

Celia Kyle



Del Fantasma

Silk Panties

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Aspen Mountain Press

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Chapter One

I can do this, right? Right. It's one night. Look out world, Lisa Bradenton is breaking out. Boom! There, the shell of her former self was gone and in its place was a vivacious bombshell just waiting to get it on with a hunky guy. For one night only.

Her hands, unfortunately, weren't on the same page as her thoughts. They were sweating and clammy, and absolutely refused to release the steering wheel of her car as if they had a mind of their own. This had seemed like a good idea as she got dressed for the evening. Now, after she'd made the hour-long journey, here she sat having doubts.

"Break out of your shell!" they'd said. "Live a little!"

"The only way you'll get over him is to have a quick, no-strings-attached fuck. And Cody? Cody knows how to hook ya up with someone who will rock your world. Guar-an-teeed." That had been Rochelle. But what sealed the deal were three little words: *We dare you*. Lisa had agreed her friends were right about needing to live it up a little. As soon as the words were out of her mouth, off they went, planning her little night out all the way down to her pink silk panties. Gah! She was a heifer! What did she need with silk panties? It didn't matter; her friends had decided she'd be wearing the skimpy panties so that's what she wore.

The one thing she needed to help her get over her ex was a roll in the hay with a hottie. Then her ex would be out of her system and she could move on. The only problem with the plan was that she'd never been a one-night-stand kind of girl. Like, ever.

Her first and only lover had been her ex, Mick. Or, Mick-the-dick as Rochelle called him. Rochelle always did have a way with words, and her assessment of Lisa's ex had been spot on. Mick was a dick. Lisa also found out, after a recent and rather enlightening conversation with Ro, that not only was he a dick, he had a small one to boot!

How was she to know? She'd never been with another lover and never even *peeked* at Playgirl. Until she'd had enough of Mick's cheating, she'd never even thought of being with another man. Now, six months after their break-up, she was sitting outside Del Fantasma, psyching herself up to go inside and pick up a one-night-stand.

Lisa's cell phone rang and she dug through her purse, searching for the ringing offender. "Hello?"

"Get out of the car." *Rochelle.*

"How do you know I'm still in the car? I could be freaking a hunky man right now for all you know."

Rochelle snorted into the phone. "Baby, if you were *fucking* a hunky man, you sure as hell wouldn't be answering the phone. Besides, I know you remember? I know that you're sitting in your car, psyching yourself up to go in there. So, go already! You look hot! What's the problem?"

The problem? Ro wanted to know the problem? Well, she'd never done anything like this before, for one. And two, she'd only ever had sex with Mick. He obviously wasn't happy with her performance since he cheated on her. What if she sucked at it? "Why couldn't you guys come with me? I can wait here while you drive over—"

"No. This is about you getting a grip on your life and what you want. This is not about hiding behind the group. Mick pushed you into the shadows with his insults and controlling behavior. We're pushing you back out. Get. Out. Of. The. Car. Go and find some one-time lover that thinks you're the hottest thing on two legs and get the Dick out of your head, once and for all. Cody knows you're coming in tonight and promises to keep an eye on you so you don't end up with a freak that's too freaky. Get going!"

Good Lord, the owner of the bar knew she was coming in and looking for loving. Could she be any more embarrassed?

Rochelle was right. Crude, but right none the less. Plus, it made her feel a little better that the owner of the bar, Cody, was a friend of Ro's and he'd make sure she didn't end up with a total nut-job. Sighing, she let her head drop back to the headrest and closed her eyes. Taking a deep breath, she exhaled it slowly through her mouth before responding to her friend. "You're right. I'm doing it. I'll call you guys in the morning."

"You go girl!"

Laughing, she clicked the phone shut and put it back in her purse, double-checking to make sure she had the essentials: lipstick, keys, and condoms. Lisa scrambled from the car before she had a chance to second-guess herself, again.

Walking became a new experience for her in Rochelle's four-inch stilettos, but tonight was about busting out of her old rut. Cute sandals were out, and sexy *freak me* pumps were in.

The shoes and the clothes had all been chosen and forced onto her by her friends. There was no way she'd have ever gone out in such a tight fitting, short ensemble otherwise.

Lisa had curves. No, not just curves, her curves had curves. Every minute Lisa spent wrapped in Rochelle's mostly spandex and flowing chiffon clothing she felt like she'd pop a stitch. But the girls had assured her that she looked hawt. Of course, they said it in their best Paris Hilton voice.

Tugging at her skirt as she approached the door, she took a deep breath and stepped into the bar. Looking around she was relieved to see that the interior looked like any other bar. Unless you knew the type of people, human and not, who frequented Del Fantasma, you'd never know it catered primarily to creatures that went bump in the night. She just hoped they'd want to bump her. With the typical high-top tables, bar and pool table in the back, Lisa felt like she was breaking down her barriers in a place that felt like home.

Lisa hadn't believed Rochelle when she told her about Cody, his troubled past and Del Fantasma, at first, but her friend had shown her a bit of proof in the form of two tiny puncture marks on her neck. Yep. Cody the owner? Vamp all the way. When Ro had told Lisa of her plan to get Lisa out of her rut, she'd agreed, with one condition; she would not do a blood sucker. Blood freaked her out. Ro simply laughed and told her not to worry. Ro didn't have designs on Cody, but she'd heard that his heart belonged to someone. Cody was a single woman's walking, talking little black book, but *he* wasn't on the market. He'd take a sip of blood if a lady offered, but that's as far as any woman had gotten, no matter how hard they tried. And Ro had tried. Never the less, Ro was sure he could find someone to sooth Lisa's urges.

Pressing a hand to her chest, she begged her heart to slow as she approached the bar. Being that it was only eight o'clock, she wasn't surprised to see the place fairly empty. A few families lingered at some booths (she tried to ignore the child with the snake-like tongue). While a few groups of people around her age were sprinkled throughout the room, the bar itself only had a couple people sitting at it, nursing their drinks.

Intent on looking around the room, she didn't notice the man next to her until he whispered in her ear. "Lisa?"

Whipping her head around, she gasped. The man's face was inches from hers and she stared into a pair of dark blue eyes. So dark, they almost looked black. "What? How do you..."

Laughing, he took a step back and she was thankful for the space. He was too big, too much, just too everything. "I'm Cody and I'd recognize Ro's clothes anywhere." He winked at her.

He wrapped his fingers around hers, tugging her toward the bar. Warmth surrounded her hand. Odd, because she thought vamps were cold, but she supposed blood had to flow through him somehow since vamps were supposed to be able to have sex. Why couldn't he be warm?

Cody even went so far as to pull a stool back for her and held it as she sat. Such gentlemanly behavior. Lisa hoped he wasn't trying to get anywhere with her. She wasn't about to be another notch on his fangs—that was for sure.

Once she'd settled on the chair, he turned his attention to the bartender. "What do you think of our gal here, Jonathan?" Cody asked the man behind the bar.

Lisa hadn't even noticed the other man approach, but she turned her head and met his gaze. Tall, as tall as Cody, and he had the most beautiful brown— No, not brown, his eyes were the color of golden sunlight with hints of brown throughout. She couldn't look away, even if she wanted to. But did she want to? No, she didn't. She was staring, but that was the point of tonight, wasn't it?

Tonight was about stepping out of her comfort zone and doing things she'd never dreamed of. Staring at a stranger, entranced by his rugged good looks and golden eyes was not something Lisa would normally do. Which was exactly why she let herself continue to stare at the man. A blush was creeping up from her cleavage. She could feel the blood rushing up her abdomen and heating her skin as it moved from her breasts, up her chest, and neck.

Feeling the heat reach for her face, she tore her eyes away and stared at the napkin he'd placed in front of her. She'd held his gaze for as long as she could, but it was something new to her. She and Mick had been together for so long that she'd never really flirted or tried to get a guy's attention. Hell, until she left Mick, she'd never really even noticed other guys. A girl shouldn't have her eyes on other men if she's in a committed relationship. Too bad that rule hadn't applied to Mick as well.

"I'm not sure, Cody." The bartender's silky voice caressed her neck, down her spine and settled in her lower back before wrapping her body in its warmth. "I'm thinking she's a silk panties kind of girl."

Lisa snapped her head up, staring at Jonathan, sheer panic thrumming through her veins. Damn, was Jonathan psychic or something? Could he read her thoughts? She'd heard about the different paranormals who frequented Del Fantasma, but...

“Silk panties?” Cody asked, “I don’t know. Let’s ask the lady. Lisa, are you a silk panties kind of girl or would you prefer a slow screw, maybe even a screaming orgasm?”

What? Yes, please. All of the above.

Lisa looked between the two men, shifting from one to the other and back again before settling on questioning Cody. Jonathan was just too good looking and too much to take in at the moment. “What are you talking about?” She almost asked him how he knew what she was wearing beneath the skirt which felt entirely too tight, but refrained. She knew Cody may have had an inkling as to the reason of her presence tonight, but she would have thought he would have been a bit more circumspect.

