

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*



An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



www.ellorascave.com

Spanking Sara

ISBN 9781419922220

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Spanking Sara Copyright © 2009 Alyssa Brooks

Edited by Mary Moran

Photography and cover art by Les Byerley

Electronic book Publication May 2009

The terms Romantica® and Quickies® are registered trademarks of Ellora's Cave Publishing.

With the exception of quotes used in reviews, this book may not be reproduced or used in whole or in part by any means existing without written permission from the publisher, Ellora's Cave Publishing, Inc.® 1056 Home Avenue, Akron OH 44310-3502.

Warning: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. No part of this book may be scanned, uploaded or distributed via the Internet or any other means, electronic or print, without the publisher's permission. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000. (<http://www.fbi.gov/ipr/>). Please purchase only authorized electronic or print editions and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted material. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or places, events or locales is purely coincidental. The characters are productions of the author's imagination and used fictitiously.

SPANKING SARA

Alyssa Brooks

Trademarks Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction —

Cadillac CTS: General Motors Corporation

Freddy Krueger: Fourth New Line Heron Venture

Juicy Couture: LC Licensing, Inc. Corporation

Lands' End: Lands' End Direct Merchants, Inc. Corporation

Pepto-Bismol: Procter and Gamble Company

Spiderman: Marvel Characters, Inc.

Tylenol: Tylenol Company

Prologue

"You better have a damn good excuse!" Swinging open the door to her apartment, Sara Foster crossed her arms and assumed her best show-off annoyance. "What the hell happened to you?"

"Me? Are you serious?" The fuzzy image of her *former* best friend threw her hands in the air, waltzing into the living room as if she hadn't totally stood her up three nights prior, inadvertently thrusting Sara into a series of events that had her booting the door shut, prepared to pull hair. Tara's. Greg's. Her own.

"Yeah *you*. Where were you Friday night?"

"You know, I was almost arrested this weekend, no thanks to you." Said so matter-of-factly, Tara couldn't be kidding.

Well, shoot.

"Me?" Sara had gone from the offensive to defensive in under a second flat as she slid the atrocious glasses hanging around her neck on, thinking cake was in order. Chocolate.

There. Just the distraction they both needed.

"So come on, out with it." Tara plopped down on the couch and stuffed a pillow under her head, her legs propped straight up. "What's *your* excuse? Why didn't you answer my calls? Or feed Mrs. Logan's cats, as I begged? Poor babies were starved."

A little hard to do from Vegas. Oops.

Sara shrunk, making an immediate beeline for the kitchen where she commandeered her precious bottle of Tylenol and popped a few, tempted to dash under the breakfast bar and hide rather than admit the truth. That she was an idiot.

"I...er...was out of town?"

That was putting it mildly.

"Are you *asking* me?" Tara sat up so quickly it was a wonder she didn't get a head rush and fall over. "Oh no. What'd you do?"

"Well..." Trying to play it cool, Sara removed the lid from her glass cake dish and sliced two hearty servings of the bakery's special this week—Raspberry Cream Torte. "I...er...may have gotten married."

"No! You didn't!" A pillow hurled across the room, bouncing off a stool as Sara slid the torte onto plates. "Don't make me get up and slap you!"

"I've already smacked myself." And not hard enough either. She certainly didn't deserve this cake...but what was a wedding without cake? "Don't worry. I'll be divorced just as soon as I have the extra money."

Of one thing Sara knew, lawyers were expensive creatures.

Collapsing, Tara snickered. Tried to stifle her laughter by burrowing her face in the couch, only to chuckle louder.

"That was number four!" Tara gasped, shaking from amusement. "Oh my gosh...four and you're not even thirty-five."

Yeah, but her birthday was right around the corner. As if she needed a reminder of that either.

Stuffing a fork under each piece of cake, she carried the plates from the kitchen and set them on the coffee table, plopping in the easy chair catty-corner the couch. "I'm sorry about the cats."

"I'm sorry I missed your wedding." Tara giggled and shook her head in disbelief, claiming her slice of chocolate-raspberry heaven. "You're a certifiable mess, you know that?"

Yeah, she knew. Knew this marriage *was* her last. Knew she had a bad case of relationship ADHD—Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder—and a cure was beyond

her. Felt like a jerk about it too, but one thing was for sure – after this many marriages, she'd learned her lesson. Or lessons.

Husband number one had been her high school sweetheart. Believing that she was pregnant, she'd agreed to marry him. Turned out she wasn't knocked up, but since she was already engaged, she figured she better go through with it. Within a week the fighting erupted. He irritated the devil out of her. One day she found herself screaming how much she hated him and knew she had to get out. She just couldn't live with a man she didn't love.

Husband number two she did love, or so she'd convinced herself. But after a good half year, the magic wore off. Or maybe it'd never been there because all his damn questions made her feel as if there were a pillow over her face. To avoid the risk of suffocating, she'd thrown herself into work and he followed suit, coming home later and later then not at all. Sara knew she'd pushed him away...

Husband number three she married for no other reason than he was nice and responsible and she thought she ought to. Settle down, make babies and all that. Her parents never stopped nagging her to. But a few months into it, no matter the solid life he offered, Sara was certain if she had to spend one more Saturday night watching some dumb action movie, she'd start shooting guns.

And number four? Just what had she been thinking? Truth was, by now she knew the bottom line. She just couldn't live with men *at all*. Sure, they were fun at first but then...

She grew bored or frustrated or sobered up.

This weekend had been nothing but a mistake. A fun mistake, but a mistake all the same. She'd had a lot to drink, a lot of sex and a lot more to drink. Still had a damn headache to prove it.

And it would cost her a good grand for the lawyer unless she convinced her new husband to foot the bill.

So from here on out, call it her perennial New Year's resolution — she was swearing off dating. Or anything that went beyond a one-night stand. Sex was great and all, but not when she went and involved her heart, or worse, her brain. Or her money, not that she had a lot to throw around.

And even less now.

So Sara claimed her cake, pointing the chocolate-laced fork at Tara. "I could blame you, you know? I sat at Beat Town alone for hours waiting and you never showed."

"So you just hopped a plane to Vegas?"

Sara shrugged as if to say "What of it?" and took a bite of cake. "Well? Where were you?"

"I met this great guy...really great. His name is Ayden and he took me to his beach house and, Sara, I'm telling you, it was a fantasy. I think I'm falling in love."

To which Sara only snorted and stuffed more cake in her mouth. "I hate the beach."

"No, I'm serious." Tara set her plate down and leaned forward as if divulging the ultimate secret. "The sex was incredible. You'll never believe what we did."

"Oh, I can imagine..." Whether Tara realized it or not, when it came to her, Sara could believe just about anything. Tara was a detail-giver — details Sara often didn't need. Or want. "Just let me imagine."

Not to be thwarted, Tara leaned forward, and whispered, "We had a threesome with this guy."

"You *what*?" Now *that* Sara hadn't seen coming.

Tara nodded enthusiastically. "We did. Can you believe he spanked me with a belt while I sucked Ayden off and then —"

Oh good grief! Too much information! "Stop, girl! Put the brakes on!" Sara motioned to an invisible barricade. "There are lines here. Do not cross!"

Though she did suppose that made the standing-her-up thing sort of worth it. Except for the spanking part—who actually wanted to be spanked? With a belt? Ick. Only Tara.

Certainly not her. No way.

And as heat began to crawl over Sara's skin, it was time for a subject change. "So do I hear wedding bells?"

"Maybe..." Tara blushed, shrugging her shoulders. "One day..."

"With which lucky guy? Or both?"

"Very funny. Actually, I was thinking about setting you up with the threesome guy. His name is Brenden."

At the mention of a prospective date, Sara habitually whisked off her hated glasses.

But *no*. No way.

"He's really hot..." Tara picked up her empty plate, licking it clean.

"More?" Sara offered, her decision made. Hot or not, Sara replaced her glasses. "And, uh-uh, I'm not hooking up with some guy you hooked up with."

"No more cake. Can't afford the calories." Tara's plate clattered on the end table. "So why not? Brenden has a *huge*—"

"Tara," she interrupted, going back for seconds of her own—the day she watched her weight was the day she actually gained some. In that aspect, and that alone, she was a lucky gal. Too hyper. But relationships were a whole 'nother cup of tea. "I don't give a darn what huge whatever Brenden has. Bank account. House. Butt. It doesn't matter. You're like my sister. That's gross. Besides, no more men for me. I've sworn off them. Maybe entirely."

Just like exercise. But never cake.

"But I'm not having sex with him again..." Gee, did Tara have to make it sound as if she were *really* giving something up?

And she was. A second slice of great cake.

"Why not," Sara mumbled over a mouthful, "if he's so great?"

"Ayden and I...we're getting serious. I think this one's for real."

"Oh sure." It was Sara's turn to chuckle. "I've heard that before."

But this time it was for real. And almost a year later, when a finally divorced Sara happily agreed to serve as Tara's matron of honor, all mention of the threesome guy with the huge something or another had been completely forgotten.

Or so she thought.

Chapter One

Tell me you're dirty...

Brenden Morgan stood outside the XXX adult bookstore, the warm, salty ocean breeze tickling his nose, bold neon lights blinking in his face. Unrepentant, he replayed the words he'd so hastily murmured in his girlfriend's ear the night prior.

Tell me you're bad...

Brooke had promptly put him in his place, informing him if he wanted a slut to spank, she suggested he find a slut. She'd left him with a hard-on and a headache, probably expecting him to come crawling after her, begging forgiveness.

Well, he was sorry he'd offended her, but certainly not sorry they were over.

She was just like all the other women his mother constantly threw his direction—boring and bitchy. An upper-crust snob only after a wedding proposal. And Brenden, as one of Virginia's most eligible bachelors, had officially stomached his fair share of matchmaking and "Brookes".

In the aftermath of their breakup, he'd left the office three days earlier than planned, and here he was, at a random porn shop on Maryland's eastern shore, thinking he'd never needed a vacation so badly—even if it was a working one. Thinking maybe, in some weird way, Brooke was right.

A lady like her could never suit a man like him. He had desires, certain needs, and after that experience with Tara and Ayden... Fantasies had been awoken in him that wouldn't be quelled.

Brenden couldn't keep fooling himself. He needed an outlet.

Activating his car alarm, he pocketed his keys and headed inside, pushing past the glass door into the dim interior. After nodding to the smokestack clerk, he perused the

aisles, admiring sex toys of all sorts, though dildos and vibes didn't hold much interest. It was the lovecuffs and lubes, the blindfolds and butt plugs, the thought of restraining a woman, possibly entering her anally, that revved his engine.

Not that he ever really would do that last part—he was far too endowed for the act—but Brenden could fantasize. And fantasize he did, his fingers caressing over cold plastic packaging and skimming glossy cardboard.

All the while he thought of Tara.

He'd met her and Ayden last summer at a nightclub in Ocean City. He'd been in town, prospecting store locations, Mr. Business As Usual when stress had overtaken him. He'd decided to cut loose, have a drink or two. Maybe do some dancing.

Across the bar, Tara had spent almost an hour shooting him winks and sultry glances before flat-out approaching him—Ayden in tow. Bold as they please, the two had invited him to a threesome.

Tara had been wild, wagging that ass, inciting him to spank her—with his belt, at that. It'd been the first time he'd ever had the privilege of taking fine leather to a woman's smooth, soft behind. He'd been hooked.

One drink and some men were instant alcoholics, but Brenden? He was an asshole. Now, nearly a year after Tara, he boasted an extensive collection of quality belts and unwilling exes to prove it. And he was hardly the type to pick up a whore.

"Hey, bud," the store clerk called, "you need help finding something?"

Yeah, where was a good woman when a man needed one?

Resisting the urge to ask just that, Brenden answered the clerk with a curt, "Just browsing," and selected a box of specialty condoms with extra headroom, thinking of the anal beads he'd bypassed.

He longed to purchase them—but what for? Wealthy or not, he was a conservative man and he wasn't about to waste the money—he had no idea where to find another

Tara. Sexual, confident, naturally naughty Tara. A woman who was anything but a slut. In fact, as he'd learned, she even held a medical degree in heart research.

Weeks after their encounter, he'd looked her up, hoping for more, only to learn she and Ayden had starting seeing each other seriously. Disappointed and embarrassed, he'd rushed off the phone with her.

She'd called him back, repeatedly, and like a fool, he'd ignored her.

Every day, every *damn* day Brenden reconsidered calling them to see if another threesome would be of interest. It wasn't Tara he actually wanted, just her sweet, round ass and her willingness—no, make that eagerness to be taken wildly. To be bad. *Dirty*, even.

But contacting her always seemed so disheartening... He wanted his own eager woman, not someone else's.

Once again the phone beckoned. Brenden thought about all the incompatible women he'd dated, of all the unused belts hanging in his closet, the sleepless nights. Tara and Ayden. "Why not?" he muttered to himself. After all, he was on vacation.

Like some sort of weirdo, he'd long since programmed Tara in his cell. Before he could give the matter second thought, he selected her number and sent the call through. Would've hung up too if she hadn't picked up on the first ring. "Tara Schaefer, soon to be Mrs. Wilson."

So much for a rendezvous.

Disappointment sunk through Brenden like a dark curtain. Another lonely night with his fantasies.

"Hello? *Hello?*"

Well, he couldn't very well just hang up and cause her to think he'd turned into a creep. He cleared his throat, making as if phlegm were the hold-up. "Hey there, Tara."

"Brenden?" There was a pause, followed by, "Wow. This is unexpected."

He bet it was. "So, uh, congrats on the impending marriage. Sorry if this is uncomfortable, I just...forget I ever called."

"Not so fast, buster. Didn't you get my calls? I left you several messages to call me back."

"I...um..." Damn frog in his throat. "Frankly, once you told me you and Ayden were together, I didn't see much point. I don't even know why I'm calling now."

Feeling like a world-class jerk, Brenden moved to disconnect, but her cry stopped him short. "Wait!"

"Wait?"

She was irritatingly quiet a moment, leaving him to wonder why she'd ever called him back. He cleared his throat again and finally she spoke. "Why don't you come to the wedding? It's at Ayden's beach house, not far from...well, *you know*."

"Um..." Brenden didn't quite know how to respond. Sure, he happened to be in the area but... "Wouldn't that be awkward for all of us?"

"Why?"

She had to ask? "*Why?*"

"Brenden, we had a good time with you. That experience...it really brought Ayden and me close," she surprised him by saying. "In fact, Ayden and I owe our love to you."

If not for knowing she was taken, Brenden could've fallen for her at that very moment. Damn it, *when* would he find a woman who could hold a candle?

"Glad I could help." For the umpteenth time during the phone call he cleared his throat.

"So you'll come?"

And spend hours wanting and wishing? Aching that old ache? He doubted sincerely the bride would want company this time around, not in the way he had in mind. "I don't think that's a good idea."

"Pleeeaaaaasssee," she pleaded. "I toyed with inviting you all along, but since you never returned my calls...I thought maybe you'd found someone or something. It has been almost a year."

A very long year, at least for him. "Well, I might be able to swing by...I'll have to check my schedule. When is it?"

Was he kidding? He'd be there with bells on.

"This Sunday at six. We wanted to be married in the cooling, evening breeze on the beach. And don't bring a date. I've got someone I want you to meet. You two are perfect for each other."

"You do?" She did? Suddenly Brenden's heart transformed into a bass drum. "Is she—"

Like you? Brenden bit off the rest of the sentence, knowing it was inappropriate.

"She's gorgeous. A ton of fun. A little badass, I'll warn you."

"A badass, you say?" Suddenly Brenden had a new fondness for matchmaking.

"But I'm sure a man like you...you could tame her in no time. Actually, I think you're just what my best friend needs."

And who would know better than Tara?

"What do you say?" Tara asked, as if she even had to.

From the front of the store, the clerk shouted, "You gonna chat on the phone all evening, or goddamned buy something?"

"I say sure. Absolutely," Brenden told Tara. And to the clerk, he hollered back, "You have baskets? I'm afraid I'm going to need more than I can carry."

* * * * *

"Harder, Andrew! Harder, please!" Her throat burned and the sand collapsed beneath her feet. Higher she jumped, harder she waved. Waved and screamed and pleaded. "Swim harder! Andrew!"

Oh God, he was drowning. Fighting frantically to keep his head above water yet repeatedly disappearing under. Taking longer and longer to emerge. Growing weak.

“Andrew, you have to swim! The lifeguard’s almost there!” Could he even hear her? The people around her, shouting and screaming the same things?

“Swim, Andrew!!” Had her older brother not been blocking her way, Sara would’ve charged into the ocean. Battled the rip tide whisking her best friend away and sacrificed her own life just to save his.

Because Sara knew. Knew she’d lost the most special person in her life. All because of her.

Stupid Andrew, trying to impress her! The lifeguard couldn’t reach him fast enough. He’d gone too far, had been spotted too late. Was dead as surely as the waves swallowed him under once again.

And this time he did not reappear.

“Andrew!”

So much for watching a beautiful sunset.

How Sara hated the beach, hated it even at this distance, even though the waves were nothing more than fuzz without her prescription sunglasses on. Despised being here so much she was seriously considering posing as the bathroom attendant for the entire reception.

Instead, she spun her back to the memory, determined to whip it from her mind and have a good time of what remained of her friend’s seaside wedding, even if that meant making a fool of herself in the process.

And oh look, a fool for the fool. Tara would just have to understand if she was caught in the closet. Or the bathroom. *Ew.*

Mr. Tall, Dark and Kinda-handsome, in a classic sort of way, had been flirting at a distance for some time, but he was approaching now and carrying two sparkling

martinis sans olives. Given her current emotional state, Sara would happily accept them both, though she'd prefer they have olives. Oh well. Win some, lose some.

And she'd better win a big orgasm out of this whole affair or attending hadn't been worth it. She could've watched the video from home, safe from the bouquet. And giving a speech.

Leaning against the deck rail, she dotted tears from the corner of either eye and concluded that despite the diminishing evening light, everyone had enjoyed enough drinks for her to get away with wearing tonight's choice of golden-pink, Juicy Couture sunglasses that would help her better see the man at hand. She was about tired of walking around half blind in the name of getting laid.

