hawaii. Gina told me all about it because she figures she won't win. She just asked for my shorts the other night and I gave her my note tonight."

His heart plummeted. Cold replaced any warmth in and on his body. "What about Nancy and Allan? Still playing?"

Adam looked pensive for a minute. "Nah, I don't think so. He told me he bought a new pair to give her and made up stuff for her to read."

Rain started to fall and Adam opened his car door. "Gotta go. Crazy thing they cooked up. Guess it's not really a contest anymore. Melissa probably won it already. At least that's what Gina thinks."

Jason watched as the younger man started his car and drove off. With heavy steps and ignoring the raindrops plopping on his head, he walked to his car and got inside.

"Shit. She used me. Underwear. Note. I love you. All a game." He pounded his fist on the steering wheel. "You're an idiot, Jason. She's no better than Camille."

Jason started the car and jerked it into gear. "And the worst part, you jackass? You still love her," he yelled at himself.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You know, Mom, I never really felt this way before. Jason's the one." Melissa talked to her mother as she drove to the airport for Grace's early flight home.

"He told me he loves you. Wants to come to Florida with you sometime soon and get reacquainted."

She slowed down for yet another traffic jam on the beltway surrounding the D.C. area. "When did he tell you that?"

"I think you were in the bedroom with Gina and Nancy. No, maybe you were in the bathroom."

Lots of surprises and secret talks were revealed the night before. All of them keeping mum on the tuba and those pictures. Melissa cringed as she thought of one in particular. Jason with the tuba and she and Gina flanking him with cross-eyed stares on their faces. Funny at the time but now embarrassing.

A car horn got her attention and she began driving again.

"Something wrong?"

"No. Just going over last night in my head and all that's happened so quickly this past week."

"That's what he said. Finding you again and knowing you love him too has made him happy. I promised not to say too much to his mother or aunt. I guess he wants to tell them himself. He made Gina swear to not say anything until he tells his parents," Grace informed her.

#### Strip Poker for Two

Joy streamed though Melissa at his plans to forge ahead with their decision to have a future together and inform his parents, and hers, of what lay ahead. She couldn't help a grin spreading across her face. Jason probably threatened Gina with telling Adam some embarrassing childhood memory he had of her if she said anything to her mom or his before he did.

"Mom, we'll be happy. We love each other. I just have to clear up something with him today." She bit her lip as a worrying thought of explaining the shorts and note she'd asked for – well, she stole the shorts – invaded her happiness.

Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed her mother's "what did you do now" glare. "Is it something you're gonna tell me? Or, is it something I won't wanna hear."

"It's not something I'm proud of – nothing illegal or really bad – but I really have to tell Jason. It's something kinda stupid, actually. A silly thing Gina, Nancy and I got into."

Her mother asked, "You're not stripping or doing wet t-shirt contests? Not in those ridiculous videos of girls getting drunk and lifting their shirts?" She sank back against the car seat. "Tell me you're not naked somewhere on a video or the internet."

"Mother! Of course not. Nothing like *that*. It was a stupid game we played."

Grace cleared her throat. "You're not all lesbians, are you?" she asked in a lowered tone.

Melissa groaned and tried to keep focused on traffic. "*No*. For God's sake. It was a *contest* involving men's underwear and love notes."

"Well, you had me ready to have you turn the car around so I could stay longer to straighten you out. Men's shorts? Love notes?" She put up her hand. "Don't tell me. I can guess. Something like 'show and tell'. *That* I can handle. But I don't want to know about it."

Melissa mouthed a silent prayer of thanks as she found a parking spot open outside her mother's airline entrance at the airport. She'd said enough, heard enough, and just wanted to tell Jason and have the contest something they hopefully would laugh about in their old age.

Right now, getting her mother out of her car and back to Florida was her first and urgent goal. Getting to work would be next. Facing Jason and confessing would be her final objective for the day.

She'd read his note, pages of it, when she'd been in bed the night before. He'd slipped it into her coat pocket the night before. The man had a wonderful memory and was very creative when it came to ways they'd enjoy each other's body forever. She'd had to use a vibrator to help with her need for an orgasm after reading his detailed writing.

Melissa kissed her mother goodbye and waved as she pulled her car away and into the flow of airport traffic. She kept a smile on her face. She was fully prepared to return his hearts underwear and note, if he wanted them. Although, she'd love to frame them and hang them on her wall.

