



Soaked

LENA MATTHEWS

Loose Id

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Dedication

To Ali, whose blush makes me smile. Thanks for making Lori Foster's Get-Together a weekend to remember. I will never think of conventions the same way again!

Chapter One

With a disgusted frown on her face, Ali Hernandez stared down at the well-used, dingy toilet seat and wondered whether it was possible to catch crabs from a public restroom. She couldn't remember if that was an old wives' tale or not, but she was more than sure scabies or just an old-fashioned case of butt itch was in the cards for her if she sat down.

The worst part was she didn't actually need to use the restroom. She was just hiding in the sorry excuse for a ladies' room because she lacked the courage to walk over to Jonas Lennox and say hi. Even that wasn't the case, because she didn't have to say a single word to him if she didn't want to. All she had to do was ignore him as she gave her former boss, and his best friend and coworker, Finn Kirkpatrick, his birthday present. After that she was free to leave. That didn't mean she was going to, of course. That would be too much like right. And when it came to anything that had to do with Jonas, she was far from right.

She'd been dead wrong so many times it wasn't funny, starting with trying to pursue a relationship with him, knowing he was fresh from a divorce. Even though his marriage hadn't lasted as long as her last diet, it had proven to be just as destructive as any chocolate éclair she'd ever eaten.

Like the glutton for punishment she was, she had bypassed all the warning bells going off in her head and went after him anyway, only to end up heartbroken in the end. The worst part, though, was knowing if she had to, she would do it all again. She loved him.

“Are you done yet, or what?”

“Or what. Most definitely.” Ali yanked a piece of toilet paper off the roll sitting on top of the dispenser and used it to pull back the lock on her door. When she saw the line of women waiting to use the restroom, she instantly felt contrite. Smiling sheepishly, she muttered an apology as she brushed past the frowning women and made her way to the sink.

How embarrassing. While she was busy having a “woe is me” moment, a line had formed. After washing and drying her hands, she glanced in the mirror and gave herself a once-over. She looked good. She had worked extra hard tonight to make sure that was the case.

Without being vain, Ali could freely admit she was an attractive woman, despite the extra curves she inherently couldn’t shake. Her parents were of different races, but she’d always thought that their union meshed well together. She was blessed with naturally wavy sable hair, a testament to her Hispanic half, and a nearly flawless complexion that made wearing makeup a luxury, not a necessity, thanks to her Korean half. All she needed to wear on occasion was a bit of eye shadow or lip gloss to complement her golden brown skin.

Tonight she’d added just a touch more, darkening her lipstick to make her full, thick lips stand out a bit more, and she’d blended in a bit of glitter to her shadow, in hopes of making her whiskey brown eyes more alluring. In addition to the makeup, she wore a new outfit consisting of a thigh-high black denim skirt and a fuchsia kimono-style top in a retro floral print. The shirt had a plunging V-neckline that enhanced her ample cleavage, but didn’t go into the vulgar category.

On a normal basis, Ali was a conservative dresser, hiding her curvaceous body behind simple and loose-fitting suits. But there was nothing normal about tonight. Tonight she had to face the ex she hadn't gotten over. She had to pull out the big guns.

"You can do this," she whispered to her mirror image, needing the encouraging words to boost her confidence. "He doesn't exist. He doesn't matter."

With that bit of encouragement in mind, she turned from the sink and tried to make her way out of the crowded restroom. It wasn't an easy task. For an establishment of this size, the lavatory was extremely small.

When she finally reached the door, she grasped the handle apparently at the same time someone on the other side did. Someone far stronger and less clumsy, who managed to not only wrench it from her hands but also to cause Ali to lose her balance.

Eyes wide, she fell through the swinging door and landed on her hands and knees. And if that wasn't bad enough, her purse exploded on contact, spilling some of its contents on the wood-chip-covered floor. "Fudge!"

"Fudge?" Long legs encased in dark blue jeans stopped just inches away from her smarting hands. "Ali? Is that you?"

A sense of dread filled Ali at the sound of the baritone voice. *Please God, don't let it be him.* While continuing to pray and make promises she knew she'd never keep, Ali slowly lifted her head and looked into a pair of familiar hazel eyes.

Damn. Apparently God was otherwise occupied. Or She just had a really wicked sense of humor.

"Of course. Who else could have made such a stellar entrance?"

"Jerry Lewis."

"True." The word was barely out of her mouth before the bathroom door opened once more, and she was accidentally kicked in someone's haste to get past her. "Double fudge."

"Are you all right?"

Ali glanced up at him and shot him a look of annoyance. "I fell and probably skinned my knee, my purse threw up all over the floor, and someone just kicked me. I think I'm far from all right."

"And yet in the midst of all that, somehow your sarcasm still remains intact."

Before she could fire off another comment, the bathroom door swung open once more. This time the woman missed her entirely but kicked her lip gloss clear across the floor.

"Christ on a cross. You should come with bumper pads." Jonas dropped to one knee and quickly helped her gather her things. When everything but her now-lost lip gloss was picked up, he rose, then reached out and grabbed her arm and helped her to her feet. Frowning, he moved them away from the busy bathroom traffic and against the wall.

"Thanks." Ali shot him a grateful look that he missed in its entirety because he was too busy brushing her off. "Jonas. I'm fine."

He spun her around and dusted off her bottom, even though she hadn't landed on it all. Mortification of unbelievable proportions filled her. This was not going according to plan. "Pipe down. You have dust everywhere."

"Imagine that." This was so embarrassing. She wished he wouldn't be so freaking nice. Things would go a lot easier on her heart if he were a full-out jerk all the time, instead of this hot and cold thing he did that tied her into knots.

When he was done checking her out and she was sure she could feel no smaller, Jonas turned her back around and crossed his arms over his chest. "Still need a keeper, I see."

"Still running from the job, I see."

"And still full of sass," he replied with a small smile. It had been months since she'd seen that smile. Yet the mere sight of it, of him, took her breath away.

He was a bit thinner than she remembered, his face was leaner, harder even, but without a doubt he was still just as jaw-dropping, panty-wetting, devastatingly handsome.

Truth be told, there was no reason under the sun for a man to look so doggone good. It wasn't fair to the rest of the men in the world, or to the women who had to compete with such beauty. And it surely wasn't fair to Ali, who was still head over heels in love with him.

Why couldn't he have tripped and fallen into a vat of toxic waste? Not enough to kill him of course, but enough to give him a raggedy scar or two. Then again, knowing Jonas, the freaking thing would end up looking like a mark of valor and only add to his rugged appeal.

His natural curly brunet hair looked untamed as usual. It was a bit longer since she'd last seen him, giving him a rakish appearance. Unable to help herself, Ali reached out and brushed her fingers through the side of his thick locks. "You let your hair grow out."

Jonas frowned and took a step back, leaving her hand just hanging in the air. "What are you doing here?"

Feeling all kinds of stupid, Ali brought her hand to her side and smiled through the pain. No matter what, she wouldn't let Jonas see how much his callous words and attitude affected her. "I was invited."

"By whom?" She could tell by his brittle tone he didn't believe her. Great, so not only did he think she was a clumsy oaf, she was also a lying, stalking, clumsy oaf.

"The birthday boy, of course. How else would I know where you all were meeting up?"

"He called you?" His expression clouded with anger.

"No." Ali felt the need to defend Finn, although he did give her the impression Jonas would be fine with her coming. From the looks of things, he was anything but

fine. "I called him to wish him a happy birthday. He mentioned he was having a little get-together tonight and asked me to come."

"You called?"

"Yes," she admitted sheepishly. "Old habits are hard to break."

"Still the efficient secretary."

"Assistant," she corrected automatically.

"Right. Assistant. About that..." Jonas cleared his throat and glanced away for a second before looking back. If she didn't know better, Ali would have thought maybe, just maybe, he felt bad about being the catalyst behind her leaving. "You know, you didn't have to quit. I know how much you enjoyed working with us. The company hasn't quite been the same since you left."

Right. As if she could work with him day in and day out and not turn into a bitter old crone. "Thank you for saying so, but it was for the best." Even he would have been hard-pressed to deny that one. And from the tense nod he sent her way, she could tell he knew it. Time for a subject change. "So...um...where is everyone?"

"Just past the bar on the right." He jerked his head back the direction he'd come. "They confiscated a few tables so there should be...plenty of room."

She read his meaning loud and clear. There would be plenty of room to avoid one another. "Okay then."

"You should probably go join them, if you're still planning on staying that is."

"What about you?"

"I'll be along shortly."

His words gave her pause. "Afraid tongues might start wagging if you show up with me."

"Yes, but not for the reason you suspect."

"Then why?"

"Because I have a sort of date. We both had to go, so..." His voice trailed off, letting her fill in the blanks.

"I get it." It wasn't fate that had lined them up together tonight, or God in Her infinite amusement. It had been his and his date's bladders. Suddenly it didn't feel like kismet after all. "I'll let you get back to guarding the restroom door."

"All right."

"See you in a bit." Ali shot him the biggest, fakest smile she could manage, before turning around and walking away. After a few steps, she let out a sigh of relief. She'd survived the initial meeting. Now if she could just manage to get through the rest of the night without maiming him or his date, she would consider tonight a big success.

* * * * *

Before the night was over, someone was going to die. Jonas wasn't sure who the someone was just yet. As far as he could figure, the simplest solution would be for him to toss a coin to determine whose neck he was going to wring. If it landed on heads, Finn would feel his wrath, and if it landed on tails, it would be Wyatt Pilcher—who kept shooting him an annoying little smile—who gave up the ghost. Either way, come morning, he would be shy one best friend.

It wouldn't be easy to replace them in his life. Not only were they his friends, they were also his business partners, but a man had to do what a man had to do. Besides, he'd still have Lennon Wright to fall back on. He was the fourth partner in their company, Global Consultant Enterprise, and the only one of his friends who didn't look as if he was enjoying Jonas's discomfort.

Lennon's behavior almost made Jonas feel bad for his own misdeeds a few months back, when Lennon's went on his first semidate with his current fiancée. He and the guys had crashed in on Lennon's date more out of curiosity than to cause trouble. They just couldn't believe Führer Lennon, as they liked to call him, would break his own "no

fraternizing with potential fire-ees" rule. But after meeting Gillian, Jonas understood. Just as he would have thought his friends understood when he ended things with Ali.

Apparently he was wrong.

Irritated, and drunk on his nefarious plans, Jonas took a swig of his beer and tried his best to block out the cheerful ruckus around him. After running into Ali, the last thing he was in the mood to do was drink and be merry. Well no, drinking sounded well and good, but merry could be damned.

He seethed quietly while he watched her try to make excuses so she could leave. He hadn't even been back at the table for ten minutes before she tried to beg off. If he didn't know better, he might think she couldn't stand the sight of him. Lord knew she was acting like it.

Her actions weren't overt or rude, but Jonas couldn't help but wonder if he'd possibly slipped into his "cloak of invisibility" shirt instead of his mild-mannered commoner one. She was damn near looking through him. Smiling and laughing, as if just two months ago she hadn't offered her virginity to him on a silver platter.

A virgin at twenty-five.

That was unheard of. Especially in a woman of Ali's quality. She was gorgeous, even more so tonight. Where the hell did she get that outfit? And who the hell was she wearing it for when he wasn't around? His hand tightened around the beer bottle as he watched her laughingly tug on the hand Finn held.

Just seeing her in spitting distance of the dark-haired lothario had Jonas seething. He stared at his friend – no, soon-to-be former friend – with barely concealed contempt. Over the course of years he'd known the other man, Jonas had never wanted to bury his fist into his face as much as he did tonight. His feelings toward Ali weren't much friendlier; although it wasn't his fist he wanted to bury deep within her.

"Finn, I have to go."

"No, lass, you have to stay. You don't wanna break my heart on my birthday. You wouldn't be so cruel."

"Finn," she protested, pulling to free her hand.

"I will not take no for an answer."

Irritated, Jonas looked away. Who did they think they were fooling? Even now, as she attempted to beg off, he knew she would stay. They all did. Heaven forbid Ali actually hurt Finn's hallowed feelings and leave the party. No, even though she wanted to abandon ship, she'd stay. Anything to avoid causing someone else pain.

She'd also do anything to ease someone's suffering, which was how he became a member of the Ali Mooneye Cult. She'd slipped him a cup of sympathy Kool-Aid, given him a smile, and a soft pat on the back followed by a "woo woo." And that was it. He was hooked.

Although Wyatt, Finn, Jonas, and Lennon were equal partners in Global Consultant Enterprise, they were each in charge of their own cases and had their own individual staffs. There was hardly any need for him to interact with Ali, but somehow he'd always found a way to make sure he did. Sometimes he needed a female take on the situation going on with his psycho ex; then there were times when he just wanted to see her, talk to her.

Whatever his need was, though, she met it with a smile and a kind word. After a few weeks of their daily chats, Jonas began to learn about the woman behind the smile, and what he learned, he liked. Despite her age, Ali still lived at home with her parents and younger sister, who she affectionately called *the brat*. She didn't feel a need to move out. She was quite happy where she was, unlike Jonas, who got along better with his parents the farther away from them he was. She was just too good to be true, and that was the way he liked her, up there on the glass pedestal, beautiful and untouchable, especially by the likes of himself.

Ali was out of his league. She deserved better than what he had to offer. Of course Ali, being Ali, didn't see it that way. She saw him as some stupid pound puppy that just needed the right family to belong to. And she saw herself as his home. Unfortunately

Jonas saw her the same way. He knew without a doubt she was the only woman he could ever truly love, but he didn't see himself as her home.

He would destroy all that was wholesome and pure about her. Tarnish the way she saw the rest of the world forever, and that would never do.

To be the guy who was responsible for breaking Ali's rose-colored glasses just didn't sit well with him. She was the perpetual good girl. He was the baddest of the bad, and despite all those cheesy movies, the two just didn't mix. Ali was Polly-fucking-anna, for Christ's sake. Pollyanna with a great pair of tits and a killer ass, but Pollyanna she was.

Sadly, she was too nice for the likes of him, and yet she was the only one who didn't seem to get that. Everything about her was special. She had a way of making a man feel ten feet tall. She was feminine, giving, and sweetly sexy. In fact, the only thing he could possibly think was bad about her was she tended to be a bit of klutz, but even that was cute as hell.

God, he could kill Finn. Jonas didn't need this shit right now. He really didn't.

"Mona, is it?" Ali's voice broke through his sour rumbles, gaining his attention despite his desire to block her and everything about this evening out. She was sitting back down now, catty-corner to him. Her race to escape obviously thwarted by the man whose lap she was sitting on.

"Yes."

Mona. Good to know. Jonas had forgotten his companion's name in the mix of things. At least now, though, he'd have a name to go with the face of the woman he planned to have under him in a few hours as he pounded out the memory of Ali with another faceless stranger.

"How did you and Jonas meet?"

Fuck. Of all the questions she could have asked, Ali had to inquire into the one thing he would have preferred her not to delve into.

"Over at the bar, about twenty minutes ago."

"Oh, that's nice."

Jonas waited for her to shoot him a triumphant smile because of his lie, but she didn't. She merely smiled sweetly at the other woman and moved on with the conversation.

Figures. Any other person in the history of the world would have cold busted him for his lie, but not Ali. She was just too damn nice. She couldn't even curse right. *Fudge.* What the hell was that about? Jonas had met seven-year-olds with a bluer vocabulary.

"So, Ali lass, are you enjoying your new job?" Finn asked, pouring on the sickening Irish charm. Finn had come to America as a child. That accent of his was just for show, and damn it was annoying. "Betcha your new boss isn't as grand as I am. Or as good-looking."

"I don't believe there is anyone better-looking than you, Finn," she teased, much to Jonas's vexation. "And he doesn't give me quite the chase around the desk as you used to, but he's nice."

"How nice?" Wyatt inquired, much in the way Jonas wanted to. The slight familiarity of her tone when she spoke of her new employer irked him.

"Real nice." She wagged her brows jokingly.

"Oh, oh, oh." Finn chortled. "Is that the way of it? Has the lucky bastard landed your heart?"

Jonas racked his brain to try to recall where it was Ali went to work after leaving Global. He was sure Finn had mentioned it in passing once, but like everything that had to do with the sexy woman, Jonas had tried to block it out. Now he wished he hadn't been so good at it, because he needed the name of the man he was going to rip apart.

"He's lucky that I work for him, and lucky in love as well, but sadly" — she pouted prettily — "someone else beat me to the punch...thirty-three years ago."

"Wow, thirty-three years." Lennon looked amazed at the concept. "That's an awful long time."

"You need to work on saying it with less fear," Wyatt teased. "Because I'm willing to bet Gillian is in it for the long haul."

"She better be." Lennon grinned, the way he always did whenever his fiancée was mentioned.

"Speaking of Gillian, Lennon," Ali chimed in. "Where is this fiancée of yours I keep hearing about?"

"When Gillian heard where we were coming tonight, she opted out. I can't imagine why," Lennon joked.

Jonas wished he'd been as wise as Gillian obviously was.

"Well, I can't wait to meet her. I can't believe you never brought her by while I was still working there. Finn says she's just as lovely on the inside as she is on the outside."

Laughing, Finn wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her back against him, all the while eyeing his best friend with a shit-eating grin. "I'm not sure I said all of that, lass."

"Oh, hush up." Ali lightly slapped his arm. The familiarity of their teasing grated on Jonas's nerves. What bothered him most, though, was knowing he had no say in the matter. "You did too say that."

"Are you sure you heard what you think you heard?"

"I'm positive. You sa—"

"That was quite a conversation the two of you had." Unable to hold back any longer, Jonas butted in. "How long did the two of you talk?"

"Which time?"

"Which time?" What the hell did she mean which time? "Any time."

"Finn and I talk often."

"You do?" The flipping of coins was no longer necessary. It was very obvious who was going to die tonight. "Interesting."

"What's so interesting about it?" Finn asked, adding his two cents. "I couldn't let my best girl slip away completely, could I? What kind of fool would that make me if I did something as idiotic as that?"

Jonas tilted his head in agreement to Finn's jab, taking it on the jaw as a man should. He could only hope his friend returned the favor when Jonas delivered his own personal fist-flying jab later tonight.

Chapter Two

So much for her grand plan of just dropping by to say hi. To say this evening wasn't going the way she thought it would was the biggest understatement of the year. Even though she was happy to see Finn and the rest of the guys, this wasn't exactly Ali's idea of a great way to spend a Friday night. There was no fun to be had sitting on the lap of her former boss, while staring at the man she was crazy about flirting with some two-bit hussy.