Sliding the sunglasses on, she adjusted the sleeveless top of the flowing sand-colored silk gown Tara had selected for her to wear as her matron of honor. *Matron*. Made her feel old. Married when she wasn't—just who'd made up that stupid rule about being divorced six months before resuming maid status?

But at least she wasn't wearing Pepto-Bismol pink like the bridesmaids, and to that effect, Sara pasted on her reputable, knock-'em-flat smile. Way she saw it, life's a bitch—play then die.

And tonight Sara wanted to play. Forget where she was, forget everything. Especially Andrew.

The man approaching winked, brandishing the drinks like peace offerings. "What's a beautiful lady such as yourself standing here all alone for?"

She didn't tell him she wasn't alone. That a ghost from the past lingered over her shoulder, haunting her. Driving her to seek distraction. "Well, I suppose I was waiting for you to rescue me."

"Waiting for me, huh? I like that."

"You...or some other guy," she teased. The devil retreated with her martini, holding it high, and brought his body closer. Intimately, almost shockingly close, his hard body brushed hers, his gleaming silver belt buckle snagging silk. "But you'll do,"

she quickly corrected, not willing to lose her drink or her newfound man, not when she needed both so very badly. "You'll do me just fine."

She'd always been far too frank. Inherited that from her dad.

"Vixen, aren't you?" Gazing down at her with sparkling hazel eyes—their achingly familiar hue disappointing at the least—he released the thin-stemmed glass into her eager embrace and she promptly took a sip. Or a gulp. Whatever. Being ladylike was for the ladies. She was just a woman—a real one, looking to have a real good time.

Too bad her tall, dark and kinda-handsome didn't have the black eyes she typically required out of her men. Staring into her new lover's golden-green gaze, she'd be hard-pressed to forget Andrew. But at least there wasn't lighting in the closet. And with any luck she'd be smashed. To ensure just that, she downed the rest of her drink.

Gee, she was really batting a hundred tonight.

"Oh," she pouted, casting her attention to the martini not surrendered. "Were you planning on drinking that one? I thought it was for me too."

Further intrigued, he lowered his drink to her level. "We could share, I suppose."

"Share? Hmmm..." Now that was quite an arousing offer. Abandoning her empty glass on the deck rail behind her, she claimed his, sipping and swishing the alcohol to her cheek. On tiptoe, she angled her head to kiss him. *Share*.

"Sara!"

Damn it. Caught and not even in the closet yet.

Sara swallowed the alcohol burning her tongue and retreated to the flat of her feet. "Hey there, Mrs. Wilson. Shouldn't you be with the groom?"

Because that certainly wasn't him being tugged behind Tara, head to toe in a well-tailored suit and looking like a hawk with that sharp nose and those angled cheekbones, making Sara ponder how he seemed so utterly attractive and yet he wasn't. Not classically, at least.

But as his eyes settled on her, he instantly went from somehow sexy to shockingly sexual. His gleaming coal gaze transforming into something intense. Dominant. Demanding. Truly tall, dark and handsome, and Sara went weak in the knees with the desire to submit to anything and everything he asked.

Now she was properly distracted. "Who's your friend, Tara?"

"I want you to meet Brenden." The bride couldn't have looked more pleased with herself for introducing them as she winked. And winked again. And again. "He's that friend I mentioned."

Had she? Intrigue empowered the air around them and Sara couldn't remember anything but her pounding heart. The way her neck hairs instantly stood on end.

And Tara kept right on winking. If she kept it up, she'd make her eye muscles sore.

"Brenden, hi." Sara offered her hand and he claimed it, his grip powerfully encompassing her fingers. Lingering.

Behind her a throat cleared and a possessive grasp claimed her arm, cutting through the magic that had permeated the atmosphere. "You'll both have to excuse us. The lady and I were having a private conversation."

Her closet lover gave a little tug to say "come on" and his chance at getting laid flew out the window. Not at all fond of being manhandled, Sara shot him a silent warning, but before she could fully put him in his place, Brenden stepped forward and freed her arm with nothing more than a severe look. "Maybe *you* should excuse us."

"I think the lady wants me to stay, don't you?" The idiot tried to wrap an arm around her and Sara ducked.

Boy had he read her wrong, but once again it was Brenden who spoke for her. "I'm afraid she doesn't. *Go.*"

No-name shrugged, had the nerve to repossess his martini, and stalked off.

Sara maintained her glare, staring after the jerk until he was out of sight. "I suppose I should thank you. I might have hit the closet with him tonight."

"Who is he to you?"

A question she was too embarrassed to answer. She'd never even asked the man's name. For all she knew, he was some sort of psycho, or so it would seem.

"No one important." By the time Sara turned to face Brenden, she realized the winking Tara had long since abandoned her. "Some friend," she muttered to herself, thinking of numerous ways payback could be a bitch. For example, the speech she had yet to give. "So, Brenden, enjoying the wedding?"

"I am now." Brenden gazed down on her as if she were prey. Delicious prey.

And Sara could only *pray* he ate her. Out.

"It just got exciting," he added.

"Why's that?" She feigned innocence, going so far as to bat her lashes, all in the name of a little fun and a lot of flirtation. "Did you meet someone?"

"I did." He stepped closer, positioning himself against the rail directly next to her so his clothed arm brushed her bare one in a tingly rush as he gazed out at the waves pounding the beach. "Now tell me, do you always kiss men you don't know? Or was that just the tip of the iceberg?"

"I knew him," she fibbed.

"What was his name?"

"George." *George?* Couldn't she have at least come up with something better?

"You're lying," Brenden declared with a hint of good humor, leaving Sara to wonder how the hell this practical stranger could read her like a book. "Which brings us back to the original question. You always kiss men you don't know?"

"Depends." On why he had the nerve to sound jealous when they'd only just been introduced. And why, when she would otherwise laugh such cockiness off, did she feel heat bursting through her south of her bellybutton?

"Depends on what? The man?"

"My mood."

“What’s your mood right now, *mon amour*?” His eyes met hers sideways, that intent stare only seeming to intensify, to scream his every desire, and they weren’t sweet ones either. “Because I wouldn’t mind a kiss, *s’il vous plait*.”

“You speak French,” she somehow managed to say, though he’d stolen her breath away with that last sentence. Lord knew she was grinning like a fool, even as his phone went off and he retrieved the cell from his coat pocket, flipped it open and promptly banished the call.

“As well as Latin and Spanish, of course.”

“Of course.” No wonder Tara had been winking her eye raw. Fluent in four languages *and* good-looking? This man was a fantasy come true—and for him the closet would hardly do.

“Now about my kiss, *por favor*?” How did he make his tongue roll like that?

And why wasn’t he rolling it in between her legs already?

Every ion of her travel agent, culture-loving nature beamed as he leaned in closer, those seductively full lips tempting her, and Sara was compelled to look away. Not an easy feat, but it wouldn’t do with a man such as Brenden to kiss too easily. She was obliged to indulge in a little hard to get, at least until his interest was secured—between her legs, the whole night long. Screw the cake and definitely the bouquet—bad luck in her experience. She’d already caught five to prove it, the last one bearing no stock with her whatsoever. And she meant it.

“Well, I could kiss you...” she sighed in true disappointment. “But *you* don’t have a martini to offer me. He did.” Feeling truly naughty, she purposely allowed her biceps to graze his yet again, encountering the hard bulge of muscle beneath crisp fabric as she continued. “And to answer your previous question, I happen to be looking for a distraction.”

“Then take a stroll with me along the beach. It’s gorgeous out tonight and we can get to know each other—very well, *mon amour*.” Mmm, he had a deep voice. Commandingly seductive.

But unfortunately the beach was the very last place she wanted to be. “Uh...thanks, but no.”

“No?” Brenden had to admit—he couldn’t believe the words coming out her mouth. Or his. “I think you must be mistaken. I *said* come take a stroll with me.”

“Don’t get bossy with me,” she flipped off, clearly taken aback.

To his amazement—and relief—she didn’t storm off, and Brenden scrambled to set things right.

“You’re right, of course.” He was behaving no better than the bore he’d just banished. “I apologize.”

Since when was he so bold? Arrogant?

Since setting eyes on her, he supposed. Sara had fired his blood at first sight. Tempted his beast. This forward, coy female wasn’t a Brooke, or a Tara, or anything like he’d ever experienced.

Maybe it was the extent to which Tara had talked her up—Brenden felt as if he already knew Sara, a travel agent who loved chocolate and relaxing lavender bubble baths and who’d ridden every roller coaster on the East Coast. Who hated exercise because she hated being bored and who fully appreciated a wild lover and even wilder sex. Who needed a good man as much as he needed a good woman.

But it was more than that. It wasn’t how she looked, wasn’t any certain detail about her, not near as much as how she felt. And she felt like *his*. His—and she was throwing herself at some other guy.

Unequivocally, she was the type of woman whom Mother would turn her snooty nose up at. The type of woman who turned an otherwise straitlaced guy such as him on—tall, slim and oh-so-sexy with that long, silken hair of gold, sleek at the scalp and spiraling into wayward ringlets just below her shoulders. Those ridiculous pink sunglasses that were surely a waste of good money and unnecessary in the evening’s

gentle light. Those full, glossy lips that made him burn to toss her over his knee and teach that pert little butt of hers a thing or two about the dangers of flirting so daringly with men she didn't know.

And maybe he would. Right after their walk, given she proved half as kinky as he suspected and Tara had alluded.

"Reconsider. Say you'll come walk with me, *mon amour*. Make my night beautiful."

"I...just can't." Still she refused his offer, avoiding his silent urging for her to turn and face the sunset with him, her denial stampeding his efforts at romance. He'd even broken out the loathed French for her, the culture lover. "Strolls along the beach aren't for me, Brenden."

"And neither are sunsets?"

"Exactly."

"So you'd make your knight in shining armor walk alone?"

She grinned her response – an unshakable no. "Taking an awful lot of credit for one small deed, aren't you?"

So frustrating yet so damn adorable. In that moment, Brenden had never wanted more than to toss a woman over his shoulder and run away with her.

"You've better plans? Than accepting my invitation?" Because if she had dogged intentions of kissing strangers tonight, it was him she'd be kissing. He'd decided that at first glance. Maybe before then.

As if matters weren't going bad enough, his cell phone rang again, and given his recent breakup, Brenden didn't have to guess who it was. Mother dearest pestering on about him finding a nice woman and settling down. Or worse, his father harping about when he was going to get back to the firm and real life.

"That depends," Sara parroted her earlier answer, talking right over the ringing in his pocket and once again dodging the real question at hand. Would she sleep with him? Submit to him?

She'd damn well better. He'd nearly worked himself up to an anxious fit just waiting for tonight.

"Depends on what?" he demanded, impatient with the untimely interruption chiming away in his pocket. Reaching in his jacket, he confirmed the caller then silenced his cell phone and sidestepped in front of her, propping either hand against the deck rail at her waist and trapping her.

"I must warn you, Sara." He leaned low, whispering in her ear, ready to do anything to have her. A woman guaranteed to make his fantasies reality. "I've decided I want you."

"Oh?" Her fingers tangled his lapels and those lips pouted mischievously. "What do you intend to do about that?"

So she was testing him? With every teasing tug at his jacket, every exaggerated rise and fall of her breasts, he knew she was. "I intend to take you for a walk." Never more curious about what hid beneath those pink sunglasses, Brenden edged the earpiece, nudging them down just a tad. "So quit playing hard to get. I've already got you."

"Not quite. You *intend*..." That long tongue of hers roamed along her glossy bottom lip as she pushed those glasses back into place before he could gauge the color of her eyes. "To take me for a drive."

"You should've said so in the first place."

Sara was hardly the type to appreciate being smothered, but as Brenden smothered her in his embrace, guiding her past the three-tier cake not yet cut, she'd never felt so right in a practical stranger's arms. A man's arms, period. He held her as if he owned her, a fact that should rightfully piss her off. Instead, she only felt special. Felt as though she were *his*, not just with him.

Not one of her exes had managed to make her feel like this—and in the span of a mere five minutes, at that.

Lordy did Brenden have strong arms, and as if to prove it, he squeezed her a little tighter. “You need to tell anybody goodbye? Any more lovers lurking in the shadows?”

He had *no* idea, so she’d be kind and spare him the elbowing he truly deserved. The truth that smarted every time she admitted it.

“I came alone, thank you.” Actually, she’d come with Tara, but speech or not, somehow Sara didn’t think the new bride would be concerned with where she was. Besides, paybacks were a bitch, weren’t they? Tara wouldn’t be married right now if not for ditching Sara in the first place, so her leaving was only fair.

“So Tara tells me you haven’t seriously dated in quite a while,” he went on. “For a woman as gorgeous as you, that’s amazing.”

What was amazing was that his cell phone was still on and going off *again*—three times in the span of ten minutes—and he even had the nerve to glance at the caller ID. Lucky for him, he promptly ceased its disruption. Glad she could be so important.

And just how much had Tara told this guy about her?

“Not amazing, not really. I’m the love-’em-and-leave-’em type.”

Following his disapproving grunt, they took the deck stairs, landing in squishy sand that devoured her patent pink heels and she stumbled, caught by his powerful embrace.

“Take them off,” he commanded, and then without so much as a “Good idea!” from her, he reached down and swept both shoes from where they dangled on her toes and hooked them on his fingers.

Bossy man, wasn’t he? And just when she began to question what the hell she was doing, taking off with this stranger who’d plainly exuded a rather officious side, they reached the edge of the driveway and, forgoing even a hint of his intentions, he swept her off her bare feet. Literally.

A squeal caught her throat and anticipation rippled through her belly as he cradled her in his arms and set her shoes on her stomach.

“Light as a China doll.”

Who was this man? And could she keep him?

But she knew better than to ever again court such a fancy. No, she couldn’t keep him. But she could play and, oh, she would. Like a kid at an amusement park. He was her dangerous ride.

She’d always loved roller coasters. Had ridden every one on the East Coast—except him.

“And you?” she ventured, again toying with her caveman’s lapels, truly feeling lighter than any China doll. “Any ladies I should be forewarned of?”

“Nope. Plenty of exes, none who suited me. I’m a picky man.” Cradling her against him, he dug into his pocket, carrying her through rows of parked cars as the *beep beep* of his alarm echoed in the burgeoning night. The vroom of an engine followed, and curious what he drove, Sara craned her neck, spotting a shiny red convertible with its roof slowly peeling back in greeting. Wow. “I almost turned Tara down when she invited me,” he continued. “But then she mentioned you and I had to come.”

Tara? She’d just assumed, given this guy’s intellectual air and knowledge of several languages, not to mention the fact Sara knew most of Tara’s circle, that Brenden was an acquaintance of Ayden’s. A colleague from work or a high-dollar client or something and her nosy friend was simply matchmaking guests.

But Brenden wasn’t invited by Ayden. That concerned her and she wasn’t even sure why.

“How do you know Tara?” And why had she winked so many damn times during their introduction? Just what was her friend up to?

There was something...something it seemed Sara should remember about this man.

Brenden. *Hmmm*, she was drawing a total blank. Still...

He only grinned wide at her question, eyes sparkling at some unspoken secret as he deposited her in the plush passenger seat of his car and dropped her shoes in the back.

Leaning against the door, his finger edged the rim of her sunglasses, scooting them down her nose. "You've beautiful eyes, you know that? For a minute there I thought you'd been beaten up or something awful. But not you, right?"

"The day a man lands a hand on me is the day I become a murderer. Take George for example. If you hadn't interrupted me, he would've worn that martini."

"That so?"

"That's so." So what the hell was he smirking at?

"I'd like to have seen that."

"Just take me back in there and you will."

"Not a chance. The only place you're going is my bed." He leaned lower, those hawk eyes smoldering with something unspoken. "Indeed, you strike me as a woman who's only submissive when she wants to be. I like that."

"Yeah, when I want to be." She laughed nervously, wondering what he was getting at. "Which is, uh, never."

One sole finger traced her lower lip, as if he were reading her every thought and desire. "Oh, I doubt that's true. If there's one place you don't like to be in charge, it's the bedroom. Yes..." He cocked his head in feigned disappointment. "Kissing complete strangers? I believe a sound spanking is in order."

Well, that took the cake. "A spanking?" she sputtered, caught off guard by the blatant suggestion. The bold heat that unfurled in her loins. The wave of yearning that crashed through her. "I...no, I—"

She what? No man had ever had the nerve to talk to her as Brenden just did. To suggest what he had.

He certainly didn't mince words, and Sara had to admit, if it didn't piss her off so much, she might be kinda turned-on.

Spank her? Pshhh. Yeah right.

"You've never been spanked before?"

Of course not and she refused to even respond to the question. To give him the benefit because she wasn't that type of woman—or girl, rather, because *girls* got spanked.

At least that's what she told herself. So why was she still sitting in his car, shoeless? Why was she thinking back on all Tara's shared exploits, curious what it would be like?

Why was she being such a total, complete nincompoop?

But much as she denied it, Sara knew the answer. Although she was perfectly aware this man sought to turn her over his knee and spank her, what she didn't understand was why she *wanted* that.

"No worries." With half a cocky-ass smile, he claimed her glasses from her nose, folded them and unknowingly tucked her eyes in his jacket, leaving her blind and barefoot. "I'll take good care of you, promise."

Chapter Two

"I must have hit my head. You'll take care of me *with a spanking?*"

Tara might have explained he would have some teaching to do. Not at all expected, not from a woman as fiery as Sara.

But Brenden wasn't about to back down now. He doubted she was either. "A good, sound one, just like you want." He motioned to the house. "You're free to go if you can't handle it."

Instead she sat there, appearing a little shell-shocked, mouth agape and silently accepting his dare with those firing, forget-me-not blue eyes.

Just what he'd thought. "Good girl," he winked, reaching down and pulling out the seat belt.

Zippering it across her heaving chest, he snapped it into place, suggestively locking her in. Her heart was pounding and heat radiated from her. If he had to guess, her pussy was already wet.

But he didn't have to guess, so Brenden slid his hand down the length of her silky golden dress and caught the hem, hiking the fabric high so he could dip two fingers between her legs, past lacy panties to her moist center.

Wet, indeed.