\* \* \* \* \*

Melissa strolled into the office with a light hop to her step. It didn't matter that it was January and freezing cold. Nor did she care that the rain from the night before was a harbinger of snow predicted for later in the day. All that mattered was her loving Jason and his loving her back.

"Mom gone?" Nancy pulled the phone away from her ear to throw out her question.

"Yes. She'll soon be back in sunny Florida." Melissa waved to her coworker.

Gina scooted her chair over to Melissa's desk. "Nice time last night. You're not really mad about the tuba thing and the pictures, are you?"

Melissa noted her friend's discomfort. "Relax. The pictures were awful but I love you and will get even some day when you least expect it."

"Whew. Glad you're not mad but now I'll have to watch your every more carefully. You know all my secrets and that's dangerous for someone out for revenge." She started sliding her chair back to her desk and stopped. "Oh. And Jason forgives me. He has to. We're family and his mother would kill him if he drafted me and sent me to some remote place near the North Pole."

Melissa snorted. "Oh, sure. Like there's a draft and we actually have people freezing their butts off in Santa Claus land. He can't do that but he could help me do a combined revenge event."

"Nah. He can't. My mother's older than his mother and she'd be mad so his mother wouldn't want him to make trouble for them so-"

"Stop already," Melissa said through her laughter. "I get the picture." She crossed her heart. "I promise my revenge will be a solo but well-planned one. Happy now?"

"Thanks. That I can live with." Gina pushed herself all the way back to her desk. "Oh. Janet says we're meeting at three o'clock. She wants to close early because of the storm coming."

The meeting. Their contest. Melissa figured it wouldn't take long. "Well, we've got tons of stuff to do if we're leaving early. I'm not going out for lunch. Figure I'll just work through it."

Nancy spoke up and added a comment. "Actually, Janet's ordering in some food so none of us will be going anywhere. She wants us to finish everything in the urgent files today."

Melissa glanced at the stack of papers in her file holder. Yep. She'd need all the remaining hours to finish them and grabbing food from a delivery person would be all the time she'd be able to spare. Maybe she'd even get to eat something.

\* \* \* \* \*

Janet locked the front door and put up the closed sign by the display window. She turned to her employees. "Ladies, I'm ready. Been waiting for this all week." She sashayed over to Nancy's desk and took a seat. "Bring your chairs here and let's talk."

As soon as everyone was seated she pointed to Nancy. "You go first."

Nancy blushed. Melissa couldn't believe it so blinked twice and then stared at her friend. Yes. She'd been correct. Redness crept up both Nancy's cheeks. Nancy? Miss "I'll-do-it-anywhere-anytime" and never shied away from anything?

"Well, I have underwear and a note. But actually, I didn't follow the contest. I asked Allan to write the note and he made up tons of stuff. Told him all about what was going on. And," she blushed even redder, "he didn't want me to take old underwear so he bought me a pair." She held up shorts covered with smiling faces.

"Oh." Disappointment colored Janet's tone. "No wild stories?"

"Uh, we had sex but it was with candlelight and he brought me flowers and he was so caring and..." Her voice trailed off as she shifted in her chair.

Janet arched both eyebrows. "Anything else you want to say?" she almost pleaded.

"No, not really. And the note's not something I'm gonna share. He's a nice guy and treats me well. I guess I really kinda like that."

"Uh, I'll go next," Gina interrupted. "I have shorts. Adam and I went out and I bought him some. He especially likes these," she held up a pair with swords on them, "and wanted me to show them. I didn't follow the contest either. Got him to write a note I'm not showing." She turned red with embarrassment.

"Ladies, how can I judge a contest that isn't one?" She turned toward Melissa. "You already told me on Friday that you were backing out but I thought for sure I'd hear *something* today to get my juices going." She tapped her pink-polished fingernails on Nancy's desk. "I should probably tell you about my week. I guess I did more than any of you."

Nancy and Gina gaped at Melissa. She bit her bottom lip.

"You pulled out of the contest on Friday? Why didn't you tell us?" Gina asked.

A tiny bit annoyed, Melissa quipped, "Seems to me we all pulled out in one way or another." She slumped back into her chair. "Fine contestants we are. You two find real nice guys so you drop out. I fall in love and -"

"You're in love? For real?" Janet stilled her hand and bolted upright. "He must really be good. Sure you won't share at least one story?"