Cody propped his chin on his palm, leaning against the bar. He looked nothing like the big bad vamp who’d survived being turned in the middle of a war zone in Afghanistan. “Well, we take a bit of peach schnapps and add a good bit of vodka. The drink comes out looking like the palest pink silk panties you’ve ever seen and goes down like a dream. As to the others, those are drinks, doll face, but I really think the silk panties is the ticket for you. It’s usually in a shot glass, but I think you’re more of an ‘on the rocks’ kind of girl.”

“Sound like something you’re interested in?” Jonathan asked, drawing her attention back to him and his intriguing eyes. They didn’t look like any color she’d seen before, and she wondered if he was as human as he appeared.

“Perfect.”

“Yes, baby, you are.” With a wink, he turned his back on her and grabbed a couple of bottles and began making her drink. When he was facing her, she didn’t get a good look at his face other than chiseled lines and a set of eyes that made her knees weak. Now, she got a chance to take in him in from the back. And what a backside it was. Round and firm, worn jeans hugged his ass and muscular thighs. His back was broad and the muscles rippled as his arms poured her drink over ice before pouring the mixture into a shot glass. The sleeves of his shirt were rolled up to reveal the tanned expanse of his forearms.

Sighing, she placed her elbows on the bar and propped her chin on her entwined fingers. Maybe she could seduce him. Going home with the bartender was a bit cliché, but she didn't care at this point. He looked yummy in all the right places and she was hungry.

He turned around, her drink in hand and she saw his eyes widen as he placed her drink on the napkin. Damn, now that he'd gotten a good look at her, she didn't have a chance. She knew she shouldn't have listened to Ro about her outfit tonight. A red, plunge neck halter-top was just not her. In the top and skirt combined with the shoes, Lisa felt like a fraud. A very well-rounded fraud. Rochelle told her men liked big breasts. Sure they did, but not when they came with a big ass to match.

She flashed the bartender a smile of thanks and placed her purse on the bar, searching for her credit card. Too bad a guy hadn't shown up to buy her a drink. Who was she kidding? That wasn't going to happen, she should just end the night before she got too depressed to drive home and eat a box of cookies.

A warm, callused hand closed over hers as she dug through her purse. Who thought that a credit card could get lost in something so small? Her eyes met the bartender's.

"It's on the house, baby. Unless your boyfriend will get upset if I give you a drink."

She shook her head. "I don't have a boyfriend, but won't Cody..." She looked around, the owner of Del Fantasma seemed to have disappeared.

"Nope, he's a good boss and trusts us when it comes to this kind of stuff." He paused and seemed to assess her. "Girlfriend?"

She laughed out loud. "No, no girlfriend."

He leaned forward, those bulging forearms resting against the other side of the bar. "Good. So I won't have someone dying to beat the crap out of me or claw my eyes out for flirting with you."

She narrowed her eyes at him, “No, but the word ‘baby’ seems to flow pretty easily, along with the flirting. Am I going to get into a cat fight because you’re flirting with me?”

“Nope.” He shook his head, eyes locked with hers, “I’m a one woman flirt.” He flashed her a bright smile. Did he have exceptionally long canines?

“Hey Jonathan!” A guy yelled from the other side of the room. He stood behind the other bar that spanned the longest wall of the room. He raised a hand to the guy before returning his attention to her.

“Excuse me for a moment. Don’t go anywhere.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it.” She smiled. The first genuine smile since her relationship with Mick ended. Lisa admired his backside as the muscles moved and flexed beneath his pants when he walked away. Maybe he was a good prospect for her man of the evening after all.

Chapter Two

Jonathan stayed near her the whole night. He sure as hell wasn't about to let some other guy slide in and steal her away. He'd spotted her the moment she walked through the entrance and his heart stopped. Then it beat out a near painful staccato rhythm inside his chest. If he hadn't been in the middle of mixing a drink he would have rubbed his chest where his heart threatened to burst through.

The woman was five and a half feet of lickable, kissable, and fuckable curves from head to toe. Her breasts nearly spilled from her too tight red top and her skirt barely covered her abundant ass. Though the short skirt did give him a wonderful view of her trim legs, his beast wanted to cover the woman in a blanket. He took a moment to pour the drink he'd been mixing and cash the customer out. When he looked towards the doorway again, she was standing near the end of the bar, eyes searching the room. What was she looking for? Was she waiting on someone?

When Cody sidled up to her, he had to tamp down the warning growl growing in his chest. Cody owned the bar, let other paranormals work there and gave everyone a chance no matter their past. He couldn't blow his job for a woman.

If only she wasn't so appealing. His beast tore at him, telling him to challenge Cody for even getting near her, but he reared the errant animal in. Last thing he needed to do was go toe to toe with a vamp. Especially one like Cody. Sure, the guy could be fun and was a fair boss, but there were times that his past caught up to him and he was down right dangerous to be around.

Jonathan made small talk and gave her a drink on the house. They at least managed to talk long enough for him to find out she wasn't with anyone. Score one for him! He wanted to slug Chris when he called him to the other side of the room, but being the manager on duty had its disadvantages. He finished his business with Chris and made his way back to his lady.

By the time he'd made it back to her, he found her sucking ice cubes and he shot the other bartender a disgruntled look. There was no reason a customer should be sucking cubes. Even if he hadn't been around to comp her drink, she'd been willing to buy her own earlier. Why hadn't Alicia helped her? Shaking his head at the other woman, he turned his attention to the sexy lady at the bar.

"I see you listened."

"That I did. Do I get a prize for being so well behaved?" The blush she'd been wearing when he walked away returned, but her eyes stayed glued to his. She nibbled on her lower lip as he continued to stare into the depths of her blue eyes.

"What would you like, baby?" She looked down at her hands and her fingers toyed with her damp napkin. She opened her mouth to say something, but for a moment, nothing came out.

"How about just another drink?" She gave him a small smile.

"Sure thing." He switched into bartender mode and mixed her drink with ease. Placing it in front of her, he watched her for a moment. She looked nervous, twitchy. "You waiting on someone? I could let the hostess know to look out for someone..."

"Nope, not waiting on anyone."

He arched a brow at her, confused about her purpose at the bar tonight. "Are you hungry? I could bring you a menu."

"Nope, not hungry either."

His confusion was growing right along with the burning blush she now wore. She wouldn't look at him either. She just continued to play with her napkin.

Del Fantasma wasn't known as a human pick-up joint, but if she wasn't eating or meeting anyone here, that was the only conclusion he could draw. But he wasn't ready to be that direct and ask her about his suspicions just yet.

"Okay then. Since it seems we'll be spending time with each other until you decide to leave, why don't you tell me your name?"

"Lisa."

He wiped his hand on his bar towel and held it out to her. "Nice to meet you Lisa, I'm Jonathan."

His hand wrapped around hers and he couldn't get over how tiny she seemed. The contrast between his tanned skin and her pale complexion was startling. She was bisque porcelain while he was a deep burnished pottery.

"Nice to meet you." She smiled, her luscious lips spreading to reveal her pearly white teeth. Hell, even her teeth were pretty. He was a goner. He just needed to make sure if Lisa decided to go home with someone tonight, that someone would be him.

Their conversation continued, ranging from politics to her favorite sport. He didn't really consider figure skating a sport, but he wasn't about to tell her that. When Chris bellowed his name across the room, again, he said a brief good bye to Lisa and stalked toward his friend and employee. This was getting out of hand.

"Chris. This better be damned good." His anger was reaching a boiling point. Jonathan was there to observe operations and help out at the bar, not be called over every ten minutes to solve a problem. That was Chris's job.

"You like her. You like her a lot." Chris did his Forest Gump impression.

He had the biggest urge to slug his friend for stating the obvious. He just didn't like the fact that it *was* so obvious. After breaking things off with Kimberly over a year ago, he'd never been this attracted to a woman. Let alone a human woman. Chris, as a fellow shifter, could sense Jonathan's lust. Sure, he could appreciate a woman's beauty, but Lisa had something else. And it wasn't just the fact that it had been over a year since he'd gotten laid either. "Shut the fuck up."

"Come on man! Admit it! You've got it bad for the hottie at the bar!"

“You can be so fucking juvenile.” Hitting his friend was looking better and better as the seconds ticked by. He kept glancing over in Lisa’s direction, making sure someone else didn’t horn in on his territory. Not that she really was his territory, but if she managed to get over her nervousness, maybe she could be.

“But I’m right, right?”

“Yeah, yeah, you’re right. Now leave me alone so that I can talk to the woman!” He shoved Chris’s shoulder and laughed. With Chris’s teasing fresh in his mind, he was fast becoming as nervous as Lisa looked. His nervousness fled the moment he spotted a guy walking up and settling onto the stool next to her. He saw her spine straighten, and she shifted in her seat, easing to the opposite edge as if she couldn’t stand to be near him.

Jonathan weaved his way through the growing crowd. Ducking behind the bar, he nudged his way past Alicia. Plastering a smile on his face, he waltzed up to Lisa and her new friend.