"Brenden..." Sara moaned, arched and pressed her ready pussy into his hands, silently begging him to take her right there. In the driveway. In front of everyone. "*Please.*"

Yes, sir, he'd spank her. Educate her in pleasure and pain and his hard cock, as long as she was willing.

To think, she'd never been spanked before. She was a virgin to a man's strong hand slapping that sweet, soft ass of hers and Brenden had to admit as she whimpered and he circled her cunt with his fingers that her innocence in that area turned him on. A lot.

So did the fact she obviously wanted it, or she'd be out of the car and kicking his butt by now. She wasn't—hell no, she was only welcoming another of his fingers—and it didn't hurt that she truly deserved a spanking either. The woman beneath him was wild and he could only imagine what that would spark into once he tugged her panties completely off.

Hovering over her, watching her squirm beneath his gaze, riding his hand, Brenden hoped he'd found his match, in the bedroom at least. A woman who could handle him. His desires.

His cock.

So why was he still fingering her when he could be spanking? "Man, you're sweet." With one last swirl, Brenden tapped her pussy goodbye and withdrew, leaving her dress hiked and askew as he circled his car, hopped in and revved the engine. His Cadillac XLR purred in response and he threw it into reverse, peeling from the drive as Sara scooted and smoothed silk back into place. "Wow."

"Wow what?" He grinned, navigating the side street that would lead him to the highway. Lucky for him, he knew the area well. After all, he was opening a store close by.

"Wow you." She slid him a smile. "I've never met a guy like you before, so..."

"Sexy?"

"You're a know-it-all, you know that?"

"You caught me." Brenden gave her an impenitent grin. "It's something to do with being a man."

As predicted, she stifled a little laugh. "I was going to say frustrating. Maybe unexpected."

“Unexpected. Now I like that one. Tell me why.”

“Because I have no idea how someone so...overconfident...can be so damn hot. It’d be annoying if it weren’t so exciting. Or something.”

“I’ll forget you said that.” He veered into the right lane, aware the highway exit was coming up. “Now where am I taking you?”

Those glossy lips gathered in the most seductive pose. “You don’t know?”

“My place? Though it is a bit of a drive.” And also technically not his—he’d rented it for his business vacation, though at the moment *she* sure was making it feel more vacation than work even if he did have a meeting first thing in the morning with the security installation guy. This summer he was enjoying a breather from patents and legal work to open a chain of organic grocery stores. Big money in everything green these days, plus he liked to think he was doing his part. But who wanted to think about their job at a time like this? “We could find a secluded spot on the beach,” he added, thinking sand might be more fun than sheets. “I’ll pick up a nice bottle of wine. There’s a blanket in my trunk.”

“Oh a blanket, huh? I imagine it’s just for this type of thing?” Those forget-me-not eyes flashed.

“I find sex on the beach is exhilarating.” Brenden could’ve mentioned that he’d tried it once and the blanket was for emergencies, but her adorable little nose wrinkled in disgust and he had to laugh. “Jealous?”

“Hardly. I hate the beach.” All at once she seemed to shrink, her magic fading as she looked away, those silky locks tossing in the wind and creating a waving curtain across her face. Brenden could feel it—pain, and not the pleasurable kind. Her change in attitude had nothing to do with the green-eyed monster either—that he should be so lucky to have a woman such as this one possessive over him.

“You okay?”

“Take me to your place.”

And with that statement, her voice cracked and suddenly she was real to him, not just a badass little hottie his mother would snub. Who flirted recklessly with men and wore ridiculous sunglasses and tempted him as he hadn't ever been tempted before. No longer was she simply some one-night stand but a woman with a heart. He wanted to peer inside her very soul, to peel away that crass outer layer and figure her out.

"Sara?" Brenden laid a hand on her thigh, squeezing. "Why? I thought everyone loves the beach."

"What, is it a rule or something? I just don't, that's all."

From the tone of her voice, Brenden had a sick feeling her aversion to sand and sunshine was much, much more than a simple dislike. "What happened?"

She tossed that hair about, whisking it over her shoulder as she took his hand and moved it deeper between her thighs where he could feel the heat of her desire through the silk of her dress. "Forget about it. Just get me to your bed." Her tongue roamed over her lips suggestively. "I've got a cherry between my legs for you to suck on."

Brenden stifled laughter.

So he wasn't the only one who could make bold demands and *damn* did her request turn him on.

She encouraged his fingers, coaxing him to rub her pussy through soft, slippery fabric, to cast conversation to the wind and once again haul her dress past her knees, driving dangerously as he indulged her. Gave her exactly what she'd asked for earlier — distraction in the form of his fingers, plunging past her panties and into her creamy cunt.

Tensions ran high, arousal higher. There was a force between them, a draw, magnetizing and compelling Brenden. His cock had never been so hard, his need so intense, and he bypassed the exit in lieu of a side street.

Who was this woman who encouraged him to finger her at fifty miles an hour, who smiled coolly but laughed freely, who hated the beach yet smelled of piña coladas? Her

pussy was so wet, so warm, so willing, and his pants were in serious jeopardy of having a hole torn through them.

Night was falling, his cock was not and Brenden needed to *distract* her further, needed to now, not twenty-five minutes from now if traffic was good. He was almost dangerously hard and if he didn't achieve release, well...

He was wearing expensive slacks, after all. No sense in ruining them.

"Damn, darlin'. If I don't bury my cock in you soon, I'll split you in half." Just so he could say she'd been warned.

Still riding his fingers, she laughed and moaned all at once. Loud and full of life. Eagerness. "Darlin', the day a man splits me in half will be the happiest in my pathetic existence. I've been looking for a cock that could satisfy me since I was seventeen."

Oh, had she now? And why did the thought make *him* so damn jealous?

He rammed his fingers higher and swerved on the road, fully intending to satisfy her until she never sought distraction again.

Fighting for restraint, steadily hand-fucking her weeping pussy, he cruised down one street then the next and then another until he happened onto a back road that winded away from civilization and eventually landed his car in a small dirt recess near the edge of the woods.

"Why...why are we here?" she gasped, still gyrating against him.

"Because." Brenden threw the Cadillac into park and, with his free hand, commanded the top up and the radio on, all while still pleasuring the woman who writhed and humped his hand. "I want you, Sara. Now."

"Then come get me. Split me in half."

That was an invitation he didn't need. Just too bad sex while squished in the car wasn't conducive to spanking. But he could think of other things that were. Like tasting that sweet cherry she'd spoken of.

Cranking up Johann Pachelbel's "Canon In D" – a perfectly intense, classical song for what was about to become an intense, anything-but-classical encounter – he moved across the seats and on top of Sara to the rapid shrill of violins, using the bar between her legs to shove the chair back as far as it would go then the lever at her side to recline her.

She fell back with a squeal, spreading and arcing her legs around him. "Hurry!"

As if he needed encouragement. He'd wanted this woman longer than he'd even known her.

Kneeling on the floorboard between her legs, he propped each bare foot on his shoulders, stripped her panties down to her knees, and dove headfirst into her pussy. His nose nudged a thin strip of velvet hair and his tongue sought out her clit, gathering her salty essence as she cried out, arched and presented herself to him for the eating.

Damn, she was heaven. Heaven in human form.

Drawing on that little bundle of nerves, Brenden shoved her dress higher, cupped those perfectly round ass cheeks and lifted her against his face. Inhaled, licked and loved all over her pretty pussy – long strokes, short strokes, circles and suckles.

"You like that, don't you?" he murmured into her cunt, just wanting to hear her talk. To hear the pleasure in her saucy little voice. The ecstasy.

"Oh hell yes!" She rode his face, bucking wildly, retreating then returning for more.

And since he was saving the spanking, Brenden opted to gather a smidge of delicate skin on her butt cheek and pinch firmly, making her cry out all the louder, shattering through the fast-paced Pachelbel. "If you like it, I want to hear it."

She whimpered and pushed against him – not exactly the reaction he sought.

Being a sucker for punishment – dishing it out, that was – Brenden wanted this woman of his fantasies anything but quiet and biddable and he'd gladly provide her necessary incentive to misbehave.

So he tweaked that bottom again, this time harder, inciting a strangled scream from her. "Bastard!"

His hips flexed, his cock lunged, and *damn*, how his libido revved. "Naughty girl, talking to me like that."

He clenched warm, soft flesh between his fingertips.

"Are...you...crazy?" came her staccato protest, followed by a winded squeal of pain and pleasure as he squeezed her skin and sucked her cunt in rhythm.

"Only for you. Come on, let me have it, bad girl," he encouraged, alternating between laving her cunt, nibbling that clit and letting her sweet little ass know exactly who was in charge and what he expected as he pinched again and again. "I'm enjoying this supremely, you know..."

"You son of a bitch!" she screeched, her legs muscles tensing around his neck. "Brenden!"

But he knew she liked it. Wanted it, wanted more.

Hence her throwing her pussy against his face in a furious show of need as she screamed and panted and all but went crazy coming into his mouth while calling him names. "You jerk! You asshole! Payback's a bitch!"

Really? Well then... He gathered new skin, pinched harder and her pussy rippled with release. She thrust against his face, shuddering with ecstasy, and as strong as her orgasm came on, she melted into the seat, looking so small and satisfied.

But satisfied *he* wasn't—not yet.

Tearing off her panties the rest of the way, he tossed them in the backseat and crawled over her, unzipping his straining slacks and all but exploding from his boxers. He pressed his cock along her inner thigh, rubbing hot flesh along flesh. "Still think I can't split you in half?"

"You!" She gasped and her hands went to his chest. "Get the hell off me!"

Huh? She actually sounded serious.

Not exactly the feedback he'd expected, not this time.

Chapter Three

He has a huge —

Cock.

It was *him*, pressed up against her pussy, thick and long and enticing her to toss her protests the way of her panties. To the backseat.

Brenden, apparent owner of the biggest cock in the world. Brenden, who'd had sex with her best friend, not to mention it'd been a threesome.

Brenden.

Tara, that little bitch...no wonder she'd been winking! Well, Sara was going to poke her eyes out! Here she was turned-on and ready for round two and...and...

Damn it!

"Get off me!" She swung at his chest, drove him away. "Go!"

To her relief, the cocky SOB obliged her, grabbing the handle of the door and shoving it open. Crawling off her, he waddled from the car, dark, ominous trees standing tall behind him. His cock standing tall before of her.

And it was big. Big, as in unusually big. Split-her-in-half big. In Tara's words, *huge*.

"Real great," he muttered under his breath. "Good one, Bren." Holding up his pants with one hand, he swept another through that short, mussed black hair of his. "Shit. I'm sorry, you know, if I went too far."

Too far?

Too long. Too tempting. "Wow." It was all she could do to stare and think twice on why she couldn't sleep with him when things had already gotten this carried away.

Oh right. That little thing called a conscience. She better get her panties back on.

He stifled a chuckle and stepped closer, that huge cock hanging out all over the place. “*Wow?* So you like it?”

“I mean...shit.” Shit, oh shit, oh shit. Sara squeezed her eyes shut, but when she opened them, the cock was still there, as was the reality that this man had spanked Tara with a belt. Really. Spanked. *Tara*. Would gladly spank her—he’d been serious about that after all. Of course she’d been fooling herself all along that he hadn’t been. “You have to take me back to the reception. Right now.”

It was plain too weird for her and given her track record, that was saying something.

“What the hell for?” But he was already zipping up. Putting that beautiful cock away as she hiked up her underwear and down her dress. “Look, I’m sorry,” he went on, his tone gentling. “But come on, don’t be coy. You came, didn’t you?”

“Uh, I don’t care—ya slept with Tara. And Ayden.” And then there *was* the butt pinching to address. So she’d come like hell. It was still rude.

“Yeah, and?”

“You mean you knew?”

He leaned against the open car door coolly, as if this were all going to be settled in a matter of seconds. “Knew? Of course I knew. I was there.”

Oh yeah. Right. She was a mess in the mind and hadn’t even had a martini to blame either.

Boy did she need one now. Another orgasm too.

“Just take me back.” The night was ruined. All she wanted now was a coffee and a cab to her hotel.

“No.”

“No?” What the heck did that mean? He couldn’t tell her no.

“No,” he repeated, and didn’t he sound so sure of himself? *Look* so sure of himself with that huge bulge in his pants?

She had to turn away. "Please?" she asked, staring at the glove box. Silently counting, giving this practical stranger to the count of ten to come around. Play nice. Then she was going to do something crazy.

"Give me one good reason." He let go of the door and crouched down, leaning in toward her. Had the nerve to stroke her leg, bunching the sand-colored silk around her knees. "Because I'll bet you still want me."

"I don't."

"You do," he insisted, caressing closer and closer to her cunt. "Quit dwelling on yesterday. This is now, and you know your pussy is as soaked as my cock is hard." His voice retreated to a sensuous, pleading whisper. "I want you, Sara. I need you."

Had he said the same things to Tara?

"You want a good reason?" she ground out, steeling herself against the fingers rimming the edges of her swollen cunt through her dress and panties. "How about I'm serious?"

So serious she was still letting him touch her there. Letting him tug her dress around her hips all over again.

Shit.

Through the soaked crotch of her panties, his thumb found her clit and pressed. "So am I. You're staying, Sara."

What? Did he fancy himself a damn hypnotist or something?

Well, now she was just pissed. Forget counting. Sara arched against the seat, determined she wouldn't be swayed so easily.

Swayed? He was commanding her about as if she were some empty-headed bimbo whose crotch did all the thinking.

Okay, sure, it might have more say-so at the moment. But she was woman, hear her roar! And if she wanted to go back, which she *did*, who was he to tell her no?

Asshole.

“One last chance,” she warned, taking his hand and enveloping it in hers. “Take me back.”

“But, *mon amour*, I don’t want to.”

Fine. Then she’d take herself back.

Left with no other recourse, Sara tugged him toward her, pouting her lips and making as if she were going to kiss him. Instead, she dove into his jacket with her free hand and claimed her sunglasses.

And as if on cue, his cell phone blasted off again—and he answered. Actually still had that phone on and *answered*. “What!?”

Brenden turned his back on Sara, leaving her stunned.

“Mother, I’m on a date. You *have* to stop calling.”

Mother? Gee, and she thought her family was intrusive.

“The answer is still no... *What?*” He groaned. “This is ridiculous, you realize? Of course I’m not bringing her to meet you. We just met.”

Who? *Her?* The woman who was supposed to be escaping as they spoke but instead was too busy eavesdropping?

“No. You won’t like her anyway...*Mother*, trust me, no. She isn’t the bring-home type. Far from it.”

Oh real nice. What was so wrong with her?

Not that she cared. He was an asshole anyway. And she was leaving. Without him. Or his permission.

She just couldn’t believe he’d answered that phone.

“This again? Kara’s a big girl. Maybe if you’d quit harping her she’d come around, so let her be.”

Kara? What, he had a girlfriend? Maybe she should stay...kick his ass!

“Well, I know my sister and—”

Ohhhh... His sister. He was having a conversation with his mother about his sister while she sat in his car with her pussy wet, acting the fool.

A big fat fool.

As he turned back around and mouthed his apologies and motioned for one moment, Sara finally took action. She stood up, plucked the phone from his hand and promptly hung up on the chattering woman on the other line. "Take me back. Now."

Brenden gawked at her as if *she* were the one out of line. "Did you just hang up on my mother?"

"Yeah." What of it? She hitched a thumb toward the car. "Let's go."

"Sara." Still that dark, intense gaze gaped at her. "I'm not sure whether to be turned-on or pissed off. Maybe both."

"You have issues, you know that?"

He almost looked about to laugh, but instead Brenden snatched the phone back and stared down its glowing neon screen, talking almost as if to himself. "My mother...she is overbearing and overly intrusive. She's a snob and socialite and it's her mission in life to drive me to the altar or to my grave from worry." His voice rife with irritation, he punched a sole button—and Sara didn't miss that it was number one. "But she's also very dear to me for reasons you can *never* understand. You just don't hang up on her."

"You're actually calling her back?" Well, that took the cake.

Sara couldn't believe him—or the impatient look he shot her.

"Well, now I have to fix the damage you caused." Lifting the phone to his ear, Brenden again turned his back on her. "Mother?"

Sara plopped back down in the passenger seat and Brenden went on as if she weren't there. "Yes, I'm sorry about that. It was terribly rude. This really isn't a good time... Yes, yes, I know. If—yes, yes, I promise..."

Feet propped unladylike on the door frame, Sara sat there astonished, not certain whether *she* should feel like a world-class jerk or *he* should. Maybe they both were. Two

peas in a pod because, Sara had to admit, if it were *her* needy, meddling mother, she'd be peeved too.

Still, for just that reason she'd left her cell in her purse. At the reception where it—and she—belonged.

Where she wanted desperately to be.

Call her crazy, but about now she was glad Brenden was on the phone. Again. Because he obviously wasn't going to take her back to Tara's—he intended to seduce her and clearly thought he would. Just that easily.

Well, she *wasn't* going to let him. Uh-uh, not after this.

"Oh Brenden..." Blowing him a kiss goodbye, she yanked her feet in, hurled the car door shut and shimmied across the console into the driver's seat. By the time he hung up on mommy dearest and circled the car, her glasses were on, the doors locked and the engine revving.

He'd pinched her. Now she was pinching his car.

Adios, sucker. Next time don't answer the phone.

She hit the pedal to the metal, blasting a trail of dust in her wake.

As Brenden was to learn, Sara Foster always got what she wanted. Only this time, she wasn't really sure halting their encounter was exactly what she *wanted*.

But it was what he deserved.

* * * * *

Sara the Seductress was about to get the spanking of a lifetime. Right here, right now, wedding reception or not.

She'd *stolen* his car. Left him horny and hard on the side of some dark street without so much as a clue where to tell the taxi driver to pick him up. As a result, he'd been forced to walk to the nearest intersection and was sweaty enough to prove it. Sweaty and angry and stunned as he slammed the taxi door shut behind him, paid the driver and stalked up the deck stairs to Sara's doom.

She better not have scratched his car, but he'd check that later. Right now he had a hellcat to toss over his knee.

"Uh-oh, Brenden, you made it back," he heard the bride call, but he kept right on walking. Past the cut cake, the presents and the punch, through the diminishing crowd and the patio doors and into his worst nightmare.

Okay, maybe that was exaggerating.