"Not a word," Melissa said with determination. Telling stories of their time together would be like betraying Jason and the feelings they declared for each other.

Nancy rocked in her chair and creaking sounds filled the air. "Allan takes things slowly. He asks me what I want and satisfies me first." She nodded her head. "Yes, that's it with him. I come first." She giggled. "And I do mean *come*."

#### April Ash

Gina offered, "Sex with a younger man is wonderful. He's so eager to please and learn. I'm gonna train him well. He's gone through that 'I-gotta-fuck-everything' phase and wants a steady relationship. And *coming* hasn't been a problem for me, either." She smiled.

Janet grinned like a she-cat about to pounce. "But of course younger men are wonderful. Alejandro and Marcus are at least five years younger than me and I've done nothing but train them." She gestured by shaking her hands in the air. "So willing to please me and do as commanded. Love to be dominated."

Everyone's eyes shifted toward Melissa. She wiggled her way up in her seat.

"We love each other. I've never been happier. Sex is great and pleasing each other is what we do. That's all I'm saying." She cleared her throat. "Janet, you were about to tell us how *your* week went."

Janet aimed a look at her through half-closed lidded eyes. "Hmm. And I will. But one thing more. Who's taking the vacation?"

No one spoke at first. Melissa knew what was in her heart. That week away still sounded inviting but not at the expense of exposing or exploiting her relationship with Jason.

Janet let out a deep sigh. "Ladies, it's starting to snow. Let's leave that for now. We'll talk about it tomorrow. Now about my week. I finally decided to stop alternating my lovers and take them together."

Melissa couldn't stop her jaw from dropping before she asked, "As in a ménage a trois?"

Janet's tongue slipped between her lips and traced them. "*Oui*. I'll be getting an oversized king-size bed next week. We need more space for us all to have enough room and fit. And I do mean *fit* as in them in me."

Melissa heard Nancy and Gina groan.

"Although, I can only fit one of them in my mouth at a time." Janet continued her salacious tales of lust as a devilish countenance covered her face.

Melissa tuned out after the third story of the threesome fucking on the sofa. It reminded her of Mac and his venture into trio-pleasing sex.

She gazed outside and realized the snow was now falling steadily. Jason said he'd be over after work and bring dinner. Her body heated just thinking of him. Janet's stories would make any listener horny but thoughts of the man she loved filled her with desire, contentment, and security.

They'd have sex but also be planning their future. Nothing like Janet's adventure's in "Lust Land". The woman craved sex, not relationships or commitments. And dominating men had moved her into a different class of sexual need Melissa wasn't into.

She tuned back in just as Janet ended her last story of watching the two men give each other blow jobs before taking turns satisfying her. Janet's eyes glazed over as she sank into her chair.

"I've gotta get home. Marcus is already there and Alejandro will arrive soon from work. See you tomorrow." She got up and went into her office.

Nancy, Gina and Melissa stood and went to their desks to get their things before leaving.

"Oh. I forgot. I told that cruise guy to call at four. Guess I'll wait a little longer," Melissa said with a sigh. "You guys go. I'll close up."

Nancy and Gina didn't argue. They met Janet at the door and all three left.

Melissa dropped into her chair, willing the phone to ring. She wanted to hurry home and wait for Jason. Staring at the damn thing didn't do any good but that's all she could focus on.

A knock at the door startled her. A delivery person stood out in the snow. She hurried over to unlock the door.

"Got something here for," he checked the name, "Melissa Foster."

"That's me," she informed him as she wondered what the package held.

She grabbed the box, closed and locked the door. Her phone rang so she rushed to her desk and toyed with the bow tied around the box. No name or card appeared on the front.

Melissa took care of her call—the one she'd been waiting for—and turned her attention to the box. Careful not to rip the beautiful multicolored bow, she untied it and opened the box.

A catch in her breath made her jump. Cold shivers careened down her body and her heart plummeted in her chest.

Inside were all the shorts she'd picked out for Jason. She grabbed the folded note on top of them.

Tears welled in her eyes and started trickling down her cheeks as she read. Her brain froze for an instant and the words blurred on the page. Melissa flung her hand across her face and wiped her tears away.

Jason had written how he'd enjoyed their sex, hoped she won the contest, and he was sending her the shorts to be sure she had plenty to show the others.

And – by the way, he'd added – he never wanted to see her again.

