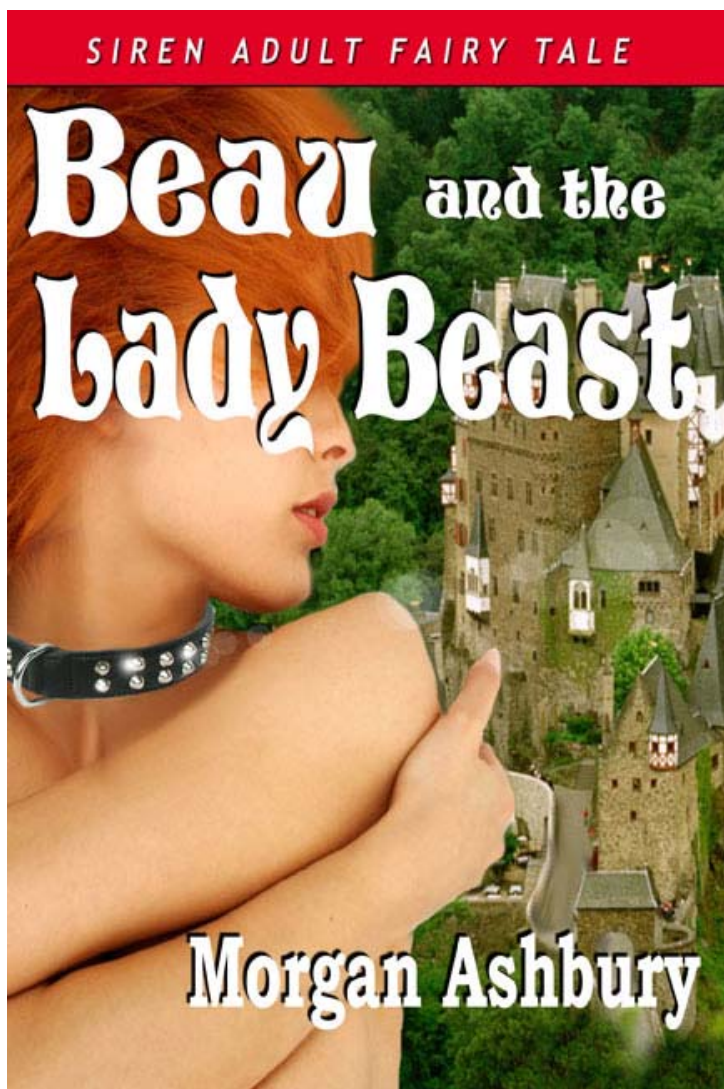


SIREN ADULT FAIRY TALE

Beau and the Lady Beast

Morgan Ashbury



A Siren Adult Fairy Tale

Beau and the Lady Beast

Indecent proposal, or merely business?

Isadora MacLean gave up on a personal life after a disastrous and costly early marriage. She worked hard to build her company, earning the nickname Lady Beast. No one crosses her. So she's totally unprepared for Beau Brannigan's offer: He'll return shares in her company in exchange for a weekend spent as his 'hostage.'

Dubbed The Most Beautiful Man in advertising, Beau Brannigan can have any woman he chooses, but the only one he wants seems out of reach. When shares of her company unexpectedly come into his hands, he knows he's found the key to lure Isadora to his country estate, certain that once he has her, he can win her heart.

Sexy as sin and twice as tempting, can this much younger man unlock the heart of the Lady Beast?

Sensuality Rating: SCORCHING

Genre: Erotic Contemporary May-December Fairy Tale / BDSM

BEAU AND THE LADY BEAST

A Siren Adult Fairy Tale

Morgan Ashbury

EROTIC ROMANCE



Siren Publishing, Inc.
www.SirenPublishing.com

ABOUT THIS E-BOOK: Your non-refundable purchase of this e-book allows you to **one LEGAL** copy for your own personal use. It is **ILLEGAL** to send your copy to someone who did not pay for it. Distribution of this e-book, in whole or in part, online, offline, in print or in any way or any other method currently known or yet to be invented, is forbidden without the prior written permission of both the publisher and the copyright owner of this book.

BEAU AND THE LADY BEAST
Copyright © 2007 by Morgan Ashbury
ISBN: 1-933563-83-4

First E-book Publication: April 2007

Cover design by Jinger Heaston
All cover art and logo copyright © 2007 by Siren Publishing, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED: This literary work may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including electronic or photographic reproduction, in whole or in part, without express written permission.

All characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is strictly coincidental.

PUBLISHER
Siren Publishing, Inc.
www.SirenPublishing.com

Dedication

To my critique partner Raina Toomey. Damn, girl, you're good.

Morgan Ashbury

BEAU AND THE LADY BEAST

A Siren Adult Fairy Tale

MORGAN ASHBURY
Copyright © 2007

Chapter 1

“You want me to *what*?”

Beau Brannigan took a moment to appreciate the sight of Isadora MacLean in full temper. Living up to her reputation for having a beastly disposition, she’d surged to her feet, her breath heaving in a way that showcased her lovely silk-covered breasts.

Her scowl told him she’d noticed him ogling her chest. He flashed her a grin and answered, “Become my hostage for the next three days. It’s a small enough price to pay for fifteen percent of your company. Let’s see...going with the most conservative estimates, fifteen percent of twenty million dollars is three million. Divide that by seventy-two hours, and that’s damn near forty-two thousand dollars an hour.”

“That’s absurd!”

Beau watched the shock wash through her and waited while she slowly lowered herself onto her chair. He wasn’t going to point

out this deal could effectively make her the most expensive courtesan of all time.

She'd certainly looked stunned when he revealed he'd purchased the stocks from one of her largest single shareholders. He understood the step she'd taken more than a decade before with her ISO had been, in her mind, a necessary evil. He also knew that ever since, she'd been buying up shares when they became available. Some had referred to the process as the *Lady Beast's Holy Grail*. The fifteen percent he'd just waved under her nose represented one hell of a big chunk of her company. Vital to her and valuable to him only because it gave him what he'd craved for the last year—the chance to get his hands on Isadora. It didn't matter, her being a dozen years older than he. He wanted her, and by damn, he was going to have her.

"Are you out of your mind? You want me to give you seventy-two hours of my time? To do what?"

"It isn't your time so much I want. It's *you*. And to do, Isadora, whatever it is I tell you to do."

Beau's plan was risky, that was certain. He understood her well enough to know she'd be suspicious of any overt attempt on his part to court her. Better to keep her off balance by way of an indecent proposal. When she was in his home, when he'd spent some time with her, would be soon enough to reveal his heart. He smiled. Sliding forward slightly on his chair, he put his elbows on her desk.

"Tomorrow at noon, my car and driver will arrive at your home. You'll be driven to my country estate, about an hour outside of town. Once inside the gates of my property, you will become a voluntary hostage, completely subservient to my every whim. Oh, and you don't need to pack a bag."

"You want me to come to your home in the country for the weekend and not pack anything? Not bring a change of clothes? That's totally ridiculous. You're not making any sense at all."

“Of course I am. *If* I require you to wear any clothes while you’re my guest, I’ll provide them.”

He could tell by the look on her face she finally understood what he wanted.

“You...me...you...*if* I wear clothes? You want me to be *naked*?”

“In my experience, having sex is easier if the parties involved are naked.”

“Sex. You and me. Are you crazy? You think I’m going to have sex with you?”

“In exchange for fifteen percent of your company? Yes, I think you will. You look a little piqued, darling. Why don’t I make you some tea?”

She was, he mused, a woman who obviously liked to have her creature comforts at her fingertips. A tiny service area took up one corner of her office. Beau blessed all those years spent in front of a camera when he’d been dubbed the most beautiful man alive. The skills he’d acquired then allowed him to affect a relaxed pose. She wouldn’t see his nerves. He could hear the sound of her sputtering, but not her actual words.

Using the hot water dispenser, it took only moments to make a cup of tea and set it before her. He resumed his seat, and his bravado.

“You want me to sell my body to you in exchange for those stocks. You want to turn me into a...a...whore? Are you out of your ever-loving mind?”

Her choler captivated him. Red slashes of fury decorated her cheeks and icy darts shot from her electric blue eyes. Her voice rivaled the thunder and he wondered her assistant hadn’t come running in response. She was, quite simply, the most stunning creature he had ever seen. He could admit that, and the fact that he likely needed therapy.

“Don’t look at it that way. It’s not my intention to make you feel like a whore.”

“Then I don’t understand. Is this...some sort of payback, or something? Did I do something to piss you off? Seizing the opportunity to cage the *Lady Beast* and humiliate her? Humiliate *me*?”

“Is it so hard for you to understand that I simply want you? You’re a beautiful woman. This has nothing to do with payback or humiliation, and everything to do with pleasure. You’re not currently in a relationship, are you?”