Date, my butt.

Jonas no more knew this woman than he knew the man on the moon, but it didn't stop him from cozying up next to her. On a normal day, Ali wouldn't have considered herself a possessive woman, but if this Mona chick touched Jonas one more time, things were going to get ugly.

"I'm heading to the bar," Wyatt stated as he rose from his chair. "Can I get you a drink, Ali?"

"Yes, I'll have a —"

"Coke," Jonas filled in, much to her irritation.

Astonished at his bravado, Ali stiffened. How dare he presume to know what she wanted...even if he was right?

Refusing to allow him to have the final word on the matter, Ali did her best to relax and smiled sweetly at Wyatt. "Yes, but add a little rum to it, please."

Wyatt grinned, apparently pleased by her response. "Nice, one rum and Coke coming up." He shot her a wink before heading toward the bar, much to her amusement. The blond-haired man was one of the most easygoing people she knew, and one of the funniest.

"So you're drinking now."

Ali glanced over at Jonas, who was staring at her with a disapproving look in his hazel eyes. Out of all the people gathered around the two tables, why did he have to focus on her? "I'm doing a lot of things I didn't do before." She tried to keep her voice light and her tone friendly.

"You say that as if it's a good thing."

"And you say it as if it isn't."

"I happen to like this new and improved Ali," Finn said, jumping into the fray. "Anything that gets her to flash a little leg and have a drink with me is okay in my book."

"Of course it is," Jonas said, none too pleased.

"Don't mind him, lass. Jonas just woke up on the wrong side of the empty bed this morning."

Before Jonas could reply, Mona nuzzled up next to him. "I can pretty much promise you won't have that problem tomorrow."

And Ali could pretty much promise her, she wasn't going to wake up tomorrow at all. Mona was saved from Ali's cutting tongue, however, by Lennon, who leaned forward and handed his cell phone to Finn. "It's for you, man."

"Oh, let me..." Ali tried to rise but was stopped by Finn, who pulled her back onto his lap.

"Where do you think you're going?" Finn took the phone from Lennon with one hand while keeping her glued to him with his other.

"I'm trying to get out of your way so you can use the phone."

"I can multitask, lass. Besides, I like you exactly where you are."

Of course he did. Rolling her eyes, Ali gave up and settled back on his lap. If she didn't know Finn as well as she did, she would have assumed he was hitting on her. But since she did, she could only surmise he was up to no good.

Normally his devious behavior didn't bother her, but seeing as how Finn was involving her in what ever little scheme he was spinning, Ali was a bit wary. While she didn't mind pinching the tiger a bit, she had no desire to pull his tail. Finn, on the other hand, had no such qualms. Moving the phone away from his mouth, he muttered, "Damn, you smell good."

His comment turned all eyes her way, heating her cheeks under the close scrutiny of the table. "Thank you."

Abruptly, Jonas rose from the table. "I'm getting a drink."

"I'll come with you." Mona took his hand in hers, shooting Ali a hostile look.

"Fine."

Ali watched him leave, heavyhearted. Her disappointment must have shown on her face, because Lennon reached over and covered her hand with his. "Are you all right?"

"Not really."

"Don't fret so, lass," Finn whispered in her ear as he handed the phone back to Lennon. "Everything will work out in the end."

Now that he was off the phone and Jonas was gone, Ali was free to question him. "What are you up to, Finn?"

"Nothing, love. Trust me."

"Famous last words," Wyatt warned, placing her drink in front of her. Ali picked it up, took a swig, and grimaced at the strong, sweet taste. Not a very good choice for her foray into the dark side. Wyatt laughed at her expression and took the drink from her. He downed half the liquor in one swallow before passing it to Finn, "Who were you on the phone with? I thought we agreed no work tonight."

"It wasn't work. It was Gillian." Finn took the glass and saluted his friend, then finished it off. When the glass was nothing but ice and a memory of alcohol, he handed it back to Ali, who could do nothing but stare at the empty glass in shock. Wasn't this supposed to be *her* drink? "Uh...thanks, guys."

"Speaking of which," Lennon interrupted. "Why exactly is my fiancée asking to speak with you?"

"To wish me a happy birthday and to tell me to keep an eye on you. Something about not trusting you as far as she could throw you."

"Yeah, right."

"What?" Finn asked innocently. "Don't you believe me?"

"Hell no."

"Why not?"

"Because I know Gillian trusts me, and besides, if she was going to have anyone keep an eye on me, it wouldn't be you."

"Ahh...now I'm hurt."

"You will be if you keep this up," Lennon said. "Jonas looks as if he's on edge."

Ali couldn't agree more. Setting her glass down, she glanced over her shoulder at Finn. "Maybe I should go."

"You most certainly should not," Finn argued, his teasing tone all but gone.

"But if Jonas..."

"Jonas is a big boy," Wyatt said, jumping on the bandwagon. "If he's not having a good time, maybe he should pick his dates better."

"Amen," Finn said.

Even though Ali couldn't agree with that more, she wasn't the type of person to purposely cause someone else pain. Well, unless their name was Mona. Turning back around, she questioned the one person who didn't seem as if he was knee-deep in mischief. "What do you think, Lennon?"

"I think it's good to see you, Ali. I don't want you to rush off." Lennon glanced behind her and smiled. "And besides, you don't want to miss the fireworks."

"Fireworks? What fireworks?" By definition that didn't sound good.

"Just wait."

Oh, heck no. What did these three have in store for her? "I thought you guys liked me."

"We do." Wyatt grinned. "Don't you trust us to keep you out of harm's way?"

"Heck no."

"I guess you are smarter than I gave you credit for." Jonas's voice rang out from behind her.

She stared at him in shock as he took his seat. "I don't know if that says more about me, or more about you."

"No. I—" Jonas's words died as he spotted the empty glass in front of her. His face hardened. "Did you finish your drink already?"

"I..." Ali didn't want to lie, but at the same time she didn't want to admit she couldn't stand the way the alcoholic beverage tasted. "What does it look like?" she asked instead, answering his question with one of her own.

"It looks as if you picked up a couple of bad habits in the last few months."

"I guess that's just a matter of opinion. And do you know what? Yours no longer matters to me. So why don't you worry about your date, and I'll let mine worry about me."

"Your date?"

Ali wasn't even sure where that had come from, but from the way Finn's arm tightened around her, she knew he had her back. Or at least that's what she hoped the movement meant, because if it meant anything else, she was in a world of trouble.

"Speaking of dates," Lennon smoothly broke in. "Yours is coming back."

Coming back? Startled, Ali glanced toward the empty seat next to Jonas. She hadn't even noticed he'd returned alone.

"Guess what?" The jubilant woman was all aglow.

"What?" The lack of interest in Jonas's voice soothed a bit of Ali's hurt.

"They're about to have a wet T-shirt contest."

"I knew I loved this bar for a reason," Finn teased. "Did you enter?"

"You know it." Mona thrust her breasts out and grinned. "First prize is two hundred dollars."

"What's second prize?" Wyatt asked.

"I don't know," she replied haughtily. "I don't plan to come in as the runner-up. The promoter asked me to see if any of the other ladies at the table might want to enter. Are you in, Ali?"

Of course she wasn't, but before she could open her mouth to reply, Jonas beat her to it. "No. She isn't."

Once again his high-handed manner didn't sit well with her. "Last time I checked, your name wasn't Ali."

"And last time I checked, you hadn't lost your damn mind."

Ali crossed her arms over her breasts. "I don't hear you telling Mona not to enter."

"I'm sure there aren't many people here tonight who haven't seen Mona's breasts."

"Hey!" the blonde screeched in outrage.

"You are so rude," Ali said in a disgusted tone.

"I'm also tired of this new you." The rest of the table grew quieter the louder Jonas became. "I don't care what you think you're trying to prove, but it isn't going to work. You're not entering that damn contest. And that's final."

The more he told her no, the more she wanted to make him eat his words. One fistful at a time.

"Is that a fact?" She held his gaze, unwilling to back down.

"Yes, it is." Jonas frowned in obvious annoyance. "Don't test my patience on this one, Ali."

He might as well just sign her name on the registration sheet. Fuming, she stood, breaking free of Finn's arms. "Ali...wait."

Even the hesitation in her friend's voice would not deter her. This was war. Turning toward Mona, she nodded. "I'm in."

Jonas couldn't believe his ears. Or his eyes. Had he walked into a bar or the twilight zone? Nothing else made any sense. Nor could any brand of reason explain why his no-cussing, virginal Ali was walking toward some smarmy guy about to enter a titty-flashing contest. No way in hell was this the real world.

Furious, Jonas rose from his seat, intent on grabbing Ali and dragging her sassy ass out of the bar. Sensing his anger, his friends jumped to their feet as well. Wyatt went a step further and grabbed his arm, preventing him from leaving. "Slow down, Jonas. You don't want to do anything crazy."

"The hell I don't." Jonas turned his icy gaze from Ali's retreating back to his friend's paling face. "Tell me something, Wyatt. You find this shit funny?"

"Surprisingly, not so much."

Jonas yanked his arm free. "Then maybe you should have thought of that before you filled her with alcohol."

"It was one drink." His friend gave a weak smile as he lowered himself into his seat. "Just one."

"And she didn't even drink it," Finn said. "She took a sip and we finished it for her."

"Why would you do that?"

"I don't suppose you'll just accept it seemed like a good idea at the time."

"No, I won't. This is all your fault, fucktard. Now how are you going to fix it?"

"Fix it?" Finn's eyebrows shot to his hairline. "I'd like to point out, we wouldn't be in this situation if it weren't for you and your caveman ways. Did you really think ordering her not to sign up would work? Who's the fucktard now?"

"Maybe. If you hadn't been egging her on tonight, this wouldn't even be an issue."

"That's right, Jonas. Blame everyone but yourself."

"Oh, I accept my part in this, Finn. The question is, do you?" Grabbing a napkin from the table, Jonas balled it up and threw it at his friend, smacking him square in the forehead.

The little act of aggression made him feel a smidge better. Not as good as he would have if he'd thrown the beer bottle, but Jonas couldn't chance the cops getting called before he figured out what to do about the Ali dilemma.

Fuckity-fuck-fuck. Jonas eased back down in his chair and contemplated his choices. It didn't take long, because as far as he could see, he didn't have many options. Just two. He could either storm into the back room where the contestants were lining up and spirit Ali away, or he could wait until she came back out, saw the crowd, and lost her nerve before he took her away and gave her bottom the spanking of a lifetime.

The second option seemed better. Much better. Not only would he hopefully teach her a lesson, it was also the one with the spanking in it. Two for the price of one.

"You're sitting." Finn's voice betrayed his outrage. "Why are you sitting? You should be doing something."

"Like what?" Now that his decision was made, Jonas felt calmer. Ali would never go through with this. Not in a million years.

"What do you mean like what?" Finn, on the other hand, looked as if he were about to blow a gasket. "Go get her before she does something stupid."

"She already did," Jonas reminded him. "She followed your lead. That was mistake number one."

"Are you going to let her do this to get back at me?"

"No, I'm going to kick your ass to get back at you. Right now, I'm just going to sit here and wait for Ali to slink out."

"And what if she doesn't?"

"Then there's going to be hell to pay."

"Fucking A." Finn ran his hands through his dark strands. "This is a disaster."

"Finn" – Lennon warily sat as well – "Jonas is right. Storming back there won't do him any good. We'll just have to wait for Ali to come to her senses on her own."

On her own seemed to take much longer than Jonas anticipated. The conversation around the two tables dropped off completely; the few stragglers who'd come to wish Finn a happy birthday slipped away unnoticed by Jonas, who was watching the back door like a hawk. His eyes weren't the only ones turned in that direction. The other three men were quietly staring at the back room, as if silently willing Ali to appear.

As the minutes ticked ever so slowly by, Jonas grew less sure of his plan. "What the fuck is going on back there?"

"I have no bloody idea." Finn sounded as tense as Jonas was. "How long does it take to chicken the fuck out?"

"Apparently more than ten minutes."

Irritated, Jonas shot Lennon a dirty look. He wasn't in the mood for his friend's wisecracking.

"Hey!" Wyatt exclaimed out of the blue. "Ivers still owns this place."

Jonas frowned at the mention of Smitty Ivers. Ivers was a fellow college classmate of theirs who would have never made it through school if it weren't for Wyatt's ability to make a computer sing. "And..."

"And that bastard still owes us."

"Yes, he does." Jonas nodded his head. He knew there was a reason he kept the blond around. "Do me a favor and check to see if he's here."

"Will do."

Jonas wasn't much of a fan of Ivers, but he didn't have a single problem using the bastard to find out what was going on in the back rooms. Before Wyatt could head off, the slimy promoter popped up next to the DJ and took the cordless mic from the stand.

"Wyatt, hold up," Lennon said and rose to his feet as two muscle-bound bouncers began to move the crowd back and away from the bar.

"All right, party people. Are you all having a good time?" The man's booming voice drew a loud chorus of "hell yeah" from the audience. "Well, it's about to get a whole lot better. I've just been in the back room with five of the hottest women around. These sexy bitches are about to join me at the bar for your viewing pleasure. Can I hear it for Darlene, Vanessa, Ali, Apryl, and Mona?"

At his announcement, the back door opened and the women came out in order of their names, smiling and waving at the crowd as they made their way to the bar, Ali included.

Fuck! She's going through with it.

"Wyatt." Jonas's voice was as ice-cold as the blood running through his veins.

"I'm on it." His friend disappeared into the growing crowd as Jonas rose to his feet. From where he was standing, he could clearly see the section of the bar the waitress had cleared of drinks and trash. And that wasn't all he could see. While in the back room, the women had changed out of their tops and lost their bras, replacing it with a supertight, thin white cotton T-shirt with the bar's logo printed on the back.

From the way the material clung to the women's skin, adding water seemed like overkill. The look was especially obscene on Ali, who appeared as if she was going to burst out of the seams at any moment. Where the shirts were a size too small for the reed-thin women in the lineup, on Ali's voluptuous frame it was two sizes too tiny.

"Good Lord," Lennon muttered, echoing the sentiment running through Jonas's mind. "I never knew Ali –"

"Was built like a brick shit house," Jonas finished for him, not needing Lennon to finish his thought. Jonas was well aware everybody's mind had gone to the gutter. He was vacationing there.

Flushed with anger, Finn moved in front of Jonas, blocking his view. "Are you just going to stand there, or are you going to do something about this?"

"Oh, don't worry, something will be done about this."

"Now," his friend insisted.

"No," Jonas said, sidestepping Finn so his view was no longer blocked. "I'm going to give Ali enough rope to hang herself with first."

"Christ," Finn muttered, turning back to watch the show himself just as the promoter, who was now standing on top of the bar, reached down his hand to assist the first contestant.

The perky blonde, with matching breasts, was the first to get doused with nipple-provoking, ice-cold water. She giggled and jiggled about as the water soaked through her shirt, giving the audience a good stare at not only her breasts, but what was under her short skirt as well.

"Looks as if someone's happy to see us." The announcer wiggled his brows at his not-so-subtle double entendre. "Show of hands, folks. Is she our winner?"

The applause was loud, but not nearly loud enough. The announcer waited for the noise to die down before he brought up the next woman. He went through the same

song and dance before wetting her as well. From the sounds of everyone's whooping and hollering, Jonas could only surmise the redhead put on a good show.

He was too busy watching Ali's reaction to notice the results of the announcer's handiwork. Ali's gaze, on the other hand, was glued to the show taking place just inches in front of her. She worried her bottom lip, her nervousness as apparent as her dark areolae underneath the thin shirt.

"Shit. She's next," Finn announced, as if they all couldn't see her standing there.

Jonas tried his best to keep his shit together as Ali reached out and took the announcer's hand. With the help of two bouncers, she made it to the top of the bar.

"Wow. Wow. Wow." The announcer covered his eyes with one hand. "Baby, you need to turn your high beams off; you're blinding me."

The crowd roared their approval.

Her breasts might not have been the perkier, but they were hands down the largest and sexiest by far. And from the catcalls coming from the audience, Jonas wasn't the only one who thought so.

"I don't think we even need water for the beauties." When the crowd voiced their disapproval, the announcer grabbed the pitcher and poured it over Ali's shirt. "But I think we'll use it anyway."

Ali's eyes widened as she let out a wordless gasp, bowing her back to escape the frigid water. It was no use, though. The damage was done and her breasts were on display.

"My, oh my," the giddy man said, grinning lewdly at Ali. "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I would have never thought it possible. These babies are standing at attention like good little soldiers. Tell me something sweetheart, are these *D's* or double *D's*?" He held the mic in front of Ali, whose cheeks were fire engine red.

"Triple," she muttered as the crowd whooped louder in approval.

"I'm in love."

No, what he was, was a dead man. Unable to watch anymore and keep up this facade of a rationally thinking man, Jonas turned his back on the show. His temper raged as the hoots and hollers continued and the next contestant was brought on to the stage.

Wyatt, who had returned to the table with a stout, dark-haired man, saved him from his own self-imposed insanity.

"Hey, man," Ivers said, clapping Jonas on the shoulder as if they were old friends. Ivers looked much the way he did back in college, but a bit slimier around the edges. "It's been a long time. How've you been?"

"I've been better," Jonas said, stiffly inching away from the space-crowding man. Ivers was a bit jittery; his pupils were dilated to epic proportions. He was high, and it wasn't on life. *What a fucking waste.* "And yourself?"

"Good, man, real good." Grinning, Ivers spread his arms wide. "What do you think of my place? We've added a lot since you guys were here last. What do you think of the show?"

Jonas gritted his teeth. Where should he start? Not at the truth, that was for sure. "It's interesting, all right."

"We're making it a weekly event. Get the college kids in here. They're real loose with Mommy and Daddy's money, you know."

Like you were, Jonas wanted to say, but refrained. Instead he looked over at Wyatt, who was wearing a pained expression. Good. Jonas had always preferred to share his suffering of fools.

"I hear you guys are doing real well also. You four looking to invest in some clubs? I know some guys who are —"

"And the winner by a nipple..." Jonas's attention was stolen away from Ivers and placed solidly on the announcer. "Come on back up here Ali, my love. Come claim your prize and my heart."