## **Chapter Eight**

The drive home was slow and tedious. Add to that her frazzled nerves and mind wandering in tangents about tracking down Jason, and she had no reason to believe that the massive headache pounding near the base of her skull would soon disappear.

Melissa tried calling him but his phone went immediately to voicemail. He either wouldn't talk to her or couldn't answer. She prayed he'd at least let her explain.

She let out a loud, "Damn." Why should he listen to her? He'd been used by his exfiancée and now felt betrayed by her. Every muscle in Melissa's body tensed and she tightened her grip on the steering wheel. The snow fell harder while she tried to concentrate on driving and not on how she'd screwed things up with him.

She could try getting to the base and finding him but that would be dangerous as the weather worsened. Just getting home, closer than his place, would prove to be a difficult enough task.

After a two-hour trip she pulled into her parking lot and turned off her car. As she dropped her head back to the car seat, she let out a whoosh of air. Her head still pounded but her knuckles would no longer be the same color as the falling snow. Flexing her fingers, she eased out the pain and her blood began circulating again to bring her fingers back to a healthier hue.

Jason. She had to get inside her apartment and call him. He *had* to talk to her. If she couldn't get through to him, she'd get Gina or her mother or someone to call him. She opened her car door and braved the storm.

Once inside her apartment, she heaved a sigh of relief and shucked off her coat and shoes. Padding her way quickly to her bedroom, she put a flannel robe over her clothes and warm woolen socks over her hose.

Then she grabbed the phone and dialed his number.

Voicemail.

She tried again.

Voicemail again.

Shivering, Melissa dragged herself into her kitchen and made some coffee. While waiting for it to brew, she dialed again, ten or twenty times but never got him.

She sat at the kitchen table after pouring a cup of coffee. Holding it in both hands and sipping, the steamy liquid warmed her body but her heart remained cold, barren, empty. She set the cup down near her phone. Her headache now throbbed and she reached to the back of her neck to ease the pain, wishing it would go away.

Her phone rang and she nearly knocked over her coffee cup as she grabbed for it.

### "Hello?"

"Thank God you made it home all right. I was worried about you," Gina said in a rushed voice.

"Where's Jason?" Melissa nearly cried as she asked.

"I don't know. Is he still at work?"

This time she did cry and sobbed out her story to Gina.

"Shit. What's wrong with him? Doesn't he know you love him?" Gina's anger was evident in her tone.

Melissa fought for control. "He doesn't trust me. Wrote a note. Said goodbye. Doesn't want me." She sniffed. "I've got to talk to him and explain. Yes, we got together because of the contest but if you had told me he was in town, contest or not, I would have seen him."

"I know, hon. Men are asses, my cousin included." She lowered her voice. "Uh, not Adam. He came here to make sure I was okay."

Melissa slouched in her chair. "He has to know I was afraid of his being so into the military at first but once we got together, I wanted him right away. I don't care about the Army. I'll go anywhere with him." Another sob escaped. "I love him. I told Janet on Friday I was out of the contest. I want him. Oh, God. What'll I do?" More tears fell and she wiped her face with her robe sleeve.

"Let me see if I can find him. Pull yourself together, girl. We'll tie him down and beat him if we have to. And I can sic family on him. That'd be worse."

"Gina, tell him I took the underwear and asked him to write the note because he said no commitments. I didn't know he loved me then. I knew I loved him but until I figured out the military thing wasn't what I remembered and it wouldn't matter, I just made the wrong decision about that damn contest." Her voice shook and she no longer could control the steady flow of tears.

"Some day you two will be telling your grandchildren about this. Either that or I will. Hon, it'll be all right. I'll find him."

"Oh, please. Tell him I love him and will do anything to get him to forgive me." She broke out into heavier sobs.

"Hang up. You're probably flooding your apartment by now. I'll get back to you after I talk to him. Bye, sweetie."

Melissa clicked off her phone and flung her arms onto the table. Some coffee sloshed out of her cup and puddled near her sleeve. She dropped her head on her arms and cried until totally exhausted.

Hours flew by as she curled up on her sofa and watched the clock. She'd changed the TV channels so often she now had no idea what was on. It all blurred before her and noises from the TV sounded distant, uninteresting.

She replayed in her head every minute she'd spent with Jason. The laughter, their games, the lovemaking all meshed into repeated patterns parading through her mind. Her headache had settled to a dull ache and she felt drained of all energy.