“No.”

“Then there really is no reason why you can’t give yourself to me for the weekend, is there?”

“You can’t be serious. You’re going to...to...*for seventy-two hours*?”

Beau chuckled. Her temper had cooled as quickly as it had fire. Now, her face had gone pale, and she seemed to be having trouble putting sentences together. Her eyes had dilated and her nipples hardened. Two signs, he hoped, of arousal and not just extreme shock. He wanted to hug her and assure her all would be well, but he needed to maintain the role of roué. “I may allow you some time to eat. To sleep. Shall we make a small contract, just between the two of us? You have a printer here, which is handy. Two copies, and we’ll both sign them. From noon tomorrow until noon Monday, you will be a willing hostage to my every whim. I’ll absolutely guarantee your safety, but not necessarily your comfort. In return, upon completion of your, shall we say, ‘personal service’, I will sign over to you the stock in MacLean Cosmetics I’ve so recently purchased. Or you can say no, and I keep the stock. I’m sure you’re aware fifteen percent is enough of a base for a canny manipulator to engineer a hostile takeover. I can be exceedingly canny, when the situation calls for it. The choice is entirely up to you.”

In all the rumors about Isadora he'd heard, there'd been no talk of a personal life. She lived, slept, and breathed her company. She'd earned the nickname *Lady Beast of Bond Street* because her office was her lair from which she guarded her empire ruthlessly. Beau believed that the tough exterior of the Lady Beast hid a warm and compassionate woman, and if he had her to himself, even if just for three days, he could set that woman free.

But he had to get his hands on her first.

Beau tramped down the arousal that began to grow when she licked her dry lips. He noted the fine quiver in her hand when she picked up her tea and sipped.

"I've never...what you're asking is that I give up all control. I've never *not* been in control. Never thought I would ever be."

"Nervous?"

"Very."

"Good. I can offer you a safe word. We could include in the contract between us that I won't hurt you. But then, once you're my hostage, I can do what I like, can't I? You'll just have to trust me. If you say yes." He sat back and let his eyes roam her body, much like he planned to let his hands roam as soon as he had her under his roof. "Can you do that? Can you trust me, put yourself into my hands? Do you accept my proposal?"

He watched the emotions play over her face and felt his heart surge in triumph when he saw her answer before she spoke it.

"Yes. I, ah, accept."

"Let's get it written up then, darling. One copy for me, and one you can place wherever you like, for safekeeping."

* * * *

Isadora hadn't expected a chauffeur-driven limousine. Settling herself into the back seat, cut off from the driver by a glass partition, she wondered if she had finally lost her mind. The

moment the chauffeur closed the car door, she began to tremble. She wasn't certain if she felt terrified, furious, or excited.

The bizarre agreement had been written up, signed, and a copy locked in her desk drawer before she'd allowed herself time to reconsider. Now, of course, it was a matter of honor.

She was stunned that Beau Brannigan could really want *her*. Black hair and green eyes, with the kind of sinfully sexy good looks that had sold millions of dollars of whatever merchandise he'd been hired to model, Beau could easily have any woman at all. She recalled the first time she'd set eyes on him, in person. He had absolutely taken her breath away, and when he'd smiled at her, she'd felt the clutch of sexual attraction deep in her belly. The arousal had shamed her, even as it had intrigued, for he was nearly a dozen years younger than she. She'd done her best to ignore the sizzle, but as the months passed, and she came to know him, she wondered about the sense of connection she felt, and wondered if it was reciprocated. If it could *be* reciprocated. Then she'd remember the years between them. She'd very nearly convinced herself that her attraction and growing feelings for him were completely inappropriate.

Truthfully, her sex life had been nothing to brag about. She understood—intellectually, at least—that part of the reason for that was how badly her one and only waltz down the matrimonial aisle had burned her. It might be unfair to paint every man she'd dated with the same brush as Neil MacLean. But that was life.

Her cell phone rang, pulling her out of her memories.

"Yes?"

"Tyler here, Isadora. Just stopped by the office to see you and your assistant said you were going away for the weekend."

Disbelief laced the voice of oldest friend and lawyer, Tyler Parkinson.

"What, I can't take a weekend off?" Isadora smiled, looking out the window of the limo at the passing scenery.

“Well, you haven’t for a long time, Dory.”

“I’m entitled to have a life after all these years of hard work and no play. But then, I believe I already mentioned my intention to change things.” She couldn’t keep the laughter from her voice, and could easily picture her old friend’s scowl.

“Please don’t remind me. It was that sentiment that led to your completely irrational and foolhardy decision which had me tromping all over the city earlier this week.”

“You’re a good friend, and a good lawyer, Tyler. Thank you for doing what I asked you to do, even when you didn’t agree with it.”

“That little piece of business made me feel like neither. I really don’t think you covered your ass very well. Have you had any response yet?”

Tyler sounded so aggrieved, she wanted to laugh. If only he knew.

“Some,” she wanted to change the subject before he got too curious. “Was there something in particular you needed to see me about?”

“No, just wanted to drop off copies of the injunction I filed on your behalf yesterday.”

“No problems?” she asked. The small matter of an unfaithful employee had prompted her to get Tyler working on another front.

“No. All straight forward. Theft is theft. I left the copies of the court papers with Charlene.”

“Excellent. Thank you, Trevor.”

“You’re welcome. So, where are you going for the weekend?”

Looking around, she could see only trees and fields. “The country,” she replied.

“You? In the country? What the hell are you going to do there?”

“I think I’m going to get my feet wet. I’ll see you next week, Tyler.”

Not giving him a chance to respond, she hung up. Then, considering, she turned off the phone before she tossed it back in her purse.

Sitting back, she let her mind travel over her meeting with Beau, and her current situation. Something he had said—or intimated—flooded her thoughts. He wanted her completely under his command. Control wasn't something she'd surrendered to any man, ever.

She wondered what he was going to do when she declined to surrender it to him.

Chapter 2

Isadora perked up when the car paused at the entrance to a gated country lane. The gate swung open slowly, and she had to suppress a nervous laugh. The car eased through, and she turned, the sight of the gates swinging closed again knotting her stomach. Trees canopied the long and winding lane. The brush was so thick on either side, she could see nothing beyond a few feet. Then the lane curved sharply to the left. Before her, a stone-and-glass building, immense, seemed to stretch to the sky.

Far from the ‘country home’ of a well-to-do corporate executive she’d imagined, this was more like a magical castle from the heart of a fairy tale. It lacked only a moat. Then the car stopped, and the driver opened her door. Thirteen steps led up to the massive wooden door. Ascending, she counted them and chided herself for being foolish. Beau Brannigan was a flesh-and-blood twenty-first century man, not some spellbound recluse from the pages of a fairy tale. Despite his choice of words, she would certainly be no hostage, voluntary or otherwise, but a businesswoman visiting an associate for a weekend in the country, to cement a business deal. There, that felt a lot more calming and reassuring.

It was an illusion she held onto until the door opened.

* * * *

Beau hadn't been entirely certain she would come. Until the moment when he knew the limousine had driven onto his land, he'd hoped, but hadn't been sure.

He opened the door abruptly, catching her off guard, and watched with admiration while she got herself under control.

"Isadora. I've waited a long time to have you in my home. Please, come in."

"Your home is unexpected," she said, turning her head this way and that to look around.

Beau smiled when she faced him.

"The expected would be boring, wouldn't it? Actually, this is a forty-room reconstructed castle. My grandfather, who had more money and whimsy than sense, brought it over, stone by stone, from England several decades ago."

"That must have cost a fortune and been logistically complicated."

Beau laughed out loud and then impulsively hugged her. It didn't matter that she was a bit stiff in his arms. He needed the contact right then and there.

"Grandfather didn't care. If he set his mind to something he wanted, he let nothing—certainly nothing inconsequential like cost or logic—get in his way. In this, my pet, I take after him."

"I'm not your pet, Beau."

He'd anticipated that response. "My darling, this weekend, and starting right now, you're whatever I choose to make you."

He cupped her face, caressed her lip with his thumb. His heart beat just a bit faster when he saw her eyes widen, when he understood that, just so simply, he'd aroused her. Carefully, he dipped his free hand into his pocket to take out his first surprise. In an instant, he had it secured exactly where he wanted it. Quick, unforeseen, and over before Isadora could even have guessed what he intended.

He watched her reach up, her fingers touching the jewel-encrusted leather collar now encircling her neck.

From his other pocket, he withdrew a leash. One quick flick attached it to the collar.

“See? You wear my collar and my leash. So you must be my pet. Ah, ah,” he added when mutiny clouded her face, “you did agree. *My every whim*. Considering the liberties I’m about to take with your lovely body, a collar and leash are small things.”