Ali was boosted back on the bar and into the arms of the grinning announcer. She looked stunned by the limelight and the win. Her gaze darted around the room as if she was searching for something or someone. But not once did she try to get down or get away from the beaming man. It was her second mistake of the evening.

To add insult to injury, the announcer gripped her around the waist and pulled her in even tighter to him. "Give me a kiss, love."

"If she kisses him, he's a dead—" The words weren't even out of his mouth before she did just that.

Jonas couldn't tell if Ali was forced to kiss the other man or not; all he could see was his woman locking lips with another man. Then all he saw was red.

"I'll get the shovel," Lennon deadpanned.

"And I'll warm up the bloody car."

As tempting as that sounded, Jonas had a better idea. "Ivers."

"Yeah?"

"Clear out your office. I need to have a word with one of your contestants." Turning his rapt attention away from Ali, Jonas focused the bulk of his rage on the sweating man beside him. "Now."

"Sure. Sure, Jonas. No problem, man. I'll make sure—right away." Ivers scurried off as fast as his stubby legs could carry him, leaving Jonas alone at the table with his friends.

"Go easy on her, man," Wyatt said. "She's innocent. Sweet. Your words, man. Keep them in mind."

"I'll keep them in mind." Not that they would do her any good. "But maybe you all should have kept that in mind before you decided to play this little game of yours."

“It wasn’t a game.” Finn looked ill at ease. Good. It served the prying bastard right. “Come on, boyo. This is Ali we’re talking about here. You know she has no idea the effect she has on you.”

“I promise you this.” Jonas said. “Before the night is over, she will.”

Chapter Three

Oh my God! Oh my God! No matter how many times she looked at the stupid boob trophy in her hand, Ali still couldn't believe it. She'd won, and she was actually strangely proud of it. In a daze, she wandered from the bar, destination unknown. She smiled wanly at the passersby who congratulated her on her victory, and it wasn't just men who patted her shoulder and said something nice. It was women too. Women who were more like herself, pleasantly plump, who might not have ever entered a contest such as this, when the other women running were Playboy model material.

Laughing to herself, she imagined the award speech she might have given if her mind had been working at the time. *This is for all the fat chicks in the cheap seats. Fat chick boobs rock!* The mere concept of it had her giggling. Who would have thought her almost-always-hard nipples would be a plus for something in this world. Not Ali, that was for sure. Oh man, wait until her friends heard about this. She smiled as she imagined how the lunchroom convo would go this week.

"Something amusing you want to share with the class?" Harsh words rained down on her from above, in the form of one angry-looking Jonas.

"Not really."

"Good; then I can talk and you can listen." Jonas reached out and grabbed her arm.

"You're hurting my arm." And worrying the crap out of her, but that was something she was going to keep to herself. The man's ego was massive enough as it is.

"That's not all I'm going to hurt if you don't come on."

Dang, my kingdom for a good line. Why couldn't she be one of those witty women who had a comeback for everything instead of the type of person who woke up out of a dead sleep three nights later with the perfect response. God. Nothing sucked worse.

While she was busy cursing the Fates, or cursing them as much as she could without actually saying swear words, for her missing skill, Jonas had been busy maneuvering them through the crowded bar to the small office she'd been in minutes earlier with the other contestants.

After turning on the light, Jonas nudged her not so gently into the room. He stepped in after her and slammed and locked the door, before leaning back against it with his arms crossed over his massive chest. Earlier in the evening she'd thought he'd looked a bit leaner in the face, but from the imposing view she was getting now, Ali felt safe to say she was dead wrong.

Jonas was as buff as he had been before, if not more so. Even as angry as he was right now, she had to admit, the man looked good.

"Are you proud of yourself, Ali?"

Ali went rigid at his words. She was already not too tickled he'd hustled her in the back room as if she were a wayward child. Now he was talking to her as if she were one. Oh, heck no. She was through. Tilting her chin up, she met his stormy gaze. "As a matter of fact, I am." Raising her arm, she brought her trophy into the light. "I even won a trophy. Think I might place it on my fireplace when I go home."

"Right, I'm sure your parents will be real pleased."

She shrugged her shoulders as if she didn't have a care in the world. "They're my breasts, my fireplace. I'll put my boob trophy on it if I want."

"What do you mean it's your fireplace?"

"I have my own place now," she said proudly. There were a lot of new things about her he had no clue about it. Ali had grown up in the last few months, and Jonas had missed it all. *His loss.*

"You think that makes you a grown-up? Having your own place and flashing your tits at drunk idiots for kicks?"

"It wasn't just for kicks." She would not let him rain on her parade. "I was paid. The announcer kissed me and asked for my number. And let's not forget this little darling. I think tonight was a win-win all the way round. Just look at this cut —"

Jonas stormed over to her and snatched her trophy from her hand. "If you mention this damn titty thing to me one more time, I swear to all that's holy I will throw it first, then you second, against the wall."

Despite his threat, Ali wasn't afraid at all. He might hurt her trophy, but he would never physically hurt her. Of that she was sure. "What, you want to see just how much more you can break me? I survived the last time, Jonas, when you walked away. I'm sure I can survive this time as well."

"Walked." Jonas let out a harsh-sounding laugh. "Let me assure you, Ali, I didn't walk away from you."

"Sorry. I should have said ran."

"Wrong again, baby doll. I had to limp away, seeing as how my aching balls would let me do nothing else."

"Whose fault is it that you had aching" — as juvenile as it was, and after all she had just done, Ali still felt weird saying bad words, so she whispered — "balls?"

Her action didn't go unnoticed by Jonas, who scoffed and shook his head in disbelief. "Give me a freaking break. You can climb on a bar and show the world your tits, but you can't even say the word 'balls.'"

"I didn't show the world my *t word*. I showed the world my breasts."

"Sorry to disillusion you, baby doll, but when you're nursing a child they're breasts. When you're letting some knucklehead pour water over you, they're tits."

"You're just a foulmouthed bully."

"And you are a reckless fool who's heading the right way for a spanked bottom. How dare you get up—"

"How dare I?" Ali was outraged by his audacity. "How dare you think for even a moment you might have something to say to me about what I do."

"Because I do."

"Says who."

"Says me."

"Think again, Jonas. You are not my father, my employer, my friend, nor my man. The first one I can thank fate for, the second my own common sense, but the third and the fourth were all your doing." More furious now than she ever conceived she could be, Ali got into Jonas's face, digging her finger into his rock-hard chest as she spoke. "So don't you dare try to get mad at me because you don't like the hand you selected, bucko."

"Then I want a redeal, because I'm not accepting these terms. You're damn straight I'm not your father, your boss, and I'll get back to you on that friend thing. But as far as your man goes, that I am. And I say your sweet ass is in some serious trouble for what you did tonight."

"What? Show the world my *breasts*" —she emphasized that word, still refusing to say the other word — "through a wet shirt."

"No. If you want to try your wings at exhibitionism, I have no problem with that. But doing it in an unsafe environment like this freaking bar is where I draw the line. This was dumb, Ali. Pure and simple."

"It wasn't dumb," she said through clenched teeth. "But do you want to know what it was?"

"What?"

"Not. Your. Business." Each word was accompanied by a sharp poke from her finger.

"Oh, I'm making it my business. For once and for all." Wrapping his hands around her arms, he forced her against the wall with hands that held no gentleness.

His fury only fueled her on. "Am I supposed to be scared now?"

"If you were wise, you would be."

"Well, I'm not." Ali tried to shrug her shoulders to loosen his hold, but it was no good. Still, though, she refused to back down. "You don't scare me. Not one bit."

"Then let me see what I can do about that." Jonas released her, grabbed her hips, and lifted her until her pelvis was aligned with his own. Acting instinctively out of fear of falling, Ali wrapped her legs around his waist, which from the predator-like smile Jonas sent her, was just what he had in mind.

Suddenly common sense kicked in as well as fear. She was in trouble. Big-time.

"Do you feel that, Ali?" he asked, dragging her suggestively over the telltale bulge in his pants. She gasped at his blatant arousal, pressed so firmly against her. "This is what you did to me. This is what you did to every man out there. And you knew it. And you loved it. Loved tying me up in knots."

"I did not."

"Little liar. Sexy little liar." Holding her in place with his hips, Jonas tangled his hand in her hair and pulled her head back. He watched the pleasure bleed out of her

eyes, replaced instead by shock. Good. He wanted to shock her. Throw her for a loop the same way she'd done him, all those months ago. "You went up there. On that fucking stage—"

"And what? Showed off my breasts. Big deal."

"It is a big deal," he growled. "You enjoyed being watched. That's a kink on my level, Alicat. I'll make sure you get your thrill. But on my terms. I say who. I say when. Understand?"

"No." She lifted her chin, meeting his icy gaze straight on.

Her determination to deny him control grated him. She was his. And if she didn't comprehend that, he'd have to show her.

"You. Don't. Tell. Me. No."

"Oh really?" Ali leaned forward, until her lips were a hairbreadth away from his. "Just watch me. No."

Her challenge could not go uncalled. "Fool." Furious, Jonas released his grip on her hair and covered her mouth with his, picking up the gauntlet she threw down. Instead of protesting or trying to push him away, as he thought she might, Ali surrendered under the force of his mouth.

Her capitulation floored him. He wanted to punish her, not pleasure her, yet the feel of her soft lips, so warm and moist against his own, was his undoing. Groaning, Jonas deepened the kiss, pushing his tongue past her lips so he could savor the sweet flavor that was just Ali once more.

Jonas knew it was weak, but he had to give in, if only for one moment, and feast. All these months, all this time, he'd been walking around like a zombie. He was half-alive, barely breathing, because Ali was the blood in his veins. Without her he was nothing, but he couldn't be the man she wanted.

Still, he couldn't help but enjoy the pleasure of kissing her. Her technique, like most everything else about Ali, seemed to have matured a bit since their time apart. The

way she danced her tongue against his wasn't something she could learn alone. She had to have had a partner who taught her how to bring a man to his knees, and Jonas would be damned if he wasn't going to find out who.

Though it almost killed him, he broke away from her too-tempting mouth. "What other type of growing up have you been doing, Alicat? Or should I say who else have you been doing?"

"Wh-what?" she whispered, her voice unsteady and husky.

Jonas pulled his face back a bit so he could look into her eyes as he questioned her. He wanted, no needed, to see the truth for himself. "Did you fuck someone, Ali? Did you give yourself to some undeserving fool who isn't worth a tiny morsel of you?"

His sharp words pulled her out of her erotic haze. Eyes wild with fury dominated her pretty face as she struggled to get down. "How dare you? You have no right" — she paused in her tirade, as if trying to regain some semblance of control — "no right at all to even ask me that question."

That might very well be the case, but he was asking just the same. "Answer me," he ordered. She could dance all night in his arms, but he wouldn't relent and let her down. Not until he had the answers he was seeking. "Now."

"Why?" Ali asked, no longer struggling. "You didn't want me."

Her naïveté made him laugh. "Didn't I?"

"You wouldn't know it on my end."

Jonas took her denim-covered hips in his hands and wedged himself even tighter against her womanly center. He roughly made it a point of showing Ali what made men *men* and what made women *women*. "What does your end tell you now?"

"The same thing it told me last time." There was no mistaking the anger in her voice, or the disappointment. "Your mind and your body are on two different pages."

"I disagree, Alicat. Both my mind and my body want the same thing. My cock, balls-deep inside you."

"Then do it, Jonas. I'm not saying no."

But she wasn't answering his question either. "Don't make me repeat myself, Ali. Tell me what I want to know."

"Why should I have stayed pure when it obviously cost me you?"

Ali's usage of past tense sent chills racing down his spine. "Stayed pure?" Acting out of her best interest, Jonas stepped back and let her slide down. The idea of another man touching her, fucking her, had him so irate he was afraid he might lash out at Ali. "Is that your way of saying yes, Ali? Be careful how you answer that, kitten. The truth just might save your life."

"If I say yes, will you finally make love to me?"

"More than likely I'll throw you over the desk, tan your ass, and then fuck you." Jonas studied her intently. Part of him hoped her answer was yes, so he could take her, his conscience soothed. The other part prayed for no, so he could sleep peacefully knowing no other man had laid hands on his woman.

Ali pushed past him and stomped over to the desk. Jonas half expected her to grab something off the desk and fling it at his head, but to his utter surprise, she didn't. Instead, she turned until her back was facing him, hiked up the back of her already-too-short skirt and leaned forward, heart-shaped ass to his hungry gaze.

When she was in prime position for fucking and spanking, she looked over her shoulder at him. Her eyes were lit with a defiance that dared him to do as he threatened. "My answer is yes. I'm no longer a virgin. Do as you will, Jonas. Put us both out of our misery."

It was akin to waving a red flag in front of a bull.

Even though Jonas could taste the falsehood of her story on his lips, he crossed the room like a man possessed. Instead of jumping and running as anyone with a brain might have, Ali merely tightened her fingers against her skirt and waited for the first blow or fuck to come.

And although he wanted to rip the cute little panties from her rear and deliver a spanking neither one of them ever would forget, Jonas paused and took a deep breath. It wasn't in him to hurt her. He'd rather slit his own wrist before raising his hand against her in anger, but at the same time, Ali needed to be taught a lesson.

It wasn't wise of her to tempt men, to tempt him. Not when he was barely holding on to his anger as it was. Moving behind her, Jonas took the sides of her panties in his hands and slowly lowered them past her bottom to her knees.

He stood back for a moment and admired the view, before bringing his palm down softly against her supple flesh. Ali jumped at the contact, as if she really thought he would do it, only proving how little she really knew him after all. "Is this what you really want, Ali? For me to fuck you over the desk like some stranger. As if you were someone I couldn't care less about? Is this how you really want to remember your first time?"

"I told you. I've already slept with someone else."

"I don't believe you." Jonas ran his hand down her ass to the apex of her thighs and cupped the V of her wet pussy. She might be pure, but she was no prude; the way she moaned and pressed back proved that.

The slippery heat of her sex moistened his finger as he caressed her lips through the soft, downy hair covering her pussy. Pubic hair, he thought with a smile. He'd almost forgotten the way it felt to touch a woman who hadn't become a slave of popular convention.

Gentling his touch, Jonas rotated the tip of his finger past her lips and into the slick, hot entrance of her body. Moaning, Ali spread her legs a bit more and arched her bottom toward him in a silent plea for more. Unable to turn down her wordless request, Jonas pressed another finger forward and slid them as deep as her tight entrance would allow him.

"Hmm..." Ali's knuckles whitened under the onslaught of his caress. "Ohh..."

Even though she was wetter than the sea, he could barely move inside her, but he felt enough. Shaking with regret and unappeased need, Jonas pulled his fingers from her sweet snatch and stepped back. She wasn't experienced, and he couldn't take her. Not here at least, and not in this fashion. "Sit up, Ali. We need to talk."

Chapter Four

He wanted to talk. Now! Was he mad? “Jonas...” Ali closed her eyes together tight and tried to will her pounding heart to slow down. Her body felt more alive now than it ever had before, and he wanted to talk. “Please...”

“No, Ali.” His voice sounded colder than the pitcher of water that had soaked her shirt. “Get dressed and turn around. I want to talk to you.”

Ali opened her eyes as realization sank in. He didn’t want her. It was the only thing that made sense. Mortified, Ali rose and pulled up her underwear. Her cheeks were aflame as she tried to finish dressing in record time. All she wanted to do was get out of there, and fast.

Pushing her skirt back into place, she stepped away from the desk with eyes cast down and walked quickly to the door. If she could just make it to her car without breaking into tears, she’d be fine. She’d just reached the door when Jonas came up behind her and slammed his hand against the wood, preventing her from escaping.

“Where are you going?”

“Home.”

“Not until we talk.”

Spinning around, she faced him, her embarrassment replaced with anger. "What's there to talk about? Once again, you don't want me. I finally get it, Jonas. I'll leave you alone."

"Don't want you." Impatience rang out in his voice, loud and clear. "Are you really so naive?"

"No, what I am is tired of waiting around for you to come to your senses."

"That's a feeling I'm well acquainted with myself, Alicat."

She felt herself tensing at the endearment. "Don't call me that."

"What?" Jonas moved his hand and took a step back, finally giving her some breathing room.

"Alicat." She practically spit the word back at him.

"Why?" He frowned. "You never minded before."

Of course she never minded before. She thought it meant she was special to him. "Well, I mind now."

"Why?" Obvious confusion covered his question.

"Because I do."

"Tough," he said stubbornly. "I like it."

"And we both know it's all about what you like. What you want." She sighed heavily, her frustration palpable. "You don't care about anyone else but yourself."

"That's where you're wrong, Ali. I care very much about you. Too much. Which is why I won't allow you to make a huge mistake. I can't be what you want me to be."

Typical Jonas double-talk. "What is it you think I want you to be?"

"Some fucking white knight."

"That's not what I want." Unlike him, she wasn't stupid enough to put him on a pedestal.

"The hell it isn't. You're a dreamer, Alicat. Nothing wrong with that."

"Apparently there is, if it's the reason you won't date me."

"I won't date you, because it wouldn't be long before I had you under me."

She liked the sound of that, even if he obviously found it distasteful. "You say it as if it's a bad thing."

"For you, it would be. I don't play nice, Ali. I'm not the settling-down type, and I'm not the type who makes love. I fuck."

"Did I miss the part when I proposed?"

"Marriage and sex go hand in hand with you."

"Says who?"

"You."

Her mind whirled at his confusing statement. Had she missed a conversation or what? "When did I say that?"

"Maybe you didn't say it with words, but you said it with every action you ever took. You're a good girl, Alicat. Nothing wrong with that."

If he said that one more time, she was going to scream. "You keep saying 'nothing wrong with that,' but then you keep bringing up all these reasons something is wrong with it. Besides" — Ali crossed her arms over her still-wet shirt — "what makes you think I'm a good girl?"

"Should I list the reasons numerically or alphabetically?"

This she couldn't wait to hear. "Your choice."

"Fine. Number one, until recently, you still lived with your parents. Number two, you keep romance novels in your bottom desk drawer at work. Number three, you told me you have every book in the Sweet Valley High series, for Christ's sake."

"Hey" — Ali's eyes widened with outrage — "we were sharing our most embarrassing secrets. No fair using that against me. Besides, I gave all those books to the brat when I moved out."

"Just admit it, Ali. You're wanting the whole nine yards."

"All I want is you, Jonas. And if you're too chicken to deal with it, then" — Ali tried to think of something really good to say — "shame on you."