But there she was, Sara, sitting on some guy's lap. *That* guy's lap, empty martini glass in hand, limbs wavering all about. *His* woman, at least for tonight.

A thought to which his cock began to harden.

His.

Had she lost her mind? He'd saved her from this joker's manhandling once already and she went right back to flirting with him?

Brenden could almost believe she was doing it on purpose, just to piss him off. She needn't put in the extra effort, not after hanging up on his mother and stealing his car.

Feeling primal, Brenden actually growled, inciting a squeal from her as she leapt to her feet. "Brenden!" She grinned this goofy smile. "Took you long enough."

Then she turned around and—*whoosh!*—dumped the rest of her drink right over George's head. "I've been waiting to do that."

George bellowed and roared up, harping about the cost of his suit and making a mad dash for the napkins.

Clearly not the least concerned, the brassy little woman shot Brenden a wink as if they had an inside joke or something then took off past him.

She didn't get far.

"We need to talk." Brenden caught her by the wrist, pulling her to a halt. He squeezed the empty glass from her hand and removed it to a nearby coffee table. "Come with me. Now."

"I—" She lifted that haughty chin, her expression masked by those ridiculous sunglasses. "No."

"No? Not the answer I'm looking for, darling."

Despite his hold on her, she gazed into the distance as if he weren't even there and spoke to someone else. "I think I'll havva piece of cake now. Would you care to fetch it for me? A drink too, pleash. I'm afraid I've misplaced mine..."

Brenden didn't have to turn around to know she was cooing at yet another man. And misplaced? Ha! Her drink was right where she intended it to be, sending home the message to Brenden that she was no pushover.

"You can't just ignore me." No more than Brenden could ignore how erect he currently was. How furiously he needed to spank this little badass. He'd wanted that sweet little ass all evening and, damn it, this time she wasn't getting away.

And that's when he realized—he wasn't angry. Not really. He was hot...explosively hot...for her. Turned-on as hell.

He had a feeling Sara was as well, given how out-of-the-way she was going to rile him, because the stubborn little spitfire obviously wasn't about to admit she wanted him. Not now, not without proper incentive.

And he had plenty of that. "You stole my car, so we can talk my way or, if you prefer, the cops can do the talking for me."

Suddenly he existed again. "You wouldn't."

"I'd enjoy it more than you would your cake, I guarantee that." When that stubborn chin lifted in challenge, he added, "*Now*," and urged her away.

Never had his heart pounded so hard, his desire pulsed with such heat, and he was almost disappointed Sara didn't utter a single protest as he hauled her down the hall and into one of the bedrooms, thrusting her onto the bed.

She bounced near to the ceiling, rolled over and quickly scurried to her feet as he locked the door behind him. "Brenden, listen, I'm...I'm shorry."

"*Shorry?* About which part?" Enlisting *all* his self-control — necessary at this point — he sat down on the edge of the bed, feet planted flat on the floor, fingers flexing at some unnamed emotion clawing at him from the inside out. He just couldn't believe how he'd found her. Just couldn't believe how hard he was. "*Shorry* for stealing my car? Hanging up on Mother? Or the part where I catch you flirting with that jerk thirty minutes after my tongue was in your cunt? Oh right, *that* was to teach me a lesson."

"If I wanted to theach you a lesson, I'd pinch your ass with these." She brandished a handful of long, strong-looking, all-natural fingernails.

Damn woman. Fired his blood, his temper. Made him jealous and mad and crazy all in one evening and yet he still wanted her like no other. Had a pure steel cock to prove it.

Determined to have his way, he reached to his left where a portable telephone rested on an end table and picked it up. "Now this part is entirely up to you. Either you can come here, hike up that dress, take down your panties and receive the punishment you so deserve, or I'll call the cops and have you arrested."

He heard her suck in a sharp breath then slowly release it. "That's blackmail."

He turned the phone on.

"Brenden, please. Don't." *Hiccup*. "What's with you and phones, anyway?"

Jeez, in the half-hour it'd taken to catch up with her, she'd tied one on already. How'd she get so buzzed so fast?

Didn't matter.

He dialed the nine, the one...suddenly she was on her feet and scrambling around the bed.

Now that was more like it.

"You're really going to call the cops on me?"

Not a chance, but she didn't know that. She needed the incentive. The *excuse*. Brenden motioned to his knees, feeling something clench in him as he noted those

sunglasses still hadn't come off and she pitifully chewed her lower lip. Nervous as hell, but truth was, if she truly didn't want this, she'd walk right out that door, police or not.

"Take the glasses off. Look at me," he told her, but she only stared at the floor. "Sara."

Reluctantly, she shifted her gaze toward his but made no move to remove those ridiculous sunglasses. In that moment, shades or not, Brenden felt as if he could see right through her, maybe because he'd been there once himself, before Tara and Ayden came along. Wanting, needing, but not knowing it *could* be more than a fantasy.

"Don't be afraid of yourself." It wasn't fear of him or the spanking holding her back. It was her own desire that scared her most.

She acknowledged nothing. Looking like a little girl lost, she lifted her dress, hooked her fingers in her underwear and tugged the white lace down. Only when the laughably innocent panties hit the floor did Brenden hang up the phone, kick off his shoes and scoot a little farther back on the bed, again motioning to his legs.

"Over them, now."

"Brenden, I'm beggin' you, please don't make me do this." She completely sucked in that lower lip, finally whisking away those glasses to reveal desperate blue eyes. Eyes that pierced him to his soul. "Pleash."

In some remote part of his brain his conscience screamed at him for doing this. For feeling he had to.

For wanting to so badly.

She was half drunk and shaking, almost trembling with fear...but much as she denied it, he *knew* she wanted it. Had all evening long. Needed a good spanking, same as a lady such as herself needed a real man to deliver one on occasion.

"I'm not," he reminded her, snatching those glasses, folding them and placing them dangerously close to the phone. "You have a choice. Just as you chose to steal my car rather than have a really, really big orgasm."

"That was stupid."

"No kidding." He actually smiled, smiled because he knew he had her right where he wanted her.

"Well, you didn't havta be so...so..."

"Sexy?"

She shook her head and rolled her eyes and released a ragged sigh of resolve. "Your phone shoulda been off."

A comment he ignored because maybe she was right, but it was a good thing he'd had that phone along, now wasn't it?

Several seconds of tense quiet passed between them, her staring him down, him not budging.

He wanted that spanking and, damn it, so did she.

Finally she nodded. "Fine. Get it over with."

As if she wouldn't enjoy every damn second.

Chapter Four

Oh God, she'd really done it this time. Really stinkin' got herself into a pickle and all those drinks she'd downed since her return weren't helping her to think her way out of this pinch either.

Rather, she was thinking about him pinching her, tweaking her behind as he ate her out in the car. The car she'd promptly pinched.

How damn good those little zings of pain had felt. How wonderfully intense it'd been...to feel so possessed by a man. Consumed and controlled.

Controlled? Her? Pshaw.

As if to mock her, his knees were waiting and the room was spinning, her stomach clenched as Sara swallowed her pride and lowered herself over his legs, stumbling in the process and landing with an *umph!* across his thighs, her body skidding on the crisp fabric of his slacks.

"Asshole," she ground out, articulating every syllable and making certain not to slur. Again. Which she might have been doing just a tad already. Damn martinis sans olives had gone straight to her brain. "I hope you know I hate you."

The SOB made a *tsk-tsk* sound that tempted her to bite him. Instead, she lay there, bare butt in the air, dangling in wait. Feeling more exposed than she had in all her life. More turned-on.

Thank God she wasn't completely sober or she had no excuse for her behavior. Besides, it wasn't as if she had a choice—what else could she do? Be arrested? Versus being spanked?

The loosening of his belt and unbuttoning of his pants instigated a few quality ideas. Then his cock popped out, still enormous as ever. "Can't we jussht have sex instead?"

Oh shoot, she'd slurred again.

A vodka hiccup escaped as Brenden caught her side and hauled her against him, his huge, hard cock lodged against her ribs in a bigger threat than his hands could ever be. Because, damn, she wanted him, wanted this.

The bastard — this was all his fault.

And just when she would've cursed him again, *smack!* Totally expected, totally *unexpected*, the flat of his palm lit her ass on fire. *Smack, smack, smack!*

Sara cried out and reared up, only to be promptly pinned back down, her face shoved against his calf and her butt lifted even higher.

Smack, smack, smack! He swatted left cheek then right with open hands, his furious five fingers sparing no mercy. *Smack! Smack! Smack!*

She supposed she ought to thank God he wasn't using a belt as he had with Tara — the cocky son of a bitch! Thinking he could sleep with her best friend then have her too. Why she ought to —

Smack!

Enough! He'd no right, no right at all, stolen car or not...

A thought that yet again served to remind her of his face between her legs. His tongue diving in her, expertly driving her to the steepest pinnacle she'd ever experienced.

"You jerk!" Her ass burned and pussy creamed embarrassingly and she wriggled and fought. She'd at least presumed he'd be...be...

Delicate about matters.

Smack, smack, smack!

"You lillyliveredpukefacedcoward!"

Delicate? Hah! Her ass was on fire! Her pussy too — which she certainly hadn't anticipated! Not the warming between her thighs. The way her clit was pulsing, her cunt clenching for his cock.

Not the way she yearned for him to spank her all the more. Talk dirty to her. Tell her she was naughty like he had in the car and touch her...*there*. She wasn't talking about her pussy either.

She really *was* naughty!

Smack, smack, smack!

"You cocky, mannerless maniac! I should castrate you! Stop!" Of course he didn't. And she didn't really want him to.

Smack, smack, smack!

And so she bit him. Hunkered down and plunged her teeth into his thigh through his pants because she was not going to be turned-on by this. Nope. Sorry. His loss.

Not turned-on. No way.

"I won't stop until you do," he warned, every syllable spoken cool and in control despite of how hard she was biting him—for heaven's sake, her jaw hurt. "Take your punishment like a woman and I'll treat you like one."

"I hate you!"

"Okay, then have it your way." *Smack, smack, smack!* "I'm going to enjoy this."

Notwithstanding that threat, he did stop spanking her, his fingers skimming over her flaring butt and diving between her crack, over her asshole to her pussy. He claimed her clit between two fingers, pinching and rolling. Enticing shudders of ecstasy through her and she couldn't stop herself from moaning.

Her mouth grip on his leg loosened and he made this deep, guttural noise of satisfaction, as if he'd proven something, then without preamble he plunged several fingers in her cunt. "Hmmm...you're wet."

"So?" Her toes stretching for the floor, for some sort of base, she bucked against him, practically begging for more as he thrust another finger inside her. Four at once? She didn't know, but he was practically hand-fucking her. Hard and fast, making her stinging butt arch and meet his steady rhythm. Making her cry out and ride him, the

orgasm that was ominous, so aroused she was whimpering and clutching at his pants legs. Frantic for that big cock inside her. "Brenden, please."

And what did he do but pull out and smack! "What was that? A please?"

"Please!"

Her cry shattered the room and just as suddenly those dangerous fingers were dancing softly over her hot skin. Buttery soft, wiping away his spanking with tendrils of pleasure like a magic eraser. "Now as much as I like to hear please from you, there's something else I want to hear first."

Smack, smack, smack! All at once his tenderness transformed into fury, reeking havoc on her thighs and butt.

"Brenden," she cried out, not sure how much she could take. Stupidly wanting more of his unique brand of...punishment. If one could call it that. If one had no pride. "I'm sorry. Sorry I stole your car!"

Sorry she ever met him! Sorry she wanted him so badly, sorry she hated him so very much in that moment. Even sorrier that she would sleep with him because after this no other cock would do.

Once again those fingers fluttered over fire, making her believe that was it. It was over.

But of course that was like thinking ice cream wouldn't melt in summer heat.

"Admit you like it," he demanded, his deep, velvet voice leaving no room for debate. "Tell me how much I please you."

The cocky SOB. Asshole! And just when she'd been looking forward to the sex!

"Say what?" That he pleased her? That she couldn't do. Wouldn't. It was worse than bending over his knees in the first place. "No."

But instead of spanking her more—thoroughly anticipated by now—his hand dove between her thighs, dipped deep into her pussy and gathered her essence then

withdrew. Over her anus that finger stroked, teased, slowly slipped inside, and Sara nearly lost her mind. "Go on, Sara. Be a good girl and tell me."

He pressed another finger deep inside her anus, driving her to the brink. Her pussy clenched, never so empty, never so needy, and she had to bat away tears to keep from screaming.

He was riding her ass, pumping in and out, purposely making her pussy jealous, purposely punishing her still.

He wanted her to admit she liked it, and the truth was, Sara had never liked foreplay more in her life. Four husbands and never this...this intenseness. This openness. Not one of them had handled her, touched her like Brenden. She wouldn't have permitted it.

Four husbands. Plenty of wild sex in her life...though maybe not this wild.

Okay, not even close. But still, why should she be shy?

Fact was, obviously Brenden liked what he was doing. And if she wanted his cock...

Now there was the quandary. Did she continue to play his bad girl? Was she giving him what he wanted by not giving him what he wanted?

Or should she?

"Come on, Sara. Do as I'm asking," he encouraged, his fingers swirling deep, expanding the tight bud, and this time she heard it in his voice. True need.

Because in the end, he didn't have control of her or this situation. She did. Always had.

She felt as if she were swallowing a frog whole, but somehow Sara admitted, "I like it, Brenden. Please."

The furiously hungry growl he emitted practically shook the room, and in true fashion, his fingers abandoned her butt and *smack!* he got in one last swat before he hurled her onto the bed and rose to his feet, stripping from the waist down and tossing

both pants and boxers on the end of the bed. Then he climbed aboard, roughly grasping her dress, and shoved the silk fabric until it bunched beneath her chin, leaving her exposed from the belly south.

Those hawk eyes bore down on her, staring deep into her gaze and claiming something she hadn't known she had to give. Claiming her as he yanked her legs apart, positioning that huge cock between them. "Looks like it's time to split you in half, sweetheart."

And Sara laughed out loud, laughed because in that unusual moment, with her butt on fire and her pride pretty burned as well, she was almost certain she'd never been happier in all her life.

And just to think, she hadn't even come. Not yet.

Restraint was a thin thread. She was so wet, so damn sexy, so suddenly submissive...it took all his self-control not to ram full force into her. To fuck her hard like an animal, which was precisely how he felt. Beastly with need.

But he didn't want to hurt her, not unless it involved the palm of his hand spanking that beautiful behind.

Besides, before he could take her, there was the matter of protection to address. Brenden reached behind him, yanking his wallet from his pants pocket and flipping it open to search out his condom stash.

And his fingers found only one. Well, shit...wasn't he the fool?

Lucky fool because at least there was one.

Damn it, he went on an adult bookstore shopping spree over her but forgot to stock his wallet with the basics? Figured—he'd have to make this one really count because bumming an extra from Sara was out of the question. Regular condoms squeezed his cock too tight and the specialty ones he'd purchased sat at home in the closet, unopened. Meanwhile, his cock was growing more enormous with every second Sara

lay wriggling and ready beneath him, that soft body brushing his cock, the delicious scent of her pussy wafting through the air.

She smelled of salt air and sex. Of creamy, luscious piña coladas.

Pure satisfaction and unadulterated pleasure.

Orgasms.

Carelessly, Brenden cast his wallet aside, not giving a damn about his credit cards or cash as he tore the foil packet open and rolled the condom on.

Circling his fingers round his cock, Brenden nestled between those long legs that instantly wrapped around him, locking him to her. His cock head nudged moist heat, probing her clit, testing her and entering slowly.

Her body was no stranger to a man, yet given his size, Brenden had to pause and give her muscles time to adjust. Her heat pulsed around him and it was agony taking matters so slow when all he wanted was to thrust into her. To have her completely. He could hardly bear it.

An inch at a time he slid deeper until he was lodged halfway into her sweet, tight cunt. Relaxed and wet as she was, he suspected she could easily take him the rest of the way. "You ready, sweetheart?"

"Since I was seventeen," she answered on a moan, bucking her hips. Driving him crazy-wild and clenching that pussy as if to draw him in farther. Out of hell and into sheer heaven and he couldn't wait a moment more.

Brenden claimed her wrists, using one hand to pin them above her head, then he propped himself over her and drove into her to the hilt, no mercy.

Beneath him, her body lurched and she cried out, arching her hips for more, more that he gladly provided, thrusting into her again and again. Taking her urgently, their bodies grinding and slamming together. Their minds lost in passion, blurred by pleasure.

Harder. Faster. More.

Brenden couldn't get enough. Couldn't claim her enough.

Harder. Faster. More.

Sara met his every plunge with the rise of her pelvis, silently daring him to be that one man who could split her in half. The one man she'd been waiting for since she was seventeen. The one man who could completely and fully pleasure her.

And Brenden knew that was a tall order to fill, even for him.

No matter the pace and fury of his hips, he just couldn't make her his, not in his mind, at least. Sara was like an elusive butterfly, so out of his reach, and no matter how intensely he took her, how tightly he pinned her wrists and fucked her and promised himself she was his for the taking, he just couldn't catch her because he knew when this was over, it was over. Love 'em and leave 'em, as she'd so callously put it. He was nothing but a distraction, and to his disbelief, he minded. Which only drove him harder, faster...

More, more, more!

Trading his post at her wrists for the pleasure of stroking that fine, red-hot ass, he slid his forefinger between her butt cheeks and sought out her pussy, gathering cream. Dragging her essence across her anus, he plunged into that tight bud, and at her gasp of shock, he immediately forced his middle finger deep as well.

Sara squealed her pleasure to the edge and back as he again drove into her with hand and cock.

Harder, faster, more! More, more, more!

"Brenden...oh God, Brenden!" Sara's body clenched, her every muscle stiff as a board, every muscle, that was, except for the walls of her pussy, which shuddered and convulsed around him. She whimpered and cried and gushed with an orgasm, and her pleasure only increased his.

His cock swelled so hard it hurt, and no sooner than she blissfully melted to the mattress did he let loose, driving into her one final time and blasting off, filling his condom, his cock twitching and sputtering in relief.

Finished, he collapsed atop her, just breathing. Trying to steady his thoughts with every inhale and exhale, but it didn't work because he could smell her. Sweet piña colada and sex and he wanted her all over again. Had the hard cock to prove it, but not the extra condom.