His kisses had made her tingle and his touch left her craving more. Losing him would shatter her soul, break her heart, and leave her with an emptiness she'd never again fill. Being together was more than just remembering old times they'd shared. They'd made new memories and talked of making future ones.

A smile crossed her face as she thought of his tuba days and how he'd been gracious enough to play last night and pose for pictures.

Kind.

Loyal.

Gentle.

Loving.

Gone.

Her smile vanished as hurt poured through her once again. Yes, their incredible sex games were amazing and she'd never felt so satisfied, so worshipped. But sex was only part of what they shared. They had a past, one that he'd kept in his heart. Other details of their growing up together surfaced the more she dwelled on his face, his being.

The jarring ring of her phone made her jump. She quickly answered, "Hello?" hoping Jason would be her caller.

"It's me. I can't get through to him either. But I talked to my aunt. He left her a message saying he was flying to California and would be outta town for awhile."

That was it. All hope was gone. He'd left and wanted no part of her in his life. "Oh," Melissa replied sadly, her body giving in to exhaustion.

"Hon, I've checked the airlines. Nothing's gone out ta here so I doubt he's left the area."

"Thanks, Gina. He doesn't want me. I'll leave him alone."

"We could come and get you and drive to the airport."

"No," Melissa sighed with a quiver in her voice." Just let him go. Maybe when he gets back he'll talk to me."

"Hey. We could always lock him in my laundry room with you until he listens."

"Have fun with Adam. Goodnight."

Melissa hung up her phone and let it fall onto the rug. She had no tears left to shed, just quiet sobs, a pain in her heart, and memories.

\* \* \* \* \*

The rest of the week went by with no word from Jason. He'd called his mother to tell her he was okay but refused even her request to speak to either his cousin or Melissa. Nothing would change unless he decided to give her a second chance. *Second chance. Right. More like third.* Melissa worked at her desk, mulling over the two times she'd hurt him and figured he'd never give her another opportunity to try again.

She worked feverishly all week, throwing herself into her job and avoiding any after-work time with her friends. On Friday just before the office closed, Nancy, Gina, and Janet approached her and circled her desk.

"Here," Janet thrust out her hand. "We can't stand it any longer. Go away."

Melissa saw the ticket Janet held in her hand along with other papers. "What's this?"

Nancy spoke. "You're worse than the damn weather here. You win. We voted unanimously that you should be the one to go to Hawaii. Get the hell outta here and bring us back souvenirs. Expensive ones."

Melissa shook her head. "No. I don't want a pity trip. Let's pick numbers or something to see who goes."

"No way, sweetie. You're driving us nuts and working so hard you make Nancy and me look bad to our lovely employer." Gina grinned at Janet and turned back to Melissa. "Go away. Get some sun. Get some hunks. Get some shorts. Do whatever but give us a week of peace without you."

Janet dropped the ticket and papers on Melissa's desk. "Everything's there. You leave tomorrow. *Go away*." She turned and walked toward her office then pivoted back to stare at Melissa. "And I expect some very *expensive* souvenirs for all three of us." She went into her office and closed the door.

Gina and Nancy urged her to leave immediately for home and pack. Melissa decided to give in as the desire to escape her dismal life for a tropical paradise reeled her in. She thanked her friends, took her ticket and papers, put on her coat, and headed home to pack.

She decided to let her tears flow one more night in Virginia. Tomorrow she'd have a chance to cry in a warmer climate while still missing the man she'd loved and lost.

\* \* \* \* \*

Melissa spent the first two days touring the island and seeing the sights. She tried to enjoy the surroundings but Jason remained fixed in her mind. Wherever she went she imagined sharing the new adventure with him. Buying souvenirs held no pleasure for her. There were things she'd like to buy him—like the surfboard underwear she was sure he'd find funny.

Interest in buying anything became a chore but she'd promised and been ordered to bring back souvenirs so she continued shopping. Melissa finally settled on gifts for Janet, Nancy, and Gina, but bought nothing for herself. No joy filled her heart although gaiety and laughter surrounded her along with lots of happy couples.

#### April Ash

One night after dinner she sat out on the beach, away from the frivolity of those having a good time. The music from a luau taking place filled the air, and she'd eaten then left without talking to many people.