From the smirk Jonas shot her, she knew she'd failed. "I'm out of here." She spun back around, but just as before, Jonas slapped his hand against the door, holding it closed as she struggled to twist the knob. "Stop it you...big...bully."

"You're such a baby. Can't even curse right." His amusement only added to her irritation.

"Cursing doesn't make you a grown-up, it just shows your inability to use your vocabulary."

"Oh ho ho. I guess you told me, Alicat." His smart-alecky attitude was getting on her nerves. "I bet you couldn't say a swear word to save your life."

"I could, I just wouldn't."

"I bet I can make you curse."

Miffed, Ali turned back around to face him. "I bet you could make me do a lot of things. You just choose not to."

"Ali." Jonas let out a sigh and moved his hand from the door to her hair. The gentle way he caressed her only served to confuse her more. "You tie me in knots, girl. I want to do right by you, but you're not making it easy. When you strut around here, all sassy like, it makes my palms tingle and my cock hard."

"You do that to me too." When his brows crinkled, she blushed as she rushed to explain further. "Not the penis thing, of course, but the knot thing."

"Penis." Jonas chuckled. "What am I going to do with you?"

"I have a few suggestions."

"I'm sure you do. I'm just not sure if my delicate sensibilities could handle the prudish way you'd try to explain it."

"Being a virgin doesn't make me a prude."

He cocked an eyebrow. "So you admit it, do you?"

"I admit nothing."

"You don't have to admit it. Your tight pussy already did."

Ali didn't even blink at his vulgar choice of words. "Kegel exercises work wonders."

"What the hell is that?"

Ali smiled smugly at him. "A woman's best friend." Or at least that's what Samantha from *Sex in the City* said.

"All this time I thought it was diamonds."

She snorted with derision. "What you know of women wouldn't fill a thimble."

"You're so sexy when you get all riled."

"Stop saying stuff like that. Especially when you don't mean it."

"Oh I do mean it, Alicat. I just don't plan on doing anything about it."

"Why, afraid you won't be able to satisfy me?"

"More than likely it's the other way around."

Now that hurt. "Just because I haven't slept with many partners"—or *any*, she added silently to herself—"doesn't mean I'd be bad in bed. I've read books and seen movies."

"Dirty movies, Alicat?"

"Yes." Through the slits of her finger-covered eyes, but that was neither here nor there. "I have skills you know nothing about."

"What sort of skills?" His tone was suddenly serious.

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

"Not as much as I'd like to know who taught you these so-called skills."

Ha, as if she'd ever tell him, even if she had slept with someone. "None of your business."

His voice was as hard as steel. "Don't toy with me, Ali."

"Right back at you, Jonas."

"You have no idea what it takes to please a man like me." It was the first thing he'd said tonight she actually agreed with. But it didn't mean she couldn't learn.

"Then tell me. Better yet, show me. I" – Ali licked her dry lips, nervous about what she was about to suggest – "I know about those parties you throw. I know you're throwing one tomorrow, for Finn."

"And..." His suspicion was more than evident.

"I want to come to the party. Let me decide if I'm woman enough for your desires."

* * * * *

This was going to end badly. Jonas was a fool for agreeing, and when it all blew up in his face, as he knew it would, he'd have no one to blame but himself. Ali, in his house, during one of his play parties, was a recipe for a disaster. Or even worse, a death warrant. The only question was whose.

His money was on Ali. Hell, he could just see it now. She'd walked in, pretending to be bold, take one wrong turn to the left side of the house where all the fun took place, and drop dead of a heart attack.

But then of course, there was the slight chance she wouldn't keel over, and someone made a pass at her. Jonas would pity the person who made that mistake. Pity them for all of three seconds, before he wrapped his hands around their throat and choked the life from them.

Neither option was appealing, but Jonas didn't see another pathway to take. Either he was going to bury Ali or bury the fool he had to kill.

Damn, decisions were a bitch.

"You're frowning," Finn said as he handed him a beer. Jonas hadn't heard the other man approach, which probably was a good thing, seeing how he would have just walked away if he had.

"And your point is what?"

"You're throwing a party. You're supposed to act cheerful."

On any other given Saturday when he threw one of his "adults only" get-togethers, Jonas *was* cheerful. Nothing made him happier than having fifty or so of his closest friends over for some late-night naughty fun. But tonight he had no plans of getting naughty or having fun. And the last person he was in the mood to deal with right now was his former best friend. "The only acting I'm doing tonight is trying to act civil. To you."

"Still pissy, I see." Instead of backing off, as anyone with a brain might have, Finn smiled and smacked him on the back.

It took everything out of Jonas not to smack him back. Hard. With his fist. "Be thankful you *can* see, and that I haven't blackened both your eyes."

"Must you always resort to violence?"

Did he forget whom he was speaking with? "Yes. I must."

"I can't believe you're getting pissy about this. I thought you'd be happy to see Ali again. I know I was."

"Liar."

"Hey" — Finn frowned, as if he was affronted by Jonas's comment — "I was too happy to see her."

"Oh I believe that. What I don't believe is you thought for even a small second I wanted to see her."

"You can lie to her, you can try to lie to yourself, but you can't lie to me, mate. You want the lass, and you know it. One day, you'll see that I was right about the two of you."

"What I want and what's the right thing for Ali and me are two separate things." Jonas took a swig of his beer, needing the alcohol to dull his senses.

"This noble act of yours is really getting old."

"As is this cupid act of yours." Jonas narrowed his gaze and pointed his beer bottle at Finn. "Remember, *mate*, what goes around comes around."

"I can't wait."

From the blasé attitude, Jonas could tell that Finn wasn't worried about his comment. Jonas would have thought after all this time, however, Finn would have realized when he was serious. And he was definitely serious about returning the unwelcome favor. "Neither can I."

"You're going to have to wait until after the party, mate. The guest of honor is here."

His earlier assumptions about Ali were far from right. Instead of walking in as bold as could be, she was standing by the open door like a deer caught in the headlights. He could tell she wasn't sure if she was going to stay or go, and surprisingly, Jonas realized he hoped she didn't flee. He still thought her being here was a big mistake, but the truth of that didn't outweigh the overwhelming sense of rightness he felt at having her in his house at last. Irritated at the pure wishy-washiness of it, Jonas frowned, disgusted with himself. If he were any more indecisive, he'd have breasts.

"Do you think Wyatt's trying to talk her into leaving or staying?" Finn asked, his voice full of unsuppressed humor.

"Not sure." Unlike Finn, Wyatt was far from convinced Ali being here was a good idea. He, like Lennon, was riding the fence on the "debauchery of Ali" play Finn seemed to be directing. Where Jonas's feet were firmly planted in the no category. One for. One against. Two undecided. If this were a democracy, Jonas would be fucked. And not in a good way. "Maybe he can convince her to go home."

"Right," Finn said in a dry, sarcastic tone. "'Cause that's what you want."

"You don't know what I want."

"And sadly" — Finn placed his hand on Jonas's shoulder — "neither do you, my friend. You're like Two-Face."

"Oh God." Jonas shrugged his shoulder, pushing his friend's hand off him. "Please no comic book references."

Finn was the Wikipedia of comic books, and he had an annoying habit of dropping the tidbits he knew into conversations whenever he could.

"But this one works, my friend. One part of you wants to make love to her, and the other wants to keep her pure and chaste. All that's missing is a coin to decide the fate for you."

Annoyed, Jonas shook his head. "Why are we friends?"

"Because you're lucky, mate. You're lucky." Finn shot Jonas a smile before turning toward the front door where Ali was still loitering. Whatever Wyatt said to her seemed to calm her down a bit, because she was now sans coat and standing in front of a closed door. The frightened look was still etched onto her face, but it was matched by the resolved set of her shoulders.

Ali, like it or lump it, was here to stay. Instead of coming forth and immediately disappearing into the sea of faces, she took her time to glance around, silently taking in everything around her.

Jonas looked around his packed house and tried to see it from Ali's perspective. Although there were over fifty people there, he knew every single one of them. Safety came above all, which was imperative considering some of the things that went down at these events.

The party itself was basic and low-key. He had it catered, so there would be plenty of good food without having to do any cooking or cleaning himself. Music flowed softly out the custom-built speakers in his ceiling, loud enough to be heard, but not loud enough to drown out the lively chatter drifting from the mingling people.

At first glance it would appear as if he was simply throwing a house party. But the real party took place in the back rooms, where anything and everything went down. A place Jonas never imagined he would take Ali.

"Hello, Jonas." Startled, Jonas turned around and looked down into the upturned face of Ali. While he'd been busy taking in everything, she'd made her way over to him, with the help of her loyal guide dog, Finn, who looked happier than a pig in shit.

"So you made it." Gone was the wary look that had darkened her face earlier, and in its place was one of bold confidence. The about-face made Jonas wonder what in the world he'd missed between here and the front door. Then he looked over at his friend, who was hanging all over her like a second skin.

And from the outfit she was wearing, it was almost necessary. She was dressed in a too-revealing purple drape-necked tank top and tight black skirt that rivaled for shortness the jean skirt she wore last night. Ali looked too tempting for her own good and too nude. She needed more clothing, something preferably in the turtleneck and sweatpants family.

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

"Really?" Jonas took a swig of his beer. It was either that or deck Finn, who had his arm wrapped around Ali's waist. "I saw you when you first came in. For a second there, I thought you were going to bail."

As usual, Finn butted in. "Just had to get your footing, right, pet?"

Pet. Jonas's hand tightened around the bottle.

"Something like that." Ali shot Jonas an impish little grin, apparently not at all bothered by Finn's overfriendly act.

That made one of them.

"I was just about to tell Ali the rules."

"Rules?" Frowning, Ali glanced from Jonas to Finn. "There are rules?"

"Oh yes." Finn nodded. "Jonas takes all of this very seriously."

"For a reason," Jonas said simply. "I'm responsible for everyone who enters my house. It's not something I take lightly."

"Sounds like you," she murmured.

Jonas couldn't tell if her comment was meant as an insult or a compliment. With Ali, it never was an easy call. "If you want to keep your cherry out of the public fruit salad, you'll heed them. First thing first" —Jonas pointed to the left side of the house— "anything goes, but only on the east side of the house."

"Why only there?"

"Because despite popular belief, not everyone here comes to get laid. Sometimes people just want to hang out with like-minded individuals."

"Okay."

"Number two, no means no, no matter what."

Ali's brow crinkled. "I would have thought that would have been rule number one."

"The numerical order of the rules isn't important as long as they're followed."

"All I'm suggesting i—"

"And number three," Jonas said, riding roughshod over her words. "What happens here, stays here."

"Sounds ominous." She mockingly shivered, riling him all the more.

"I just protect what's mine." Jonas looked at Finn when he spoke, silently reminding his friend of his possessive nature.

"And on that note"—Finn pulled away from Ali—"I'll say good-bye. That is, unless you want me to show you around."

"I—"

"No, she really doesn't." And if she did, Ali would be wise to keep that little bit of information to herself.

Finn ignored Jonas and glanced over at Ali. "It's up to you, pet."

"I'm in capable hands. I'll holler if I need you."

"Do that. Have fun, you two." Finn gave them a jaunty little wave of his hand that had Jonas itching to break his fingers, before turning and leaving.

"So is this it?" Ali looked around the room as if she was searching for something. "Is this the big bad side of you that you've been protecting me from all this time?"

"It's merely the hole, Alice," Jonas warned. "It's up to you to decide if you want to take the final step inside and tumble down."

"You said the left side of the house, right?"

"That's what I said."

Ali met his steady gaze with one of her own. "I'm not afraid, Jonas. Show me what it means to be your woman."

If only he could. "All right, I will. But remember, I warned you."

Chapter Five

The false sense of courage Wyatt instilled in Ali at the front door vanished the second he did. She was so nervous she felt as if she might vomit at any moment. But throwing up wasn't an option. Not only would it be über embarrassing, it would also prove to Jonas he was right and she wasn't the woman for him.

The problem with that was, he wasn't correct. Ali was perfect for him. She just had to get over a few fears, such as making a fool of herself, before they could live happily ever after.

"So silent. We haven't even gone to the fun part of the house yet."

"Just thinking."

"About?"

"What a lovely house you have. What I can see of it, that is." She actually glanced around to give credit to her comment, and when she did, she was amazed at what she saw. His home was huge. Ali could fit both her apartment and her parents' house inside his and still have room to walk around. It was odd how big it was, especially knowing it was just for him. "I can't wait to see the rest of it."

Jonas chuckled and shook his head. "Your unfailing politeness kills me."

That wouldn't be all that killed him, if he didn't stop making fun of her. "What's wrong with being polite?"

"Nothing, Pollyanna. Nothing at all." Jonas placed his hand on the small of her back and directed her to begin walking toward the left.

"Will you stop with the *Pollyanna*? Alicat is bad enough as it is," she grumbled, irritated he was treating her as if she were a child.

"You're Pollyanna when you act all Goody Two-shoes on me, and Alicat when..."

"When, what?"

"When you make me forget about those shoes."

Maybe Alicat wasn't so bad. "So..." She drew out the word, looking around at the crowd. "Do you know all these people?"

"Yes, I do." Jonas shot her an amused look. "Why, do you want an introduction?"

"Well...maybe."

"Fine" – he stopped, grabbing the edge of her top to get her to do the same – "who do you want to meet?"

"Umm...I...guess it all depends."

"On?"

"On what it is you're planning to show me? If I'm going to be watching people do" – Ali paused, searching for the right word – "*certain things*, then I might want to know their names before I see them do said things."

"Said...things." His lips twitched, much to her annoyance.

"Stop. Laughing. At. Me." The heat in her cheeks belied her embarrassment. "I don't know what's going on back there. I can't give a name to something I don't know."

Ali walked away, heading in the direction of Jonas's self-made Sodom and Gomorrah. It was amazing how his cockiness had morphed her nervousness into steel, giving her the strength she needed to get through this, head held high. This wasn't just about watching kink for the pure pleasure of it all; this was about proving a point, and

doggone it, she would do it if it killed her. She'd just passed under the entryway of the hall when Jonas came from behind and took her arm.

"Hey," she grumbled as he pushed his way in front of her. Still holding fast to her arm, he began dragging her down the hallway. Stopping at the first door, he opened it and glanced inside, all the while blocking her from viewing the interior. Before she could try to elbow her way past him, he closed the door and moved farther down the hall. "Wait a minute already."

Instead of heeding her, however, he had already reached the next door. Once again, though, he just looked inside the room, then promptly closed the door. When he tried to drag her farther, she attempted to dig in her heels, but it was all in vain. She was no match for his strength. "Jonas, stop. Why aren't we going into those rooms?"

Opening the last door, he glanced in, then pushed the door wider and tugged her inside with him. Once they were clear of the door, Jonas released his hold on her and turned, then shut and locked the door.

Shaking her head at his odd behavior, Ali turned around to get a good view of the room. To her disappointment, the room was void of naked people doing naughty things. To add insult to injury, the room wasn't decked out with props like the ones she'd seen on the Web site to the swingers' club. There was just a bed and dresser. A very nice bed, but boring all the same. It was a guest room, and nothing else.

Talk about a letdown.

"What's going on here?" she asked as she turned to face Jonas. "Nothing, that's what. We had a deal, Jonas, and you're breaking it."

"And you really don't know, do you?"

Ali couldn't help but feel as if she were coming in on the tail end of a conversation. "Know what?"

"What takes place between a man and a woman."

"Yes, I do." How stupid did he think she was? "Sex."

"And..."

"Stuff and things."

"*And.*" This time the word had a harder edge to it.

"Stuff in things." Her frustration with him knew no bounds.

"Ali." His sigh of discontentment was a warning if ever there was one. He was going to back out. She just knew it, but that was something she couldn't allow to happen.

"Look, Jonas, I don't know what you're looking for, but contrary to popular belief, I'm not a sheltered nitwit. Just because I don't say dirty words like you doesn't mean I don't know what they stand for."

"Really?"

"Of course. Try me." Unless he threw some sort of slang at her to try to trip her, Ali figured she'd be fine. This was the age of the Internet after all.

"Don't tempt me."

Wasn't that the point? "The more you keep pushing me off, the more I want to do this. I really doubt anything is taking place behind those doors that would shock me. I've talked to Finn and Wyatt about you. I did my homework."

"You talked to them?"

"Yes." Ali hoped she wasn't going to get them in trouble, but she had to let Jonas know she wasn't going to break. "I know what you like. Whether you open that door or not, I still know what floats your boat."

"Floats my boat?"

Ali's dander rose when his lips twitched again. "Gets you off. Makes you hard. Turns you on. Does that work better?" The twitch was gone. Good. She had his attention now. "I'm not afraid of you, Jonas. Or anything you might desire. I want you. I want to be with you. What do I have to do to get you to realize that?"

"What all did Finn and Wyatt tell you?"

"You like to watch people have sex, and you enjoy people watching you."

"They would know. Lord knows they've seen me enough times."

Oh! That was the part she hadn't been able to wrestle from his friends, whether they were the audience for Jonas, or if it was the other way around.

"Did they tell you about my penchant for ménages?"

"Mena..." Ali stuttered for a moment before she repeated the word. "Ménages?"

"Yes. It's French for threesome."

Once again, Ali had to wonder just how lame he thought she was. "Please, Jonas, give me some credit. I know what a ménage is."

"Sorry, you looked a bit floored there."

"I was just surprised, is all. Finn sort of left that part out."

"Is it going to be a problem?" Ali was thinking he hoped it would be.

"Is it something you enjoy?" Ali had to wonder how she would handle his answer.

"If I say yes, will you give up your pussy and ass?"

"That is how it normally works, isn't it?" She was pleased she'd kept the quiver from her voice.

"You'd whore yourself just to get in my bed?"

Ali wanted to say if that was what it took, but she knew it was a lie. "No, I wouldn't whore myself out for you or anyone else." She did have her pride, even though it seemed to turn invisible around Jonas.

"That's what I thought," he said with a touch of misplaced satisfaction.

"But I'm not opposed to experimenting with you, or opposed to bringing someone else into our bed. But that wouldn't make me a whore, Jonas."

His eyes widened. "Are you saying it's something you want to do?"

"The idea of being with two men at once is something I'm sure every woman fantasizes about at one time. Why would you assume I'd be different? Besides, if it was a trusted friend, such as Finn or one of the other..." Jonas's gaze hardened. The sudden change in his demeanor took her aback. "What's wrong?"