Muttering a foul protest under his breath, he slid his cock from her hot confines, rolling onto his side and gathering Sara into his arms because he just couldn't let her go. Not yet.

"What's the chance you carry extra-large condoms in your purse?" Rather than the laugh he expected, silence responded. Silence laden with heavy breathing. "Sara?"

And that's when he realized. She'd passed out.

He gave her shoulder a shake. "Sara?"

Well shoot, she was out cold. Wouldn't hear a freight train if it rattled by. Probably wouldn't even remember her spanking.

Which meant one thing—she'd need another. Yup, just to be certain she'd learned her lesson—the one about owning up to her true desires—full and well.

"Sara?" He shook her again. Nothing.

Well, what did he know...?

Way he saw it, Brenden figured this was his chance. She'd stolen his car. Now he was going to steal her.

Chapter Five

The aroma of hot coffee and croissants wafted through the air, brilliant sunshine warming her face, sizzling kisses trailing along her back...wet smears of the mouth, sucking in her skin and laving her with his tongue. Moving farther and farther south, over the rounds of her butt, closer to sheer ecstasy.

Either this was the best dream ever or Sara was in heaven. Which was much better than the previous nightmare—being spanked and worse by him, Lord Jerkface of the Giant Cocks.

Even more terrifying? That she'd thoroughly enjoyed having her ass spanked, dream or not.

"Sara, sweetheart," beckoned the unmistakable baritone that seemed instantly capable of marching her to his tune. "Wake up, *mon amour*."

Damn it, what was he doing in her good dream? Now she'd have to wake up.

Or was she already?

Oh shit. Because if she was, she certainly wasn't in her own bed. And whose shirt was this?

Please, please let this be Tara's guest room and Ayden's shirt...though the chances of Tara serving croissants, much less brewing coffee, were slim to none. The girl couldn't heat up leftover pizza without exploding it.

And where was her hangover headache? Nonexistent. Had the spanking been real? The last thing Sara remembered was coming and coming and, wow, coming hard. Good grief, had she sexed herself into oblivion last night?

Lordy, she'd gone and done it again. If she'd up and married him, she deserved to have the people in white coats carry her away.

Sara buried her face in the pillow and groaned, which didn't seem to make the beast behind her very happy. Teeth nipped at her butt, warning. "Sara, are you going to quit pretending and get up now?"

Cocky ass. Maybe she didn't want to. "Go away."

"Or," he continued, that big, sexy hand of his skidding over her bottom, "am I going to have to spank you awake?"

"No!" She whipped over to her back so fast she accidentally plowed into his face with her elbow. "Don't you dare!"

Damn, that had to have hurt.

With barely a wince, he caught the arm that'd assaulted him, those dark eyes turning darker. "What was that?"

"Sorry! I'm sorry." *Please spank me...er, don't. Please don't spank me!* Then she pulled her wrist free and glanced around at the bright, airy room she found herself in, tastefully decorated in simple blues and whites, the breeze of the ocean blowing in through open French doors. French doors—go figure. Add to that croissants and little love nothings—man, did this dude love all things French. "Oh God, I'm in your house, aren't I?"

She was also writhing with nervousness, counting down the seconds until she could flee and fast from this man who sat at her side in nothing but a terry cloth robe, seeming to loom over her with his presence.

"In a roundabout way, yes. I'm renting it for the summer." He motioned to the patio and she couldn't help noticing the way thick vines adorned with pink exotic flowers climbed up lattice on either side, giving it complete privacy. Very ritzy. "If you'll stop acting as if you expect the place to blow up, I prepared you breakfast."

"Breakfast..." From a man who'd spanked her? And wait... "How did I get here? And in this?"

A man's dress shirt, crisp white and only buttoned twice. No bra. No panties.

"I brought you. Changed you. You couldn't sleep in that dress you were wearing. I hung it in the closet."

God, he was presumptuous! Sara bolted upright, throwing her hands up in frustration. "Did ya ever think that maybe I wouldn't be too happy about that?"

"No." Nonetheless he smiled as if so damn pleased with himself and so damn confident in their non-relationship. "Eat. Wake up. Shower if you like. Then we'll fuck again."

Huh? "I don't know what planet you're from, but on mine, men who want to have sex generally use manners."

Those devious eyes sparkled with intent and his grin only widened. "Then I apologize. It is true, *mon amour*, I don't mince words." He leaned forward, claiming one of her wayward curls and twirling it about his finger, fusing their gazes. "But nor do I ever take liberties that aren't mine."

Her stomach crashed to her knees. Mine? What the hell did he mean, mine? "We didn't...uh, get married, did we?"

One dark eyebrow quirked high. "Hell no."

Oh thank God... "Listen, I had a great time—" Discounting her embarrassment, she'd really come hard. Really had thought it the best sex of her life and wouldn't mind a nice breakfast and round two, or even three, in the least. But there was that pesky little issue of her perennial New Year's Eve resolution. No more dating, never anything more than a one-night stand, no matter how into the guy she might be. Especially then. With her track record, *anything* could quickly turn into *something*. Given the nervous way Brenden made her feel... "I really should be heading home."

"No."

No? This again? "Um, okay...maybe you didn't hear me right."

And yet still that black gaze bore into hers and amusement tweaked those angled cheeks. "Oh I did, and I said no. You'll go home when we're finished making love. There, I put it nicely."

He shot her a wicked wink and her stomach did flip-flops.

"But I don't stay at men's houses. I don't have affairs." And why the hell did she sound like a little girl whining? "I can't."

"Why sure you can," he stated so matter-of-fact, so confidently she didn't know how to protest as he slid his hand up her calf and tickled the underside of her knee. Wasn't sure she wanted to, even though she really wanted to.

Now she was just being an idiot. "I really can't do this."

"Who's stopping you?" Those fingers danced higher on her thigh, teasing her maddeningly. "Tell me who and they'll have to deal with me."

"No one."

"No one?"

"Me?" What? Was she asking permission?

No, just scared of how he might deal with her. Maybe hoping he would.

Instead, he simply smiled that devious smile and did something totally unexpected. Reaching into the pocket of his robe, he brought out her sunglasses and unfolded them, sliding her Juicy Coutures on her face. "I thought you might be missing these, sweetheart. Wouldn't want you tripping."

Sara sputtered, no clue what to say to that, no clue how he'd caught on to her silly little secret or why she was letting this man guide her from the bed and onto the deck, to a patio table where bowls of fruit awaited.

No clue at all.

Except...

Nope...nope, she couldn't acknowledge the weird yearning in the pit of her stomach, so she'd stick with no clue at all. Here she was, with a man who'd all but

kidnapped her, overlooking the beach when she'd pointedly expressed to him how much she hated the beach—twice—and what frustrated her the most was how much she wanted this. To be here, in Brenden's presence, the waves crashing in the distance in total betrayal to Andrew.

"You know, I have a hair appointment later. I should just get dressed and go..."

"But breakfast is already made." Whisking aside her concerns, he pulled out her chair, seated her and placed a loving kiss right atop her head, murmuring, "Don't disappoint me, *mon amour*."

The only one she was disappointing was herself. Not to mention Andrew.

He disappeared into the bedroom and a moment later returned with a tray of coffee and croissants. Placing it in front of her, he assumed his seat across from her.

She had to look ridiculous, sitting there over breakfast, her hair a true mess, wearing a man's shirt and pink sunglasses, so Sara whisked the eyewear off and laid them on the table.

Determined to be annoyed with him—her only current defense—she leaned back in her seat and crossed her arms, refusing to eat. "I hate the beach, you remember?"

"That's right." He paused from pouring his coffee, which, damn it, smelled good. "And why, Sara, would you hate such a beautiful thing?"

What? Did he think it was a joke? "When I was fourteen my best friend and I were learning to surf. I wiped out and decided to call it a day, but not Andrew. I think he was trying to impress me." Her voice cracked in heartfelt pain. "Instead, he was caught in a rip tide and drowned. I watched him die."

The confidence he always wore melted from his face. "Sara, I'm sorry." He set aside the pitcher and, for the first time, stared directly into her eyes without looking as if he were going to consume her whole. There, in those pitch-black depths, she saw another side of him. A sensitive, caring side—the same one that'd driven him to prepare this meal. "Really, I am. I lost a brother and I know how badly little reminders can sting. If I'd have known... I mean, you were on Tara's deck last night."

"But then I was also desperate for a distraction, if you remember."

He reached across the table, laying out his hand palm up, as if to offer peace. "We'll go inside, to the dining room. Let me gather this up and —"

Suddenly that was the last thing she wanted.

"I...no, we don't have to." He had prepared this incredible breakfast, after all. And apologized. "It's not like we're swimming."

"You're sure?"

"Sure." She winked away any tension between them. "As long as the coffee's good." After all, she was here, she might as well enjoy the company while it lasted. He was right—the deck was romantic, and these days it wasn't often she found herself in such a position.

Yes, nothing wrong with pretending. Kids did it all the time, so why not take ten, imagine what it would be like to be with Brenden? Really be with him.

After breakfast, she'd promptly return to reality.

She reached for the pitcher, and as her hand wrapped around the handle, he caught her fingers, stroking over her bare nails almost tenderly. "Given your personality, I'm surprised these aren't painted some blinding shade of red."

She pulled her hand free and poured her cup full. "I can't wear nail polish. Lipstick. Any kind of heavy makeup. It makes me feel like a clown. Drives me crazy and I peel and rub it all off." Then, as if she'd somehow melted into the idea of a conversation just as her sugar melted into her coffee, she revealed something she rarely admitted to anyone, much less a man. "Believe it or not, I used to be a terrible tomboy. I have two brothers and I climbed trees and caught frogs better than either of them. Andrew too. He lived next door and we were best buds from the time we could walk. Heck, crawl."

And she'd thought they always would be. Had even begun to think they'd be more...in that childish, teenage crush sort of way. Meant to be, destiny and all that garbage.

Smooth fingers again caressed her nails. “Nothing about you is what it seems.” Nor him, she would argue, because as he slowly sipped his coffee and digested her unexpected revelation, she would swear from that loopy smile that he was smitten with her. “No nail polish and yet last night you were wearing heels every bit of three inches. In bare feet you’re much shorter than I ever expected.”

Sara swiped a croissant and tore off a corner, confirming, “Every bit of five four,” before she popped the bread in her mouth and chewed, daring to add, “Heels make me feel sexy,” despite the food still in her mouth.

“A tomboy in heels.” He shook his head in disbelief then joined her in the indulgence of eating and talking simultaneously. So he wasn’t perfect after all—and now that she noticed, his hair was all disheveled and morning stubble shadowed his jaw. “Somehow I can imagine you all covered in mud in your Sunday best and driving your mom up a wall. Tell me, what happened to your rough and tough side?”

“I still have it, believe you me, but around fourteen I stopped worrying about frogs and started worrying about princes. It was easy to conclude that if I was to ever snag a prince, I needed to look like a princess.”

“And did that work out for you?”

Oh sure, her prince had drowned and left her empty-hearted. But Sara didn’t tell Brenden that. “I snagged some men for sure but came to realize hard and fast that princes exist only in fairy tales.” And bittersweet memories.

Somehow, given the sudden deepening of his gaze, that answer didn’t seem to please him and she could only guess why—he was jealous of the skeletons in her closet—but Sara hardly wanted the conversation to take a wrong turn. Actually, what she wanted was to know more about his dead brother, but asking felt far too intimate. Sipping her coffee, she instead posed a more superficial question, “Who are you, Brenden of the Big Cock?”

He sputtered coffee at her name-calling, never looking more amused.

"Who am I...?" Using one of the cloth napkins to wipe his face and the table before him, he settled back in his chair and contemplated his response. "Okay. Why is that question so difficult to answer?"

"Let's start simple. What do you do?" Sara popped a grape in her mouth, her hands wrapped around her coffee mug as if to never let it go. "Your job."

"I'm a patent lawyer."

"Wow." Being a travel agent, she had the privilege of meeting a wide variety of clients, including her fair share of pretentious patent attorneys who apparently raked in a killing by obtaining patents and trademarks for clients. "It would seem I've scored myself a high-class man."

"You mean a snob?" He feigned offense but quickly laughed it off. "Actually, if you met my family, you'd know that description isn't far off. My father is a patent lawyer, as are my other brothers and a few of my cousins. My grandfather started the firm. It's like a family requirement or something." Then he leaned forward, as if to reveal a secret. "Great money, easy work, but it's not really my thing."

Hmmmm...the rebel of the bunch. "So you have other brothers?"

"Yes, three, two older, one younger, and a little sister. Mom was determined to have a girl." Brenden cleared his throat and looked to the beach, reminiscent, and Sara saw something vulnerable in that faraway gaze. Something all too familiar. "Charles was the oldest, thirteen when he died. I was eleven. We were going to the museum and Kara darted out into traffic. There was this bus... Charles ran after Kara and threw her out of the way, but he wasn't so lucky. The wheels crushed him."

"My God." Sara's heart sank for him. For his family. "Poor Kara, to live with that."

"Kara was only three, a baby really, but that didn't stop Dad from blaming her. After the accident, he wasn't the same. It was as if, if he didn't have Charles...he didn't want any of us, my mother included."

She's also very dear to me for reasons you can never understand.

In that moment Sara instantly forgave Brenden for the phone call the night prior, whatever those reasons might be. "That must've been awful, growing up like that."

Shadows in his eyes, Brenden glanced at her then quickly looked away again, leaving Sara to presume this wasn't something he spoke comfortably of, even as he went on. "I think Charles was the best one of us. Always good. Smart. Perfect. And I just stood there when it happened and did nothing."

Now that was unacceptable. "Brenden, you were just a boy." Sara knew all too well what the guilt was like. Except his was intolerably misplaced. "Don't do that to yourself."

He half sighed, half groaned some sort of acknowledgement and turned the subject. "So you wanted to know what I do, who I am, and being a patent lawyer isn't really my answer. Right now I happen to be opening a string of organic grocery stores up and down the East Coast."

Him, a tree hugger? Somehow she hadn't seen that coming. "Oh, so you're into saving the Earth?"

Very admirable and her respect for him only heightened, though she had a hard time picturing him—a man who drove a red convertible and resided in a house bigger than some of the local motels—in that role.

"No, I mean, that's certainly a big plus—I'm even pledging five percent of profits to saving the rainforests—but me, I'm into making money. Right now people want to go green and business is all about cashing in on the fads." He nodded toward where her Juicy Coutures rested on the table. "For example, those ridiculous sunglasses you wear. Do you have any idea how rich you're making someone?"

Sara didn't respond to that. She didn't know why, she just...didn't.

Then he surprised her by adding, "You can't see, can you?"

"I can see." When she was wearing them. That was all he need concern himself with.

"Sara, I tried them on. They're prescription."

"So?" What was it his business?

Sara bristled, telling herself her annoyance was completely based on his nosiness. Not her embarrassment.

"So why wouldn't you wear normal glasses?" he pressed. "Or contacts? Or simply have laser eye surgery?"

She shifted uneasily, feeling exposed. Caught in the act. Shallow. "Contacts make my eyes itch and surgery didn't take."

"And glasses?"

"I do wear glasses." She cleared her throat, uncertain why she hadn't ended this conversation three questions ago. But then somehow she felt as if he cared, the same way Tara or one of her close friends did and for Sara...she wasn't used to that. Not from a man, not since Andrew, the one and only guy in her life who'd ever loved her for her and not her beauty. Even if they had been kids. "Just not...around people. They make me look old. Weird. I don't have the face for them."

She knew it was stupid, toting around sunglasses and being afraid to wear real ones in front of men, but if there was one thing she'd learned, it was that no guy wanted to look at a real woman. Even when she was married, her husbands wanted the package, not the person. Especially when it came to her, a person who came with many a personality flaw.

Brenden considered her excuses for barely a second then dared her, "Prove it."

He had to be kidding. "Are you asking me to put my glasses on?"

She rolled her eyes at the thought, but she wasn't laughing when he claimed her Juicy Coutures and pocketed them. "Prove it or I keep the sunglasses."

"I can't." God, he had a lot of nerve. "They're in my purse, anyway."

"No worries," he grinned cockily, looking ever so pleased with himself. "I brought it along."

He what? Sara bolted forward, practically slamming her empty coffee cup on the table. "But Tara stashed it in her dresser for me so I wouldn't have to hold it during the wedding."

"Yes, I know. She gave it to me."

Tara was going to get her ass kicked. She'd allowed this man carry her from her reception, unconscious at that, and even handed off her wallet in the process?

Why was she here anyway? With a man she hardly knew, one who'd spanked her at that?

Who spoke to her very soul in French and who'd given her the best orgasm of all time.

Nope. Nope, nope, nope, she was not falling for that. Not again. Need she remind herself of her penchant for translating great sex into crappy relationships? Uh-uh, not again.

Sara stood, ready to say a long-overdue goodbye. "Look, Brenden, as hot as you are, I just can't do this."

As if to confirm that hotness, those eyes shone darker. More intense, even though he played it cool and didn't budge from his spot. "What can't you do?"

As if he didn't know.

Well, since he was going to be so stubborn, she might as well be frank. "Look, Brenden, I have what I call relationship ADHD. I've already been married four times and a fifth time around just isn't happening, despite that fifth bouquet I might have caught. As I already warned you, it's my policy to love 'em and leave 'em and now I'm leaving you. Thanks for breakfast."

"Sit back down, Sara." He issued the command as if she had no choice but to obey, but lucky for him, he followed up with, "Stop worrying. A relationship is hardly what I want from you. Just sex, great sex," he emphasized "Then I expect you to go."

He didn't say why, but he didn't need to. Last night's phone call with his mother had said enough—Sara wasn't the type of woman he'd consider taking home. Just to bed.

"Well then..." Why was she so disappointed? Not her, no way. She was thrilled. Another mind-blowing orgasm before she left—so long as he played by her rules. "Let's fuck. I have a hair appointment at one thirty, so hurry it up. And none of that spanking stuff either, chief."

Deep down though, she didn't really mean it.

Let's fuck? Hurry it up? And none of that spanking stuff either, chief?

Four husbands, for hell's sake? Four?