“Refill on the drink, baby?” He stressed the ‘baby’. He didn’t care if he was giving the guy the wrong impression. Even if Jonathan wasn’t going to get a chance with her, this guy sure as hell wasn’t. He looked oily and generally unhappy. He scented something from the man and Jonathan could tell he wasn’t human. Far from it. He was leering at Lisa, and she looked like she was doing everything she could to ignore the newcomer.

“Baby? Who the fuck is this Li?” The oily man grunted and shifted closer to Lisa.

Lisa turned ice-cold eyes on the man next to her. “Excuse me? You lost the right to ask that question the moment you shoved you poor excuse for a *penis*,” She spat the word, as if it dirtied her mouth to even say it, “into Barbie the bimbo.”

“Awe, come one Li, don’t be that way.” The oily stranger reached a hand out to touch her and before Jonathan could blink, she slapped his hand away. She slid off the stool, placing it between them.

“I’ll be any way I please, thank you. Now, leave me alone, Mick.”

Jonathan lifted the door to the bar and moved to stand behind her. It was probably playing up the situation a little, adding fuel to the fire, but he didn't care. Sliding his arms around her waist, he pulled Lisa's lush body back against his. He could feel her shaking and he tightened his hold as he bent and whispered in her ear.

"It's okay. He's not going to touch you." He couldn't resist the temptation her neck presented and he pressed a tiny kiss just below her ear before scraping one of his canines across her pale flesh. The other man saw it and stiffened. At Jonathan's touch, Lisa relaxed her body against his and eased her head to the side, giving him more room to work with.

With the few hours they'd spent together as he tended bar, he already felt a connection to the tiny woman and he wasn't about to let this jerk upset her. He'd shift and eat the pig before he let that happen. He raised his head and spoke, leaving no room for argument. "You heard her. She doesn't want anything to do with you. You fucked up your shot by treating her like shit, and I'll be damned if you'll bother her and make her unhappy ever again. Leave. Don't ever come back here." Cody would let the banishment stand, he trusted his employees. Jonathan didn't want the pig in the bar ever again.

Jonathan straightened, grabbed her hand and tugged her along with him. Stepping behind the bar, he wasn't surprised to see the stranger's mouth drop open in shock. Lisa seemed like such a quiet, sweet soul. No matter what she was wearing, she wasn't the vixen she portrayed. Talking to her for the past several hours proved that. How she ended up with that creep, he didn't know, but hopefully he'd be finding out soon.

He pulled her behind him as he traversed the obstacle course that was behind the bar. He stepped around crates of liquor and clean glasses. When he reached the staircase that led to his apartment on the second floor, he motioned for her to precede him. She shot him a questioning look and he bent down to whisper in her ear for the second time in as many minutes.

“Just putting on a good show for your guy over there.” He nodded his head in the direction of the oily guy, still standing at the end of the bar. She looked over her shoulder and then back at him, smiling and nodding in agreement. Her full ass squeezed past him and she took the steps slowly at first, wobbling on her high heels with each step. After about five steps, she stopped and removed the shoes. Picking them up, she jogged up the rest of the stairs.

Laughing, he followed her swinging behind to the top of the steps and opened the door for her. Once inside, he closed the door and leaned against it, watching her inspect his home away from home. Cody let him stay above the bar at night to keep an eye on things while he hunted, he also watched the bar during the day while Cody slept, and Jonathan appreciated his trust. It worked for Jonathan. He got a place to stay that was close to work and Cody got someone to look after the place. It also made bringing women home from the bar pretty easy. “So, who was that guy?”

She had ventured deeper into the room, looking around his apartment.

“My ex.”

Yeah, that’s what he figured. “You went out with a pig?” Lisa deserved so much better than a pig for a boyfriend, lover, and mate. She deserved him. “Were you expecting to see him here?” That could be an option. Maybe she wanted him to see her talking to another guy, get him good and jealous so he’d take her back. Some women were desperately in love with total jerks, he hoped she wasn’t one of them.

“Yes. Now that you mention it, he does kind seem like a pig doesn’t he?” She giggled. “And no, I wasn’t expecting to see him here.”

“That’s because he is a pig, baby.”

“He’s what?”

“A. Pig. A pig shifter, didn’t you know?”

She shook her head. “No, but it explains a lot.” She wrinkled her nose. “Like his lack of good, general hygiene.”

Laughing, he watched her hips sway as she moved around the room. “So, if you aren’t trying to make him jealous, what were you doing here tonight, Lisa?”

“Looking for you.”

“Me? You don’t even know me.”

She turned around and padded on her bare feet to him. Standing a foot from him, he could smell a hint of her perfume now that it wasn’t over-powered by the scents of the bar.

“No, I don’t. But you look like a guy that could make me forget him, his touch. Are you a guy that can do that Jonathan?” She stepped forward, closing the gap between them and he groaned aloud when she pressed her body to his. A feather light touch fluttered on the side of his neck and her breath tickled his neck. “Can you make me forget?”

His hands traveled up her hips and wrapped around her waist, pulling her body tight against his own, his erection pressing and straining against his jeans. “Yes.”

Chapter Three

Lisa wanted to dance, scream, and shout when she heard Jonathan's answer. She *really* wanted to do the running man and cabbage patch, but was pretty sure it would ruin the moment. Especially considering Jonathan was looking all serious and staring at her lips.

He closed the gap between them, his lips hovered millimeters from hers and she held her breath, waiting for his touch. That first brush of his skin against her sensitive lips sent tiny shivers through her body, settling in her core. Her body tensed and strained towards his, craving more. And that was only a teasing taste, a glimpse at what he could draw from her. He pressed a soft open-mouthed kiss to her mouth, flicking the seam of her lips with his tongue.

The next time he pressed against her mouth, she returned the favor. Her tongue snuck out and slid against his and she got her first taste of him. She went back for more. Their tongues danced as she searched out more of his taste, relishing the warm moist cavern of his mouth.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and arched her body into his, moaning when they aligned. His erection pressed like a hot steel rod into her abdomen. She rocked her hips against his pulling a groan from his body in return. Their lips and tongues continued their fight for dominance until he wrenched away from her, resting his head against the door.

Lisa slid down his chest until her feet rested firmly against the floor and she sagged against him, ear pressed to his chest. She could hear the rapid thump of his heart and the deep breaths puffing in and out of his lungs. Her hand slid down his neck, past his shoulder to rest on his chest. Her fingers stroked the muscle of his pectoral through his thin cotton dress shirt until a tiny nipple pressed against her palm. Using her fingernail, she scraped it with one slow swipe.

"Oh, baby." Jonathan moaned, placing his hand over hers, stilling her movement.

She snatched her hands away, clasping them behind her. "Did I do it wrong?"

Lisa hated the hesitation and uncertainty in her voice, but she couldn't make the feelings disappear. *She didn't know what she was doing!* She'd only ever been with Mick, and if she were with *him* they'd be through by now. She never had to seduce her ex. If he wanted sex, he rolled on top of her and they had sex. After many conversations with Rochelle, Lisa learned that sex was more than having someone roll on top of a person and pump. A lot more.

Jonathan stroked her arms, goose bumps rose on her skin in his wake. He tugged her hands from behind her and brought her fingers to his mouth, pressing soft kisses to the tips. "No, you did it right. Very, very right."

Relieved, Lisa allowed him to pull her toward the bed in the corner of the room. Once there, she didn't protest when he sat and pulled her between his knees. Seconds passed as they stared at one another and Lisa didn't know what to do. It was usually over by now and they'd both be asleep. Okay, he'd be asleep and she'd be washing up, but the main event would be long past at this point. What was taking him so long?

"Lisa, you sure about this?"

Why? Why did she have to get the one guy in the world who seemed to have a conscience? "I'm very, very sure." There. That was good, right?

"You seem nervous, Lisa, I don't..." Lisa pressed her fingers to his lips, stilling any further assurances from him.

"I'm nervous because..." she swallowed hard. He might tell her to get out after he heard of her *experience*. "I've only ever been with one other guy and, well, he cheated. I'm not sure how good I'll be. If you want me to go..."

It was Jonathan's turn to shut her up. "Hell no! You're perfect. Every inch of you is perfect and I can't wait to slide between your thighs. I just don't want you to regret being with me."

She raised an eyebrow at him, snickering. "Don't worry. I'll respect you in the morning."

"Yeah?"

Leaning forward, she brushed her lips across his, the now familiar shivers slid down her spine. "Yeah."

Words weren't necessary any longer. Jonathan took control. He stood and turned her around, easing her to the bed.

Once she was lying on the queen-size mattress, he began undressing her. Jonathan took little time divesting her of her top. A quick tug on the tie around her neck and back and the chiffon confection was gone. Lisa helped him with her skirt, sliding the zipper down, and he tugged the mostly spandex piece of cloth from her hips and down her legs.

Now, in nothing but her pink silk panties, she waited. The whole experience was so far out of her realm, she wasn't sure what to do next.

"Now *that* is a beautiful sight." Embarrassed, she covered her breasts. Well, as much of her breasts as she *could* cover. He wasn't having it. "No, baby. I want to see you."