She sat on a low chair, running her hand along the sand and stared at the waves. She'd tried calling Gina once and had been told not to call unless it was an emergency. She was ordered to have a good time and not worry about anything. Melissa had laughed at her friend's tone but hung up and hadn't tried calling again.

Maybe Jason was still in California. Maybe he was back in Virginia. Maybe he thought about her once or twice or a hundred times a day as she'd thought about him.

She heard someone approaching and wondered if another couple sought out a quiet spot to spend some time alone. If so she'd get up and leave.

"Woman, you make me crazy."

Melissa turned so quickly at the sound of Jason's voice that she almost flipped her chair. She tried to stand and stumbled. He held out his hand and helped her up.

"Jason!" she cried out, and tears formed in her eyes. "I'm sorry. I love you. Please forgive me," she pleaded. Then she put her hands to her face and cried.

"Shh. Honey, don't cry." He put his arms around her and clutched her to him. "Please stop crying so we can talk. Okay?"

She sniffed a few times and gulped for air. His hands rubbed her back as he pressed her closer.

"I'll do anything. Say anything. Just let me explain." Her body stopped trembling at his gentle massage.

"Let's go to the condo. We'll talk there." He lifted her chin and gave her a soft kiss.

She moved her head away. "I– How did you find me? When did you get here? Where –"

He kissed her again then pushed her away and grabbed her hand. "You. Me. In the condo talking. Now."

"Oh. Okay."

They marched swiftly up the beach to the condo building entrance. Melissa fumbled for her key and was surprised when Jason presented one and unlocked the door.

"Inside and go wash your face while I get us some wine."

Confusion raced through her head as she headed for the bathroom. She didn't have wine. "I'll be a minute and then we can go for a drink—" She almost tripped over a suitcase outside the bedroom door. She turned and walked back to the kitchen area and saw Jason uncorking a bottle of wine.

"Melissa, you're not following orders. Bathroom. Go." He turned around and grabbed two glasses off a shelf.

She forced her feet to stir and entered the bathroom. Cold water splashed on her face helped clear her head and she figured the suitcase was his. Janet or Gina had given him another condo key.

That meant he wanted her. Would listen to her. The frown she'd first seen in the bathroom mirror turned into a smile, one of happiness and joy filling her heart.

She rushed out of the bathroom and joined him on the sofa. He handed her a glass of wine. "You spoke to Gina, I presume," she stated.

"Yep. And my mother. And my aunt. And your mother. And Janet, Nancy, Adam, and Allan. They all reamed me up and down for running off and not giving you a chance to explain." He took a swig of wine. "So explain."

Melissa cleared her throat. "You already know about the contest. What idiots we were, coming up with something like that. I'm really sorry. But when you said no commitments and I had concerns about military life, I just went with it at first."

Warmth blazed in his eyes. "Then what?"

Frazzled nerves threw her system into chaos. Her pulse quickened as her desire for him flared. "Then we talked about the past, the future, being together. I cleared my head of worries about military life because the only thing that matters is being with you. I don't care where it is. I'll go."

"Damn right." He tipped his glass back and swallowed the rest of his wine. "Finish your story."

"I took your shorts and asked you to write that note. I wanted those things for me, not the contest. You were going away. I was hurt, afraid, and angry all at the same time. What if you really didn't want me? Wouldn't miss me?" Her voice elevated and quivered as she explained her reason.

"Why didn't you tell me about the contest? Gina and Nancy told their guys." He slid closer to her.

"I tried to that night in the laundry room. You told me to wait. Janet already knew I wasn't finishing the contest. I love you, Jason."

"Finish your drink."

He reached out and stroked her arm. Tingles of heat raced up her arm and throughout her body. She gulped down her wine. He took her glass and placed it on the table next to his.

"Babe, I'm sorry. I should've given you a chance to talk to me. Trust me. If I don't have you call Gina so she can spread the word you forgive me, I'll have the family curse placed upon me. Tell me you love me again. Please," he begged.

"I love you and always will." Melissa scooted her body over to his and he wrapped his arms around her.

"I've been miserable without you." He kissed her forehead. "Just thinking about you screwed with my head and I couldn't concentrate on my job. I couldn't think straight. Couldn't sleep. Took a million cold showers." Melissa angled her hand to his crotch and massaged his shaft. "You won't have to take one tonight, Captain," she purred.

He crushed her into his embrace and kissed her with a passion she loved. Their tongues met and flicked around each other. She pulled away as they both panted in unison.