"Why did you mention Finn?" Jonas took a step closer to her. His face was a mask of fury.

"I d-don't..." Ali backed up.

"Why?" His voice was ice-cold.

"He was the first person to come to mind."

"Well, get him out of your mind. Now. He's never to touch you. Do you understand me?" She could practically feel his anger coming off him in waves.

"No, I don't." What in the world had come over him? "Jonas –"

"Let him near you, and I'll kill him."

"Kil – Are you kidding me?"

"Does it look as if I am?"

He was mad, literally and figuratively. It made no freaking sense. He didn't want her, but he didn't want anyone else to have her either. That illogic just didn't fly with Ali, but it did squash her fear. Narrowing her eyes, she crossed her arms over her breasts, refusing to back down no matter how angry he was. "You can't tell me who to have sex with, Jonas." Especially when he couldn't make up his mind whether he would sleep with her. "You don't own me."

"For tonight, I do. Let him or anyone else touch you tonight, and there will be hell to pay."

"Does that go both ways? Do I own you tonight too?"

His lips thinned out as he regarded her sullenly. "Yes. Tonight, I'm yours."

It wouldn't be just for tonight, but she was smart enough to know when to push and when to accept a gift when she received one. "Okay then. Should we go check out a room then?"

"Not yet."

"What now?" The way he kept hedging, she would never get lucky.

"You want to learn what I like?"

"Haven't we already established that?"

"Then we can start here and now."

"Okay." Hands on her hips, she cocked an eyebrow in question.

"I like a woman who can tell me what she wants."

He still seemed to be underestimating her. "I can do that."

"Can you?"

"Yes." Where was he going with this?

"Then tell me."

"I want to go into one of those rooms and watch people make love."

"No one makes love here, Pollyanna. They fuck. And if you want to see that, you have to ask for it."

"I just did."

"No, you didn't," Jonas insisted. "Say fuck and I'll take you to a room."

The way Ali's eyes widened was hilarious as hell. Her shock doused his anger out cold. No matter how grown-up she acted, no matter the sexy clothes she slipped on to play dress up in, Ali was still, at heart, his Goody Two-shoes. And he'd be damned if he didn't want her to slip them off. "What, too much of a Pollyanna to do it?"

"No. I just think it's stupid."

Jonas furrowed his brows in mock anger. "You calling my sexual urges stupid?"

"This isn't an urge. It's just your way of bullying me."

"No, It isn't." Jonas took a step toward her and watched with silent satisfaction as she dropped her hands from her hips and stared at him with nervous apprehension. "I find it extremely sexy to hear a woman whisper dirty words in my ears."

"You do?"

"Yes," he replied truthfully, especially if the woman in question was one Ali Hernandez. "I really..." Jonas took a step closer. "Really..." And another, until he was standing so close to her he could feel the heat radiating from her body. "Do."

"Okay then." Ali's cheeks were turning the prettiest shade of red Jonas had ever seen. "Lean down here and I'll whisper it in your ear."

Jonas shook his head and smiled. He wasn't going to let her off so easily. "I don't think so, Alicat. I want to hear you say it. Loud and clear."

"Be nice." She frowned at him in some sort of lame attempt at intimidation.

He was going to be nice, so nice to her.

Jonas slid his hand under her silky hair and cupped her nape. Leaning close, he stared deep into the sensual pools of her dark eyes. "Say it for me, Ali. Say fuck."

"Fuck." She whispered the word, so soft and gentle like, that for a second Jonas thought he'd almost imagined it.

"Louder, Ali."

"Fuck." It wasn't much louder this time, but there was no mistaking what she'd said, and man did he like it. So much so he was going to make her do it again.

"Now say cock."

"Wasn't fuck bad enough?"

"No such thing as bad enough when it comes to talking dirty. I want you to get used to saying everything. Because if you were my woman, I'd have you screaming it every time I fucked you. Would you like that, Alicat? Me fucking you so hard and deep, you forget what it means to be a good girl."

"Yes."

"Then tell me you want me to fuck you with my big, thick cock." Ali closed her eyes and murmured the sentence back to him. But still, it wasn't enough. "Tell me you want me to eat your pussy and make you come."

Ali opened her eyes and stared wantonly at him. "If I say it, will you do it, or are you just trying to teach me a lesson?"

Reaching out, he grabbed her hand and pressed it on the proof, bulging out against the front of his pants. "What do you think?" he said arrogantly before moving his hand away.

Instead of taking her hand back as he expected, she tightened her hold on him. "It really turns you on?"

"It really does."

"I want you to eat my pussy and make me come." Pussy was said lower than any other word in the sentence, but she said it. Maybe there was hope for them, after all.

"Hmm." Jonas moved his hand from behind her neck and down her back, where he rubbed her soothingly. "Now was that so bad?"

"Not entirely." She let out a deep breath, which had him laughing on the inside. "I didn't implode, after all."

"Was there a chance of that happening?"

"Maybe." She laughed, a bit shaky, as if she too realized the insanity of it all. "I don't know if you noticed or not, but I tend to be a little high-strung."

"You. Nah. I would have never guessed." He winked to show her he was teasing.

"Yeah. I hide it real well, don't I?"

"Completely." Jonah couldn't help but smile at her. This was one of the many reasons he really liked Ali. She didn't take herself too seriously and wasn't too high-and-mighty to laugh at herself when the opportunity called for it. And she wasn't a quitter. There was something else he noticed about her as well. "Ali."

"Yes."

"Wanna take your hand off my cock?"

Shocked, she glanced down between them to her hand, then back up at him.
"Probably should, huh?"

"Might be a good idea. Eventually." It wasn't as if he was in any surefire hurry or anything.

"Eventually or now?"

"Well..." Jonas pretended to ponder the question for a second, when inside he was laughing at the mere madness of their situation. He had to be the only man in the world who had to ask the sexy virgin he was crazy about to stop touching his dick.
"Now would probably be as good a time as any."

"Okay." Ali took her hand away and ran it shakily through her hair. She shot him a nervous smile that just endeared her to him all the more. How was it possible that one second she was all temptress and the next all Shirley Temple? "So..."

"Yes."

"Since I passed your dirty word test, can we go check out some of the rooms now?"

Sighing, Jonas stepped back. Despite desiring her and wanting her there, he still couldn't shake the feeling this was a very bad idea. "Look, Ali, you don't have to do this for me."

"Why do you keep saying for you? Has it ever crossed your conceited little mind that maybe I want to see people do stuff because I want to see it?"

"No, I can honestly say it hasn't."

"Well, let it." She sighed and then continued her tirade. "Yes, part of me is here for you, but then part is here for me. And I want to watch. With you."

"Fine." Jonas was done. Done fighting her and done fighting himself. He was going to give Ali what she asked for, and let the cards fall as they may. "But first. The rules."

"You already told me the rules."

"No, those were the party rules. These are the rules for you."

Her brow arched in an affronted manner. "Why do I get separate rules?"

"Because I say so. Take it or leave it."

"Bully."

He couldn't deny it, even if he tried. "Is that a yes or no?"

"Yes." Gone was the woman who seconds ago didn't want to release his dick. In her place was one who looked like someone who, for five dollars and a shot of tequila, would gladly rip his dick off. "Fine, what are they?"

"Number one, you don't go off with anyone but me."

"Okay."

Her reply was too quick for his peace of mind. "I mean anyone, Ali. Not Finn. Not anyone."

"What is your obsession with Finn?"

Jonas sent her a level look. He could ask her the same thing. "Anyone."

"I get it." She tilted her head and sent him a look that spoke volumes on how little she regarded his intelligence at the moment. "You leave with the one who brought you. Check."

He didn't care if she thought he was dumb as a stump, as long as she did as he told her. "Number two, if at any time you feel the slightest bit uncomfortable, you tell me so we can leave."

"I will," she said solemnly, filling him with at least a bit more assurance.

"Number three, no lying."

"Lying?"

“Yes. I want you to be open and honest with me at all times. Tonight isn’t just about looking, it’s about learning. And we can’t do that if you lie. If you see something that excites you, makes your pussy wet” —Jonas used the crass words just to get the pretty pink color to come back to her cheeks—“then I want to know. Number four, don’t be embarrassed about liking what you like.”

Ali held up her hand to stop him. “Hold up a second. I can’t make any promises about that.”

“Why not?”

“Because I can no more control how things affect me than I can control my feet. You’ve seen me trip over dust. You know I’m not lying.”

“Fine, then let’s make number four, don’t be ashamed of what you like.”

“Isn’t that the same thing?”

“Not at all.” And before the night was over, he was going to show her the difference.

“Okay, no shame. Is that it?”

“No, final rule” —Jonas held his hand out to her, palm up—“no panties.”

Chapter Six

Be careful what you wish for. Ali couldn't get that phrase out of her head as she silently walked behind Jonas into the hallway. This had all seemed like such a good idea a few minutes ago. Then again, a few minutes ago she had panties on. Now she was all bare bottomed and pensive, while Jonas was strutting in front of her like a proud peacock.

Cock. There was that word again. She'd only spent half an hour with Jonas, and he had her out of her panties and swearing like a sailor. Hopefully this boded well for the rest of the evening.

"I think..." Jonas stopped in the middle of the hallway, causing her to run into him.

"Oops," she said, looking up, her cheeks heating once more. Good Lord, if she didn't stop blushing around him her blood pressure was going to go through the roof. "Sorry."

"No big deal. I was just going to say we should probably start outside."

"Outside?" Where a breeze could possibly kick up her skirt for the world to see? No, thank you. "What's wrong with in here?" In the breeze-free zone.

"Nothing, I just figured you'd want to start off small. Possibly see some people skinny-dipping, get your first view of a cock."

"I've seen a pen —"

Jonas tilted his head and raised a brow. "A what?"

Oh brother. "A cock, before."

"Diaper duty and porn don't count, Pollyanna."

"Does Lewis Ghant count then?" *Take that.*

"Who the hell is Lewis Ghant?"

Ali smiled smugly. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

"No. I think for your best interest, I shouldn't." He looked anything but pleased. "But I do want to know what else this Lewis Ghant showed you."

"The difference between second base and third."

"You're right. Fuck outside, let's start" — Jonas turned around and walked to the first door on his left — "in here."

"Oh...okay." Ali walked to where he was, hoping her expression didn't betray her nervousness. "Umm...should we knock first?"

"Knock." Her question seemed to amuse him. "No. We don't have to knock. If they didn't want to be watched, they wouldn't be here."

Could she be any lamer? "Good point."

Jonas placed his hand on the doorknob but didn't turn it. He stared at her intently, as if trying to peer into her soul. "You ready?"

More than ever. "Yes."

"Okay." Jonah turned the knob and pushed the door open for Ali to look inside. After taking a deep breath, she walked passed Jonah, into the room, and stared openmouthed at the sight before her.

Good goobalegoo. She hadn't been ready.

Nothing could have prepared her for this. There weren't just two, or even three, people making love on a bed. Heck, there wasn't even a bed. Just two large mattresses lying on the floor next to one another with a group of people on them, doing...lots of stuff.

"Oh...my."

"This is the free-for-all room."

"I can" – Ali cleared her throat as she ran her gaze over the hodgepodge of loving going on before her – "see why. Everyone is touching everyone." It didn't seem to matter to anyone what sex the other person was, either. It was hedonism at its best. And yet, even though she was shocked, she wasn't disgusted. It looked fun.

With great reluctance, Ali tore her gaze away from the scene in front of her and looked up at Jonas, who was watching her intently. "Too much?"

Not hardly. "No. Is this what you like? What you like to do?"

Jonas glanced at the group and smiled. "I like watching this, but it's a bit too crowded for my taste. Besides, I prefer knowing exactly whose hand is on my dick."

"Makes sense." Ali turned her attention back to the group writhing on the floor. She did a quick count. Nine. Good Lord. She didn't even know nine people she liked well enough to go out to lunch with, let alone get naked and roll around on the floor with. But then again, as she said earlier, it did look fun. Very fun.

Ali hadn't thought it was possible for so many people to be intimate at once, but boy was she wrong. Staring intently, she tried to take it all in and make sense of what she was watching. The only way she could think to describe it would be one gigantic daisy chain. If she ever wanted to watch a step-by-step guide on how to please a lover with your mouth, all she had to do was watch the scene taking place right before her eyes. The most interesting part about it was that the uneven number of participants didn't seem to matter at all, thanks to the circlelike shape they took on the floor. Everyone had someone's head buried between their legs, and it wasn't just boy on girl. It was a free-for-all, and everyone looked very excited to be there.

Unlike the porn she'd watched, this was actually making her feel something besides nausea. Ali was becoming aroused. There was nothing more exciting to a wallflower such as herself, who didn't always feel included, than to watch an act that didn't exclude anyone. Everyone was being touched. No one was being left out. That in itself was sexy to her.

Ali wondered if she could work up the nerve to slip into the fray of things. To just disrobe, close her eyes, and surrender her body to the erotic horde surrounding her.

"Come on, Ali."

"Huh?" Ali shook her head and glanced over at Jonas, who was staring at her with a bemused expression on his handsome face. "What?"

Jonas moved closer to her. "Like what you see, Alicat?"

Ali darted her gaze back to the floor for a split second before looking back at him. "Yes."

"How much?"

"Umm..." She wasn't sure where he was going with this. "Is there a scale or something I should be using? One being not at all and..."

"Five being you want to rip off your clothes and sit on someone's face."

"Sit on... Oh." Well, she liked it, but she didn't like it that much. "Maybe a three."

"Hmm...three."

"Yes."

"Let's go."

"Go?" Her voice rose in indignation. "Why? We just got here. I'm not ready to go home." Maybe she should have said four instead.

"Not home, Alicat." Amusement flickered in his eyes for a brief second, before it vanished altogether. "To another room."

"Oh." *Awkward.* Of course he didn't mean home. "Uh...why do you want to go to another room?"

"I want to see if we can find a room that will rate higher on your number scale."

"Oh."

"Yes, but if you prefer to..." He gestured back to the mass of tangled limbs on the floor.

"No." She didn't want to appear too eager, so she paused as if she were giving it some thought, when inside she was raring to see more. "No, we can go check out another room."

"Come with me." Jonas took her hand and led her from the room. Before they cleared it, though, Ali gave a quick glance over her shoulder. If things didn't work out the way she hoped with Jonas, there would be no telling when she'd get another opportunity to see something like this. "Don't break your neck."

Ali whipped her head around to stare at Jonas. "What?" she asked, trying for innocence, and failing if the look he shot her was anything to go by.

"Right." His dry tone said it all. Without saying another word, he took her down the hall a bit, nodding his head cordially at people walking past them.

The door to the next room they came upon was open already, but the room was less crowded by far. Only a few people stood around a large four-poster bed that was centered in the middle of the room.

"What's going on in here?" Ali whispered to Jonas, not wanting to interrupt anything by speaking too loud.

"I don't know." His hushed tone matched her own. "Let's go find out."

Silently, they made their way over to the foot of the bed and squeezed in between another couple and a man standing by himself. The only other two people in the room were a nude, voluptuous, redheaded woman tied spread-eagle on the bed, and a partially dressed, dark-haired man who was sitting next to her touching her lightly with a feather.

"What's he doing?" Ali asked softly.

"Torturing her would be my guess."

"Oh." And that was about all she had to say on that. She was too stunned to say any more, which was pretty surprising since she'd just come from a room where nine people were getting it on. But nine on nine had nothing on this. At least not in her book.

Probably not in the woman's either, because she was looking all kinds of happy to be there, if her pointed nipples and moans were anything to go by.

Not that Ali could blame her. The gentleman had replaced the feather with his fingers, then his tongue and mouth. He was slowly making his way from the belly button down to her sex, all while Ali stared on with wide-eyed attention. From the way he was positioned and where she was standing, Ali not only could see the wet opening of the woman's vagina, but also the top of his head as he moved closer and closer to the prize.

When Ali went home, she was going to have look up the word *torture* in the dictionary, because she was more than sure this wasn't it. Unless it was a new type of torture. The type where the person was punished with oral sex. Now that was the kind of punishment she could get on board with.

"Please...Leaf."

The man raised his head a bit and turned to face the woman. "I plan to, Carrieanne. Now do I need to fill your mouth to get you to quiet up and let me play?"

"I just want to come."

Leaf released a long-suffering sigh and sat all the way up. "And yet you won't follow my simple rules so that I can reward you with an orgasm."

"Please..."

"And still you continue." Leaf rose from the bed and, for the first time since Ali and Jonas had come into the room, turned and faced the group standing by the bed. "Would either of you like to help me out here by giving Carrieanne something better to do with her mouth?"

"Well, if you insist," said the man who was standing by himself.

"Yes, I really do." Leaf shook his head in a long-suffering manner. "She won't learn her lesson any other way, will you, pet?"

"No." Carrieanne licked her lips and watched the other man approach. "Probably not."

"That's what I thought." Leaf unbuttoned his pants and slid them, along with his briefs, to the floor. "Why do I put up with such a disobedient slut?"

"Because you love me."

Leaf smiled as he joined her on the bed. "That I do, pet. That I do. Now be a good girl and say 'aahhh' for the nice gentleman."

Startled, Ali turned her attention from the couple on the bed to the now-nude man climbing on the bed near Carrieanne's face.

"Oh my." The words slipped out of Ali's mouth before she could stop them, just as the guest player slid his very erect cock past Carrieanne's parted lips.

"Damn," the other man muttered as he began to piston his hips.

"Oh yes, she's very good, isn't she?"

"Fuck yes."

"Carrieanne, what do you say when you've been paid such a nice compliment?"

Carrieanne moved her head back a bit and smiled up at the man she was pleasuring. "Thank you...uhh..."

"Hugh," he offered.

"Thank you, Hugh." Then, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, she engulfed his cock once more, sucking with renewed vigor.

As she blew Hugh, Leaf moved between her spread legs and buried his face deep within her sex. This new move, although seemingly pleasurable to Carrieanne, was less than pleasing to Ali, whose view was obstructed by Leaf's rear end.

Frowning, she skirted from side to side to try and get a better angle. "Problems, Alicat?"

Yeah. "I can't see."

"Well, we can't have that." Jonas guided her around to the other side of the bed, so their sight wasn't obstructed by ass or footboard. "Better?"