When he tugged on her wrists, she released her hold, feeling the now familiar heat of her blush traveling up her chest. Nibbling her lip, she turned her head and stared at the white wall.

Jonathan's finger stroking her chin had her turning to face him. "No need to be embarrassed, Lisa. You are so..." his fingers slid over her left breast, circling her nipple, "so beautiful."

Hearing it from Jonathan, she almost believed him. She almost believed that her curves weren't her worst asset, but her best.

Relaxing, she arched into his palm when he squeezed her breast, aching for more. He kneaded them, alternating between the left and right, stopping to pinch and pull at her nipples. Lisa couldn't get enough. Arousal burned hot through her system, pushing her to do things she'd never imagined. Like beg. "Please."

Jonathan leaned down, capturing her breast with his mouth and sucking long and hard. He released her nipple with a pop. "Please what, baby?"

He skimmed her abdomen, palms stroking and touching her everywhere at once. She started when he slipped his fingers beneath the elastic of her panties and held her breath, waiting for him to move.

Instead of pulling them off, he tormented her. Jonathan traced the lines of her panties, from hip to inner-thigh and back again. His teasing caresses only proved to heighten her arousal further. Her pussy clenched and more of her juices dripped from her, coating her labia. She knew she had probably soaked through the silk confection covering her mons, but she didn't care. Every thought flitting through her mind centered on Jonathan and his teasing fingers.

Finally, he hooked his fingers around the elastic and tugged her silk panties over her hips, down her thighs and along her calves before removing them entirely. After having brought her legs together so he could remove her panties, Lisa was hesitant to reveal herself to him fully.

He gripped her ankles, hands skimming her freshly waxed legs as he rose higher. Lisa's heart slammed in her chest, harder and faster with each rising inch. When he came to her upper thighs, she pressed them together, unwilling to reveal everything.

"Lisa?"

She nibbled her lower lip. Mick hadn't... No one had... "Um..." She made a strangled sound, somewhere between a whine and a growl. "No one's ever..."

Jonathan gifted her with a crooked smirk. Something masculine and primal lurking in his eyes as he pried her legs open. "You'll love it, baby. Open for me, now."

His demand had come too late. Like the wanton slut he'd turned her into, she relaxed into his grasp, thighs spreading, giving him access to everything.

Lisa hoped he liked what he saw. She'd spent a pretty penny getting waxed and plucked at the salon in preparation for her one-night stand. Her labia were bare while her mound still had a smidge of hair up top. She'd walked in with a bush and walked out decidedly lighter. She wanted to be smooth, but hadn't wanted to look like a prepubescent child. The woman at the salon had worked magic. It sounded as if Jonathan agreed.

"Damn, baby. You're gorgeous."

She laughed, she couldn't help it. The man had said her pussy was gorgeous. Wrinkly, maybe. Gorgeous? Not hardly.

"Are you disagreeing with me?" He quirked his brow at her and her laughter doubled. In response, he pounced.

Jonathan buried his face in between her legs, tongue aiming straight for her clit as he devoured her. He lapped at her nether lips, first licking a path up one side and down the other before focusing on her clit once again. Almost as if her were cleaning Lisa of her juices and at the same time, causing more to leak from her pussy. Arousal spiked through her blood, heart pumping and breath billowing out of her lungs as she tried to follow Jonathan's path in her mind.

She rocked her hips in time with his licks, aching for more contact. Each time he strayed from her clit, she whimpered. Each time he ventured back, she groaned. It wasn't long before she realized he was doing it all on purpose. He teased her, but hadn't yet brought her close to the brink. Each moment, her orgasm was delayed, her arousal seemed to gain strength.

Tangling her fingers in his hair, she tugged until his eyes met hers. "Make me come, Jonathan. Please?"

She did it, she begged. At this point, all she wanted to do was come. Now. Then again, later. But now would be good. The man had the audacity to smile at her again

before sticking his tongue out, the nubile muscle formed a pointed tip and he kept his gaze locked on hers as he flicked her clit.

Lisa's eyes drifted close as his attentions focused on the tiny nubbin. So close, yet so far.

Then, oh God, then his fingers joined his tongue. He slipped first one and then two into her pussy, their path eased by her abundant cream. Her muscles clenched and tightened around the invasion and she moaned in response.

Jonathan began tapping her clit with his tongue in time with the thrust of his fingers. Her orgasm began spiraling out of control, and before she could grasp it and hold the rush of pleasure back, he did something unexpected. He touched her in a place she thought had only existed in dreams and Cosmo magazines.

Jonathan stroked her G-spot. Unbidden, her muscles tightened and contracted at once. Her back arched off the bed as a strangled moan escaped her lips. Every inch of her body jumped to life, all of her synapses firing at once as her nerves jumped in pleasure. The orgasm he had been coaxing and toying with burst through her, enveloping her in a cocoon of pleasure.

Lisa's pussy milked his fingers and never once had Jonathan's mouth left her clit. He still pleased her as she writhed beneath him, lost to the sensations his mouth and fingers had caused. Gasping for air, Lisa slowly came back to herself.

She eased her back to the mattress, heart racing out of control and breath billowing. She'd never, in her entire life, experienced something so amazing. A soft whimper escaped when Jonathan slid his fingers free of her heat, but he returned quickly, looming above her.

Sated, she didn't care what he did now. Though, she wouldn't mind another orgasm...or four.

* * * *

Jonathan ached. No, more than ached. He burned to be inside Lisa. His beast clamored and clawed to be released. A driving need rode him now, a desire to mate and claim like none he'd ever felt before. Sure, Jonathan had bed his share of women through the years, but no one touched him like Lisa. Hell, no one touched his beast like Lisa, human or not.

Lisa, with her hesitant touches and unsure looks, tempted him beyond measure. She nearly burst into flames under his hands and mouth. How would she react to his cock? No time like the present to find out. He rose from the bed just long enough to shed his clothes. Her eyes had drifted shut, a sated smile on her face. He'd put that look there, and he was going to do it again and again.

Returning to the bed, he settled between her thighs. Positioning his cock at her entrance, he coated the tip of his erection in her juices. Skin against moist, aroused skin. There wasn't anything closer to heaven on earth. As much as he'd lapped up her juices, she was still dripping wet. Part of his brain told him he should be wearing a condom, but his beast wasn't having anything between his cock and his woman. He slid the head of his cock up and down her slit, circling her opening and enjoying watching her want.

"Please, Jonathan. Please." Damn, when she begged, he nearly came then and there.

"What do you want, baby?" He wanted his sweet, quiet woman to say the words. He wanted her hot and raunchy, willing to do anything for satisfaction. He imagined she hadn't experienced much in the bedroom and he wanted to show her everything. Beginning with the fact that she shouldn't shy away from her sexuality, but embrace it.

"You," she moaned.

"Not good enough."

"You in me?"

"Closer," he teased. Jonathan slid the tip of his cock into her heat and fought to stay there, to not go any further. He wanted to, but this was about making her wild.

Lisa slid her palms up his arms and across his shoulders, sifting her fingers through his hair. Damn, it was almost as if she was petting him and he fought to tamp down the purr threatening in his chest. He wouldn't go panther on her now. Couldn't.

She whispered something.

"I couldn't hear you, baby. What do you want?"

Lisa tugged on his hair and he lowered his face to her. He nuzzled her neck, unable to resist marking her a little. He rubbed his face along her smooth skin, and smiled, knowing his scent would stay with her, if only for a few days. Her timid voice, husky with arousal, sounded in his ear.

"Your cock...in me."

Jonathan pulled back, a smirk on his lips as he stared at Lisa. So beautiful. So perfect. "Baby, that's all you had to say."

Without hesitation, he slid his cock into Lisa's soaking pussy. He pressed forward, groaning, his moan of pleasure mixing with Lisa's, until he was balls deep within her. Only then did he stop moving, wanting to give her a moment to adjust to him.

Tight, wet heat enveloped him when he speared her. The teasing taste he'd received when just the tip of his cock had been lodged in her channel was nothing compared to being surrounded by her heat.

Lisa rocked her hips against him and he opened his eyes. He hadn't realized he'd closed them and the revelation astounded him. He was a predator, his beast always on alert and ready, yet he'd let down his guard with this tiny woman.

"Move. Please, oh God, please move."

Grunting in response, unable to form a single word, let alone a coherent thought, Jonathan withdrew from Lisa's pussy slightly, only to thrust forward again. The force of his thrust jostled her, pushing her higher on the bed and she gasped.

"Oh, fuck. Do that again." Here eyes were wide as if amazed that his thrust had felt so good. She'd be feeling better than good by the time he finished.

Gripping her shoulder to keep her from sliding away every time he thrust, Jonathan withdrew and entered her again, putting more muscle behind the movement. She moaned, the sound traveling from her pussy to his cock. His girl liked it hard, it seemed. The harder the better. Happy to oblige, he began pounding into her.

Over and over again he thrust and retreated, only to thrust into her heat again. She had started with soft moans of pleasure, which quickly turned to groans. Before long, she cried out with each thrust, sometimes a simple “oh” and other times, she chanted his name. He loved hearing his name on her lips. He wanted to hear the sound forever. Forever? Yeah, forever. His beast roared in approval, its need to mate and claim rode him hard, but no harder than he rode Lisa’s sweet body.