"And no." He shook his head. "I'm not playing cards tonight. No time for that. Maybe tomorrow but I want you in bed with me in ten seconds." He stood and grabbed her hand to pull her off the sofa.

"Wait. One thing first." She bit her bottom lip.

"This better be important and fast. What?" he urged her to hurry.

"Call Gina. I don't want any curse on us."

He walked with her to the table where he'd placed his jacket. Grabbing his cell phone, he dialed.

"Gina? I'm here, she forgives me, we love each other, and now we're gonna have sex. Tell my mother, my aunt, and Melissa's mother everything but the last part and tell them to plan a wedding. And no one's to bother us the rest of the week unless it's an emergency." He handed Melissa the phone. "Tell her no Molina curse will be needed. And," he added with a wink, "you would've won that contest hands down."

Joy filled her heart. She took the phone and barely had time to say," Yes to what he told you and no curse," before Jason ended the call.

He threw his phone on the table and marched to the bedroom dragging her with him. "I'm tired. But not too tired for you."

Melissa stopped their progress. "Could we maybe do one more thing before make love?"

Jason groaned, turned around and stared at her. "Honey, I wanna be in you this minute and ravish that wonderful body of yours. What is it?"

"There's a wonderful pair of surfing underwear in the hotel store next door. I wanna buy them for you," she teased.

"Now?" he said in a surprised voice.

"Oh, I guess it can wait. Your surfboard would only poke through anyway." She wiggled her way into the bedroom. "Clothes off. I'm ready for a mouthful and I get to go first."

He stripped and stood before her. His engorged penis stood out and Melissa wasted no time in sitting on the edge of the bed while she waved him over to her. "Stand still while I taste."

She dipped her tongue into the pre-cum on the tip and lapped her way up and down his length. His moans of pleasure filled the room. He placed his hands on her shoulders, trying to pull her closer. Melissa understood his need and her desire so she took him into her mouth. Jason held her head there and slowly eased his cock back and forth in her mouth. His breathing grew rapid and she decided to let him lead the way.

"Hon, I'm gonna come in a second. Either undress quickly or suck. It's up to you," he pleaded.

She kept her mouth clamped on his shaft and put steady pressure on it as she waited for his climax to erupt. Gripping his butt cheeks, she shoved him closer to her to take him in deeper.

His body shuddered with wave after wave of relief as he came and she didn't let go until she was sure he'd finished. Only then did she release him. She fell back onto the bed. "I love the taste of you, feeling you come in my mouth."

"Jason stood above her, his body silhouetted by the light coming in the window. "Move, woman, so we can pull down the covers. We're not done yet," he ordered.

Melissa got up and together they grabbed and then flung the bedspread and top sheet off the bed. "I'm thinking we'll go through a lot of sheets from now on. Might have to stock up on them," she said jokingly as she stripped.

"So we'll get plenty. I kinda like the satin ones where you slide and squirm all over the place. Smooth, just like you." He lifted her and placed her on the bed. "My turn."

She lay back after putting some pillows behind her head. "I'm gonna watch." Her legs were spread apart and her knees bent and over to the sides.

Wasting no time, he knelt and got between her legs. Jason put his hand into her slit. She wiggled as he found her clit and stroked it. Breathing normally had disappeared a while ago, ever since he surprised her on the beach. Moans of pleasure urging him to continue came quickly.

"You're so wet. I need a taste before we continue. Do you want me to use my mouth or have my cock inside you when you come?"

"Oh, God. Both. Your mouth first, Jason. Please," she almost screamed.

Jason pulled her by the hips to the edge. He took a pillow, shoved it under her rear and then dangled her legs over his shoulders.

His mouth delved into her pussy as he grabbed her ass cheeks and held her firmly in place. He bit, licked, sucked until she reached the crest of pleasure. Her orgasm had her bouncing into his mouth but he refused to let go and brought her to repeated heights of bliss.

Her entire body quivered with satisfaction and she waited a minute before moving after he released her. Jason stood, and Melissa looked up at him as she ran her fingers along his leg, sensing his curly hairs crinkling under her touch.

"We're not done yet." Jason lowered his eyes to his groin and she did, too. Sure enough, he was ready for round two. "I told you I missed you," he laughed.

He grabbed a condom, joined her on the bed and lay flat on it. This time she straddled his body and slipped her still wet opening down his revived and throbbing cock. Jason held her hips, keeping her in place. She tightened her cunt muscles, eliciting a groan from his lips.