“Bastard.”

“Remember our deal. Behave...and submit.” He enjoyed watching her struggle to get her temper under control.

Finally, she lowered her hand.

“That’s better.”

“It’s only for seventy-two hours, after all.” Her words emerged from between clenched teeth.

“Ah, but what fun we can have in seventy-two hours.” He took a moment to look at her body, making his stare lascivious. “I’ve a pot of tea waiting in the front parlor. Just to show you how magnanimous I can be, pet, I’ll let you drink from a cup instead of lapping from a saucer.”

The room he indicated was just to the left of the entrance hall, across from the stairs. Taking the first few steps, he noticed Isadora standing her ground. The color in her cheeks was high, and he bit back a smile. That saucer comment had been spontaneous and obviously a direct hit. He judged the distance. One more step, and the leash went taut.

“Did I misjudge your integrity, Isadora?” Unable to resist, he punctuated his question with a small tug on the leash.

Her hands clenched and unclenched, and he could almost hear her mentally counting to ten.

“No one questions my integrity.”

He could have relented, let the leash go slack, but he wanted her to submit. For a long moment, she held his gaze, and defiance

filled her eyes. Then, without the tiniest sign of giving way, she walked toward him.

“This can be a pleasant interlude, or a nasty one. It’s entirely up to you,” he said, careful to make his tone amiable, his voice soft.

“You said this had nothing to do with humiliation.” The edge in her voice was more than temper. If he hadn’t made such a point of paying attention to her during their many encounters over the last year, he would have missed the hurt.

“It’s not my intention to humiliate you, pet. I’m just trying to demonstrate the parameters of what’s expected of you. Don’t think of it as humiliation, and it won’t be. Think of it as...training.”

Temper fully eclipsed the hurt in her eyes, and he smiled, satisfied. He’d much rather have her mad than pained. “Come, our tea will get cold.”

He saw her seated on the love seat, casually draping the leash over the arm of it. Then he served her tea and set a plate of cookies on the low table before her.

“It’s Earl Grey,” he said, sitting across from her.

“My favorite.”

“Yes, I saw that in your office yesterday. I hope you didn’t have any trouble getting away?”

“I had no plans to change.”

He wanted to know how that could be, but he didn’t ask. Instead, he enjoyed his tea and watching her. Interesting that she looked everywhere but at him. When she did finally meet his gaze, he grinned.

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.” Genuine confusion laced the words. “And in any given situation, you always know what to do.”

“Yes.”

“Because you’re always the boss.”

“Yes.”

He wondered if she'd heard that grudging tone in her voice. He was touched by the sadness she seemed to always carry with her. Usually, she kept it more deeply buried. He'd hoped this weekend might bring it, and much more, to the fore.

"Always being the boss carries with it a burden of responsibility. I know you meet that responsibility head-on. But everyone needs a break, pet. This weekend is yours. You don't have to be responsible. You don't have to worry. Just be co-operative, that's all I require. Are you finished with your tea?"

"Yes, thank you."

"I'll show you to your room, shall I?"

He used his hand at the base of her spine to guide her so that she walked beside him, rather than employing the leash. He escorted her up the stairs and then turned right, stopping at the first door on the right.

"Here's your room. Mine is just next door. You can rest and have a nice long bath, if you like, and yes, before you ask, you'll have complete privacy behind this door. Since you're bound to obey my every command, I don't need to stoop to voyeurism to see you naked. Dinner will be at six, sharp. I'll come and escort you." He opened the door, then unsnapped the leash. "Oh, and darling? Leave the collar on. I don't want to have to punish you so soon into our time together. Your garment for the evening is hanging on the armoire."

He had to give her a small nudge to get her to move into the room. Then he pulled the door closed and locked it.

* * * *

Isadora froze, the sound of the second "click" echoing off the walls. A lick of fear, instinctive and female, shivered down her spine when she realized he'd locked the door. She waited a

moment, unsure, and then tested the handle. The test turned into a furious, vigorous assault.

The door remained stubbornly closed.

Her hand went up to the collar. It felt as if it had been made for her, sitting comfortably around her neck. She reached back to unfasten it. Panic fueled her fingers searching for the clasp.

There was none.

Her eyes scanned the room. Bars on the window and a locked door. Good thing she understood she wasn't *really* a prisoner.

A single garment hung on the outside of an antique armoire. The ivory silk robe, long and beautiful, begged for her touch. It boasted no buttons, zippers or Velcro, just a silk sash. A folded piece of paper stuck out of one of the pockets. She pulled it out, opened it, and read.

The deep V neck of this gown should show your collar off to perfection. As it is made of the finest silk, I'm looking forward to seeing how this robe caresses your breasts, ass, and thighs. Wear this for dinner, tonight, my darling Isadora. The robe, the collar, and nothing else.

Reaching forward, Isadora caressed the robe with fingers that weren't quite steady. She wondered how it could be that locked in, wearing a symbol of a man's control, she felt seduced.

Chapter 3

Beau had to restrain himself from taking her on the spot.

She'd put her hair up so that curls tumbled half down. The effect—the long, white column of her neck adorned by his collar, unhampered by red tresses—was very arousing. The silk caressed her sensuously. He'd known it would. Held closed only by the belt, he imagined reaching forward, giving one tug.

The game he'd chosen to play was proving to be hell.

"You're beautiful, Isadora."

"Thank you. So are you, but then, I've always thought you wore a tux very well."

He couldn't resist chuckling. "And you're feeling underdressed?"

"Maybe just a little."

"Well then, perhaps I can offer one more item." He held up the end of the leash, his thumb resting on the catch, and waited to see what she would do. He watched her eyes focus on the shiny metal, and he wondered at the emotions chasing across her face. She shuddered slightly, just once, and tilted her head, giving him free access to the small ring dangling from the leather.

"Good girl," he said softly. Unable to resist, he stroked his hand over her shoulder and down her back, finishing with a gentle caress across her bottom. His touch not only fed his arousal, it told him she wore nothing under the gown but flesh.

"That was very clever of you, demanding I not remove the collar, knowing I'd need a key to do so."

He didn't mind the bite in her words. He simply smiled at her. "You're an intelligent woman. I half expected you to have picked the lock."

"I thought about it. I very nearly did."

"What stopped you?" he asked, escorting her down the stairs.

"The realization that I *did* sign a contract. In essence, giving you my word. I'll have you know I've never reneged on a contract in my entire life. Well, except for that marriage one, but that was years ago and hardly counts."

Beau stopped at the bottom of the stairs and turned to her. "Was that all? Your honor? My promise of punishment didn't factor into your decision at all?"

Her face reddened slightly, but she looked him dead in the eye when she answered. "No."

"Liar."

He ran his fingers up and down the leash, then casually caressed her collar. "When the time comes, I'm going to enjoy taking you. I'm very much going to enjoy hearing you scream my name when you come." He leaned toward her and filled his lungs with the scent of her. "Lilacs. I see you availed yourself of the Jacuzzi. I trust everything in your room met with your approval?"

"How could they not? My favorites, every one."

His eyes drew to her nipples, beaded and poking out under the silk. "Yes, they were." Turning, he led her down the hall to the dining room.

He'd had the long table set for just the two of them, with a place setting at each end. The food had already been brought in, kept warm with silver domes and warming trays.

He saw her seated, then taking up the open and waiting wine bottle, poured her a glass. "I hope you enjoy the meal." He couldn't resist a light caress of her cheek. This kind of touch he knew he'd lavish on her constantly, and he wanted her to get used

to it. Though she looked startled at the tiny familiarity, she didn't jerk back or jump. She blushed, and that delighted him.

"It smells wonderful."

He treasured her surprised smile when she lifted the cover to her plate. He'd had his housekeeper grill the fresh Pacific Salmon with a honey garlic glaze. The rice pilaf and fresh green beans also numbered among her favorites. He'd chosen a nice, crisp Chablis to accompany the main course of their meal.

"You're at my table, wearing only the robe I've allowed you and the symbol of my possession I've bestowed upon you. You've pleased me, pet."

He enjoyed the confusion that crossed her face. Time to switch gears.

"I hear you've had a brush with corporate espionage recently." He watched her mentally follow the segue and wondered what she thought about as she nibbled so delicately on her food.

"My V.P. in charge of advertising thought she could cut a better deal by taking herself—and the ad campaign she'd designed for MacLean—to a competitor."

"I hope you skinned her greedy ass."

"Well, it's a clear case of theft. My lawyer has initiated proceedings. Poor Mary Ellen doesn't really know who she's messing with. The little bitch."

Beau smiled when she stabbed a fork full of beans for emphasis. "Good for you. You can't let people get away with theft—whether it's product or ideas."

"Don't worry, I don't."