Sara was frank as a fool. Bolder than a bitch. A devil's lady in an angel's disguise.

And that badass behavior was going to get her in serious trouble. With him.

Her words fuel to flames, arousal flared through Brenden, making him jealous. Making him hard.

How could she have committed to so many men? And why did the fact only serve to intrigue him further?

No other woman made him so crazy. Stirred such violent need in him. When she didn't sit, he stood, his cock bursting from his robe as he claimed her upper arms and hauled her to him.

"Hey! Easy there, chief!" Yet she did not pull away, opting instead to thrust her breasts against his chest and his cock up her long shirt, between the open juncture of her legs.

And he knew. She was doing it on purpose. Firing him up for the fucking.

"Perhaps, sweet Sara," he whispered low in her ear, nestling his cock against that bare pussy, "you should stop worrying about looking like a princess and concentrate harder on behaving like a princess."

Then he'd have some hope of keeping her.

She simply threw her head back and laughed as if to say, "A princess? Her?"

And she was a hundred percent right. What was he thinking?

He wasn't. He was feeling...feeling dangerously obsessed with her.

A day he'd known her, but certain as the sun would rise, he knew one thing about Sara Foster—as her license had read. Sweet her name might be, but Sara possessed a wild spirit. An untamable spirit.

And as sure as he was of that, he was compelled to tame her just the same. To make her into that princess, come hell or high water. If he didn't drown first in the dangerous depths of desire raging through him.

She cocked her head, those silky ringlets tossing about in the ocean's breeze, defiance dancing in those blue eyes almost innocently. She had no idea what she was getting herself into as those shoulders shrugged in his steel grasp and those thighs closed around his cock. "Perhaps regality is beyond me."

The way she lifted that haughty chin? Behaved as if she owned every place she entered...including his car? He daresay she was bred for a king. No wonder those other, mere pauper husbands had lost her. "Perhaps you just need a few more spankings to get you there."

And no matter her previous denial, Sara did not protest. She didn't even cry out as he whirled her roughly around and shoved her into the house, swatting that fine ass in fair warning.

Like a soldier she marched straight to the bed and climbed aboard, disposing of her long shirt and lying on her back, legs spread and propped. Three elegant, ringed fingers dove between that wet pussy, working her clit as she moaned, "Come 'ere, baby."

As if it would be that easy. Of course she didn't want it to be, not really. Not his Sara, who loved last night's spanking, whether she remembered clearly or not.

And he had a feeling she did, just didn't want to admit it.

Brenden drank in the sight of her completely bared body. Those shapely tanned legs. The dip of her flat stomach. Her small, pert breasts.

But there was one body part he couldn't get enough of.

"Roll over," he demanded, and to his grand pleasure, she obeyed.

And there it was—her butt, perfectly round, perfectly Sara. Forget her being a princess, in that moment he officially nicknamed her his Bubble Queen—having the most exquisitely formed ass ever to grace his eyes. As if God had blown bubbles and they landed atop her legs.

And there was only one thing for Brenden to do. He went to his walk-in closet and didn't just pull out one belt, he gathered four of them from his extensive collection. Two exotic alligator belts, one in burgundy, one in blue, a sharkskin belt tanned a rich shade of cognac, and his all-time favorite for spanking—a velvety-smooth black belt made from fine Italian calf suede.

As Sara was about to learn, he was a man who loved his belts. Loved round, feminine asses. And it was time to have some fun with hers.

Chapter Six

Wondering where her lover had disappeared to, Sara propped up on elbows and saw him coming from a mile away. Watched him walk toward her with four belts resting casually over his forearm, and what did she do?

Remained a sitting duck with nary a protest. Forget screaming. Running. Hiding. All those logical things a girl should do when she discovers a man possessing a closet with more belts than clothes. Or shoes for that matter.

Nope, she just lay there. Waiting patiently. Like a moron, wondering what the hell she'd gotten herself into. And why wasn't she getting herself out of it?

It wasn't as if she actually wanted to see where he was going with this. Come on, four belts?

Nope! Not interested! She was simply stunned stupid. Need she mention how turned-on she'd already become? All that pussy-playing and no cock?

Well, crap. Brenden certainly didn't play fair.

"These are some of my favorites." He stroked the belts almost lovingly and placed the four straps casually at the end of the bed, just below her feet, abruptly commanding her, "Back on your belly, Sara."

On her belly? To meekly expose her butt to him? Not on her life!

Provoked into action, she scrambled, making a mad dash for the pillows. Not exactly worthy weapons when he had belts, but as he caught her ankles and hauled her toward him, she hurled one at him. "Stop it! This is insane!" She used another to whack him in the back of the head then the face. "Let me go! I'm leaving!"

Brenden shook off her blows as if she'd hit him with a feather not a feather pillow. "Come now, Sara, calm down. You don't mean that."

"Yes I do!" She refused to be taken so easily! *Whack, whack, whack!* Thrusting the pillow at warp speed, she scrambled to the other side of the huge bed. Escape.

"Settle down!" Brenden arched his elbow to block the blows and came at her like a man determined. "I mean it, sweetheart. Be reasonable."

She couldn't! Wouldn't!

He caught the pillow and wrenched it away, pitching it across the room.

"Sara!" *Umph!* He yanked her flat on her belly, sitting on her back then pinning her arms above her head. "Listen to me, *mon amour*. I'm not going to do anything you don't want me to."

"Good! Glad to hear it!" She twisted, she wriggled, she fought, her breathing heavy and her heart battering her ribs. "Get off me!"

That he did not.

He was simply silent, as if waiting for her to calm, and only when she quit struggling did he release her hands and seductively trail his fingers down her arms, inciting tingles she didn't want to exist. "I need you to trust me, Sara. To give me control." When her only response was to gulp, he stretched his body out along hers, his front lying flat along her back, his elbows propped at her shoulders, his legs cupping hers. That hard cock lunged along her bare bottom, making her want him. Need him. Need all he had to offer, so bad.

"Come on," he urged, "think about it. Did I hurt you when I spanked you?"

Yes! Of course he had!

So why did she all but moan, "No..." while that huge cock slid up and down her crack and his nose tenderly nudged her ear?

"You enjoyed it, didn't you?"

When she didn't immediately provide the answer he demanded, he thrust harder against her butt, driving her wild. Despite all manner of reason, she murmured a definite, "Yes...please, Brenden."

God, how she ached. Her pussy was so wet, her clit throbbing with need, and she was pretty sure her nipples were about to poke holes in the mattress.

Simply put, she was in serious trouble. Because if she knew anything about Brenden, she knew he hadn't even gotten started and she was already on the brink as he kissed and licked her neck. Seduced her into submission.

"Good girl." His cock nudged at her anus, teasing her unmercifully, and hardly able to breathe, Sara cried out, so confused by what her body craved and her mind refused.

"Brenden, please!"

"You like that," he murmured. "Sara, *mon amour*, I need you to stop thinking. Only feel, okay?"

"Okay. I'll try." Who was that talking? Another woman in the room?

Or her, relenting when she should be rebelling?

"No trying." Commanding in true fashion, his voice became firmer. "You swear."

And no matter her fear, she just couldn't deny him. Him or herself. "I swear."

Tears blurred her vision at the promise she didn't know she could keep, yet Brenden pushed her further still, kissing and suckling at her neck, riding her butt as he went on to demand, "And what do you feel right now?"

"I'm scared," she admitted, her butt arching instinctively against him. "Horny."

Out of nowhere, he reached down and pinched her ass. Sara gasped, rearing against him. "Brenden!"

His hand slid upward, petting her tenderly. Stroking her so softly, Sara knew something sinister was to follow. "You're wondering if I'll do that again."

"Of course I am!" Her nails stabbed her palms as she waited, nervous of what would come next. Pleasure...or pain?

Making a sound of approval, he feathered those fingers over her back, surmising, "Your heart is pounding."

She didn't answer, didn't have to as his hands molded her clasped cheeks. "Your muscles are clenching."

Sara nodded, hating and loving the way he read her, knew her, perhaps more than she did herself. Hating and loving those fingers as they dipped around her hips and slid into her moist depths. "And you're very, very wet, Sara dear."

And then his hands were gone again, spreading her silky desire over her hot skin.

"Part of that arousal is the fear, don't you know?" And he took her hair, tenderly moving it to the other side of her neck so he could claim more skin between his teeth. "Like watching a horror flick." And then he bit her, his teeth clamping tingling skin, sending searing pain and pleasure through her.

Sara squeezed her eyes shut, feeling the emotions move through her, the fear, the pain, the satisfaction that was born out of understanding her desire. "I love horror flicks."

He made a primal sound that couldn't depict his delight more.

"I don't want you to move, got it?" Slowly he slid off her, giving her bottom a smart slap as he warned, "Just trust me, Sara, and don't stop."

"Okay."

It was the craziest thing she'd ever agreed to.

Her every muscle tensed in anticipation, uncertain what was to come, anxious for it. Terrified. Not just of the pain, but of the liberties she was allowing this man. She was surrendering her pride, what felt like part of her soul, and she had no idea why. Except that something about him...he made her need to so badly.

Brenden climbed off the bed and grabbed her by her calves, tugging her down until her feet collided with the edge of the mattress then he spread her legs wide. Cool, conditioned air met her hot pussy, and she whimpered, unable to see him but sensing his actions as he picked up a belt. "This is alligator skin. Sleek. Smooth. Cool to the touch."

"Hot on the ass?" He chuckled, and she added, "Not very green of you though."

"Or frugal. But we all have our vices, Sara."

He snapped the belt, making a loud clap, and she ceased to breathe as she awaited the blow to come, only to discover Brenden possessed a completely different intent.

He picked up her left foot, wrapped the belt around her ankle then drew her heel to the bedpost where he threaded the belt through and fastened it tight. Then he circled the bed and applied the same treatment to the other leg until her bottom half was securely spread. Unable to move.

"You have no idea how sexy you look, strapped like this. Alligator skin becomes you." His fingers trailed along her calves, tickling her, and she reared up at the unexpected touch. "And see that, *mon amour*? I haven't hurt you a bit."

"Yet!" And why did she sound so damn eager about it?

With a velvet chuckle, he climbed on the bed and straddled her, bringing her arms behind her and pinning them at the small of her back before securing the third belt around them. "Sharkskin, a personal favorite. Tell me, how does it feel wrapped around these delicate wrists?"

"Soft, but I can feel its texture..." Sara attempt to pull her wrists apart, to test her boundaries. Despite the supple feel of the belt, she found the sharkskin unyielding. Inescapable. "You might loosen it some."

He laughed at that seemingly absurd request.

"And chance you getting away? No, Sara, you're mine for the moment." He scooted down, placed a simple, mind-blowing kiss to her butt and left the bed, and she didn't have a single question in her mind what the fourth belt was for. She was out of limbs to secure. It was time, a thought to which her butt muscles clasped tight.

But rather than begin her spanking, Brenden disappeared altogether, walking away without providing even a single excuse why.

What the heck?

Sara craned her neck, trying to spot him, but strapped down she could only stretch so far. "Brenden?"

Nothing. Not even a footstep or a chuckle.

"Brenden!"

Shit, had he really left her? She started to panic. Where the hell had he gone? And why?

"Brenden!"

Tears threatened and she forced them away, commanding herself to be reasonable. Come on now, what man would leave a woman in this position and not come back?

He was doing this on purpose. A control tactic.

So fine, she could wait. What woman couldn't wait to have her butt spanked...with a belt?

Even so, Sara lay there pondering what it would be. More sharkskin? Or alligator? Didn't they make belts out of snakes?

The thought made her shudder.

Left with no alternative, she waited impatiently, trying to concentrate on anything but the arousal that thrummed higher through her with every second... Waited there, trying to ignore it, thinking how insane this was.

How she could hardly wait for it to begin.

How she should be institutionalized for allowing this to happen in the first place.

How tight her nipples were, her breathing hard and ragged. Her body flushed with heat.

And who knew what he was up to? What else was to come?

What was going on, damn it? Where the hell was her spanking? Where did he get off leaving her tied up and turned-on?

After what seemed like an eternity, the gentle thud of bare footsteps approached.

“Miss me, sweetheart?” he cooed, stepping up to the side of the bed and giving her an eyeful of that huge cock of his. Still hard but now sheathed in a condom.

Before she could put him in his place – well deserved after leaving her so long – his hand splayed her butt cheeks open and he squirted something warm and gooey over her anus.

“Brenden!” Sara gasped, her muscles tensing so tight it almost hurt, but he provided her no time to recover, immediately sliding something slick, rubbery and not his finger deep into her anus. Lodging it there, what she could only conclude to be a butt plug. One just the size of his middle finger. “You could have warned me!”

The tension in her tingling body soared higher, her world swirled, and Sara fisted the hands secured behind her.

Then another thought occurred. A gross one. “That plug better be new!”

“What do you take me for, a slut?” As punishment, he tapped the plug twice and electricity shocked up her spine. “I bought it just for you.”

He had? When? How? They’d only met yesterday, and between kidnapping her and cooking breakfast, he hardly had the time. Which meant he’d bought the plug beforehand. Had been prepared for her. Had even known she would like it, though until yesterday, Sara would’ve completely denied having any such desire.

But come on, need she remind herself there was no such thing as meant to be?

Still, she wriggled at the thought of him in a sex store, thinking of her when she didn’t know he existed.

Well, not entirely.

“There’s more toys as well,” he went on, his finger running along her crack. “When Tara told me about you, I stocked up.”

Sara’s body went tight. Her best friend had sold her out every way possible.

“That bitch.” *I’ll have to thank her.*

“Jealous?” For effect, he again applied pressure to the plug. “No more worries, love, not about Tara. Consider her nothing more than my means to you. Destiny’s pawn...”

“You know,” he pondered, his finger stroking the outer rim of her anus, making her body shudder in orgasmic promise. “It’s always been a fantasy of mine to fuck a woman in the ass. Shame I’m too big...” Then he sighed. “Now, sweet Sara, tell me how you like it when I touch you here...”

Words beyond her, she nodded and pressed her eyes shut. Here it came. Man, was she ready.

“You aren’t talking...” The belt skimmed her bottom, feathering across the already-sensitized skin in warning. The promise of punishment to come. Bittersweet satisfaction.

But instead of the whiz of the leather cascading through the air, the distinct sound of his damn cell phone cut through the edgy silence encompassing them.

And Brenden, always one to provide the unexpected, always one to answer the damn phone at inconvenient moments, dropped the belt on her butt and walked away. “Be right back.”

Incredible. He was actually going to answer it. Leave her waiting yet again.

Difficult as it was, Brenden tore himself away from the writhing Sara and her adorable seizing butt cheeks. Dropping the belt across her backside, he stalked naked across the bedroom and snatched his cell off the dresser.

“Unfucking believable!” But business was business and play was play, and when it came to answering the cell, Brenden’s policy was simple—come Saturday and Sunday he ignored calls without guilt—though not much flair. But he always left his phone on and he always checked the caller ID, and during the workweek he was on absolute duty. No excuses, not even in the form of a hard cock and a gorgeous woman strapped to his bed, ready for the taking. And spanking.

He had too much money on the line.

Flipping his cell open, he verified the caller and exhaled in frustration. Just who he thought—Scott, the manager he'd hired. An altogether self-sufficient guy, so if Scott was calling, any number of things could be wrong. The store's grand opening was already on a tight schedule and if they didn't pass the inspection later this week...

Brenden answered. He had to answer...and calmly. "Yeah, Scott, what is it?"

"This isn't like you, Bren." The confusion in Scott's voice was apparent. "You were supposed to be here ten sharp, remember?"

A reminder to which Brenden glanced at the clock on the wall—eleven fourteen. Already?

Seemed Sara was going to miss that hair appointment for certain.

"I've been held up." Up, as in his dick was so tall he could jab someone's eyes out. Then Brenden did something he hadn't done since grade school. Faked a cough. "I'm not feeling too well—" *Cough, cough, sneeze!* "But I hope to be in later today."

If at all, he added silently, returning his gaze to the sight of those long legs spread wide and secured firmly. That pink, dripping pussy he could taste from memory.

"Everything's cool, right? You don't need me?" He coughed again, just for effect. "You've got the store under control?"

"Not exactly." Scott's tone mirrored his confusion. "Um, look, I guess you forgot, but Custom Security has been hard at work all morning. The guy says he can't finalize the installation without the owner being present. Needs your sig."

Shit!

Damn it, shit, fuck!

For likely the first time in his life, he'd completely and totally blanked on his responsibilities. Just went to show what Sara did to him.

Now what? What choice did he have? Squeezing out the words was like wringing water from a rock. "I'll be there in less than ten," he promised, grinding teeth.

As for Sara? Well, shit.

Clapping the phone shut, Brenden cast it on the dresser. Great, and just when he'd finally pushed her to the brink of submission.

"Brenden..." she whimpered, arching that adorable butt and worming about uneasily. "Brenden, please..."

See that? She was crying out for the very spanking she'd denied wanting only a few minutes prior and, damn it, he couldn't deliver. Not right away, at least. So what now?

This wasn't exactly the type of scenario one simply transformed into a quickie. Besides, after receiving Scott's disappointing reminder, his cock had already started to fall.

But this also wasn't something he could simply stop short. Even if he did, as edgy as she was about the spanking thing, he'd bet cold, hard cash that the moment he untied her and turned his back, she'd be singing a whole new tune. Or rather, her old one. He'd leave and she'd be hiking up her panties and making a mad dash for her hair appointment.

So what? Did he just leave her as she was, tied up?

Hell, maybe a little time to simmer would do her good. Look at how frenzied she'd become while waiting for him to return with the butt plug. Three minutes and she was practically begging him.

Practically, but not quite.

Give her twenty minutes and she'd be complacent as hell. Distance makes the heart grow fonder, right? Not that his heart was involved in this—though with a wonderful and wild woman like her, he wished it could be. Life would never be boring, that's for sure.

So it was settled. He'd leave her just as is.

It wasn't as if he'd be gone too long. The store was right around the block, less than two minutes away. He'd zip over, sign what needed signed, and *bam!* he'd be back to feed her raging fire – which by then promised to be a complete inferno of need.

Hell, maybe this wasn't such a bad thing after all.

"I'll be there in less than ten."