By far. Ali nodded, too distracted by what she was seeing at this point to answer. Hugh was leisurely allowing Carrieanne to suck on his cock and, if by any indication on his face, enjoying the task immensely. Leaf was pleasuring Carrieanne as if he was a man on a mission. That mission seemingly to give her the most explosive orgasm of all time. The unintended consequence was that watching the scene was affecting Ali as well. Big-time.

In fact, Ali couldn't recall the last time she'd been so turned on. Wait. Yes, she could. The office. Last night with Jonas. Speaking of her own personal sexual torturer, Ali had something she needed to fess up to him about. "Hey, Jonas."

"Yeah."

"Remember that rule you gave me?" Ali had told herself to stare straight ahead but instead looked up at his face when she spoke.

"Which one?" A slight smile crooked the corners of his mouth.

"Umm...the one about the wetness."

"Yes." The smile grew in intensity.

She couldn't believe she was going to say the words, even as they left her mouth. "It's wet."

"What's wet, Ali?"

God! She should have known he would make her say it. "My pussy. My pussy is wet."

"I don't believe you. I think I'll find out for myself." She trembled with one thought. *Finally.*

He moved behind her and stood as close to her as he could without touching her. For now. He wanted her to anticipate his every move, to want him more than she did her next breath, and in order for that to happen, he would have to bank his desires, if only for a few more minutes.

This was the moment he'd been waiting for, and it had been worth every second to have her with him now. He only prayed this experience was one he would come to treasure and not one he would come to hate.

Reaching out, he brushed her hair away from her shoulder and ear and leaned in close, inhaling her sweet, fruity smell as he did so. "So you're wet, are you, Alicat? This little show has you all hot and bothered?"

"Yes."

"Is your clit hard and achy?"

This time she nodded her head in lieu of answering, but words weren't really necessary. Especially since he was going to feel for himself. Jonas placed his hands on her hips; then ever so slowly he moved them down her thighs until his fingers were touching the bottom of her skirt. He placed his fingertips just over the edge of the hem, gripped the fabric, and began to pull it up.

"Wait." Ali slapped her hands over his and twisted her neck so she was looking at him. "What are you doing?"

"You said you wanted to know what I like." Jonas nodded his head to the trio going at it on the bed all hot and heavy. "This is it. I like to watch people fuck, and I like to be watched. Can you handle that, Ali, or is this all a bit too much?"

"I...I don't know."

Jonas's stomach clenched. This is what he had always feared. That Ali would get a glimpse of his world and hightail it back to hers. But if he'd gotten his hopes up in vain, he had no one to blame but himself. "I understand." He didn't like it, but since he'd

already anticipated this outcome, he did understand it. With a heavy heart, Jonas released her skirt and made to move back, but was halted by Ali's hands holding his in place.

"No, I don't think you do." Her cheeks colored under the weight of his gaze. "I don't know if I can handle it, but I want to find out."

He wanted to believe her. God knows he did, but things weren't adding up. "Then why did you grab my hands?"

"Habit and jumpiness, I think," she said with an edgy laugh before moving her hands off his. "I think I might just need to keep my hands busy out of nervousness."

Well, if that was all. "Then let's give them something better to do, shall we? Pull your shirt past your bra and free your breasts," he ordered. "I want a glimpse of those award-winning tits."

"Now?" Ali's eyes widened as she glanced around the room.

"Yes." It was time to kick things up a notch. "Now."

From over her shoulder, Jonas watched as Ali raised shaking hands to her shirt and pulled it under the slopes of her mauve lace-covered bra. Last night's show had given him his first glance at her priceless twins, but tonight's up-close-and-personal viewing put the wet T-shirt contest to shame. Even through the intricate design of the lace, Jonas could see the dark circles of her areolae. The sexy brown rings called to him, as did the pebbled peaks of her nipples, which poked against the front of her bra.

Jonas hadn't known he was a breast man until last night, and now all he could think about was burying his cock between her large mounds. Fuck, he wanted to get a taste of her melons, and from the way the other men glanced over at her, he could tell he wasn't the only one.

"Damn," murmured the man still standing at the foot of the bed with his date. His eyes were fully focused on Ali and not at all on the trio in front of them. Not that Jonas could blame him. Why would he rather stare at a man going down on someone when he could be looking at Ali topless?

"Did you hear that, Alicat?" Jonas looked down at Ali, whose cheeks were rosy red, obviously from the attention she was getting. "I think he likes the look of your tits. Maybe you should give him a better view. Take them out, honey, and play with your nipples for me. For us."

Ali nervously licked her lips but did as he requested, reaching in one side, then the other, to free her massive mounds. Once they were bared, she cupped them and ran her thumb over her lovely, dark nipples. Jonas could tell she was aroused from the way her tips jutted out for all to see, and he couldn't wait to find other evidence of her desire.

Bending over slightly, Jonas grabbed the hem of her skirt and began once more to pull it up. With the expectation of her calling a halt to everything, Jonas moved at a slow pace. Inch by inch he drew the skirt up, scratching his nails lightly against her supple thighs along the way. The movement dragged a sultry moan from Ali that made his cock ache.

Hmm. Did Pollyanna prefer a hint of pain with her pleasure? Lord, he hoped so. Just thinking of the many wonderful things he could do to her, and for her, made him suddenly begin to look forward to the evening with renewed delight. "Still with me?"

"Uh-huh." Her breathing sped up the higher he raised her skirt, but not once did she ask him to stop. Instead she just whimpered his name and toyed with her nipples more.

"Just what I wanted to hear, baby." Before Jonas could say more, a deep moan drew his attention to the couple at the foot of the bed. Only he could no longer see both of them clearly. He could only see the male, who was standing with his pants down in front of the woman, who was now sucking his cock. Oh yeah, the room was getting friendlier by the second. "Ali, look over there. You got him so turned on, baby, that he had to have relief."

"Wasn't me," she denied as she watched the man saw his cock in and out of his date's mouth.

"Oh, I bet it was. Shall I ask him?"

"No," she replied quickly, shooting Jonas a pleading look.

"You're right. I have more important things to do." Such as get his fingers inside her juicy pussy again. With a final tug, Jonas bunched her skirt up at her hips, exposing her sex to the watchful room. Even though everyone was busy doing their own thing, they were also paying attention to Jonas and Ali. The heady high he received from this display was exhilarating and exciting in ways he could never explain.

Ali had no idea how much control he was exhibiting right now. Jonas was fighting everything in him not to push her to her knees and sink his cock deep inside her hot sex while everyone watched her take him like the beast he was. Despite how much he wanted to, though, he wouldn't. He was going to take things slow if it killed him. And from the killer erection he was sporting like a cheap toupee, Jonas knew there was a big chance that it just might. But Ali was worth it. She was worth everything to him.

Taking a deep breath to calm his raging hormones, Jonas released his death grip on her skirt and flattened his palms on the tops of her thighs. "Spread your legs, Alicat," he whispered into her ear.

Ali froze rock solid as he slid his hands up and down her tense thighs. Her breathing was coming in short little puffs now, and Jonas couldn't help but wonder if he was going to have perform CPR before the evening was over. He hoped not, since there were so many more interesting things he'd rather do with his mouth.

"I said spread them." He didn't enjoy telling her twice, but he was willing to make concessions under the circumstances. But she was testing his patience and his willpower. "Now."

The *now* got him immediate results as Ali quickly spread her legs a few feet apart, giving him access to her sweet cunt. "Good girl." His fingers brushed lightly across her inner thighs, causing her to tremble at his touch. Her simple response sent his blood to boiling. Patience be damned, Jonas went in for the kill, moving his hand up her splayed thighs to her pussy, which to his immense satisfaction, was sopping wet.

Hungry for her now more than ever, he slid his fingers over her cream-coated lips, then spread them so he could touch her clit and slick slit. "Oh yeah, Alicat. Look how wet you are for me. You're soaked."

"I know." Embarrassment laced her words, much to his dismay.

"Oh no, baby." Jonas moved his fingertips in circular motions over her aroused clit before moving them to her welcoming, tight hole. He slid two fingers deep inside her hot sex, fucking her with short, sharp strokes. "Never be ashamed of this, baby. Never. This is my juicy pussy, and I love how slippery you get for me. Can't wait to coat my cock with your essence as I sink deep in you." He punctuated his words with deep thrusts, fucking her with his fingers much as he planned on doing later with his cock. She was his. There was no going back now.

Jonas watched Ali as he touched her. He wanted to make sure he saw her every expression so he could learn just where to touch her to bring her ultimate pleasure. Nothing was more important to him than making sure she enjoyed his touch. Nothing.

When he brushed his thumb against her clit, she moaned and bit down on her bottom lip. *Hmm. She liked.* But just to make sure, he did it again. And again. And again, strumming his thumb over her love button as he imagined it was his tongue not his fingers playing her pussy as if it were a grand piano.

"Ohhhh..." Ali's knees buckled, and he had to quickly wrap his arm around her waist to steady her. "I...I...can't..."

"You can and you will." There was no way in hell he was going to let her back down now. "Just relax, baby."

"Ea-easier said than done."

He was sure it was, but it didn't mean he was going to stop touching her or talking to her. "Don't concentrate on my fingers. Concentrate on them." He gestured with his head to the threesome now in the midst of a *Kama Sutra*-type position. "Look how he's fucking her in the ass while the other guy eats her pussy and she sucks his cock. What do you think, Alicat? Think you maybe want to try that one day." Jonas

would orchestrate any fantasy she had in order to please her. "You want to get fucked by two guys at once?"

"I...I..."

Jonas could tell she was right on the verge of coming. Her sweet, tight pussy was clutching at his fingers as if they were a lifeline, but he wouldn't let her go over yet. No. He needed her to want the release so bad she could taste it. Then and only then would he lay her down and give them both what they so desperately needed. Each other.

"What about them?" he asked, turning their bodies a bit so she could see the couple going at it doggy-style just a few feet from them. Their clothes were now completely gone, and the man was pounding into his date with fierce, long strokes. "Do you want me to take you like that, Alicat? Fuck you on the floor for all to see?"

"Yes." Her voice was almost pleading. "God, yes."

"In front of all these people?" He needed to make sure she was making a rational, if not slightly insane, choice.

"Yes. Fuck me while they watch."

Her dirty words sent a lightning bolt of desire straight to his soul. He hadn't even prompted her to say it, but she did, and Jonas knew it wasn't just for his pleasure. Though the fact she had uttered *fuck* pleased him as nothing else had. And if his naughty little Alicat wanted him to take her, who was he to deny her, or himself, any longer.

Chapter Seven

“Right here. Right now.”

“Yes.” How much clearer did she have to be? She was so close to coming, and he wanted specifics. The man was mad. “Right here. Right now.”

“Your wish is my command.” Much to Ali’s dismay, Jonas removed his fingers from her aching pussy. Even though she said right now, she would have been kind enough to grant him a few more minutes to get her off before they made with the loving. She was going to have to make sure from now on she was a bit more careful with her wording. “This way, Alicat.”

“Kay.” Ali wasn’t very steady on her feet, but knowing what lay ahead of her gave her the ability to fly if necessary.

Finally, after all this wasted time, Jonas was going to take her. No, not take her like some Regency pure maiden, but fuck her, and hopefully fuck her good. It was time for her to put aside her aversion to dirty words, especially now that she knew just how much enjoyment Jonas took from her saying such things. And if she were truthful with herself, Ali would have to admit she even found something exciting about being lewd with him. It was freeing and arousing all at the same time.

With his hands on her hips to guide her, Jonas led Ali to the foot of the bed and ordered her to lie next to the couple making love on the floor. He positioned her so her head was near the action, enabling Ali to watch as the man powered into his moaning partner.

The new spot suited her just fine. Even though she was ready for Jonas to fill her, she didn't want to miss out on a single moment of what was going on. What started as a learning venture to discover more about what made Jonas tick turned into an educational self-journey instead. She was no longer watching for Jonas's sake. She was watching for her own, and what she saw she liked.

The female half of the couple fucking next to them was facing away from Ali's probing gaze, but not the man. Not only was he in a position for Ali to watch him, he was also doing some looking of his own. As he continued to piston deeply into the woman under him, his gaze raked over Ali's exposed body. She knew she should be embarrassed to have this other man staring at her so blatantly, but she wasn't. Instead she was beginning to understand the appeal Jonas alluded to. Being watched was quite a turn-on. It made her not only feel very desirable, but also sexy, something Ali had never felt much of in her life.

She was wanted, and not just by Jonas. It was a heady feeling for sure.

Jonas's chuckle had her swinging her attention back toward him. He was lording over her, fully dressed, staring at her as she lay with both her skirt shirt pulled up, on the floor before him. "You enjoy how much he's salivating over you, don't you?"

"There's some...attraction."

Arching a brow, Jonas lowered himself to his knees. He pushed her legs apart and lay forward, resting the weight of his body on his forearms so he was staring down at her, but not squishing her with his weight. The best part about his position was the way his erection fit in the wet groove of her overheated sex. "What did I say about lying?"

Crap. Stupid rules. "Not to."

"Then answer me again." Jonas pressed forward, pushing his hard shaft against her more-than-ready pussy. "Do you like how much he's salivating over you?"

"Yes. I like that he wants me."

"That he wants to fuck you?"

"Yes. That he wants to fuck me."

"Do you like the way his dick looks sinking into her hot cunt?"

"Yes, but..."

"But what?"

"But I wish it was them watching you fuck me instead."

"Hmmm...let's see if I can give them something to watch." Jonas pressed a quick kiss against her lips, then moved down her body, pausing at her breasts to lick each nipple before continuing on to the apex of her thighs. When he was settled, he ran his fingers against the damp curls covering her lips and then leaned forward and inhaled deeply. "Damn baby, you smell good," was all he said before he buried his face between her thighs.

Ali cried out and bucked against him helplessly. He'd moved so fast, she hadn't been expecting it, but she welcomed him and his talented tongue wholeheartedly. Jonas's stubbly cheeks rubbed against her tender inner thighs as he stroked his tongue over her sensitive clit.

"Oh God, Jonas!" There was nothing gentle about the way he went at her, filling his mouth with her clit as he filled her pussy with his fingers.

Losing control on her thin grip of sanity, she buried her hands in his thick hair and pulled him closer to her aching sex. Her reaction seemed to suit him just fine. He delved his tongue deeper into her heated core. Ali moaned as he penetrated her, pressing as far as he could into her pussy, tongue fucking her until she couldn't catch her breath.

Just as she began to lose herself in the moment, Jonas pulled back and brought her back to earth. *What the* — "Jonas." Ali panted through parched lips. "Don't stop."

"Then do something for me."

Right now she would gladly walk on water for just one more second with his mouth. "What?"

"Fuck my face while I eat your pussy. Show me how much you want me."

That she could do and she would have told him so if she could get her mouth to work. Instead she nodded, which, by the way Jonas spread her nether lips wide and slid two fingers deep inside her once more, was good enough. There was nothing gentle about the way he fingered her this time, filling her, fucking her until she thought she'd go mad from the pleasure of it all.

"So close. So close." Closing her eyes, she squeezed her nipples and undulated her hips toward him, fucking his face as he requested. She wanted, needing him to make her come. Whimpering, she dug her nails into her breasts, the sharp pain only adding to her pleasure as he fingered her rapidly and laved her clit.

Just when she thought she couldn't take a second more, she came. Twisting her head from side to side, she chanted his name as he continued to tongue fuck her, riding her orgasm out with his face between her thighs. Her wild, back-bowing, head-dizzying orgasm nearly bucked him off her, but Jonas stayed faithful to the cause, lapping at her pussy until she was too weak to even murmur his name coherently.

Jonas, on the other hand, had no problem moving. He sidled up and over her until she was staring up into his lust-filled gaze. Where she was feeling all lethargic and good, he looked as tense and unsatisfied as could be. "I need you."

"I'm here." Ali brought her hands up to his sides and held his tightly coiled body against her.

"I want to touch you. Rub my cock against you."

"Do it. Touch me. Or better yet...let me touch you. Let me..." Ali took a deep breath, working up the nerve to ask for something she wanted. "Let me suck you."

Jonas let out a shaky laugh. "Don't think so, baby. I'd come in less than a second."

He said that as if it were a bad thing. "I don't mind."

"But I do." Jonas sat, turned his head to the side, and licked her left nipple with his tongue. He nibbled on the peak until it was hard enough to cut glass before turning his attention and his face to the right one. "Do you know what I've been dying to do?" He lapped at her turgid tip for a few seconds before speaking again. "Since the day you first wore that peach V-cut shirt to work."

Right, as if she could even remember a peach shirt at the moment. "What shirt?"

"The one that showed off your breasts to anyone within viewing distance."

She still had no idea what he was talking about, but she wanted to see where this story was going. "No."

"The same thing I wanted to do last night. Rip your shirt off and bury my cock between your big, full breasts." He lowered his lips over her nipple and sucked it completely into his mouth, nipping gently with his teeth as she quaked with desire.

How in the world could she say no to a request followed up with a move such as that? She couldn't. "Do it, Jonas. Fuck my breasts."

"Hmm..." He released her nipple with a *plop*. "Then press your breasts together. I want to slide my cock between them."

Aroused by the mere idea of him fucking her breasts, she moved her hands to her chest and did as he said. She toyed with her nipples as she watched him rise and make quick work of removing his shoes and clothing. Just as she'd imagined, Jonas had a body to die for. He was muscular and sexy as all hell. Through lust-filled eyes, Ali stared at his large, thick cock and trembled inside. Soon, and very soon, she would have him in her, and she couldn't wait.

After dumping his clothes to the side, Jonas came back to her and lowered himself to his knees, directly over her breasts. He eased back on his heels, then leaned forward with his hands above her head and slid his cock into the cavern she made for him.

The room filled with loud groaning moans, but all Ali's attention was fixated on Jonas and the smooth motion he was making as he sawed his dick back and forth between the space she afforded him. The look of rapture on his face was as breathtaking as the little moans he made while fucking her breasts. Finally she found a reason outside of feeding infants and wet T-shirt contests for her breasts.

"Fuck, baby. Ohh."

She squeezed her nipples between her fingers as she held on tight to her breasts. This shouldn't feel good to her, but she'd be damned if she wasn't becoming excited all over again watching his pale cock pump in and out of the valley of her breasts.

His cock was leaking precum, making the crown of his shaft shimmer and shine. Licking her lips, Ali hungered to taste him. Before she could work up the nerve to do so, though, Jonas groaned and moved back, freeing his cock from the haven of her breasts.