"Neither do I. Tell me about your ex-husband."

She stopped her fork halfway to her mouth. "Why?"

Shifting gears was a good strategy. "Because I want to know."

"Not much to tell. I made a mistake. I never repeat them."

He didn't mind the acid in her tone. After all, it wasn't him she was remembering with such venom. "There must have been something good about him to attract you in the first place."

"It happened a long time ago."

He simply waited, his head cocked slightly to one side.

"I was so impossibly young," she said softly after a moment. "Looking back, I find it hard to believe I ever could have been so young. I'd just started my company, with an inheritance from my grandmother. I approached each promotional opportunity with the enthusiasm only the young can manage, and at one of the functions— a concert, I think—I met Neil. I didn't know at the time that he'd been watching me for a couple of months. That I was at the top of his 'list.' I didn't know he planned on courting me, marrying me, and then cleaning me out, financially, that he'd done just that to at least two other women before me. I only saw what he let me see. He appeared cultured, smooth, and seemed to be infatuated with me, and I fell for it. I fell for him."

Beau didn't like the sadness in her voice. She'd stopped eating and seemed far away. He knew better than to offer her pity, though. There was only one way to pull her out of her funk. He needed to rile her.

"You annoy me, Isadora. How can you still blame yourself for the dishonesty of another, after all these years?"

Her eyes focused on him with a fierce scowl. "Well pardon me all the way to hell and back. The bastard betrayed me. Not just with his dick, which doesn't strike me now as being a particularly memorable one. He took my money, my self-respect, and broke my heart. At the time I loved the asshole. So excuse me for *hating* that I fell for him."

Pissed was better than vulnerable in his opinion. "And he wasn't worth even one of your tears, sweetheart. I bet he's still looking for marks, and it burns his ass to know how well you've thrived without him."

The look on her face spoke volumes. He wondered how she'd managed to cut herself off from people so completely that simple words of support floored her.

"Whenever I think of him, I feel stupid."

He rewarded her candor with a gentle smile. "And you haven't let anyone get really close to you since." He heard the gentleness in his own voice and hoped she did, too.

"No."

"Until me."

He waited patiently, the silence between them lengthening. He waited and felt his heart kick once, hard, at her whispered response.

"Until you."

Chapter 4

She'd never been more churned up and confused in her life.

The echo of the door being locked still reverberated in her head. The taste of Beau's kiss, their one and *only* kiss, still clung to her lips.

After dinner, he'd led her into the library, a wonderful room filled with books and the rich scent of leather. A fire burned in the hearth, and the gentle warmth of it filled the room. By the fireplace, a chessboard had been set up, and once she was seated, he brought her an after-dinner liqueur. That it was her favorite, peach schnapps, didn't surprise her in the least. It appeared he'd done his homework, and she truly didn't have any secrets from Beau Brannigan. Settled comfortably in the chair, her drink at hand and the game underway, Beau threw her off balance yet again.

"Isadora, open your robe. I want to look at you."

She hadn't consciously decided to grant his request, but her hands reached for the belt and untied it. Then, when he just sat there with that maddeningly sweet smile on his face, her hands had gone that one step further, folding back the fabric, baring herself to him.

"Very nice. You have beautiful breasts, pet. Yes, and your nipples stand out quite a bit when you're aroused. Good. The nipple clamps will work well. They're silver, in the shape of small rings. If you like the look of them, I'll consider making the look permanent. Two rings, one in each nipple. Perhaps with a tiny silver chain on each, running from the rings to the center of your collar. Would you like that, pet?"

She wanted to scream no, of course she wouldn't! Picturing what he described, she felt arousal stir in her belly and moisture gather between her thighs. She couldn't hide her reaction or bluff it off, either. Somehow, he'd known.

"I'm glad that turns you on. I bet there are a lot of things that will turn you on. I'm going to enjoy discovering each and every one. It's your move."

Not in their personal tango, she knew, but in the chess game. "How do you expect me to be able to concentrate when I'm naked before you, and you're looking at me like that?" When you have me so horny, she meant. She couldn't say it, but she couldn't hide it, either. He knew.

"By relying on your competitive streak."

He pushed his chair back from the table just slightly. Unplanned, her eyes moved to the very obvious erection tenting his trousers.

"If I can do it, then, pet, so can you."

She couldn't seem to remember the difference between a rook and knight. Before she was ready for it, the game, and the evening ended. Nearly midnight, he escorted her to her room. She'd felt the air caressing her breasts, her belly, and her mons as she walked with the silk robe gaping open. The shivers coursing down her back came from more than the cool breeze.

At her door, he turned her. And he kissed her. He touched only her face, cupping it between his hands, his thumbs tracing an invisible pattern over her cheeks. His touch gentle, as if she were precious. His mouth avid to sample and taste. She couldn't stop herself from responding. No, that was a lie. She hadn't even thought to refuse him. His tongue stroked hers in a strong, almost forceful rhythm, touching and tasting every part of her mouth in a single instant. All she could do was hold onto his wrists with her hands and return the kiss. How often had she wondered what it would be like to have his mouth on hers? Reality outshone

imagination. She could taste the brandy he'd had while she'd sipped her schnapps. She could taste him, his flavor more intoxicating than any alcoholic drink could ever be. On and on the kiss went, and she nearly stumbled when he pulled back slightly.

"You'll be awakened at seven. We'll have breakfast at eight."

It had taken her long seconds to understand that this kiss wasn't a beginning, but an end. Before she could comment, he'd opened the door, unclasped the leash.

"If I'd wanted just a quick lay, you can bet I'd have had you flat on your back with your legs spread before now. So think about that, pet. Oh, and sleep naked tonight, Isadora, wearing only my symbol of possession. Sleep naked, and dream about all the delicious things I'm going to do to you tomorrow."

Now, standing alone in the center of the bedroom, she shook her head slowly. Sleep? How was she supposed to get to sleep when every inch of her felt painfully wired? She looked around the room and felt her face heat when she saw the bed had been turned down. An envelope rested on her pillow. Beau hadn't left her, which meant he had staff in the house.

She'd walked through the place with her assets hanging out, and he had staff in the house!

"At least he put it in an envelope," she muttered, picking up the thing and pulling out the folded single sheet within.

Your clothing is being laundered. In the armoire is your outfit for the morning. After you've been awakened, shower and dress. By then, your door will be unlocked. Join me in the dining room.

Curious, Isadora opened the armoire. The storage space held but two pieces of clothing: a pair of white slacks and a matching white tee shirt, both of summer-weight cotton. If they fit, they would be snug, and very nearly transparent. Then she realized there truly were only two items in the closet. A quick search of the room revealed what she'd suspected. No underwear of any description could be found.

She never slept naked. Just one of those things she'd never done. But Beau had asked her...no. Isadora closed her eyes, inhaled deeply. He hadn't asked her anything. He'd *ordered* her to sleep naked. Before that, he'd called her his pet, and *ordered* her to bare herself to his sight.

Thoughtful, she got to her feet and approached the wooden closet. She slowly removed the robe and hung it up, then slid into the bed. Turning off the light, she lay in the dark and wondered why being commanded by Beau had felt so right, and why obeying him had become the only thing she really wanted to do.

* * * *

"It's beautiful."

"I think so, too." He'd brought her outside for a walk on his land, and now they overlooked his favorite place, on the banks of a large pond. "This piece of property belonged to the farm my great-great-grandfather established when he came from Ireland in the eighteen hundreds."

"No longer being farmed?"

"Well, I have a few acres devoted to corn and hay. But no, for the most part, the Bannisters moved from rural environs to the city in my father's childhood. But I've always loved it here."

"It's so quiet. I've been a city dweller all my life. I grew up in an apartment, never even lived in a house until just after I started my business."

She fell silent, and Beau knew her thoughts had turned back to less pleasant memories. Stepping behind her, he wrapped his arms around her, cradling her against his chest. He couldn't help but speak from his heart. His respect for her had always been huge, and his love for her was growing. He wondered when she would recognize the feelings he had for her.

“Now you have a beautiful home in the middle of the most exclusive area in the city. You’ve furnished it with the best of everything from all over the world, and you did it all through your own brains and vision and guts. Your company is one of the most solid, most respected cosmetics companies in North America. This, too, is the fruit of your hard work, planning, and determination. That’s a hell of a lot to be proud of, love. The rest that came before? Maybe you had to go through that to get where you are. To be *who* you are now. I happen to have very fond feelings for who you are now.”

Beau closed his eyes in pleasure when she folded her arms over his.

“Thank you. That’s...that’s the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me.”