Bending over and closer to his body, she dangled her breasts near his face.

"Cram those pillows under my head so I can reach you," he begged.

She forced three behind his head and held out a breast to his eager mouth. Jason kept his grip on her hips, rocking them both slightly as he toyed with her nipple.

In the throes of ecstasy, she threw back her head and rolled it back and forth sideways. She pressed forward, driving her breast further into his mouth. He moved from one breast to the other, sucking and licking each one as he began thrusting his cock faster and faster in and out of Melissa's pussy.

They reached their climaxes together and both shook as their utmost satisfaction rocked their bodies in unison. Jason kept nibbling at her breast, extending her pleasure as he pulled the nipple between his teeth.

Finally exhausted, he rolled them to the side, still joined, and cradled Melissa in his arms.

"This is how we'll always be. In love and I'll crave you more and more each day. He placed one hand by her breast and rolled the nipple between his fingers. "I'll never have enough of you."

"Mmm. Me too." She burrowed closer to him and whispered, "Sounds wonderful."

"It will be, babe. No matter where we are. You can work anywhere. I know you'll miss your friends but we'll make new ones and you can always find a job in your field."

"I know. My mom worked when she could. I accept what will come. As long as you're always there for me."

He tightened his grip around her waist. "You know I'll hafta leave sometimes. But I'll always come back."

Jason shifted so he could slide out of her. He left one arm around her waist and used the other to stroke along her body. "Nice curves. Love all the places I can touch."

She let her hand travel along his chest and sensed his muscles tighten under her touch. "Not bad yourself."

"I like playing poker with you. Even been thinking about some other games we might try." He gave her nose a tap.

"Like what? Now you have me curious," she questioned.

"Oh, something to do with charades or word games like Scrabble. Then there's Chutes and Ladders. We could do an adult version in bed."

She laughed and he joined in. "You mean as in going up and down? I could be persuaded to try it out."

Her heart, no longer empty, brimmed with love and happiness. She had the man she loved who loved her enough to fly to Hawaii to settle their misunderstanding. What more could she ask for?

"Will you take back your underwear?" she teased.

"You didn't throw them out? Man. I thought for sure you'd be so pissed off at me you'd dump them."

Melissa moved her hand to capture his shaft and gave it a tug. "Nope. Wanted souvenirs of getting to dress a man. And I wanted to keep them to remind me of you." She circled his cock with her hand.

"Hon, you can pick out my shorts anytime. We'll buy those surfboard ones tomorrow. You're so good to me, thinking about my underwear all the time." He grabbed her hand and helped her rub it up and down his shaft.

"I'll always be good to you. And, Captain Dimples, you better be good to me," she threatened in a joking tone.

She heard the catch in his breath as she gave him a squeeze. Finding his breath again, he said, "I promise. Always."

"Good thing. Don't forget. I now know about the Molina curse. All it'll take is a quick call to your relatives and you're a goner."

Melissa sat up, bent toward him and gave him a deep kiss. She flicked her tongue inside his mouth before running it along his lips. "No more talking. I have something else I'd rather do."

She licked his lips once more and then trailed feathery kisses down his chest. His hand rested on her head, guiding her down toward her inevitable destination.

Tuba guy, Army guy, her guy, was all she'd ever need. She couldn't help a smile curving her mouth before she lowered it over her goal and flicked out her tongue for another taste of what would forever belong to her.

## About the Author

Always intrigued by romance, April started reading Regency novels (Barbara Cartland) then went on to contemporary romances. When her four children were all teenagers, she began writing as a sanity outlet. As a teacher, being creative kept her one step ahead of her pupils. Writing gave April an additional outlet for her imagination. A lover of movies and love songs, many inspire her writing and lead to story ideas.

April also has books published by Ellora's Cave imprint Cerridwen Press, sensuous romances that are either paranormal or cotemporary books, under the pen name Marianne Stephens. Humor plays a big part in her stories, although suspense can also be found. She published a ghostwritten, nonfiction e-book based on the life of a women's shelter speaker in 2000.

April lives in Kansas with her husband, children and grandchildren. She's a member of Romance Writers of America; Fantasy, Futuristic, and Paranormal; Mid America Romance Authors; and Midwest Romance Writers. She's also involved in other romance sites and a blog.

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

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