Continuing his assault, he noticed her eyes had begun rolling back into her head and her cunt clenched around him. She was close to coming again and he’d done that to her, for her. Leaning down, he captured her nipple with his teeth, nibbling the hard nubbin and tugging slightly. She gasped, eyes opening and meeting his as he bit harder. Lisa’s gasp turned into a moan and her pussy tightened around him. His woman liked a hint of pain with her pleasure. Perfect.

A purr really did threaten when her fingers tangled in his hair, holding his mouth to her breast while he continued to pump in and out of her. She stroked the back of his head, fingers sifting through his hair while he suckled and nibbled her breast. Her cunt clenched in time with his sucks. Damn, he was close. And from what he could tell by her breathing and muscles tightening, she was too.

Jonathan upped his tempo and changed the angle of his hips then. He wanted to stroke her in just the right spot.

“Ohmygod!”

He found it. Her body tossed and arched beneath him, simultaneously pulling him closer and pushing him away as the tip of his cock stroked her G-spot. He’d been holding back his orgasm, but now that her release approached, he could find his blessed relief.

It didn't take much more; she bucked beneath him, meeting him thrust for thrust before she tightened around him almost to the point of pain. Her cunt milked his cock in rippling waves as her orgasm washed through her and his was quick to follow.

Jonathan's seed spurt from his cock, releasing the tension that had been building in his balls as his orgasm slid along his nerves. He squeezed his eyes shut tight, afraid Lisa would see his eyes change. He felt his canines lengthening in his mouth and he prayed she wouldn't notice. Thrusting into her once, twice, three times more, he slumped over Lisa, resting his weight on her. Just until he caught his breath.

Chapter Four

The early morning sun streamed through an open window, waking Lisa slowly from her slumber. Stretching, she was startled by the heavy weight around her waist holding her captive. Then she remembered where she was. She'd spent an amazing night pleasuring and being pleased by Jonathan until they'd both passed out in an exhausted tangle of limbs. At some point during the night they'd become less tangled, but his arm still held her against his body.

How the hell was she going to get out of this? She'd never done the one-night-stand thing before, and she really wasn't prepared for the morning after awkwardness she'd heard about. She needed to get out of there, fast! Rolling and wiggling, she managed to slide free of Jonathan's hold. He grumbled as she moved away and she held her breath, waiting to see if he would awaken. Thankfully, he didn't. He rolled over and faced the kitchen.

While his back was turned she tip-toed around the apartment, gathering bits of her clothing and shoes. Taking them into the bathroom, she closed the door behind her without a sound. So far, so good. She slipped her top and skirt back on, making sure everything was covered. Stepping into her shoes, she debated the intelligence of putting them back on. Then again, she didn't exactly want to scurry across a glass littered parking lot without them.

Sneaking out of the bathroom, she checked on Jonathan and breathed a sigh of relief to see that he still slept. Now, she had to figure out how to get out of there. She

snatched her purse off the bedside table and looked around the studio apartment. There had to be another way out. She couldn't go out the front door that led back into the bar. She was sure there would be some sort of security system armed and just waiting to wail if she stepped outside the door.

Frustrated, she growled and looked around the place once again. In the back corner, behind a coat rack, there looked like there was a door. Dodging the overturned furniture, she made her way to the obscured door. Looking out a window next to it, she saw that there were indeed some steps leading down to the parking lot. Score! Her eyes scanned the door, looking for magnetic points to indicate if the security system monitored this door as well. When she didn't see any, she flipped the deadbolt and turned the knob.

Taking a deep breath, she pushed the door open. No alarm sounded, but the damn door did make a god awful sound. It groaned as if it hadn't been opened in years. She glanced over her shoulder and was relieved to see that Jonathan hadn't been roused by the sound. The man slept like the dead.

Stepping out onto the landing, she pushed the door shut behind her. She felt guilty for not being able to lock it behind her, but she didn't want to stick around until Jonathan woke to let her out. That wasn't how one-night stands worked. She would have loved to have had breakfast with him, and lunch...and maybe dinner, too. She really needed to face it; she was not one-night stand material.

One night and she wanted to spend forever with Jonathan. Maybe not forever, but a really long time, at least. Shaking her head at the direction her thoughts were going, she began her descent on the rusted stairs. They creaked and groaned as she carefully placed her feet on each step. After two steps, she realized that this hadn't been one of her brightest ideas. It felt like the stairs would collapse at any moment. The bolts holding the steps to the side of the building looked as if they'd tear free of the concrete at any moment. Maybe the door and the stairs weren't meant to be used.

On the next to last step, the rusted metal gave way and her left foot plunged through the hole in the metal. The grating dug into the skin of her ankle and calf. She

sucked in a deep breath as the pain washed through her body, and set her nerves on fire. After the initial jolt of pain faded away, she pulled her leg free of its metal prison. Moving slowly, hands grabbing the rail and wall, she got her foot loose of the rusted material. Blood flowed down her leg and ankle into her shoe, pouring from the numerous cuts to her foot, ankle and calf. She didn't dare examine the cuts too closely, afraid of what she'd see.

Her breath came in and out of her body in great puffs as the pain throbbed through her leg. Taking a careful step, she got off the cursed staircase. With slow, purposeful steps, she made it across the parking lot as blood continued to flow into her shoe. Leaning on her car, she unlocked the door and got in as carefully as she could, making sure she didn't bump her leg. She felt around in her backseat for a towel, shirt, anything to help stop the bleeding. Snagging a shirt, she wrapped it around her ankle and calf as tightly as she could stand it.

Lisa started her car and threw it into drive, thankful that she drove an automatic. It took her thirty minutes of navigating the city streets before she finally pulled up in front of the emergency room. Parking her car near the sliding glass doors, she hobbled into the ER. Tears streamed down her face as she made those last few steps to the nurse's station. The woman had been typing away at her keyboard as Lisa approached, but looked up when she sniffled. "Excuse me?"

"Oh, dear! What's wrong honey? Were you raped?"

Of course, with her clothes thrown on in a hurry and blood covering her hands as tears streamed from her eyes, the woman would think she was raped. "No, no. I cut my leg on some rusted out stairs when I was trying to get away..."

"Lord! You were kidnapped?"

The elderly nurse rushed to the end of the desk, yelling for an orderly as she rounded the corner. The woman stopped when she was a few feet from her and gasped. Lisa heard fumbling behind her and turned to see a man unfolding a wheel chair and push it towards her. The nurse grabbed her by the shoulders and steered her backwards to the chair.

“Don’t worry dear, we’ll take care of you.” The nurse snatched a clipboard from the desk and began spouting questions as she was wheeled behind a set of double doors. Twenty minutes later, with the nurse’s medical and insurance questions answered, Lisa was left alone behind a curtain that partitioned the room. Squeezing her eyes shut and saying a silent apology to the other hospital residents, she dug her phone out of her purse and called the only person that could help her now.

The phone rang three times before she finally answered. “Hello?”

“Rochelle!”

She heard her friend grumble and struggle with her sheets, more than likely she was untangling herself from her own one-night stand.

“Lisa? Are you okay? What’s going on?”

The tears she’d been holding at bay began again as she relayed her story to her friend. Taking her from Lisa’s initial meeting of Jonathan to Mick’s arrival and a brief stop off at the wonderful sex, she ended the story with her current state.

“And now I’m in the hospital with a cut up leg and I’m sure that crazy nurse will be bringing the cops back any second to take my statement. The lady still doesn’t believe that I wasn’t kidnapped and raped. And the worst part of it is I’m not wearing any underwear!”

Her best friend of more years than she dared to count was silent on the other end of the line. And then she heard it. The most horrible sound any down and out person could ever hear, laughter. Rochelle was laughing like a loon on the other end of the phone.

“Rochelle!”

“What? Sorry.” She snorted. “No, really, sorry. I’ll gather the girls and get over there as soon as we can. Do you need anything?”

Lisa thought about it a moment and gave Rochelle a list of things she wanted. “My sweats, underwear, a *bra*, and my favorite sneakers. You know the ones with the stains from when we went canoeing and I stepped in the huge mud hole that may not have been mud? Oh! And coffee. And a chocolate crème filled donut. And...”

“Lisa, you’re not getting admitted. You’ll be there for a few hours, tops. I’ll start with the clothes and stuff. I’ll send Amelia to get your coffee and donut. Sharon will probably get to you first since she’ll be heading straight over. We’re on our way hon. Take care of yourself till we get there.”

Lisa sniffled, her tears receding like the tide. “Okay. I’ll be here. Tell the girls to hurry.” They said their good byes and she flicked her phone shut.

Replacing it in her purse, she lay back onto the bed and closed her eyes. No one had been by to give her any pain medication and the throbbing was becoming unbearable. Taking the pillow from beneath her head, she shoved it under her injured leg. Anyone walking by would get an eyeful of her crotch, but she didn’t care. Her damn leg hurt.