"Wait... Why did you stop?"

"Because I don't want to come just yet."

"Yet?"

"Yes." Jonas moved back into position above her, his now-uncovered cock resting against her pussy. With just one plunge he could fill her and put them both out of their misery. "I want to fuck you so bad, I can hardly see straight."

Never before had she heard sweeter words. "Then do it, Jonas. Fuck me. Make me yours."

"I will. But first..."

"Yes?"

"Tell me something. Truthfully."

"Anything." Anything to get him inside her where he belonged.

"Are you still a virgin?"

Anything but that. "Jonas." Ali didn't want to lie, but she knew the truth would get her sent on the first bus heading out of Dodge. "Just make love to me."

"Answer my question first."

From the steadfast way he stared at her, Ali knew he wouldn't give in without getting what he wanted first. "Yes."

Jonas closed his eyes tightly and rolled off her. "Fuck."

And with that one word, Ali knew all hope was lost.

Never before had things he wanted this badly gone right for him, so Jonas didn't know why he expected this to be any different. A virgin. She was still a fucking virgin, and he'd been seconds away from popping her cherry like it was the weasel, in a room full of people. Could he be more of a colossal fucktard? No. He couldn't.

Screw being a gentleman. He'd lost that medal about the time he started banging her boobs. Now he was just a royal dick, someone even he didn't want to face in the mirror in the morning. What kind of sick bastard took a woman's virginity a few feet away from a couple fucking doggy-style on the floor? Hell, he wasn't even going to include the mad kinkiness going on above them on the bed.

To do that to Ali was beyond low. She was better than that. She deserved rose petals, soft music, and wine, the cheesy shit women wrote journal entries about. And what did he give her? An orgasm on the floor.

If he were limber enough, he'd kick his own ass for this monstrosity.

"Fuck!" he cursed again as he sat up and looked around the now seemingly crowded room. From the lack of noise, and limp and sated bodies lying about, Jonas could tell everyone was spent, leaving him the sole flagpole saluter in the room.

And then there was Ali. Sweet, sweet Ali, who had tasted heavenly on his lips and now watched him through heavy-lidded eyes. Her beautiful breasts were still bare, and her legs wide open, giving him an eagle-eye view of her wet, tempting slit.

Good Lord, just staring down at her sweet, flowery opening was giving him a mad case of the shakes. He was so tied up in knots that if he got a whiff of dust and sneezed, he'd come like a callow youth and embarrass himself.

How pathetic. Groaning, he stood and stomped over to where he'd flung his clothes during his brief lapse of judgment, picked up his jeans, and began to put them on. Maybe if he put his cock away, his brain would start working once more. This whole evening was a bust. What had started out as him trying to teach Ali a lesson, had ended up in him getting schooled instead.

Maybe he'd been right the first time when he put up a wall between them. Lord knows trying to show her his sexual preferences in hopes of scaring her away hadn't gone as planned. It probably didn't help that instead of using his words to convince her to back away from him, he let his fingers and tongue do the talking for him. Surprisingly, they didn't quite give the right message.

"Jonas?"

"Get dressed, Ali. Now." His tone was a whole lot more gruff than he intended, but he was working with all his blood pooled in one particular area. A little bit of leeway had to be given.

"No."

Jonas halted in the midst of shoving his protesting cock into the uncomfortable denim, sans underwear, and glanced over his shoulder at a defiant-looking Ali. She couldn't have just said what he thought she did. "What did you say?"

"I said no. In fact" — Ali rose to her feet and lifted her chin, meeting his startled gazed head-on — "I think I might need to get a bit more comfortable."

Jonas watched in stunned disbelief as Ali grabbed the bottom of her shirt and pulled it over her head, then quickly went to work on her skirt, until that too was just a memory. To his irritation, he noted he wasn't the only one watching her undress. So were the other men in the room. Normally, Jonas enjoyed showing his women off, but there was nothing normal about this situation. "Get out."

Ali looked up from the tangled mess that was her bra. "Are you kicking me out for stripping?"

"I'm not talking to you." He must really be the biggest prick on earth if she thought he'd ever order her from the room like that. "I'm talking to them." He jerked his head toward the others in the room. "Get your clothes and get out."

His less-than-hospitable action surely wasn't winning him friends and influencing people, but right now, he really didn't care. He watched through narrowed eyes while his roused guests gathered their belongings and skulked out of the room. By the time they cleared out, his arousal had waned and he was able to right his pants. Ali, on the other hand, was no closer to getting dressed than she had been two seconds ago. In fact, the only things she was wearing now were sandals and a frown.

"You are being stupid."

He couldn't disagree with her there. "Could you please put your clothes back on so we can talk?"

"I have to be dressed for you to dump me? Again, I might add. This time, though, I think I'm going to save you the trouble. I don't think we should see each other anymore."

"No one is dumping anyone." He was stupid, he was ruled by his dick, but he wasn't going to make the same mistake he'd made the last time.

"Says who?"

"Says me. Now put your goddamn clothes back on." He needed her dressed so he could think coherently.

"Don't curse at me."

"You didn't mind me swearing earlier."

"That was different." She crossed her arms, brow furrowed, looking cute as hell.

"How?"

Confusion and embarrassment flashed over her features as she struggled to control her disconcertment. "Do-don't go changing the subject."

He couldn't help it; he chuckled. She was just so cute when she became all flustered. "Are you seriously going to start getting shy about dirty talk when you're standing in front of me like a wet dream?"

"Where's my shirt?"

"Oh, now you want to put your clothes on. I think you just enjoy doing the opposite of what I say."

"And I think you're a stubborn jackass." Ali bent over and snatched her shirt off the floor.

"I agree."

"Finally, at least something we can both agree on."

"You started it." He couldn't help but point out as he watched her struggle to put her shirt on. "I just wanted you to be less nude."

"Fine," she shot back when her head cleared the opening. "I'm getting dressed, and then I'm going home."

"The hell you are."

"I don't get you." Ali tossed her hands in the air, obviously as frustrated as he was. "You don't want me here, but you don't want me to leave. You don't want me having sex with other people, but you don't want me to be a virgin either. Make up your freaking mind. You're driving me insane."

Jonas ran a hand through his hair. "I know, and I'm sorry. It's just..." How the hell could he explain himself? He knew he was being unreasonable.

"You know what? I'm sick and tired of trying to figure you out. It's just too hard."

He didn't like the sound of that one bit. No matter what he'd done in the past, Ali had always fought for him. The idea she was ready to give up didn't sit well with him at all. "I know that I'm difficult."

"Quantum physics is difficult. You're impossible."

"And," he continued on as if she hadn't spoken, "I know that I'm blowing hot and cold here, but I'm not trying to. Honestly. I just want to do the right thing where you're concerned. And popping your cherry on the floor while a bunch of horny guys look on just isn't it."

"What is your fascination with my virginity? It's not that big of a deal."

"Of course it is. You wouldn't be holding on to it if it weren't."

Ali sighed heavily. "Did it ever occur to you I haven't had sex because I just haven't wanted to before you? I assure you if I were waiting around for Mr. Right, I wouldn't be trying to sleep with you. This pedestal you have me on is going to give me a nosebleed, it's so freaking high. I'm not perfect. I'm not saintly. I'm just a woman who fell in love with the wrong guy."

"Love." Jonas stared at her in shock. "You love me?"

"Trust me, I'd prefer not to. If I could change it, I would. You're difficult, stubborn, and a pain in my behind."

"And yet you still love me." She loved him even after everything he'd shown her tonight. No. She had to be kidding. There was no way in hell she really felt about him the way he felt about her. "You. Are in love...with...me?"

"Don't go rubbing it in my face." Ali scowled at him. "And just for the record, I could have had sex a million times."

"Then why didn't you?" Because for the life of him, he couldn't understand that at all. She was kind, beautiful, wonderful in every sense of the word, and sexy to boot. It didn't make any damned sense she was still pure. Or at least purish.

"My virginity is my gift to give. I choose to give it to you, but if you don't want it, then I'll just rewrap it and regift it to someone who can appreciate it and me."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"That this is my body and my decision, and if you're not going to sleep with me, I assure you somebody will." Ali stepped toward him with sheer determination brimming in her eyes. His little Alicat was in rare form, and it excited the hell out of him. "I refuse to spend one more night alone, and I am not going home a virgin."

"Honey, you ain't ever lied." Jonas bent over, cupped his hands behind her thighs, and flipped her over his shoulders, headfirst. Her loud gasp of outrage meant not a good goddamn to him. It was too late. She'd told him she loved him. She'd kissed her freedom good-bye. He was keeping her. For life. "You're not going home at all."

Chapter Eight

To Ali's disbelief, Jonas strolled out of the bedroom while holding her over his shoulder like a rag doll. She was no lightweight, but by the way he was seamlessly walking through the hallway, one would never know. He held her steady, with a hand on her bare behind, and headed straight into the party as if nothing was amiss.

"Put me down now," she bellowed at the top of her lungs as she pounded her fists on his lower back. "I'm not joking, Jonas."

"Not going to happen, Alicat. Now calm down before I warm this delicious bare ass of yours."

Bare. Doggone it, why didn't she get dressed sooner. Or at least arm wrestle him for her panties before she decided to take a stand. Then at least she'd be not only right, but less breezy.

Gasps from the crowd as he stormed through the room were quickly followed by loud, boisterous laughter. Blood rushed to Ali's head, not only from the downward dog position she was in, but also from the acute embarrassment she was feeling.

When she got down, she was going to kill him with her bare hands.

Ali gripped the sides of his jeans like a lifeline, worried that over the course of the argument she might have pissed him off a wee bit. Once again she'd let her mouth run

wild and possibly get her into trouble. But she couldn't help it. His knight-in-rusty-armor routine was getting old. Even after everything they went through tonight, he was still trying to call all the shots. If there was one thing she was going to teach him tonight, it was that there was no *I* in couple.

Stinky, stubborn, son of a bi—

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," Finn's cheerful voice called out, halting them in midstride. "What do we have here?"

Finally, reinforcements. Arching up, Ali twisted and turned, trying her best to seek out aid. "Finn...help m—"

A sharp smack silenced her and sent her flopping back down on Jonas's back. "Pipe down, Ali. Finn."

"Yeah, mate?"

"Get out of my way and stop looking at my woman's ass."

"I'll get out of your way, but there's no way I'm going to avert my gaze, mate."

"Good-bye, Finn." Jonas began walking again, apparently not halted at all by her former friend.

That was it! He was just going to do what Jonas said? No, couldn't be.

"Bye, Jonas. Have fun."

Fun! Infuriated, Ali pushed her torso up and looked at Finn, who was standing next to Wyatt, as they passed. Both men had huge grins on their faces.

"Traitors," she cried out, not caring if it earned her another smack from Jonas, which it promptly did. To add insult to injury, Finn had the nerve to wave at her.

Ohhh, he was going down at the very next opportunity afforded her. Along with the bully who held her hostage caveman-style as he swept right through the living room, moving at the pace of a man on a mission.

Despite the many voices that called out to him, Jonas didn't stop until they cleared the living room and the hallway, and then only long enough to open a door and walk

inside a dark room. Without closing the door, he marched to the center of the room, then halted and flipped her off his shoulder onto a mattress, flat on her back.

"Ow," she grumbled, despite the jolt not hurting in the slightest. Frowning, she sat up and watched with irritation as Jonas stormed over to the door, slammed it shut, and locked it. The sound of the catch clicking was like a wake-up call to the stunned woman. "This is so illegal."

"What are you going to do, sue me?"

"Maybe."

"Then you might as well have me arrested for stealing your virginity too."

Ali gasped. Was he crazy? Fueled by her anger, Ali rose to her knees and slammed her hands down on her hips. "If you think I'm going to have sex with you now, then you're dead wrong."

"I don't think it." Jonas unbuttoned his pants and shoved them down his hips. "I know it."

"Then you're as deluded as you are —"

"Sexy. Charming. Irresistible." Jonas walked toward her with his erection bobbing and a wide smile on his face.

For a split second, her attention diverted from the conversation at hand to the naked body coming toward her at a slow, sexy pace. Then common sense kicked in and reminded her just whose body it was, and she became infuriated all over again. "Crazy. I was going to say crazy."

"The only thing I'm crazy about is you."

Oh no. She wasn't falling for his malarkey so easily this time. She was primed and ready for a fight. This time it would be he who did the chasing, not her. Ali had laid her heart on the line tonight, and so far it seemed as if it was all for naught. "If you think I want you now —"

"I don't think it. I know it."

"Stop interrupting me," she said through gritted teeth.

"Then stop saying things you don't really mean."

"I'm not."

"Really? Then tell me, Alicat." Jonas moved to the bed, not stopping until his legs were pressed against the mattress and he was standing directly in front of her. "If you don't want me, why are your nipples poking through your shirt as if someone has just doused your shirt with ice-cold water?"

"It's cold in here," she lied, crossing her arms over her breasts. "Besides, Jonas, it doesn't mean anything. I'm done with you and your multiple personalities."

"You'll never be done with me. Just like I'll never be done with you. Hell, don't you think I've tried to walk away from you? Tried to erase you from my soul?"

As much as she wanted to believe him, Ali couldn't forget or forgive his actions in the last few minutes so easily. "You just want me because I said you couldn't have me. I actually can't believe my mother was right about men. They really do like women who play hard to get."

"No, honey, I don't like women who play hard to get. I just like the ones who get me hard, and that, sweet thing, is you."

"Big whoop." Ali rolled her eyes. "Everything gets you hard. Admit it. You just want to have sex with me. All of a sudden popping my cherry seems like a good idea when held up against the chance I might sleep with someone else."

The cocky grin Jonas had been sporting just seconds ago shifted into a frown. "I don't want just your virginity. I want your heart. Fuck that regifting shit. I'm not letting you go, Ali. I can't. I love you too damn much to let you walk away now."

All these varying emotions were conflicting within her. She wanted to forgive him, while at the same time she wanted him to suffer. Why couldn't she just be normal and fall in love with a guy who was seminormal? No, she had to pick someone who

couldn't make up his mind from one minute to the next, and who, unfortunately, she couldn't live without.

"Did you hear me, Alicat? I love you."

She wanted so badly to believe him, but still his past behavior was haunting her. "'Love me,' says the man who just pulled away from me five minutes ago."

"I wasn't pulling away, Ali. I just wanted to talk. Like we're doing now, but you wouldn't listen."

"That's because you were talking crazy with all your 'get dressed' and 'your virginity is sacred and holy' crap."

Jonas's lips twitched. "I'm pretty sure I didn't say that last part."

"No, you just kidnapped and paraded me across the house, showing my butt to the entire world."

"In my defense, it's a really cute butt."

She should be furious, but damn it, every time he said something like that she just wanted to smile. And besides, she was willing to get down and dirty with him in a room full of other people. Wasn't she being a bit hypocritical to berate him for showcasing her assets?

Oh crap. She was forgiving him. She wasn't even trying to, but it was happening before her very eyes.

"And it was the only thing I could think of. You were going to walk away from me. I couldn't let that happen. I need you too much to just let you go. You may not believe me, Ali, but I love you, and I'll do anything to win your heart. Even" — Jonas smiled, his eyes twinkling with mirth — "take your virginity, if need be."

"Gee, don't do me any favors."

"Then I'll do myself one instead." His earlier humor was now wiped from his face, replaced by sincerity. "Forgive me, Ali, and let me make it all up to you."

"Why can't this" — she waved her hand between them — "just make sense?"

"I never said I made sense."

"Good thing," she grumbled, because he would have been lying through his teeth.

"But I can say I love you. That I think I always did. You may not agree with me pushing you away, but please know I only did so with the purest of intentions at heart."

"You, pure? No wonder you messed it up."

"That wasn't a 'no, I won't forgive you.'"

"It should be."

"But it wasn't." Jonas climbed on the bed and made his way over to her until they were mere inches away from one another. "I love you, Ali."

"You keep saying that."

"And I'll keep on saying it until you believe me."

Well, since he put it that way. "Then how about one more time? Just so it can sink in."

"I." Jonas wrapped his hand around the back of her neck, pulling her close. "Love." Then, bending his head, he brushed his lips across hers. "You."

"I love you too, you big lug. Sometimes I wish I didn't, but I do."

"I can pretty much promise you, there will be many occasions in the future you're going to wish that. But I also promise you, when it does happen, I'm going to work my ass off to make you remember why you do love me."

Ali guessed that was all she could ask for. She supposed she could make him go round and round until her pride was properly soothed, or she could stop playing games and admit what they both knew. She loved him, and she wanted to be with him forever. Jonas wasn't perfect, but then again, neither was she. She guessed they'd just have to be perfect for one another.

"I'm going to hold you to it." Wrapping her arms around his waist, she pulled him to her and laid her head against his chest. She was home. At last.

"Ali."

Content and happy with her world, she smiled and murmured, "Yes?"

"Can I unwrap my gift now?"

Laughing, Ali pulled back and looked into Jonas's hopeful eyes. "Have you been a good boy?"

"No."

"That's exactly what I was hoping to hear."

"I want this shirt off." Jonas began to tug at her shirt. "New rule. When it's just us, you're to be topless at all times."

"Just when we're alone?" Ali held her hands up above her head like a good little girl.

"Good point" —he grinned, freeing her breasts to his hungry eyes— "around others is acceptable, but especially when were alone."

"Good rule."

"I'm glad you approve." Jonas cupped his hands beneath her thighs and pulled her against him. "Wrap your legs around my waist," he ordered, desperate to have her underneath him.

Moaning, Ali complied, which enabled him to slowly lower her to the bed, until he was leaning over her and she was lying beneath him. "Have I told you lately that I love you?"

"No. I don't think you have at all." Her mouth curved up at the corners.

"Then let me say once more —"

She quickly interrupted. "Just once?"

"I love you, Ali." Just saying the words had his heart tightening. To be able to say those words, aloud, made him happier than he'd ever been in his life.

"Jonas, my love."

"Yes?"

"Enough talking. Put your mouth to good use." When she ordered him around like this, he had no trouble complying.

"Anything you say, Alicat." Grinning, Jonas pulled away and did just that.