“You’re welcome.” He resisted the urge to cup her breasts, to slip his hands under her shirt and pinch her pretty pink nipples into erection. It was absolute hell, being this close and not having, but he wanted her for more than a quick tumble. He could have her body now. He knew he could turn her in his arms, pull the clothes from her, lay her down, and plunge. But all he would have would be her body, and he’d decided, even before he’d brought her to his home, he wanted much more than sex. The time he’d spent with her so far only reinforced his determination.

Reluctantly, he released her and stepped away. “Come, pet. We’ve not finished our walk.” He tugged on the leash and smiled when she didn’t bitch or tug back. She blinked once, as if just now remembering the collar and leash. She tilted her head and looked at him, her expression serious.

“As you wish.”

“Now you’re getting it,” he couldn’t resist saying.

Chapter 5

“You want to play another game?” They were back in the library, but the chessboard wasn’t set up.

“I do. Please, pick a seat.”

Looking at the Scrabble board, Isadora shook her head. She could remember playing it as a child. The thought came out of nowhere that some things endured.

She’d brought her after-lunch tea with her and sipped it while Beau set the game up. He handed her a large pile of tiles.

“I thought I was supposed to pick them blindly, a few at a time,” she commented idly, turning the letters over and arranging them.

“My board, my rules, and I get to go first.”

“You like being in control.”

“I do, but I know when to let go, pet. Never fear. Ah, here’s an excellent first word.”

Isadora knew her eyes widened when he laid four letters on the board. F-U-C-K, never a word she’d used for points before.

“I thought profanity against the rules.”

“Like I said, my board, my rules.”

Isadora found herself returning his smile, though she was sure hers wasn’t as heart-melting as his. Examining her letters, she picked a single one, an “S,” and put it at the end of his word.

“Ooh, you went for simplicity, I see. Let me just tell you what I think of that.”

She watched avidly while he picked up four tiles and used her already placed “S” for another letter. She laughed. He’d spelled the word ‘pussy’.

“I think you have a one-track mind. At least, when it comes to words. Aren’t you going to keep score?”

“Who says I’m not?”

Shaking her head, she picked up two letters and placed them after the “P”, adding the innocuous word ‘pan’ to the mix.

Quick with his next contribution, he placed an “S” at the beginning and a “K” at the end of her word.

“Spank. Is that a threat?”

“I don’t make threats, only promises.”

“Beau Brannigan, you’re a very confusing man,” she said, studying the board and her letters.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’m an open book.”

She shot a look of disbelief. Deciding two could play the same game, she used his “K” for the last letter of her word.

“Cock,” he said, smiling. “That’s more like it.”

Too engrossed with enjoying his playful expression, she didn’t immediately notice the word he formed next. He had gone back to the original two words and added four more letters.

“Fuckslave. Is that even a word?” she asked, and could have cursed when the slight tremor entered her voice.

“You’ll be in a better position to answer that question, personally, after dinner. Your turn.”

His remark had been without that bantering tone she’d come to enjoy. The expression in his eyes told her he was quite serious.

Over the last twenty-four hours, he’d pulled more out of her than anyone before. Enough that she spoke without thinking. “You keep me off-balance. I came here prepared for what I believed would happen. I thought we’d have a few laughs, maybe...and a lot of sex.”

“And I invited you here to share intimacy. Tell me, Isadora, have you ever been so intimate with another man?”

Isadora couldn't lie. “No.” She couldn't pretend not to understand what he'd been doing to her, systematically, since she arrived. Looking down at her letters, she scooped up five and lined them down under the “A” in his last word.

“I know you're afraid. You don't have to spell it out for me.”

She laughed, loud and sudden in the silence of the library. She felt an extra bond form between them when he smiled and winked at her. She watched him place one more word on the board, beginning with an “S” that fit onto a word already there.

“I win.”

She read the new words: fuckslaves submit. Becoming aware anew of the collar around her neck and the leash attached to it, she understood in that moment he spoke nothing but the truth.

* * * *

She hadn't heard the lock turn or the door open. That was her first thought when she awoke and saw the box.

Plain white and decorated with a red ribbon, it waited at the foot of the bed and hadn't been there when she'd drifted off for an afternoon nap.

After their word game, Beau announced he would return her to her room so she could have that nap.

“I never nap in the middle of the day.”

“You will today, because I order it. I want you fresh for tonight.”

That had certainly been imperious of him, and she let him know it by the frosty look she sent him. She'd felt quite proud of that tiny rebellion, all things considered.

And hadn't she just ruined it all by being sound asleep when he'd made his delivery?

Tossing the blankets aside, she got to her feet and stretched. The second time she'd crawled into bed naked, she'd done so this time, automatically. She felt a bit more at ease with the concept, but not with standing awake, totally nude. She opened the armoire, unsurprised to find the outfit she'd worn that morning gone, but very grateful the silk robe still hung in place.

Feeling more secure with the robe on and belted around her, she approached the box. There was, of course, a brief hand-written note attached:

Your attire for the evening. I'll collect you at seven.

It took her a few moments after opening the box to understand what she was looking at.

"Oh, you have got to be kidding!" She pulled each item out one at a time, examined it carefully, set it aside. She removed six items in total from the box. When she had them on the bed, she arranged them, as they would be worn, and she picked up the item that had been at the very bottom of the container.

If she put *those* on, she'd be...what? Giving in to Beau Bannister's prurient fantasies? Well, *duh*, she'd done that the moment she'd accepted his proposition. No, if she put on this last item, she'd be telling him he really was in control. That she submitted to him and his self-proclaimed right to dominate her.

And what had giving up that precious commodity netted her so far? Isadora licked suddenly dry lips. The answer came to her with no effort at all. She'd never felt more pampered, more cherished, or more *special* in her entire life. She'd certainly never been so intimate with a man—hell, with anyone—as she had been with Beau. Before this weekend, she'd believed herself infatuated with the man, and curious if that infatuation could become something more. Now she knew she was falling in love with him, and here she stood, on the very precipice of crossing into totally unknown territory.

Could she continue being submissive? So far, it had been simple and, she acknowledged, superficial. Tonight, when he opened her door, if she wore everything he'd provided for her, it would go far beyond the superficial.

Tonight, if she wore this outfit, the real submission would begin. Her hand went to her stomach. It felt like she'd swallowed an entire hive of bees. She had no idea what plans Beau had in store for her. She felt a little bit afraid and a whole lot nervous.

The only question was, did she trust him—and herself—enough to do obey him?

* * * *

He unlocked the door and knocked.

She'd been his "guest" for just thirty hours. It seemed longer, somehow. Forever—that's how long he'd been waiting for her. Waiting for her to come into his life and into his bed.

Tonight, he was taking them just one step deeper into intimacy, and closer to his ultimate goal. He hoped. It all depended on what he saw when she opened the door.

The door swung inward, and his breath caught.

"My God, woman, you're hot."

"Thank you."

Touched that her cheeks turned pink, Beau couldn't resist reaching out to stroke them lightly. Neither could he resist continuing the caress down her body. The bra he'd chosen for her, French cut and siren red, displayed the top of her breasts and nipples. With his fingers brushing her flesh, nipples already pebbled poked out even more. His gaze swept down, noting with approval she wore the thong panty over the garter belt. She'd understood he intended to remove the one, but not the other. At least, not right away. The stockings and shoes showcased her long, sexy legs.

He'd left looking at the best for last.

The felt-lined black restraints he'd included with the ensemble encased her wrists. Ordinary handcuffs made of metal invariably connected the wrists together. He'd chosen these ones not only to match the collar, but for their versatility. He could restrain her with her wrists together, or her arms spread wide. Also, like the collar, these could only be opened with a key. He'd included no key in the box.

"I didn't know how you wanted me to wear them. I snapped them together, figuring if you didn't want them that way, you'd change them."

"You've pleased me, pet. Are they comfortable?"

"Yes."

Beau cupped her face, his thumbs stroking either side of her mouth. "Take that last step, Isadora. You've come so far already, and you're safe. You know that. Take that one last step for me, pet, and answer me again."

He felt the slight tremble and smiled when she lowered her eyes.

"Yes, they're comfortable. Master."

"Good girl." He kissed her, his tongue thirsty to drink from her, his lips firm and demanding. The taste of her, honey and ambrosia, shot straight to his groin. He felt her surrender in the tilting of her neck, in the widening of her lips. He pulled her tight against him so she could feel the strength of his erection. He used one hand, pressing on her ass, and was rewarded with the feel of her pussy grinding against his cock. He loved her, and at this moment he knew his goal within reach. Wanting her more than he'd ever wanted a woman, stepping back was hell.

He broke the kiss, smiling in response to the dazed and passionate haze in her eyes. He stepped back and handed her the clasp-end of the leash. She didn't hesitate, but attached it to her collar in one move.