She must have drifted off to sleep because the next thing Lisa knew she awoke to a scream she’d recognize anywhere. *Rochelle*.

Pushing her body into a sitting position, she waited for her ranting friends to find her. The curtain was thrust aside and Lisa was happy to see that the gang was all there. They shoved their way into her curtained cubicle and proceeded to help her get undressed and redressed in minutes. Just as she was shoving her old clothes into a bag, the doctor and a police officer entered.

The policeman, filled with authority, spoke first. “Excuse me. We’ll need those clothes for evidence.”

“Evidence of what?” Always the designated speaker of the group, Rochelle stepped forward.

“I’m sorry. I can’t disclose...”

“Ro, I told you that dingbat of a nurse was going to call the cops.” Lisa turned her attention to the officer. “I’m sorry you were bothered officer, but there’s been no crime committed against me. I just managed to ruin a perfectly wonderful night with a stupid accident.”

“Well, Ms...Bradenton, the nurse was certain you’d been held against your will and physically assaulted.”

The doctor, doing what doctor's do, ignored the exchange between Lisa and the officer and began unwrapping her leg. When the wound was fully revealed, everyone, including Lisa, gasped. Innumerable cuts and scrapes peppered her leg, ankle and foot. Some of them still oozed blood and looked to be pretty deep. For some reason she'd been able to block the pain, but looking at it made it return in full force. Lisa's stomach rolled and the pain made her gag.

Ro, seeing her distress, stepped between her and the cop.

"Sir, she engaged in activities of a personal nature last night and when departing this morning managed to muck up her leg. Nothing illegal about it."

The doctor poked and prodded at her leg, turning it this way and that, causing her to moan.

"I'll have to hear Ms. Bradenton explain what happened." The cop sounded skeptical.

Gritting her teeth, she spat her answer at him, frustrated with the guy's insensitivity. Did he not see her bleeding all over the bed? "I found a guy, I fucked him, and when I tried to sneak away this morning my leg fell through the *fucking stairs!* Is that plain enough for you?" Her voice rose as the doctor continued his examination until she ended with a screeching wail.

Both men's heads snapped up and their eyes collided with hers. She couldn't even begin to imagine what she looked like. Eyes wide, hair wild and breath coming out in great puffs to help her deal with the pain, she imagined she looked pretty scary. At least it seemed that way since the officer left abruptly without any additional questions. Even the doctor refrained from asking her questions. He went about his business of numbing the lower half of her leg with local anesthetics and cleaning and stitching her leg from the knee down. When all was said and done, she left the hospital after a tetanus shot with her leg bandaged and a set of crutches to help her get around.

After the morning she'd had, she didn't think any other one-night stands would be in her future.

Chapter Five

“How Chris? Explain it to me.” Jonathan’s eyes bore into the back of his best friend’s head as they paced the room. Somehow Lisa had gotten out of the apartment and out of Del Fantasma without setting off the alarms. Chris had been responsible for overseeing the installation of the security system and making sure the place was nearly impenetrable. Cody’s life depended on the security of the bar.

Of course, he wasn’t really *that* mad the security system failed so much as he was pissed Lisa managed to disappear. He thought they’d had a connection, something more than just a quick fuck, but he must have been wrong. She’d fled at some point during the night and he had no idea how she’d done it. She hadn’t even bothered to leave her number so he could call her. Did she never want to see him again? After everything they’d shared through the night, he thought they had *some* type of future.

Running his hand through his hair, he slumped into a nearby booth. Chris slid in across from him.

“I don’t know how she did it, man. The alarm was set and the doors were locked up tight when I came in this morning. You didn’t give her a key or the code last night so she could let herself out?”

“No. I didn’t want her to leave.” He swallowed hard after that admission. “I wanted to wake up with her this morning.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah, wow.” After his last girlfriend, he hadn’t had any real feelings toward any woman. Yet, here he was, wishing he’d woken up with Lisa beside him instead of a pillow.

Chris slammed his hands down on the table and jumped from the booth. “I’ve got it! If she didn’t leave the building through here, it must have been through the apartment.”

“What are you talking about? You can’t get out of my apartment except through the stairwell door.”

“What about the back door?”

Yeah, there was a back door, but it hadn’t been used in forever. “But that door’s locked tight and the fire escape stairs are nothing but a bunch of rotted metal steps.”

She wouldn’t risk her life by sneaking out the back door, would she? Jumping from the booth, he was right behind Chris as they dashed up the stairs to his apartment. Flinging the door open, they raced to the back door and stared at the deadbolt. It was unlocked.

“Fuck!” Jonathan wrenched the door open and stared down at the rotted metal steps. He couldn’t believe she risked her neck by running away down those stairs. Disgusted, he turned away from the door and paced back to the living area, walking circles around his coffee table.

“Uh, J? There’s a hole in the next to last step. Was that there before?”

His mind flashed through the images of the last time he’d checked the stairway. “No.”

He raced Chris down the stairs they came up and into the bar, adrenaline pulsing through his veins. Even if she hadn’t wanted to wake up with him, he didn’t want to think she was hurt. He’d never wish that on her.

The men were panting for breath by the time they made it to the back of the building and to the bottom of the rotten steps. Sure enough, a gaping hole was left in the middle of the next to last step. Just beneath it was a small puddle and drops of blood staining the concrete.

Jonathan braced his body against the building and dropped his head to his knees. Even if she didn't care for him, he cared for her and the evidence of her pain speared his heart. She had probably left in those ridiculous heels and tried to come down the steps quietly. He could just imagine her delight at nearing the bottom, only to have her leg swallowed by the razor sharp teeth of the step.

"You didn't hear an ambulance, right?"

No, he hadn't. Even if he didn't wake up when she snuck out, he would have heard an ambulance. "No."

"Then she can't be that badly hurt. Maybe a few cuts or scrapes, but..."

"I need to know for sure."

"Okay, let's get inside and call the hospitals. She'd be smart enough to know she needed a tetanus shot after something like that, right?" Chris asked hopefully.

"Yeah. Any idiot would know that."

"Okay, just checking. Let's get inside and call around then. But I'm not running, not even for her. I'm getting too old for this shit, man." Chris's joke brought a smile to his face even though he didn't feel like it at the moment. His upbeat attitude and personality was just what he needed at a time like this.

Squeezing his friend's shoulder in thanks, the men walked back to the front of the building side by side.

It didn't take long to find her. There had been one Lisa admitted to the emergency room at the county hospital and now, Jonathan had her last name. Bradenton. Lisa Bradenton.

Without waiting for Chris, he hopped into his truck and sped towards the hospital like the devil was on his tail. The staff wouldn't give him any information, but he hoped he could persuade them to tell him about her when he arrived. If that failed, he could always rip the place apart, brick by brick. His beast was well and truly pissed at him now and desperately wanted to know about its mate.

He slammed on his brakes and squealed his tires as he pulled into a spot. Vaulting from his truck, he ran towards the emergency room doors and right up to the

nurse's station. He didn't wait to be acknowledged, just butted into the nurse's conversation and talked over her and the woman she was speaking to. "I'm looking for Lisa Bradenton."

"Just a moment sir." The nurse turned back to the woman she had been speaking to before he interrupted.

"Ma'am, I realize you're in the middle of something, if you could just tell me where I can find Lisa..."

"Sir. You'll have to wait until..." Jonathan slammed his fists down on the counter top, shaking the structure with his force, denting the once smooth surface.

"Look lady. My mother taught me to treat elders with respect, but you're pushing it. I need to know where Lisa is, and then you can go back to your conversation."

"Well, I never."

"And you never will again if you'll just tell me which room she's in."

The nurse turned her back on him as she consulted her computer. Seconds later, she came back and gave him the bad news. "She was released about ten minutes ago. I can't give you any further information young man. Now, I'd like you to vacate the premises."

His shoulders fell at her words and his fingers raked through his hair. Turning, he stalked away from the staring eyes and shocked faces. He didn't care what they thought. It was Lisa that concerned him now. At least he knew she was okay. They wouldn't have released her otherwise. He just wished he knew what had spiraled through her mind when she sprinted down those damned steps.

Frustrated and tired, he dropped to a crouch and sat on the curb, trying to figure out where to go from here. Part of him said to just chock it up to one night of fun and forget it, but the other half of him said he had to find her. Now! Even if she was fine, he just wanted to see her, touch her, talk to her. Anything!

Lost in his thoughts, he didn't realize he had company until she spoke. "Who are you and what do you want with Lisa?"

He looked up at a petite, thin brunette that vaguely reminded him of his ex. She held her body as if she was prepared for battle, and had an attitude that matched it. He didn't know how much to divulge about his relationship, or lack thereof, to this stranger. "I'm a friend."

"No, you're not. If you were, you wouldn't have had to go Incredible Hulk on the nurse in there. So, I'll ask you again, who are you and what do you want with Lisa?"

Jonathan wasn't a guy to kiss and tell, but he didn't know how to describe what went on between him and Lisa. "Fine. I'm not a friend, but she and I spent some time together recently. I became worried when she disappeared...no, wait, that's not right."