Where the fuck did he think he was going?

Hot, throbbing desire controlled her every ragged breath and fear took on a whole new meaning, no longer that pinnacle of the unknown, that rib-burning anticipation of what was to come, but what wasn't.

Dread. Dread and longing.

Brenden couldn't just leave her like this...could he? But the asshole had answered the phone. Not for the first time either.

"Brenden?" Oh God, Sara couldn't stop squirming against the bonds that held her, wiggling her butt all around, aching and searching for relief. Relief that would only come at his hands because hers were bound. Firmly.

"Brenden?" she cried out, craning her neck one way then the other. Damn it, if only she could see behind her! From this angle she had an eagle-eye view of the patio on the left and the bedroom door to the right, but not the bathroom or closet. Well, at least if he'd truly left her she'd know it.

Unless he leapt out a window. "Brenden, get back here! Brenden!" Because God help her, if he didn't give her an orgasm and soon, she'd shove him out that window herself!

She heard shuffling in the closet, frantic movement. As if he were searching, but for what? Another butt plug? Perhaps a bigger one?

At the thought, her cunt convulsed, grasping at air. Needing. So near to explosion...

"Brenden!" The footsteps behind her echoed the pounding in her heart. "Brenden!"

“Patience, *mon amour*.” Spoken so calmly. Reasonably. Ha! “I haven’t gone anywhere yet.”

Yet?

He appeared bedside—khakis on. Dress shirt buttoned. Hair combed. Briefcase and keys in hand. Jesus, he looked as though he’d jumped out of a Land’s End catalog.

Oh God. He really was leaving! “What are you doing? You can’t just go.”

Answering the phone had been offensive enough! Last time he’d done that she’d stolen his car, and if he thought she’d be here when he got back—

But then he knew she would, she quickly realized as he chuckled devilishly and leaned between her legs, planting one long vibrating kiss against her pussy.

Knew because he wasn’t setting her loose.

She nearly came at the lingering wet touch of his lips, melting into a pile of pathetic need. “Brenden, don’t do this. Please. Please.”

She wanted to plead with him to spank her. To smack her butt raw with that belt. To fuck her ass with that big cock. Anything he wanted, no matter how crude, how painful, just so long as he stayed. Eased this obsession flushing through her body. Making her crazy.

Those smooth, skilled fingers of his whisked over her bottom, enticing tingles, making her clench her rectum around the butt plug buried deep within, and Sara whimpered with helplessness. “Brenden...please.”

But she knew it would take more than a simple please.

She was completely at his mercy. Maybe if she really begged, really pleaded, he wouldn’t go.

But when she opened her mouth, nothing came out. She simply couldn’t, not in the way he silently demanded.

“I won’t be long at all, *mon amour*. Twenty minutes, tops.” Without warning, that gentle caress transformed and he smacked her ass, even harder the second time, letting

her know he meant it. "Think about me while I'm gone. Me and nothing else, you understand?"

It was all she could do to nod her head, tears brimming her eyes, frustration exploding throughout her. She couldn't wait that long! Wouldn't!

Who the hell did he think he was?

Then just like that, the bastard walked out and left her there, straining at the belts, twisting her wrists and pulling her ankles, determined he not get away with this. Determined and yet all the while mentally on her knees.

Little did he know that she wasn't the type of gal to have her buttons pushed without pushing back. Uh-uh, not Sara.

Not even a shark could tame her.

Chapter Seven

"You have to hit the red button twice, got it?"

How the—

It couldn't be her. Couldn't. She was strapped to his bed. Securely—with two expensive, unyielding exotic alligator belts. Wrists bound *tightly* behind her back with sharkskin. He'd barely been gone fifteen minutes.

But it was her, Juicy Couture sunglasses and all. Strutting down the street as though she owned it.

Impossible! How the hell had she gotten loose? And wasn't that one of his belts? Yes! The burgundy one he'd used on her left ankle. And she'd ripped the sleeves off one of his good shirts. The black one, which now grazed her thighs, adorned by the belt, serving as some sort of ridiculous dress in combination with those patent pink heels.

The door to the store hung wide open, he was practically standing in it, and there she went, right past him as if he didn't exist.

"You listening?" The installation guy, Chuck as his nametag read, went about punching numbers in the keypad. "The red button twice, you see? If you don't hit the red button—"

What was she up to? Was she toying with him?

"Mr. Morgan?"

"Yeah, yeah, got it." Brenden's head did a complete one-eighty as Sara disappeared around the corner. "The green button."

"Red."

"Excuse me." She wasn't escaping that easily, not with his two-hundred-dollar belt!

The security system practically a planet away, Brenden darted out the open door and down the street, running faster and faster with every step, determined to catch up with her and haul her ass back to his bed.

The farther he ran the harder his heart thudded, pounding in his ears, pumping adrenaline through his blood.

"Sara!" Around the corner he sprinted and she was nowhere in sight.

Gone, vanished into thin air.

Shit! How the hell could he have lost her? He didn't even have her number!

Damn it! "Sara!"

His chest heaved and he stood there angry and baffled and not sure losing a woman had ever felt so disappointing.

"Oh Brenden..."

What the —

He whirled around and there she was, leaning coolly against the brick building, one knee bent and one foot solid on the ground, toying with a nail as if she'd been there all along. And he supposed she had. In his fear over losing her, he must've run right past her.

"Sara." Never had a name sounded sweeter than hers...even if it did belong to a woman who was anything but.

"Going somewhere?" And that mouth quirked impishly, instantly transforming his rushing blood into rushing arousal.

"I could ask you the same thing." Noting reddened wrists, he closed the distance between them in three seconds flat, propping a hand above her head, not quite pinning her, but prepared to should she try to escape. Now that he knew what losing her felt like, she wouldn't get away twice. "Mind sharing how you managed your escape?"

Her lips simply played into a wide grin, the expression in her eyes masked by those golden lenses. "Trust me, Brenden, when I say no man can tie me down for long."

He'd keep that in mind, but when it came to her, nothing was stopping him. "You enjoy playing with fire, don't you?"

And he liked dishing it out. He supposed that was because he so enjoyed her. Why he was so hard right now, ready to burst free from his pants and claim her body on this very public street, cars zipping by and all.

She tipped her head forward, letting her sunglasses slide down her nose and granting him a pointed stare. "It's all about the fear. The rush. This guy I know taught me that."

"Oh yeah?" He had a helluva lot more to teach her too.

Brenden lunged closer, pressing his pelvis against hers, loving the way the silk fabric of his boxers rubbed his erection. The way she rubbed him.

"But, Brenden, dear?" she went on, scooting against him in the most tempting manner. "The rush is only fun when it pays off in the end. You left me hanging."

And with that statement his little butterfly ducked free, and by the time he dove to catch her, she'd skipped several steps out of his reach, now sauntering coolly in the direction of his store.

As if he'd let her slip away so easily.

Brenden trailed close behind, thinking she had no idea she was walking right into his trap. "How'd you find me anyway, Sara?"

"I didn't. I walked around the block. Figured you'd find me, eventually."

"And then what?"

"You have to ask?" She tossed a cool glance over her shoulder and upped her speed, teasing him intentionally.

Brenden pretended not to care. Pretended, but oh how he cared. How he wanted the pert little ass that mocked him with every step. To turn her over and drive into her from behind, bending her to his will. To cup each of those breasts in hand and squeeze until she cried his name and his alone. Until he'd completely claimed her. All of her.

"I'm almost done at the store." As though it much mattered. Right about now, smart business man that he was, he'd sign off on spoiled salmon and think he'd been handed a good deal so long as he was free. Free to fuck her. "Give me five minutes and we'll go back to my house. Trust me, the wait'll pay off."

But he knew his Sara wasn't going to contend with five minutes, no more than he.

And sure enough... "All work and no play makes Sara sad." She pouted, goading him with that wagging butt.

"Well, then she'd better scream with happiness," he warned, loping forward and claiming her by the shoulders just as they approached the front entrance of his store. "Not another word," he warned. "Just smile pretty."

Fingers tight, he drove her inside, past Chuck, who called out, "Hey, we gonna finish this up or what?"

Brenden simply gave a jerky nod and rushed by him, down the aisle of organic cereals, past the freezer section and through swinging doors that led to Scott's office where he finally released her and locked them in.

"Over the desk, now."

He yanked out his wallet, flipped it open and fished out a condom.

"Excuse me?" The little fool whisked off those glasses and batted those forget-me-not eyes, talking like a true Southerner, sauce and all. "Why, sir, whyever would you speak to me in such a manner?"

"Whyever?" With an amused chuckle, Brenden unzipped and suited up, promptly closing the distance between them with his eager erection. "You were told to wait at the apartment. Now you're being told to get that ass in the air. Unless..." His finger played along the open neckline of his shirt, caressing the gentle swell of her left breast. Feeling the powerful rise and fall of her every breath, the way she wanted him and how it made her heart pound. "You'd rather wait? Than please your man?"

Her man? He had no idea why saying that sounded so good, but at that daring insinuation, he fully expected a reminder that he was not. And never would be.

A reminder that didn't come.

Instead, she seemed to melt beneath his very touch. Instantly his.

"No, sir," she saluted, still playing the seductive belle as she wriggled off her panties and bent over, propping her elbows on the desk and stationing her legs wide with that delectable derriere high in the air.

"My beautiful Bubble Queen." It took all his willpower not to come right then and there, staring at her in such a submissive position, that mind-blowing butt being practically served up on a platter.

"Huh?"

"I'll explain later." Moving behind her, he ran a hand over pale, baby-soft skin, delving between her ass cheeks to explore, and that's when Brenden lost his cool. Entirely.

Because she still had the plug in. Had dressed and sauntered all the way down here, thinking of sex, thinking of him.

All matter of manners flew out the window and he claimed her by the hips, thrusting the shirt she wore around the belt at her waist.

Running one finger over the rubber plug lodged in her anus, he spread her slick folds open, meeting her entrance with the head of his cock.

Beneath him, he felt her tense, ready herself, and Brenden just couldn't hold back.

"Damn, you're incredible." One full, powerful thrust and she rammed against the desk as his cock took her to the hilt. Sara had never known such completion. Had never known it was possible to feel so full of a man, taken so completely with no room left for wanting. "Incredible and all mine."

Not even a second passed and he was retreating then blasting into her once again, so furiously that Sara had to brace herself. Her unaccustomed body both protested and pleased at the sudden, rather immense invasion. "Brenden!"

He stalled deep inside her. "All mine, right?"

His finger pressed against the butt plug she'd chosen to leave in—having persuaded herself it just wasn't something a girl removed on her own—and her whole world shook.

"All yours," she whimpered, refusing all manner of logic. Now wasn't the time to worry over shattered resolutions.

"Say it again," he demanded, cruelly holding back his next thrust. "Louder."

"All yours!" She needed him so badly she ached. So badly she'd say anything. Her pussy clamped around thick cock, squeezing and silently begging for action. "All yours..."

But it wasn't enough, not for him, not for her. "Say my name." *Thwack!* He abandoned her rectum to smack her ass then promptly returned the finger to its resting place on the plug, applying pressure. "Say it like you mean it."

Her anus seized at the plug, somehow wanting more, and her cunt clenched so tight his cock was nearly forced out. That wouldn't do, not at all. Not with the way she needed him, needed this.

After the way he'd strapped her to the bed and left her wanting, the only thing that would save her sanity was one big orgasm, straight from the source. Him, her man of many pleasures—including the big cock demanding the willingness of her body.

"I'm yours, Brenden..." Then it hit her—she didn't even know this man's last name. Her face flushed hot at the searing reality of it. She was pledging to be his, yet she hadn't a clue who he was. Still, she couldn't shut her mouth. "I'm yours."

"Morgan," he filled her in, starting to slowly stroke in the tight glove of her cunt. "Brenden Morgan. Say it."

"I'm yours, Brenden Morgan." And, God, how she needed him. Needed more.

Brenden Morgan, she again chanted silently.

Involuntarily, her pussy contracted even tighter, holding him as if to never let go. He moved at a turtle's pace, rocking short hip pumps back and forth.

"Relax," he encouraged. "Give yourself to me."

God, how foolish she was.

Those words represented more than he'd ever realize, but Sara was helpless to stop it. Mentally she willed her pelvic muscles to loosen, welcoming his huge rod as he began taking her more rapidly, his hips jamming against her butt over and over.

He was so big, fucking her so hard and fast and thoroughly. Her body cried out in pleasure it'd never known, milking his cock, wanting desperately to hold on to this, the intense way he made her feel.

His powerful thrusts nearly drove her on top of the desk, away from him, but not one to be thwarted, Brenden took her by the hair, his fingers tangling around the loose locks, and he pinned her face to the desk, holding her there.

Fucked her harder. Took more than she had to give.

But she gave it anyway. Gave it because she had to.

Brenden Morgan.

Never had a man been so rough with her. So forceful. He pulled at her scalp, kept her positioned submissively, and his cock owned her body. Every thrust commanded her higher, and Sara soared on the wings of his desire, feeling truly wanted, as if her very own caveman had hauled her to his cave and was making his claim. Making her his.

From deep within, a sudden, intense orgasm burst, shattering her into little bits of herself, and as she came—came and came and came—Sara knew that she'd never be the same.

Husbands could be cast aside. Forgotten. Cavemen couldn't.

For no matter her very sane protests, in that moment of utter insanity she truly belonged to this man who could drive her to the pinnacle and keep her there, crying out, begging for more, milking her pleasure like a babe at a mother's breast.

Then all at once he finished it, pulled back and buried himself so deep her world went dark, and in that instant she forgot who she was. Who he was.

Because names didn't matter.

For once in her life, she stopped thinking and only felt. Him, her, the way she shuddered in the aftermath of her climax. The way the condom filled with heat, branded her very soul.

The way he held her as if he'd never let her go and she didn't want him to.

And just as quickly it was over. Reality returned.

"God, you're beautiful." He rested over her body, still grasping her hair and holding her there as he planted a simple kiss between her shoulder blades. "I can't believe you left it in."

How romantic. "Just what a woman wants to talk about after great sex."

"So what do you want to talk about?"

Sara shook her head, blinking back tears and forcing a smile. She was being silly. Come on now, branded her soul? If she even had one.

This was why she never had flings. She fancied herself in love with every man who passed by. Then promptly left them.

But he was no man, some imp in the back of her head reminded her, he was a caveman.

God, she was hopeless. She really ought to go home and as far away from him as possible. ASAP.

But as yet another kiss lingered across her back, and he murmured, "Sara, you delighted me greatly." Then he tightened his clutch on her, his voice deepening with

intent. "Now, Sara, say you'll delight me even more. Leave it in. Go back to my apartment, to my bed, and wait for me there. Please."

That final word was laden with such hope, how could she deny him? Deny herself?

"Brenden..." Did she follow her heart, or follow her head?

And why did it seem both were screaming *yes!*? Her apartment in Bethesda, Maryland, was easily a three-hour drive—she'd already missed her hair appointment. For God's sake, considering the busy travel season, her boss had hardly been enthusiastic about giving her today off. But to take tomorrow too, unscheduled?

But she was sick. In the head—and the heart—damn Brenden.

"Shhh. Don't ruin this with protests. Just one more night."

After all, considering the distance between here and home, it wasn't as if she could come back to visit anytime soon...

Not that she would come back.

"Just one more night," she echoed, and he groaned with satisfaction, releasing her hair and standing, leaving her sprawled across the desk in practical shock at her own behavior. "But first thing in the morning, I leave." Her body near limp, she rolled over to look him in the eyes, to really mean it, dark and demanding as his gaze was. "And you don't try to stop me."

"Tonight we'll have dinner and wine, my treat." He pulled her onto her feet then like a true gentleman knelt before her and tugged the panties hooked around her ankles up, his fingers playing along her thighs and inciting desire all over again. "I want you to go home, shower and rest. Perhaps DVR a movie for us."

God, she was weak. But at the thought of a movie, all she could think to say was, "A horror flick?" One that would make her scream and jump with fear. Just as his belts would.

Brenden chuckled and rose, his long body stretching to full height along hers. Making her feel so small. Any protests she had, insignificant.

“Anything you want. Just leave it in.” He planted one last kiss to her forehead, his mouth as firm as his words. “And don’t disappear on me, not yet.”

Chapter Eight

Ten to one Brenden would bring home something French for dinner. At the very least French wine. She'd bet a new purse on it.

If anything, he'd better bring home the notion to remove this plug and grant her a massive orgasm because Sara couldn't take much more.

She'd dealt with it the entire way here, all through her shower, even as she combed her hair and called her boss. There it was, with every step she took, every miniscule move of her butt muscles, rubbing deep within, reminding her of him. Of his hands on her ass. Of his unfulfilled fantasy to take a girl there.

How she wished she could give that to him. Be the one.

Because suddenly she wanted it too, his cock in her ass, claiming all of her.

Yup, that damn plug might as well be lodged in her ear, poking at her brain, because she was right back to square one. Aching and needing him all over again, the same way it had driven her to wrestle her wrists free of that sharkskin belt earlier.

Henceforth, she made it her solid vow not to move until he walked in the door.

Wrapped in one of his terrycloth robes that she'd garnered from yet another raid on his closet, Sara lay draped across the bed sideways, her head hanging off the edge. The blood had long since rushed to her brain—what a relief for her pussy—and through the open doors the hot sun beat in, threatening to warm her right out of the robe, her only saving grace the breezes that whipped and gradually dried her loose hair.

She could have lay there like that forever, breathing gently, smelling the exotic flowers from the patio, letting her eyes slowly open and close as she pleased, thinking of Brenden. Allowing herself to wonder about him, who he was, what made him tick.

What did she know about this man who seemed able to command her libido with the snap of his fingers? The snap of his belt?

That he was a patent lawyer who came from a stuffy family and spoke several languages. That he was opening an organic store—or stores, hadn't he said?—and didn't believe in following trends unless it was to make him money.

That he was highly sexual. Highly bossy at times.

And he owned a billion belts and loved all things French and could make her melt with that dark intense gaze.

That he blamed himself for his brother's death as she did Andrew's—though his guilt was neither logical nor justifiable just as she knew, deep in her heart, neither was hers.