Before getting started on his mission of pleasure, Jonas reached over to his nightstand and pulled out a condom from the top drawer. He placed it next to her thigh and then took his time exploring her body. He wanted to learn exactly what she liked, what she loved, and what drove her out of her mind with pleasure. Slowly, he made his way down her body, pausing at her breasts for a good ten minutes each, to tongue and tug at her tightly corked nipples. By the time he moved away from her tempting peaks, her breasts bore the faint marks of his teeth.

Just to be thorough, he lapped at her navel before moving to what was fast becoming his favorite part of her body. Her pussy. He needed to stretch her out and prepare her for his cock, but first he was going to taste her once more.

There was nothing he wanted to do more than thrust his shaft as deep and hard as he could into her warm, wet pussy. But he restrained himself. This moment wasn't about him. It wasn't even about them; it was about her. And Jonas was going to do everything in his power to make this a night to remember.

Inhaling deeply, he let the scent of her excitement drown his senses. "Damn, baby, you smell good." Even though he'd already had a taste of sweet pussy, there was no such thing as too much of a good thing. Parting her damp folds, he bared her swollen clit to his heated gaze, then leaned forward and lapped at it with his tongue.

Her moans filled the room as she moved against his tongue. He took her sounds as her wordless consent to pleasure her more, so he did. Using his other hand, Jonas slid two of his fingers into her hot, tight pussy, pushing against her walls as he prepared her the best way he knew how. His best was obviously good enough for her, because she grew increasingly louder, undulating her hips toward his thrusting fingers.

"Jonas. God...ohhh."

"Hmmm." He groaned as he raised his head and licked his lips to taste her essence. "If you could only see how wet your sexy pussy is. Fuck, it turns me on. You turn me on. I can't wait to sink my cock in you." Ali whimpered and arched her hips toward him wantonly. "You feel the same way, don't you, baby? You want my cock, don't you?"

"Yes. Please."

That was nowhere near good enough for him. "You know what I want to hear, Ali."

"I want you to fuck me. To fuck my pussy good."

"I will, trust me I will, but first I want you to do something for me."

"What?" She groaned, rocking against him as he pumped his fingers into her tight, wet sheath. "Anything."

"Anything?"

"Yes."

"Then come. Come for me now," he demanded. To his immense pleasure, she did just that, crying his name as she came. Her body rocked and shuddered in the aftermath of her release. Jonas didn't waste time watching the erotic show she was giving him; instead he sat up and ripped into the condom he'd stashed next to them, then sheathed his cock as rapidly as he could.

Once he was properly covered, he moved up her body and settled his jutting cock against her soaked sex. This was the do-or-die moment. She would never be more ready than she was now.

Looking into her dark eyes, heavy with desire, Jonas tried to soothe her. "Relax for me, Alicat. I'm going to go in hard and fast. Can't take the chance I won't pierce you on the first thrust." Grabbing his cock, Jonas pressed his condom-covered crown against her slick slit. "God, I don't want to hurt you, but I can't stop now."

"Don't stop, Jonas. Make me yours."

Jonas paused before sinking in, taking in this moment as the milestone that it was. He was seconds away from becoming her first man and quite possibly her last.

Surprisingly, the very thought he would be her one and only man aroused him more than anything he'd ever witnessed or experienced before. All the crap they'd gone through was worth it, when this was the outcome. Then, with that thought in mind, he thrust into her, past her hymen, and into the depths of her body.

Chapter Nine

A soft gasp escaped from Ali as Jonas sank balls-deep inside her. Eyes wide, she stared up into the tortured face of the man she loved and bit back the cry of pain that nearly escaped from her dry lips. If there was ever a time for her to man up, it was now, because if she even for a second let on she was in any sort of pain, Jonas would stop. And there was no way in hell she was about to let that happen. They'd come too far to turn back now.

"Ali, honey. Are you okay? Did I hurt you too bad?" Both his voice and eyes were filled with worry. Even though it was wrong, and so not the time, Ali wanted to laugh.

How could she explain to him the way she felt at this moment? Did it hurt? Yeah, but no more so than stubbing her toe or scraping her knee. It was nothing she couldn't handle, and nothing she wouldn't go through again to be here in his arms.

Unfortunately, while she'd been busy taking in the moment, Jonas was stressing out. "Ali?" He began to withdraw, which brought her back to the present.

Acting quickly, Ali wrapped her legs around his bottom and held him in tightly to her. "Jonas, I'm fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. The only one around here that will be hurting is you, if you even think of stopping now."

His earlier concern began to clear from his expression. "I wouldn't dream of it."

"Good." Finally they were on the same page. "Now fuck me, Jonas. Fuck me, please."

"I'm not sure what I like more," he said as he slowly pulled back. "You saying please" – then he powered forth, deep into her – "or you saying fuck."

Happy with his new train of thought, Ali loosened her grip on him and welcomed him into her body. "I'll say them both all night, if you promise not to stop."

"You have yourself a deal." With his gaze locked on her, Jonas fed every hard inch of his cock into her aching depths. "You're so tight. I can barely move."

Even though he said the words, he somehow found the strength to do just that. Over and over, he thrust into her body until she began to feel one with the mattress. Every plunge seemed deeper and more intense than the one before, until Ali was no longer conscious of where she began and he ended. They were one in the most elemental of ways. And it was as exciting as it was scary.

She had never felt so connected with another being before, and it wasn't just the sex. She knew that, despite his bluster, if she even hinted she wanted him to stop, Jonas would pull out so fast he'd leave tread marks. He cared for her pleasure and well-being more than he did his own. Which made being here with him now all the more special.

The soft, gooey emotions swelling up inside her were quickly replaced with a hot, needy, desperate side of her, thanks to the pounding Jonas began to give her. He'd allowed her body a little time to adjust to the feel and size of him, before he let loose and started to give her exactly what it was she'd asked for.

Talk about being careful about what you wish for. Ali was soon not too sure if she was up to handling Jonas's fierce nature. He went from gentle and loving to ardent and all-consuming in just a few seconds. Her body had been able to handle all the tenderness, but she wasn't too sure it could hold up to his fervent passion.

"I can't take it," she moaned, turning her head from side to side, trying to escape the intense pleasure threatening to drag her asunder. "It's too much."

"No," he growled amid a thrust. "It's not nearly enough. Take more of me, Ali. Take. More."

"Please, please..." Ali begged. She gripped his hips as tightly as she could with her thighs and dug her nails into his back, urging him on with her body as well as with her words. She wanted to come so badly, she could taste it.

She never knew it could be this good. She'd hoped, but she hadn't known, and now that she did, Ali didn't want him to ever stop fucking her. So she told him, over and over until her throat burned and her blood pounded.

And he rewarded every word, every moan, with another thrust of his cock. Without missing a stroke, Jonas slid his hand down between their bodies, stroking her clit as he powered inside her. The added pressure and pleasure were her ultimate undoing. Moaning, Ali closed her eyes and gave herself over to a power greater than herself. "Jonas...Jonas."

"That's it, Alicat. Fly for me, baby."

She didn't know about flying, but she damn near drowned from the tidal wave of pleasure raining down on her. Of course she'd had an orgasm before, but this was so much more. The feel of him filling her as her pussy pulsed around his thrusting cock multiplied her pleasure, making this release so much more powerful than any she'd ever experienced before.

Or so she thought, before Jonas continued his assault on her pleasure sensors. One orgasm per customer was apparently not his motto, because he never stopped moving within her.

He thrust, over and over, with sure and steady strokes as Ali held tightly and undulated beneath him. They had gone past lovemaking and straight into animalistic fucking territory, and she loved every second of it.

She wanted to show him how much he pleased her, tell him in the dirty manner he loved, but she couldn't even form one-syllable words. All she could do was moan and whimper her approval and hope he knew that meant "don't ever stop."

Just when Ali thought she was incapable of taking a second more of his soul-possessing loving, Jonas gripped her clit and pinched it between his fingers, sending her cascading once more into another earth-shattering orgasm.

This time, though, she wasn't alone in her release. Jonas growled low in his throat and pumped once, deep inside her, before groaning her name. Breathing harshly, he moved his hand from between her legs and rested all his weight on her for a few seconds, before pulling out of her and plopping down beside her on the bed.

Freed from the burden of his body, Ali closed her tender thighs and whimpered. She was sorer than she'd thought she'd be. During the sex, she'd felt as if she could handle anything; now she didn't think she could even walk to the bathroom. "Oh my —"

"God," Jonas finished for her, his breathing slowly returning to normal.

"Yeah." She had never felt so completely drained or happy in her life.

"I'll be right back." Ali turned her head and watched Jonas rise from the bed and disappear into what she could only assume was the bathroom. Despite being tired, she too rose and made her way over to the window to peer into the backyard at the party still taking place.

Smiling at the antics of the now mostly nude crowd swimming in the pool, she watched like the voyeur she'd just recently realized she was. It was surreal, this evening, this party, and she still didn't know how she felt about everything.

"Hey, up and about already?" Jonas sidled up behind her and pulled her back against him. "Maybe I didn't fuck you as good as I thought I did."

"Oh no." She laughed, leaning into him. "You did. I'm well and truly satiated."

"Bummer," he teased. "I was hoping for round two."

"Wow. You're going to have to give me a minute or a hundred and twenty."

"I guess I'll have to settle for bathing with you instead."

"Poor you."

"I know." Jonas stepped back and took her hand. "Let's go. I don't want the water to get cold."

He tugged, intent on her following, but Ali couldn't just yet. "Wait. I have a question for you."

"Okay." Jonas cocked his head in interest.

"Do you think less of me because I like all of this?"

"God no," he said harshly, stepping toward her once more. "I think the same thing about you that I always have. That you're pretty damn wonderful."

"If you thought I was pretty wonderful, then why did you push me away?"

Jonas sighed heavily. "Because I didn't think I could have you."

"I think I made it very clear you could have me from day one."

"I didn't think I could have you and *this* as well." Jonas nodded toward the scene on the other side of the window. "And I knew I couldn't give it up."

She could see why. "I don't want you to." In fact, she was looking forward to the next time he threw a party.

"So I see." He chuckled. "How in the world did I ever get so lucky?"

She felt exactly the same way. "Born under a good sign, I guess."

"Must have been." Jonas leaned forward and dropped a soft, sweet kiss on her lips, before pulling back and smiling down at her. "You ready for that bath?"

"Yes, please." Hand in hand, they walked into the dimly lit bathroom and over to the nearly filled bath. Using his hand as leverage, Ali stepped into the bubble-filled tub.

The tension she'd carried with her all but melted away as she sank down into the deep water. The temperature was just as she preferred it, just shy of scalding. Eyes closed, she leaned her head back against the cool tile and sighed.

"Enjoy, Alicat." Jonas grabbed a towel off the rack and wrapped it around his waist. "I'll be back."

Surprised he was leaving, she opened her eyes. "Where are you going? I thought you were going to bathe with me."

"I will, but first I need to check on our guests."

"Guests." Good Lord, she'd forgotten he had a house full of people. "Don't be long. And don't go partying without me."

"Never again," he promised with a wink, before slipping out the room. Closing her eyes once more, Ali drifted into a blissful sea of comfort, knowing now that Jonas was hers forever. She didn't soak alone for long; in just a few minutes Jonas was back in the room.

"Miss me?"

Ali opened her eyes and looked up at him, standing next to the tub once more. "Not at all," she lied with a smile.

"Right." He chuckled as he knelt down and stuck his hand into the water. To her extreme delight, he began to move his hand through the water and up her thigh.

"Did you lose something?" she teased as his fingers brushed across her folds.

"No, I think I've found something."

Ali spread her legs wider, giving him access to all he desired. "Oh really, and what would that be?"

"Home." Slowly, his fingers slid past her lips, until his thumb brushed gently against her clit, then down to her tender hole. "Are you sore?"

"A bit, but if you stop, I'll kill you."

"Give a woman some loving, and suddenly she thinks she's the boss."

"Jonas, love, I've always thought that."

"Excuse me?" he asked as he suddenly plunged two fingers deep inside her pussy.

Ali arched her hips and gasped. "Nothing. I said nothing."

"Try again, Alicat." Jonas pressed his thumb over her aroused button.

"You're the boss," she moaned, gripping the side of the tub as he began a steady yet firm circular caress on her clit. "You. Not me."

"That's what I thought." Jonas delved his fingers into her, spearing and spreading her with every thrust. "Just wanted to hear you admit it."

"I'll admit anything you want. Just don't stop."

"I wasn't planning on it." He used his fingers as if they were a substitute for his cock and plunged into her over and over again with sure and strong strokes. The tips of his fingers brushed across her G-spot, sending lightning bolts of pleasure racing throughout her.

It was painful.

It was pleasurable.

It was both all at the same time.

"Jonas..." His talented hand had her back bowing from the intense pleasure he was bestowing on her.

"You like this, Alicat? You like being at my mercy?"

She nodded, unable to speak. Ali was reaching for her climax, wanting it, wanting him.

"I want to see you come, Ali, to fly apart under my hand."

"Yes, yes."

He stepped up his sensual torture and began to thrust his fingers faster inside her, brushing her sensitive spot time and again. The bathwater swirled around her like an angry ocean in the middle of a typhoon.

With her back arched, her nipples were in plain view, a situation Jonas took full advantage of. He lowered his head, took one of her small buttoned tips, and gently bit down on it, sending Ali spiraling out of control.

She ground against his hand like a deranged wanton, crying out his name like never before when she came. Gasping for air, Ali released her death grip on the side of the tub and sat up, her head swimming, her mind a blur. Her release had been so intense her hair had unraveled and fallen loose onto her shoulders, the ends dipping into the water.

Before she had time to catch her breath, Jonas had risen and eased down in the water behind her, placing his long legs on the outsides of hers. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled Ali back against him. Trembling, she leaned on him, thankful for the solid support of his chest. "You know...you know what I've been thinking?" she asked once she was finally able to put words together again.

"That Jonas is a stud of massive proportions."

"Well, besides that." She chuckled.

Jonas laid his chin on her shoulder and pulled her in even tighter to him. "No, what?"

"That sometimes it's good to be bad."

"Baby, I promise you, you haven't seen anything yet."

"Hmmm..." she murmured, sinking into his embrace. That was one promise she was going to make sure he kept.

* * * * *

A month later

"Go ahead. You can say it. I'm wonderful."

Jonas glanced up at Finn, who was standing in front of the empty white chair to his left. His former-almost-replaced best friend was holding out a beer to Jonas with a shit-eating grin on his face. Sighing heavily, Jonas took the beer and gestured for Finn to join him. He knew this day was coming, and from the look in his friend's eyes, it was going to be as bad as Jonas had thought it would be. "I'm not saying you're wonderful."

"Okay, then." Finn sat next to him and took a hit from his own beer. "Then say, 'Yes, Finn, you were right.'"

"No."

"Come on," he wheedled, nudging Jonas in the side with his elbow. "You know it's true."

"Doesn't mean I have to say it." *Or like it for that matter.*

"Oh, but you should. It's only right."

Jonas frowned. "Since when do you care about right or wrong?"

"Since I'm in the right and you're in the wrong."

"I'm not doing it," Jonas insisted.

"Hey, looks as if we're right on time."

Jonas looked down at his watch, then back up at Lennon and his fiancée, Gillian. Standing, he gave the pretty African American woman a kiss on the cheek, before offering his hand to Lennon. "Yep, right on time. The show is going to start in a couple of minutes."

"Show?" Lennon asked with mock curiosity as he took the empty seat on the right. "Who's talking about a show?"

"You are, aren't you?" Jonas asked, all kinds of confused.

"Nope" – Lennon pulled Gillian down onto his lap and wrapped his arm around her waist – "I'm talking about you admitting to Finn he was right. That's why we came tonight. The show is just a bonus."

Great, everyone was in on it. The only way things could be worse was if Wyatt –

"Did I miss it? Did he say it?"

Fuck. Jonas didn't even bother turning around. What was the point? Everyone was plotting against him.

"No, not yet," Gillian answered for everyone, her own enjoyment evident in her cheerful voice. "But I'm sure it's going to happen any second now."

"Then you'd be wrong." Jonas peevishly took his seat, turned his attention back to the newly constructed stage in the far corner of his backyard, and counted to twenty silently.

The show was supposed to start any second now. He was sure he could outlast his friends until then.

"Aww, come on," Wyatt complained, seating himself next to Finn. "He's hardly ever right. It is the least you can do."

"No," Jonas said through clenched teeth, counting be damned. "The least I can do is to do nothing."

"But where is the fun in that?" Finn asked. Leaning forward, Finn put his hand on Jonas's chin. "Come on. Just say it. 'You were right.'" He moved his hand when he did so, making Jonas's mouth move as well.

"Get off me." Jonas elbowed Finn as hard as he could in the side, much to the amusement of their gathered friends. "I'm not saying shit."

"Poor sport," Finn grumbled, rubbing his side.

"Asshole," he fired back.

"Just because you don't say it, doesn't make it any less true."

"Then you don't need me to say it, do you?"

"No" – Finn smiled – "I just want you to."

"You know, Finn," Gillian interrupted. "Paybacks are a –"

"Bitch," Finn finished for her. "I know it, and I welcome it."

"We'll see about that." Jonas had every intention of making his nosy friend pay and in spades.

Before Finn or any of the others could comment, the announcer moved onto the stage, grabbing everyone's attention. "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the first annual Lennox's Lovely Ladies wet T-shirt contest." He paused long enough to let the audience cheer before moving on. "Can I have the lovely contestants join us on stage?"

Jonas watched with pride as Ali, contestant number two, bounded up the stairs to join the other women. When she spotted him sitting in the front row, she winked and waved, shimmying her barely concealed breasts at him.

"All righty then. Are you ladies ready to get soaked?" Without waiting for an answer, the announcer motioned for the first bucket. "Let's get this party started."

As the first woman stepped forward, Jonas leaned to the left, without taking his gaze off his first-place winner. "Finn?"

"Yes, mate."

"You were right," he said out the side of his mouth.

"I know, mate. I know."

Even though his friend was gracious about it, Jonas still had every intention of getting him back. It was only a matter of when and how. But until then, he was just going to be grateful for everything he had, especially for his woman strutting about on stage in her wet shirt.

 THE END 

Lena Matthews

Lena Matthews spends her days dreaming about handsome heroes and her nights with her own personal hero. Married to her college sweetheart, she is the proud mother of two children, three evil dogs, and a mess of ants that she can't seem to get rid of.

When not writing she can be found reading, watching movies, lifting up the cushions on the couch to look for batteries for the remote control, and plotting different ways to bring Buffy back on the air.