The woman's hand flew to her mouth with a gasp. "Ohmygod. You were her fuck and duck last night, weren't you?"

She leaned down and slugged him in the shoulder. Damn, the woman could hit. "Why the hell did you let her get hurt?"

"Well, I sort of fell asleep and when I woke up, she was gone. I guess that was the 'ducking' part of the evening." Yeah, he'd known that she'd gone out last night with the intention of enjoying a one-night stand, but it had meant more to him. Hearing this stranger's words cut him deep.

She must have heard the bitterness in his voice. Her anger disappeared and she plopped down next to him. "Sorry. She was messed up by her ex, and last night was our attempt at getting her back into the game."

"Mick?" The pig.

"Yeah." She looked at him out of the corner of her eye. "How do you know?"

"One, I met him at the bar when he tried to approach Lisa. Two, we did more than just fuck. We talked. Got to know one another. At least, I thought we did. I guess I was wrong." He propped his head in his hands and stared at the asphalt, memories of the previous night flashing through his mind. Not just the memories of them making love, but all of it, every moment. "Look, here's my card. Call me and let me know that

she's okay, all right? If she doesn't want to see me again, fine. I just need to know she's okay."

Jonathan didn't wait for her response. He rolled to his feet and strode towards his truck. He needed to forget about what he'd shared with Lisa and get back to running Del Fantasma while Cody slept the day away. It was just a one-night stand, right?

Chapter Six

“Remind me why we’re here? *Here* of all places.” Lisa yelled to her friends’ retreating backs. She made her way through the crowd, watching their heads bob amongst the bodies as they followed the hostess. If only it was that easy for her. It had been a week since her “accident” and she was still on crutches. Admittedly she probably didn’t need the crutches any longer, but she was a wimp. Her leg still hurt, and had stitches; she was using the crutches. No matter what the doc said.

After what felt like an eternity, she hobbled her way to their table. Her friends had already settled into their seats leaving two open for her. She lowered her body into one chair and propped her injured leg on the other. It wasn’t the most comfortable position, but it kept her from feeling her pulse throb in her ankle. She picked up her menu and perused the items listed. Deciding to just order a burger, she slapped her menu on the table. None of her friends had answered her question.

“Anybody?”

“What hon?” Amelia peered over her menu and pushed her glasses back into place before disappearing again.

“I said, ‘why are we here?’”

“We like Del Fantasma. What’s wrong? You liked this place and Ro knows the owner.” Sharon replied, her menu muffling her words.

“It’s, *you know.*”

“Home of the best margarita’s and seven kinds of imported beer on tap?” Lisa snatched her menu and whacked Rochelle on the head.

“No. It’s where I met Jonathan. He works here, lives here, damn it.”

Rubbing her head, Rochelle narrowed her eyes at Lisa. “What’s the big? It’s not like you’ll see him again. And didn’t you say he worked nights? It’s only seven, still early. Anyway, it was a one time thing and done. Why don’t you look around and see if you can find your next fuck and duck, dear.”

Rochelle reached over and patted her hand before returning to her menu. *Bitch.* Okay, maybe not a total bitch. How about snarky pain? Rochelle, Amelia, and Sharon had been saying similar things to her all week. Every time she brought up her night with Jonathan, they told her to forget about him and move on already.

Jonathan was just a guy to get her back on the horse and he did his job, pick another. Blah, blah, blah... What if she didn’t want another horse? What if she liked him? Then again, even if she liked him and wanted more, she couldn’t contact him. In her haste to get the hell out, she didn’t bother to leave her phone number. That’s how one-night stands worked. You got in and got out with no further contact. She was beginning to understand that she just wasn’t cut out for the fuck and duck lifestyle. Nothing against it, but it wasn’t for her.

“I don’t want another one.” She closed her eyes, waiting for her bombshell to sink into her friends.

“Okay.” Lisa opened her eyes to look at Rochelle and saw that Sharon, and Amelia were nodding their heads in agreement. “One nighters aren’t for everyone. We’ll just help you look for your next boyfr...”

“No, you don’t understand. I don’t want another one because I want him, Jonathan.” She swallowed the lump in her throat and watched for her friends’ reactions. Amazingly, there wasn’t much of one. Instead of ranting or raving about rebounding, they all nodded their heads as if they had been expecting the news.

“You guys aren’t surprised?”

This time, Sharon laid her hand on top of hers and squeezed. "As much as you've been moping around for the last week, hon, it wasn't a big surprise."

"It wasn't?"

"Nope." Amelia agreed. "We've known since we drug your sorry ass home, and were convinced that you'd seen Jonathan in the parking lot."

The table shifted with a thump and Sharon glared at Rochelle. "What was that for?"

Rochelle gave a muffled "sorry" and kept reading her menu. Something was up with her friends, but Lisa couldn't put her finger on it.

Choosing to ignore Rochelle and Sharon's behavior, she posed a question sure to get their attention. "So, how do I find him and keep him? Should we start a hunting expedition?"

There wasn't a reaction. None. She didn't get to enjoy their typical giddy giggles. Amelia peered over her stupid menu, Sharon patted her hand and Rochelle, the mouth of the group, just shrugged her shoulders. Their reaction, or lack thereof, was really anticlimactic. Lisa had received bigger reactions over going shopping at the mall than she did when announcing that she wanted Jonathan.

When she didn't get so much as a word out of her friends, she slumped into her chair and took a swig of her soda. Fine, if they didn't want to help her, she'd help herself. The moment her leg healed, and she could wear Ro's stilettos again, she'd be on the prowl for her man. She hoped he hadn't found someone else by then. But if he did, then she supposed it wasn't meant to be.

All thoughts of hunting and hoping flew from her mind when she heard a familiar velvet laced voice in her ear. "No hunting is needed, baby. I'm right here."

With a gasp she twisted in her seat and came face-to-face with the man she'd been thinking about twenty-four hours a day for the last week. "Jonathan."

His hand cupped her cheek as he pressed his lips to hers. She opened her lips on a sigh, allowing his tongue access to her mouth. Her tongue twirled and twined with his, searching out the smooth taste of him she remembered. His tongue glided and

stroked hers, seeming to be looking for the same thing. She sucked his tongue with slight pressure, urging him closer and drawing a groan from deep within his chest. She released his tongue and licked his upper lip.

"Get a room guys!"

"Geez!"

"*Oh my!*"

Smiling, she pulled out of the kiss, nipping Jonathan's bottom lip as she retreated.

"You ran away, baby."

"Yeah, I'm..."

His thumb pressed against her lips, quieting her. "No need. 'Cause I'm not letting you go now."

"No?"

"Nope. Now that I've found you, you're mine."

Without another word Jonathan scooped her into his arms. As if sensing his purpose, the crowd split, giving him a clear path to the bar. He didn't stop once he'd stepped behind the bar; he strode toward the staircase leading to the second floor. Just as they neared the bottom of the steps, Cody blocked their path.

Lisa felt rather than heard Jonathan's low growl. "Move," he snapped at Cody.

"Where are you headed?" Cody leaned against the entryway to the stairs, seeming unconcerned about pissing Jonathan off.

Lisa, sensing her lover's agitation, stroked up the side of his neck, cupped his cheek and started stroking his stubble. He leaned into her touch and she smiled, running her thumb over his lower lip. His tongue snaked out to flick her skin and she giggled.

"Upstairs. Claim." Jonathan grunted. She didn't understand what he was talking about. Sure, they were headed upstairs to make love, that wasn't a surprise. But what was this about claiming?

Cody stepped forward until his chest nearly touched her side and her gaze flicked from Cody, to Jonathan and back again. Something was passing between them and she didn't know what.

"You'll tell her first." Cody ordered and Lisa wanted to know who would be telling what.

Jonathan nodded his agreement and Cody stepped aside, letting them continue their journey to the apartment.

Jonathan managed to get them through the door without hurting her leg for which she was thankful. Even after a week, it still throbbed and hurt occasionally. She sighed when he laid her on the bed. So many memories were wrapped up in its sheets and she hoped to make many more with Jonathan.

Instead of joining her or stripping naked, he kneeled on the floor, pulling her hands into his. His early frantic pulse had slowed and he didn't seem as tense or strung tight. "We need to talk, baby."

Lisa panicked; she knew it was too good to be true. Someone as hot and desirable as Jonathan could never want her. Never.

She pulled her fingers free of his grasp and moved to stand, easing her legs off the bed. "It's okay, I'm a big girl. I wish you wouldn't have drug me up here without my crutches, but I'll make it down by myself. You could have dumped me privately, you know..."

Jonathan eased her back to the bed while she continued to babble and she didn't stop talking until his lips sealed over hers. He swept in like a tornado, without warning he disarmed her and kissed her nearly stupid.

Grasping her wrist, he forced her hand between his legs and her fingers wrapped around his jeans-covered erection. "Baby, I want you more than you know, but I have to tell you something before we go further. I want you, Lisa. But you have to know the truth before you decide if you want me too."

Not want him, was he kidding? She wanted all of him, and more than once. Instead of assuring him that nothing to deter her from taking everything he offered, she kept quiet, allowing him to get whatever he wanted off his chest. She didn't wait long.