“My grandfather wanted this castle to be identical to an actual medieval castle. He included a few features the rest of the family thought over the top. I’ve been a negligent host in not giving you the complete tour. So tonight, I make amends. First, we’ll have a small snack in the dining room. Then, I believe we’ll take our party to the dungeon.”

Chapter 6

The dungeon was real.

One wall held what appeared to be medieval weapons. Daggers and swords, a mace, a large club, and a shield decorated the old stone. At the base of the weapon display stood a table, with a wheel at one end.

Isadora tilted her head and realized, with some shock, the table was a rack. A small cage, mid-room, hung suspended above the floor by a heavy chain.

She couldn't suppress the shaking that had begun when she stepped into this room.

"Now you understand why I only fed you a light snack. Are you afraid, my pet?"

And he had fed her, Isadora acknowledged. She'd sat on a low stool beside him in the dining room. He'd unhooked her handcuffs, fastening them behind her back. He fed her, one small mouthful at a time, from his own plate. He allowed her a few small sips from his wine glass. He even dabbed her lips delicately with a napkin, and then he brought her here.

Was she afraid? Isadora examined the emotions swirling within her.

"No, Master. I'm...nervous. And excited."

"None of these tools have been used. They're all replicas, for decoration only. But over here," he put his hands on her shoulders and turned her to face the other direction, "is where we're going to play."

Chains hung from the ceiling and wall. A black leather medical exam-type table, complete with stirrups, waited innocuously in the corner. A shelf held various items, some of which she couldn't identify. Those she recognized included a riding crop, a flail, a paddle, and a strap.

"None of these have been used before, either, but we won't be able to say that after tonight, will we, pet?"

"N...no, Master."

Her belly jittered when he disconnected her handcuffs from each other and massaged her arms.

"Sore?"

She didn't think she could speak, so she just shook her head. Her arms weren't sore, even though they'd been manacled behind her back for nearly a half hour.

"Hold your hands out in front of you so I can attach these chains."

A part of her wondered why the hell she obeyed his every command, calling him "master"—that tiny part of her that was a stubborn, foot-stomping shrew. And yet the rest of her, fascinated, wondered *what would come next?*

When he'd attached both chains, one to each cuff, he stepped behind her. She heard the rattle of metal, and then her arms, lifted by the chains, rose above her head, and away from each other.

"There."

Stretched to the maximum, her feet still touched the floor. Barely. She tested her bounds and found she couldn't lower her arms one bit.

"Rest your eyes now, pet."

The blindfold was soft, and he had it in place before she could take a breath. She felt him fastening it, the way one would fasten a watchband or a belt. It fit snugly, and she could see nothing. Blind and immobilized, she waited, totally at Beau's mercy.

She felt his body press against her back and she gasped for his hands came around her, touching her everywhere. It wasn't until she felt him cup her naked breasts she realized he'd unfastened the bra.

"I've wanted my hands on you for so long. I would see you across the room at cocktail parties and imagine you here, naked, mine to take. I would be trading snappy repartees with you at those functions and dream of the day I would have you hot and needy, writhing under me. Wanting only me."

Heat washed through her, and she could only moan in response. Her head fell back, and she heard his chuckle, low and deep, felt it roll through her belly. She was completely seduced, and if only he knew it, completely his already. Despite her nervousness, despite the situation, she knew she could trust Beau Brannigan, as she had trusted no other man. Completely and absolutely.

"You like having your breasts played with? They're luscious. Plump and ripe...and mine. How do they taste?"

He stole her breath when he moved around and suckled her. His hands stroked her ass and up and down her back. He used teeth and tongue and lips on one breast, then the other. His movements varied in speed, slow at first, then, unexpected, he'd feed ravenously. Unable to see, suspended, she felt disoriented, and emotionally off-balance. Sometimes breath-soft, other times sharp, almost painful, he doled out delicious torture.

"Please." She couldn't stop the plea, which came from her soul.

He moved his mouth up her body, then settled on her lips in a totally carnal kiss. She wanted to give everything and take even more. Her tongue met his, stroked and danced and tasted. Her arousal blossomed in the pit of her stomach, spreading out in all directions. Her hips moved convulsively, and she cried out when he moved himself out of their reach.

“Yes, you like your tits sucked. Let’s see how you like this.”

Isadora heard movement, something sliding, and then something soft and gentle caressed her. Whatever it was floated softly back and forth across her breasts, making her nipples pucker even more.

“The strands of this flail are velvet. Gentle, but they aren’t always.”

She heard him step back, and a whistle in the air. She nearly shrieked when the lashes of the flail streaked across her breasts. It hurt, but only a little. She clenched the lips of her pussy when it struck her again, and then a third time. She couldn’t believe how the light pain increased her arousal. A fine electric current seemed to run from the strands of the flail through her entire body. She couldn’t hold back the moan of pleasure.

Beau laughed softly, cupped her breasts, and placed gentle kisses on each. “A bit pink, but no real marks,” he whispered, just before he suckled her some more. “And you liked it. I can tell. Let’s see if you like this, too.”

He stepped away, and she heard a tiny bell-like clang. Then, she sensed him step close, felt his cool breath on her still-damp nipple. The bud puckered even tighter.

The metal felt cold against her hot flesh. Two pieces, on either side of her nipple. She whimpered when the metal tightened, pinched, and knew these were the nipple clamps he’d spoken of.

“Can you take a bit more?”

“Mm...yes, Master.” What previously secret nerve ran from the end of her nipples to her pussy? She was so hot, so wet. Moving her hips, she gave herself over to the sweet, stinging arousal that this man stirred in her.

“There, that’s tight enough for the first time. Now, we’ll do the other one.”

Tiny, desperate mewling sounds echoed off the stone walls of the small room. *Was that needy, begging sound coming from her?* She didn't care. She just cared about, needed more.

The sound and feel of fabric tearing preceded the wonderful sensation of his hand brushing against her slit.

"I bought them, I can ruin them. Oh, baby, you are so wet for me."

"Please." She didn't care if she begged. She wanted more, and she wanted it now. Her hips moved, helping her pussy follow his hand.

And the stinging smack of something hard and flat on her ass made her jerk in shock.

"How many, pet? How many times should I spank your ass with this paddle?"

He struck her again, and the smarting pain, accompanied by the brush of his fingers against her mound, brought more arousal than she'd ever known, certainly more than she believed she could bear.

"Don't come," he ordered, his voice hard.

Don't come? She wanted to come so badly. Only a few minutes, and already, she wanted to come.

Her thoughts scattered, then focused. That's what sex had always been for her—get hot, get off. Wham, bam, no fuss, no muss. And no importance, really.

As if he read her mind, his next words cut to the very heart of her. "That's right. You want to come, but I'm not going to let you. It's only Saturday night. We have until noon Monday. I'm not going to be fast and clean and over. I'm going to be long and messy and enduring. I'm going to *matter*."

Oh, God. You already matter, more than I ever thought anyone could. But she couldn't tell him that, not when every nerve ending in her body was crying for orgasm.

"Now...how many more times shall I spank you, pet? Ten more?"

She cried out when yet another blow stung her ass. She could feel the flesh of her bottom getting hot and tight. She never would have imagined being spanked could turn her on like this.

“Yes, yes. *Please!*”

His tongue swirled in her ear, one hand stroking the lips of her pussy, back and forth, and the paddle fell in hard, fast slaps. Never the same place twice, unpredictable, the blows covered every inch of her ass. The pressure on her nipples added to the fire burning deeply within her. The sounds coming from her throat as she felt her wetness on his hand turned almost feral. She hadn’t counted, but knew the spanking finished when she heard the paddle drop to the floor.

“Kiss me, sweetheart.”

She needed to kiss him more than she needed to take her next breath. He hadn’t just stimulated her body, he’d stimulated her heart. Opening her mouth, she devoured him. Such heat, such hunger ran through her it was a wonder she didn’t melt. Barely aware her hands had been freed, she wound her arms around him. He was everything she’d ever wanted, everything she’d ever needed, and she had to have more. She’d die if she didn’t get more.

She closed her eyes for a moment in the harsh light when he took off the blindfold. He kissed her lightly, then stepped back. He had the clamps off her nipples in mere seconds. The sudden cessation of stimulation made her feel almost drunk, certainly bereft, and oddly uncertain.

She hadn’t even seen the lush velvet robe he bundled her into. When he gathered her into a hug, she clung hard and fast.

“Come on, sweetheart. Let’s go upstairs.”

Yes! Upstairs, where the beds were. Horny enough to take him now, she’d prefer a bed. She wanted Beau more than she’d wanted any man in a long, long time—probably ever.

She blinked in bewildered confusion when he opened her door, unsnapped the leash, and stepped back.

“I don’t understand.”

He bent down and kissed her, his lips and tongue both gentle. He tasted good, and she wanted more. Trying to take more, she tried to wind her arms around him, but he gently set her away from him.