"I'm a shifter."

She nodded. She figured as much when he told her about Mick-the-dick. Ro even intimated as much when Lisa had relayed the news to her friend. Beyond blood tests, only paras could snoop out other paras. At least, that's how Ro explained it.

"You know?" He seemed shocked.

"Of course. Okay, not of course, but I figured it out and it doesn't matter to me." She stroked his cheek, his coarse five o'clock shadow scratching her skin.

He kissed her palm. "You're mine, you know."

She nodded again. Lisa knew. Knew from the moment she walked out his door that walking away was a mistake. She belonged with Jonathan, as incomprehensible as it sounded. She barely knew him, but ached to be near him.

"I want to claim you, Lisa."

Okay, that she didn't know anything about, but he rushed to reassure her. "It doesn't have to be now, but I'm a panther, baby, and my cat recognizes you as its mate."

Mate. The word flitted and bounced through Lisa's mind as she stared at Jonathan. He looked so full of apprehension and uncertainty. *Mate.* Lisa had never thought to be anyone's mate before. Sure, she hoped for love someday or maybe fondness and affection, but mating went beyond all that. Did she want all that came with being mated? There hadn't exactly been a lot of information available on shifters when she'd been researching, since not many people believed in their existence. Throwing caution to the wind, she smiled and gave Jonathan her answer.

"I've always been a cat person."

* * * *

A cat person. She'd always been a cat person. If it hadn't been such a serious situation, Jonathan would have laughed out loud. Instead, he captured her lips with his in a slow, lingering kiss before pulling away and fixing her with a serious stare. "What do you say, baby? Want me to be your cat?"

This time, she leaned forward and brushed a chaste kiss across his lips. "Yes."

Time seemed to have fast-forwarded then. From one moment to the next, Jonathan was conscious of one thing. Skin. He needed it, craved it, wanted to touch every inch of skin he could get his hands and paws on. Within moments, Lisa lay bare before him. The only thing she wore were the bandages around her leg.

After stripping his own body bare, Jonathan took a moment to kiss the skin surrounding her bandages and the bandages themselves. "Don't you ever hurt yourself again, Lisa. I couldn't bear it."

She chuckled. "It wasn't exactly planned, but you won't catch me doing anything so stupid again."

"You ran."

"But I won't again, Jonathan."

He stared at her, trying to see if she told the truth. When she held her hand out to him, he moved up the bed and slipped behind her, nuzzling her neck. His scent was still strong, even after a week, but soon it would infuse her permanently. He wouldn't have it any other way.

Jonathan stroked her arm, following it to where her hand rested on her hip. He slid his fingers through hers and placed her hand behind his neck, out of the way. He hitched her leg over his own, opening her to him.

"What are you doing?" Her voice had dropped to a husky murmur.

"Claiming my mate." He pressed an open mouthed kiss to her neck, just below her ear. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"No." She moaned when his fingers found her clit. His cock ached to be buried deep inside her, but he had to make sure she was ready.

"Not at all." She sighed when he dipped his fingers to the opening of her pussy.

Heated moisture met his questing fingers. He'd barely touched her and she was ready for him. His woman. *His* woman was so damned responsive. He'd never get enough of her. And after tonight, he wouldn't have to worry about losing her. Sure, they'd have their problems, but after tonight, she was *his*.

Jonathan continued to stroke her. Just because he could. He didn't want their mating to be frenzied and rushed, but something they would both remember with fondness. He circled her clit, alternating tiny tight circles with small taps. He didn't want her to come, but he wanted her close. Already his cock ached to be buried inside her and he knew he wouldn't last. He'd be damned if he came while she didn't.

When she whimpered and begged for his cock, he knew she was ready for him, but he wanted to hear her say it.

"You ready for me, baby?" She nodded. "Not good enough."

"Yes," she whispered. So low, he almost didn't hear her.

"A little louder, baby. Tell me what you want. Exactly what you want."

Lisa moaned, the sound traveling straight to his cock where it nestled between the cheeks of her ass. "Fuck me. Claim me. Make me yours, Jonathan. Now!"

His human mind wanted to wait, wanted to give her more pleasure before claiming her fully, but his beast wasn't having any delay. His bestial nature won.

Easing his fingers away from her soaked pussy, he grasped his erection at its base and positioned the tip of his cock at her entrance. Slowly, so fucking slowly, he eased his cock into her heat. He slipped into her easily, her warmth enveloping him, bathing him in her essence.

Seated fully within her, he kissed and licked her shoulder. They both lay silent as she relaxed against him.

Cupping her breast and laving her shoulder, he eased his cock out of her passage before thrusting in again. He wanted this to be a slow and tender loving between them. Lisa seemed just as content with sweet kisses and easy love making.

She pressed her backside against him, arching her back so he could slide deeper into her heat. "So good, Lisa. So good."

Lisa laid her head on the pillow, eyes closed as he made love to her. "Mmm..."

Jonathan laved the spot he wanted to claim. Just where her shoulder and neck met, he'd bite. At the right time, in the middle of her climax and not before, he'd lay claim to Lisa's body and heart.

Abandoning her breast, he reached between her legs. Finding her swollen, throbbing clit easily, he stroked her in time with his thrusts. In. Out. In. Out. Over and again he slid his cock into her sopping pussy and every time she welcomed him. Glancing at her face, he was happy to see a smile playing on her lips. Their mating was progressing as he'd hoped.

He twirled his fingers around her clit, tightening the tiny circles and pressing harder against the tiny nub of flesh. She gasped and rocked back against him. Careful of her injured leg, he placed his foot on the bed, needing more leverage to thrust into her.

Lisa rocked back, meeting his every thrust as they both approached their peaks. Soon, too damned soon, but soon nonetheless.

Jonathan's orgasm hovered within his awareness. He held it and his beast in check as he waited for the tell-tale convulsions and tightening of Lisa's cunt around his cock. Only one night together and he knew her body so well already.

His beast wanted to be free, wanted to sink its teeth into its mate and hold her steady as he pounded into her, but Jonathan kept it at bay. Right now, his mate needed tenderness and sweet caresses. The frenzied mating and clashing of bodies could come after she healed.

For now, he continued his gentle assault, increasing his pace only slightly to match hers. Lisa's body shuddered slightly and he recognized her impending orgasm. He wanted it. He wanted to be the cause of all her pleasure from this moment forward.

"Come for me, baby. Come on my cock while I claim you."

Jonathan's words must have acted as a catalyst for her climax. She tensed and groaned his name as her pussy tightened around his cock. Her body convulsed as muscles squeezed and spasmed in rapid succession from head to toe.

Taking her orgasm as permission to release his own, he pressed deep into her pussy and released the tenuous hold on his climax. His seed burst from his cock as his canines elongated and extended from his gums.

With a groan, he bit into Lisa's shoulder. He didn't break the skin, but the significance was there. With every thrust of his cock into her channel and release of his seed into her womb, he'd claimed her fully. His heart belonged to her, as did the heart of his beast.

As his tremors died down, he released his bite on her shoulder, laving the abused flesh with his tongue.

Jonathan eased to his back, sliding his cock free of her pussy, pulled her over and into his side. He pulled her close, relaxing only when she used his shoulder as a pillow.

Her soft voice drifted to him as a sated sleep threatened. "So, I'm yours?"

As if there was any question. "You're mine."

Just before he drifted to sleep, he stretched his other arm out to his side. Sliding his hand beneath the pillow, his fingers stroked the silk from their first night together hidden there. Yeah, he had a silk panties girl—smooth and sweet to the core. And now, she was his.

The End

Silk Panties



Ingredients

1/2 oz Vodka
1/2 oz Peach Schnapps
1/4 oz Raspberry Liqueur

Directions

Pour ingredients into a stainless steel shaker over ice. Shake until ice cold. Pour into a large shot glass, and serve.

We hoped you enjoyed this installment of match-making by Cody Warren at the Del Fantasma bar. Cody has mixed several special drinks for his patrons, available now at Aspen Mountain Press (www.AspenMountainPress.com)

Stop by for:

A Screaming Orgasm by Michelle Hasker: Tara's not looking for love, and will go to great lengths to avoid becoming intimate with a guy. Brandon is tired of taking no for an answer. He loves Tara, and when a mysterious stranger takes a very active interest in her, it's time to stake his claim.

Sea Breeze by Jade Rivers: Serai, a sea siren, has one chance to leave the ocean's depths and walk on land to find a mate. Failure means death.

Texas Tea by Maura Anderson: Photographer Lara Saunders has a lifelong secret – she can see and hear ghosts. When she was rescued from a near drowning by the ghost of a lighthouse keeper, he set her on a mission to document historic lighthouses and the lives of their keepers so they were not forgotten. Now on her third book in the series, Lara has arrived in San Diego to document the Old Point Loma Lighthouse but

hasn't counted on becoming the target of Cody Warren, the matchmaking owner of the Del Fantasma bar. Or falling in love with a handsome Park Ranger whose secret is stranger than her own.

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