“Inside, you’ll find your clothes, the key to the collar and cuffs, and a notarized letter, dated today, confirming the terms of our agreement have been met, and that the shares in MacLean will be turned over to you Monday at noon. When you awaken in the morning, your door will be unlocked. Downstairs, there’ll be a car with the keys in it. You can go home, if that’s what you want to do. Or, you can come next door to my room. And we’ll make love. Tomorrow. Your choice.”

“I...I really don’t understand. What was that downstairs? Just...playing?” She felt her temper climbing and didn’t care. Damn this man all to hell and back, he really messed with her head! Not to mention what he’d just done to her body. No man set her on fire like that and then just walked away!

“No, darling. *That* was foreplay.”

“It worked!”

“For me, too.”

She felt some satisfaction when he grabbed her hand and pressed it against his engorged cock. She obviously wasn’t the only one in need.

“But I need you to choose me when you’re not high on arousal, when you’re not flooded by submissive urges to please your master. I need us both to be certain that if we make love, it’s because we have both chosen to.”

He kissed her lightly, just once more. Then closed the door in her face.

Chapter 7

Everything was exactly as he said it would be.

Isadora stood at the window, looking down at the late-model sedan parked by the base of the steps. Her clothes had been returned to her, cleaned and pressed and ready to wear. She held in her hand the document Beau had mentioned. Those stocks were hers.

She could walk, and she knew instinctively that Beau, the next time she met him at a party or business function, would be charming, and witty as he'd always been. He wasn't a man to hold a woman's choices against her. There wasn't a petty bone in his body.

Pity she couldn't say the same about herself. She could be small-minded and mean-spirited when pissed. She had a temper second to none. Despite the fact that being called *The Lady Beast* sometimes hurt her heart, she knew she'd earned that name down to the ground and would likely continue to be more than worthy of it.

She should go back to the city and chalk the entire weekend up to temporary insanity.

The sun broke from behind the clouds, sparkling like diamonds on the stone and glass house. The green of the forest shimmered, as a soft breeze caressed the leaves.

Temporary insanity, her mind echoed, while her finger reached down to stroke the collar that lay on the dresser.

* * * *

Beau wanted coffee, but he couldn't bring himself to move away from the window to go get it. He knew she'd awakened. He'd heard her shower come on.

He wondered if leaving her high and dry last night had been the wisest course. Sure, he felt noble, if frustrated, but what if she made the wrong choice today?

He could court her. Flowers, candy, whatever it took to convince her she belonged with him—to him. Or he could make her his hostage for real. Refuse to unchain her until she vowed to spend the rest of her life with him. Until she accepted his love, and gave hers in return.

Fuck this. The waiting was driving him nuts. He'd waited long enough. The time had come to claim what belonged to him.

He spun away from the window and froze.

He hadn't heard the door open, but it had, of course, opened and closed. Isadora stood with her back against it. She wore his collar, and nothing else.

* * * *

"You didn't leave."

"I nearly did. I thought of all the reasons why I should just go. There were a lot of them." Isadora amazed herself. She didn't feel self-conscious standing naked before him. Now with the pretense of master and slave gone, there was nothing to figuratively hide behind any more. She had chosen to be here, her pride stripped as bare as her body.

"What reasons?"

She wished he'd come closer, rather than lean against the window frame. She shot a quick look around the room. The massive bed showed definite signs of a restless night. It was the

only sign she had that he felt as she did, and she clung to it stoically as she answered him.

“To begin with, I’m too old to be thinking about changing my life, taking on a man for the long haul. My business eats up a lot of my time. I’ve gotten rather used to doing things my own way and not having to think about pleasing anyone but myself.”

“Those sound like some pretty solid reasons for you to go.”

“Hm. That’s only some of them, but only one reason I could think of to stay.” If he didn’t do something soon, she was going to scream.

“And that reason would be?”

Finally, he took a step toward her. “Because I want you. It doesn’t matter if it doesn’t make sense, if people laugh behind my back because I’m so much older than you are. Nothing matters but being with you. You’ve already touched me as no one has. You *get* me as no one has. Damn it, man, put your hands on me!”

He could move fast when he wanted to. He scooped her up and brought her to the bed.

“I’m going to put my hands, my mouth, and my cock all over you, pet.”

“Less talking. More action.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

She’d known. Somehow, she’d known that it would be like this. Even through his clothes she could feel the heat and the strength of him, and that heat and strength warmed not only her flesh, but her soul. Fast, hot, give and take. She tore at his clothes, greedy for the feel of his flesh under her hands. He seemed to be just as greedy for her if the speed with which he feasted was any indication. She had his shirt open in a heartbeat. He was beautiful, his chest broad and firm, dusted in brown hair. Then her mouth fastened on a male nipple, biting, licking, sucking. He tasted of salt and sin, musk and man. His was a taste she wanted never to do without again.

A hard hand cupped the back of her head, fingers tangling in her hair, guiding her closer. “More, baby. Give me more. Take more.”

Her mouth explored his chest, then found his lips as three hands—one of hers and two of his—worked frantically to free him of his pants. She crawled on top of him before he got them all the way down his legs. And cried out when he lifted her off and set her on her back again.

“Beau!”

“In a minute, baby. I want to feel you. Let me.”

She knew she drenched his fingers when they so easily slipped into her. She was so hot, so ready, that his hand was nowhere near enough. She wanted his cock, and she wanted it now. She felt him reaching into the bedside table drawer even as he fastened his mouth on her right nipple, nipping it sharply, then sucking the swollen bud into his mouth.

She loved the feel of his mouth at her breast, but it wasn’t what she needed most right now. Pulling away, she said, “Give me the damn thing.” Ripping the condom packet from his fingers, she had it open and on him in a heartbeat. Then, using all her strength, she pushed his back to the mattress and mounted him.

His cock, long and thick, slid inside her and she groaned. This is what she’d been missing all her life. He was what she’d been missing, and to have him now, a part of her, filled her soul with joy. Her pussy, hungry for him, took every last inch, squeezing tight, then releasing, and doing it all over again. He felt hard and slick and *wonderful*. He completed her.

Beau sucked in a sharp breath, his fingers digging into her hips. “That’s it. Fuck me, baby.”

“You feel so good inside me. Mm, yes, I need more.”

“More?” he asked.

He was incredibly strong to be able to wrap his arms around her, lift them both, and change positions without taking his penis out of her.

“More, then.”

He spread her legs wide, and she felt the muscles in them straining. He shifted his position and...oh lord, he pushed so much deeper now, moving harder and faster so that he hit her cervix. It hurt, but the pain just rolled itself into the arousal, taking her higher and higher. She could feel the flesh of his shoulders and back straining, and ran her hands over the hot silk-covered muscles, her fingers drinking of the feel of him. A fine sheen of sweat glistened his skin. Leaning up, she tasted his salt, the flavor of his sweat going straight to her sex. The scent of him, all man, swelled her senses until she thought she might explode.

“Yes, yes, keep taking me, pet. More.”

His voice, no longer smooth, no longer velvet, conveyed his tension. The animal in him emerged, and Isadora loved it. She tilted her pelvis, wrapped her arms around him, and added fuel to his fire.

“Fuck me harder, master! Fuck me harder.” Her orgasm gathered as he did exactly that. The sound of labored breathing, of his balls slapping against her flesh echoed in the room. Primal sounds, they tore away the pretense of civilization.

“Now, sweetheart. Come on my cock now. Come with me now”

“Beau!” She screamed his name, her orgasm exploding through her. Wave after wave of pure rapture convulsed her pussy and rippled from her belly to her fingertips. She wrapped herself around him and held him, just held him through the convulsions of his own orgasm, absorbing the energy, the emotion and the intimacy. On and on it went until, finally, drained and replete, she fell back on the bed. Beau collapsed on top of her, and she wanted him to never leave her..

* * * *

"I knew it," he panted. "I knew it would be beyond good with you. Shit, lady, I think you wrecked me."

Her laughter was music to his ears. He managed to roll to his side, bringing her with him, tucking her close.

"I love you, Isadora. I love you."

"I think I figured that out when I kept finding my favorite things all over the place, but mostly when you went to so much trouble to show me I didn't have to worry that a relationship with you would hurt me."

"I knew you were smart enough to figure that out." He held her closer, nuzzling her neck. "I like the way you taste, right here."

"I like the way you taste, too. Everywhere."

"You haven't tasted me everywhere yet," he teased, and laughed in delight when she blushed.

"I will."

"Good. I've been gone over you since the first moment I laid eyes on you, more than a year ago. I kept trying to get you to see me as a man, one who wanted you, but you wouldn't."

"Oh, I saw you all right. You turned me on, more than I'd ever been turned on in my life, but I thought myself foolish. An older woman in mid-life crisis lusting after a young stud."

Beau couldn't help it. He laughed and hugged her tighter so she'd know he wasn't really laughing at her.

"Sweetheart, you're only forty-two, not sixty-two. You're too young for a mid-life crisis." More seriously, he stroked her face. "I'm going to be forever grateful to Cyrus Carmichael for deciding to sell his stock in your company. It was perfect timing, and the perfect lure. I knew that if I could just get you alone ...what?" Her face colored in a light blush, and her eyes skittered away from his. Intrigued, he scooped her up and laid her on top of him.

“About that stock. It wasn’t Cyrus’ idea to sell it to you. It wasn’t even his stock. It was mine.”

“Yours? I don’t understand. I got a call...”

“From Max Kessler, who said he’d been speaking to Cyrus, who wanted to sell his fifteen percent in MacLean. My lawyer arranged it all, at my request. Gave me grief over it too. He called me irrational and complained I didn’t cover my ass.”

“I like your ass uncovered. But why, sweetheart? Fifteen percent is a pretty hefty chunk. Why did you want me to buy it?”

“Because I wanted a *life*. I wanted something more than just my business. I had it all planned out. You’d buy the stock, then take an interest in the company, come to meetings, and get involved, and then I’d find a way to get you to make a move on me.”

Beau felt his smile spread. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

He watched her fingers play with his chest hair. He could feel his erection growing, and knew they wouldn’t be talking for much longer. “When I came to your office, you seemed so shocked.”

“I *was* shocked. You moved a lot faster than I dreamed you would. What you suggested was way over the top. I thought.”

“The reality of it turned you on, though.” He couldn’t get enough of the feel of her under his hands. He stroked her, back to thighs, lingering on her ass.

“Yeah. Enough to suggest that we take this party to the dungeon later.”

“Later. You know I want you to be my sub only when it comes to this, don’t you?”

“I figured that one out, too.”

“That’s why I gave you that document. Those shares are yours, that company is yours. I respect that. I honor that.” He enfolded her within his arms, hugging her lightly.

She kissed him lightly, then said, “But I really want you to be a part of it. That’s why I tore up that document you gave me.”

He knew he looked stunned. He had been certain nothing meant more to her than her company. His hope had been to come to mean as much to her, in time. “Is that your way of telling me that you love me?”

She looked up at him quickly and he cursed himself for sounding so insecure. But then she smiled, the most beautiful smile he’d ever seen.

“No, that’s my way of saying I’d like us to work together. Maybe even, you know, merge. But I do love you, Beau Brannigan, and that’s a miracle I never thought to have.”

“So maybe, since you love me and all, you wouldn’t mind merging more than our companies.”

“Maybe.”

He flipped her onto her back. One finger stroked the collar—his collar—that she’d worn, just for him. He kissed her, taking her deep, drinking in her unique flavor.

“Brannigan MacLean International has a nice ring to it.” He knew his smile was smug.

“I like MacLean Brannigan, myself.”

“We’ll negotiate.”

BEAU AND THE LADY BEAST

A Siren Adult Fairy Tale

THE END

WWW.MORGANASHBURY.COM

AUTHOR'S BIO



Morgan has been a writer since she was first able to pick up a pen. In the beginning, it was a hobby, a way to create a world of her own, and who could resist that? Then as she grew, life got in the way, as life often does. She got married and had children, and worked in the field of accounting, for that was the practical thing to do. And all the time she was being practical, she would squirrel herself away on quiet Sunday afternoons and write.

Most children are raised knowing the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. Morgan's children also learned the Paper Rule: thou shalt not throw out any paper that has thy mother's words upon it.

Believing in tradition, Morgan ensured that her children's children learned this rule, too.

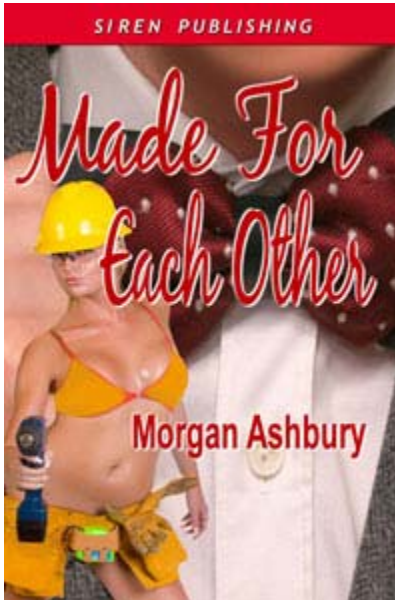
Life threw Morgan a curve when, in 2002, she underwent emergency triple by-pass surgery. Second chances are to be cherished, and Morgan decided to use hers to do what she'd always dreamed of doing: writing full time.

Morgan has always loved writing romance. When asked why, she says, “I can’t help it. I’ve lived, I’ve loved, I’ve laughed, I’ve cried. And, I took notes!”

Morgan lives with a cat that has an attitude, a dog that has no dignity, and her husband of thirty-four years.

Come by and visit Morgan at **www.morganashbury.com**.

Also Available



When librarian Lesley Farmer meets builder Charlene McKinley, it's hot at first sight. Pheromones flood common sense despite the fact that each is so obviously not the other's type. He prefers women who are sophisticated, genteel, and ultra-feminine. She prefers men who are buff and don't wear bowties. But when hormones take over, the two ravished and bemused opposites are left to see what they can build together.

Through a series of assumptions and misconceptions, it seems as if the unlikely pair will never get together. Maybe all they really shared was a one-night stand after all. Yet neither can stop thinking about the other. When fate puts them together one more time, they say to hell with dating and head straight to bed.

But can home-and-hearth-seeking Lesley convince commitment-shy Charlie that building a life together is inevitable because they are made for each other? [*Contemporary Romantic Comedy*]

REVIEWS for Made for Each Other

5 Hearts: "What an addictive story! To say that Lesley Farmer and Charlie McKinley were polar opposites would be like comparing the Grand Canyon to a hole! Dr. Lesley Farmer was a university Director of Library Services; Charlie McKinley was a building contractor with four brothers; she was the only one without a formal higher education, but the family knew she was actually the smartest member. The couple met early one morning when Lesley needed someone to come to his aid after a huge tree which was formerly in his backyard ended up in his upstairs bedroom. Incredibly, that was only part of their problem; their sexual attraction to each other was indescribable and such a shock to them!

That very afternoon, after he showed up at Charlie's office to pick up her quote, Lesley and she engaged in an awesome sexual encounter! Neither was the type to have an affair with someone unknown; they decided they needed to go back, have a couple of dates, and get to know each other. He planned one to a wrestling match; she planned the other to an upscale (little food) restaurant! Both dates were catastrophic, but the sex just kept getting better! Where, exactly, could their crazy, contradictory relationship go from here?

Ms. Morgan Ashbury has written a phenomenal story with a unique plot which, I predict, will be an award winner. Her characters are strong: both Lesley and Charlie have strong foundational relationships with others; it is just commitment that is hard to accept! Ms. Ashbury has an extensive ability to bring their likenesses to light without rambling. There is so much substance in this novel that it would be very easy to bog down in wordiness; it would be simple to lose readers. However, after reading this book, I am delighted that she could share so much information in this superb manner.

Seldom have I read a book I enjoyed more; that this is Ms. Ashbury's first book is amazing. I highly recommend this book to all who are interested in a beautiful love story which has a light comedic appeal!"—**Brenda Talley, *The Romance Studio***

4 Cups: "*Made for Each Other* is a powerhouse read. It was fun watching the mismatch duo tackle their feelings for the other. I love it when two people suddenly interact instantly, and their chemistry burns the pages. Charlie and Lesley are dynamite individuals with great personalities. Ms. Ashbury details a story that captivates and wins the heart of this reader. The way she instilled the desire for commitment into the storyline made the story even more enjoyable as the reader feels a part of the couple's relationship. This romantic story is an absolute delight." — **Cherokee, *Coffee Time Romance***

"What do a builder and a librarian have in common? Seemingly nothing, but Charlene McKinley and Lesley Farmer can't help but find each other simply irresistible in Morgan Asbury's *Made For Each Other*. Charlene and Lesley are unique, believable characters who are a treat to read. Their enjoyable, seductive story immediately draws the reader in. The secondary characters - Charlie and Lesley's best friends, family, and coworkers are also well drawn and not just background players. But it's Charlie and Lesley's passionate relationship with all of its ups and downs that is captivating. Ashbury is fabulous at telling a romantic, spicy story with easy-to-love characters. Look for more from this talented debut writer in the future." —**Amy Mendenhall, *NewsandSentinel.com***



Siren Publishing, Inc.
www.SirenPublishing.com