And somewhere between spanking her and seducing her, he'd managed to touch her deeper than any man had. Break her out of a shell she hadn't known existed. Three days ago, she would've been revolted at the idea of a man taking a belt to her in any fashion. Mortified by the prospect of being spanked.

Now she craved it. Recognized needs she'd ignored all too long.

It wasn't that Brenden was dominating her, it was that he was freeing her, the part of her that'd been trapped inside. The part of her that somehow needed a guy who would take command and strip her of control. The part of her that craved being manhandled. Pain with her pleasure.

Right or wrong, she hungered for the way he treated her, in the bedroom at least.

And even out of it, she was drawn to him. On some unspoken emotional level she felt connected with him.

With that traitorous thought, the unavoidable was confirmed. She was doing it again. Falling and fast, and if she were smart, she'd get the hell out of Dodge before—

She hadn't even finished the thought and footsteps were echoing throughout the house. He was back.

"You better be home!" he called out. "Oh *mon amour*?"

Just for fun she didn't answer. She liked tempting the beast, teasing him, and when he least expected, giving him what he wanted just because she could. That was her control.

A moment later he came stalking into the room and around the corner of the bed, dropping to his knees before her. "Cat got your tongue?"

No, he did, it seemed, as he claimed her mouth and kissed her deeply, upside down as she was. Those lips molded hers as his tongue plunged past her teeth and his fingers threaded through her hair, tugging to ease her up toward him.

Harder he kissed her, faster until she couldn't breathe from the intensity of it. Until she was going lightheaded and breaking away to steal little gasps of air between his attacks.

Spiderman had nothing on this. On her hero.

The way his tongue stroked hers, so softly yet demanding. The way his teeth grazed her lips intentionally, displaying his carnal appetite. The way he splayed open the robe and cupped her breasts, molding them beneath his possessing grasp.

The way she wanted him. Needed him.

And just when she thought she might cream her panties if he kissed her another second, he groaned with finality and broke away, leaving her lying there, breathing heavy with desire, her ass practically pulsing around the plug. Her body on fire.

"No more." He stood and stripped her robe open, taking her beneath the underarms, spinning Sara over. Smooth hands shoved the garment down, roughly tugging it off then traveling over her back.

He grasped her bottom, squeezed, and as she whimpered in anticipation, his fingers glided between her butt cheeks and checked for the plug's presence. "Such a good girl." He made a noise of satisfaction, pulling the rubber toy from her body and leaving her with an empty feeling. "Yet so bad."

He slapped her ass goodbye, single-handedly turning her back over and hauling her to sitting. The room spun and blurred from the rush of blood that dropped from her head back to her toes. Not to mention her pussy. "I'll dispose of this and we should eat. And then," he murmured, planting a kiss atop her head, "and then."

With that lingering promise he disappeared into the bathroom and Sara scrambled from the bed, anxious to follow him but surprisingly unsteady on her feet. "Whoa."

Teach her to kiss upside down. The man affected her so powerfully she was still dizzy.

Hands at her sides for balance, she eased back down, sitting on the edge of the mattress. She listened to the sound of water running in the next room and watched Brenden waltz onward to the kitchen with a wink, leaving her alone to repair her robe and fluff her hair and twiddle anxiously until the time came that she decided her head had cleared enough to stand again.

And then she was off, curious to see whether she'd won that new purse or not.

She found him in the dining area, an airy, bright room decorated in whites and creams that adjoined the kitchen. On the table, he was setting out two wineglasses amongst fine china and in the middle towered a huge bouquet of roses. Red roses that hadn't been there earlier, and for a moment Sara forgot to breathe. Again.

But just for a moment because then Brenden had the nerve to ask, "Tell me, what did it feel like, walking around with that plug in?"

Despite the way her empty butt clenched at the reminder, she refused to answer such a naughty question in front of a fine—hopefully French—meal. "I'll tell you when you tell me why you called me Bubble Queen." Pretending not to notice the roses—after all, he'd never said they were for her—she sat down and crossed her legs. "What are we drinking?"

"I picked up a nice bottle of white." Which he removed from a brown paper bag then nodded his head toward the bouquet. "They're for you."

And just when the romanticism of such a gesture had nearly been ruined by his disregard, he glanced up from pulling the cork and met her gaze. Something unspoken sparkled in those dark, dangerous depths. Something tender and hopeful. Something Brenden was as reluctant to reveal as she was to receive.

"Thank you." Warmed into a smile, she reached up to caress a crimson petal. "They're beautiful."

He simply nodded.

"So what's for dinner?"

Out of the second, much larger brown paper bag he hauled two takeout containers. "Chinese."

"Really? Somehow I expected French." Damn, no purse for her! And wasn't he a universal guy? "Hey," she ventured as he scooped rice onto each of their plates. "Say something to me in Latin."

"*Vos es decorus, meus diligo,*" he rolled off his tongue effortlessly then gave a shrug and sat across from her, once again meeting her with that all-consuming gaze as he poured their wine.

Without even knowing what he said, Sara tingled, downright turned-on, not physically but in a way she couldn't really describe. "Say something else, in French this time."

The corner of his mouth quirked. "Only for you, love. *Il sera difficile d'oublier vos yeux de myosotis des marais, mon amour.*"

It was beautiful, incredible. Made her heart flutter. The meaning of his words was inconsequential, but still, part of her wanted to know. "Okay, translate."

"No," he promptly denied her, abruptly aloof as he dished saucy red chicken over their rice. "Maybe one day but not yet."

One day. Right. As if they had a one day.

Sara stuffed a fork in her food and stirred it around, mixing the sauce and chicken. "How'd you learn to speak all those languages?"

"My parents...ahem..." Having just taken a mouthful, he motioned that he needed to swallow before he continued and Sara took that as her opportunity to steal a bite herself. The dish was sweet but spicy and absolutely delicious, so she ventured a second forkful as he continued on. "My father wouldn't have tolerated anything less. After Charles died, it was as if we were no longer his children but possessions to be polished and shined. We were all sent to private schools with tutors afterward. Learning was our lives." An ironic laugh burst forth. "How I hated French. To me, it was the equivalent of nails on a chalkboard."

No wonder she was out a purse. Boy, had she pegged him wrong. "I didn't realize. Why do you still use it then? Keep calling me *mon amour*?"

"I figured you like it, being a travel agent and all," he admitted with a mischievous grin. "But perhaps old habits die hard."

"Oh?"

"My father might have forced us to learn the language, but he didn't speak a word. My mother did, fluently. During those long and boring afternoons studying, she would sneak us jokes and reasons to laugh as if she were feeding a dog scraps under the table." His chin lifted as if in resistance. "Unlike you, I wouldn't have known how to climb a tree, much less catch a frog."

She swallowed but not food. Sadness.

"That's terrible..." Sara set her fork down, her heart sinking for him. His life didn't sound like much fun to her, a girl who'd spent her childhood covered in mud and hanging from limbs and always skipping her chores and reading. "So all work and no play makes Brenden a very smart boy. No wonder you're willing to abandon hot sex over a phone call."

"So now being spanked is hot, is it?" He winked, but never one to give a man an edge, Sara was forced to ignore that comment entirely and any lightheartedness he'd

ventured melted away. "No play makes Brenden a very perfect, unhappy boy, but a very rich man. I'd trade with you in a heartbeat."

Sadly, she wouldn't do the same. With a sudden, newfound appreciation for her pesky mom and dorky dad whose only hope in the world was to have a few grandkids, Sara felt her eyes well up. Batting away embarrassing emotion, Sara rushed a piece of spicy chicken.

"You okay?"

Sara coughed and covered her mouth with her hand. "Got a big piece of pepper or something. So you never played sports or anything?"

With a piercing look of suspicion, Brenden went on. "Golf, also my father's choice, and how I despised wearing plaid and whacking little balls. One summer, when I was ten, I told him so, courtesy of a club through a window. I spent the following two weeks in my room with nothing but books for company."

"That's harsh."

Brenden took a bite, shrugging off his dreadful childhood as if it were just some old story. "Growing up, there was never any room in our lives for acting out. Being who we wanted to be. Slinging clubs through glass. My father created our box and we had better fit in it. The only one of us who ever had the courage to take her own path is my baby sister. Ironical really...all my mother ever wanted was a sweet little girl, but she sure didn't get one. No one has ever or ever will tell Kara what to do. My father pushed her until he pushed her away completely. Hell, maybe that's what he wanted."

"So you don't see her anymore?"

"By her choice. Can you believe she's stripping right now to pay her way through college? Refuses to take my help, much less my mother's. Refuses to take our calls. I don't know...maybe she just needs space."

From what she knew of him and his family, either Kara was very smart or very stupid. "At least she's going to college," Sara suggested. "She could be doing worse things with the money."

Brenden didn't look so sure. "At any rate, right or wrong, I kinda admire her. Sometimes I want to, but I could never just walk away as she has. To tell you the truth, I feel too sorry for my parents. My father is a miserable wretch and Mother spends every waking moment trying to extract her happiness through her children. But sometimes I wish..." Those dark eyes took on a faraway look. "I wish I had her nerve."

She was surprised to hear him say that, even more surprised by her emotional reaction. This wonderful man had no business feeling bad about himself. "You know, you have something even better. What Kara's doing, it's far easier to run than to face your demons."

That cracked a smile. "Well, I wouldn't quite call Dad a demon."

"And besides, you're all grown up now. It's not like you're their puppet, forced to dance to their tune, like you were as a kid." But though unvoiced, Sara could sense he still felt he was—old habits die hard, right?—and she felt compelled to prove him wrong. What she saw before her was a strong, independent man tough enough to stick it out and love someone, even if it hurt. "You're here, aren't you? Opening your stores. Taking your vacation. Seeing—" Sara nearly choked on her chicken at the word, rushing to correct herself. "Having sex with me, someone your mother wouldn't like, right?"

A question to which he half laughed and she didn't miss the irony in those chuckles, even though he outright avoided the question. "The old man would like to see me caned for taking the summer off, but you're right. I stopped being a boy a long time ago. It's my money, my life. My working vacation."

"See?" But who the hell took a working vacation? Only him. There was something sad and lonely about that and she had to wonder why. Sure, he could be cocky, in more ways than one, but Brenden was a good guy. Damn sexy. Why was he still single?

Sara sipped at her wine, wondering where to take this conversation next. She could ask him where he really lived, but then she remembered the brand new bottle of lavender bubble bath she'd found on the vanity earlier while preparing to shower. How

expensive it'd smelled – able to relax her with one whiff. Piña Colada Passion might be her preferred body spray, but lavender was her favorite scent to soak in after a long, hard day. But uncertain who it belonged to, she hadn't dared crack the seal. "So...you know my sordid past. What about –"

"About your sordid past," he interrupted. "I've been wondering how a woman so young –"

Now it was her turn to interfere. "How a woman so young has gone through so many men?" The question made her flush hot. "I don't know, not really. I mean, I never filed for divorce without good incentive, but I don't think I ever wanted any of my relationships enough to make them work. Maybe I did at first...but something was missing. I suppose I'm just not the settling-down type."

"Or," he suggested, "you married all the wrong men for all the wrong reasons."

"Maybe." She didn't say it out loud, but a secret part of her had always been certain, had Andrew not drowned, that they would've lived happily ever after. So maybe that forever part of her died with him. "What about you? Ever been married? Had any serious relationships?"

"No, none."

"None? Come on," she pressed. If she'd been to the altar four times, he at least had to have a serious girlfriend in the past. "You've never been in love?"

He snickered at the thought and waved off the notion as if his bachelorism had been long since settled. "I've tried, but I'm just not attracted to the type of women my family expects me to marry."

"What kind is that?" she asked over a bite of chicken, trying to shove the half-eaten food to the side of her mouth as she chewed.

"The perfect kind."

Translation – not one like her. Unequivocally, if he married, it'd be to a woman with table manners. Mommy dearest wouldn't tolerate less, though she had caught Brenden with a mouthful once or twice.

Who the heck had invented the concept of dinner and conversation anyway?

Oh well.

Raising her eyebrows, Sara made a *Hmmm?* sound, encouraging him to continue as she quickly stuffed in another bite, determined to chew and swallow before he finished talking.

"The kind who'll want kids," he all but groaned. "You know. Some snooty socialite from a good family who'll throw herself into Mommy 'N' Me yoga and trot around in the latest fashions and serve on charity boards and hop to my mother's beck and call."

She swallowed just in time. "You don't want kids?"

"Not particularly. I'd just screw 'em up. You?"

"There was a time I thought I did want a family, even married a man simply because he'd make a good father, but then I realized...my parents wanted me to have kids, not me. I was trying to fit myself into a box."

"A box. You too, huh?" His fingers spun the stem of his wineglass. "We spend our lives doing that, don't we? Trying to fit into someone else's definition of who we are instead of just being us." Then he looked up at her, that intense shimmering gaze primed to devour her whole. "I like the just you, Sara, a lot. Much as you could drive a man nuts."

Even the just her who talked with her mouth full? How she wanted to ask but didn't dare. Nor did she dare another bite of food, not after what he'd just said.

It was sweet. Touching.

Everything she'd always wanted to hear.

And too close, too damn close to being something a boyfriend would say. That, topped with the flowers, and Sara knew from the deepening in her heart that she'd

allowed this little fling to transform into an extended date. Her emotions to get involved.

And that wouldn't do, not at all.

She shoved her plate aside, picked up her wine as she relaxed back in the chair, the movement immediately reminding her of all the attention her rear end had recently received.

And wasn't that what this was all about? It was time to stop talking, and just to make sure she stayed on track, she gave her butt a wriggle. Squeezed those loosened ass muscles and reminded her pussy just who was in charge.

"So, Sara, I understand you're a travel agent?"

Anticipation creeping in, Sara finished off her wine, all the while flexing her butt. Thinking of those belts. Being spanked. Still she answered, and even managed to sound half normal. "I figure if I can't afford to gallivant around the world, I can at least help others do so."

"Really." Brenden took another bite, impressing her with his ability to chew and talk and make her feel at ease and on edge all at the same time. "And if there was one place you could go?"

Despite her longtime fantasy of having an international affair with a sexy foreigner, the trouble with that question was deep in her heart she had a feeling she'd already arrived. She ought to get the hell out of here and fast.

Right after she had her hot sex one last time.

Sara set her empty wineglass down and stood, offering him her hand. "I want to safari in Australia. Tour castles in Europe. Ski in Scandinavia. But at the moment, there's no one place I want to go more than your bed." Dropping to her knees on the plush carpet before him, Sara trailed her fingers over his zipper then flicked the button of his pants open. "You know, Brenden, about that fantasy of yours. Doing me in the ass?" She licked her lips, pushing up his shirt, her nails grazing skin and hair, teasing.

With a watering mouth, she yanked his zipper down. "Have you ever considered not sticking it in all the way? Just some, ya know... Enough to do the job. Let me show you with my mouth."

Chapter Nine

His engine was revving. His cock steel and his tires squealing as Brenden peeled off, knocking over his chair as he hauled her to her feet.

Wanted fucked in the ass, did she? He tossed the little hellcat over his shoulder, matching her cry of surprise with a smack to her butt.

"Brenden!"

Smack! Just for the fun of it he slapped her rear again.

Fingers grasped at his shirt. "But what about your blowjob?" she whined.

"That can wait." Sure, having his cock sucked would be great, but that was for long, leisurely Sunday mornings in bed. Not furious, frenzied fucks. And at the moment he simply didn't have the patience to watch those full lips drawing him to the brink. Those blue eyes dazzling with mischief.

Just some, ya know... Enough to do the job.

She had no idea, no idea at all what that wicked little proposition had done to him. But she was about to find out.

He just hoped he could keep control. Then again...maybe she didn't want him to.

"I hope you know what you're getting yourself into." Brenden stepped from his unbuttoned, unzipped pants that were sliding off, kicking them aside. "You're bargaining for trouble."

"Oh really? What? You're just going to stand here, dangling me?" The scamp was mocking him. "Oh Brenden, dangle me more...dangle me..."

Smack! "Keep it up!" he warned, as if he really wanted her to stop. There was nothing, nothing in this world sexier than Sara sassing him.

Except maybe over dinner when her eyes had teared up for him. A rare glimpse of emotion, one that'd touched him to his soul... He'd had plenty of ladies in his life, those looking for ring or rank, but never any who cared.

Sara cared. He could sense it, had seen it in those beautiful blue eyes.

And now he would feel it, in a much more physical way.

Securing those long legs beneath an arm, he stormed from the dining room and into the bedroom, promptly changing his mind when he set eyes on the bed.

No, too boring. She expected the bed. The belts. For him to make his fantasy come true in the tight confines of that sweet bubble butt of hers.

And that just wouldn't do.

As keeper of the orgasms, it was his duty to provide the unexpected. To make her tremble at the unknown, clench in fear. Weep with desire.

The bed was entirely too easy. But then he couldn't forgo the belts—or the fantasy she was granting him—not if this was quite possibly the last time he would have the extreme privilege of fucking her, and in her ass at that.

Brenden made a beeline to the closet, and she whined, "Where are we going...the bed's over there." She drummed on his back. "Brenden!"

Never learned, did she? *Smack!*

"Brenden!"

Just a glutton for punishment. *Smack!*

Gathering a handful of miscellaneous belts, he yanked them free of their hooks and tossed them over his forearm.

He felt her tense, her hands clutching at his shirt, those long nails skimming his back through the fabric. "Hurry..."

She was lucky his hands were so full or he'd smack that ass again. Instead, he gave her a good jostle, inciting a frantic squeal, and then hauled her across the room to the patio.

Swinging open the French doors to a blast of warm afternoon air laced with humidity and salt, he dropped the belts to the ground and deposited her on her feet. The sky was cloudy, dimmed a threatening shade of bluish gray, and the empty beach before them reflected the weather reports. It would storm soon, but they'd have the patio roof over their heads and the vines to shield them from nosy neighbors.

"Brenden, what—"

"Sit," he commanded, pointing to a chair that she promptly plunked down in. "Don't move."

On some elevated level, he was aware of how potent being bossy made him feel.

"But, Brenden—"

He flicked on the patio light and pointed at her in warning. "Don't move."

Racing inside, Brenden made a mad rush to the closet and into the drawer where he'd stashed his recent adult store purchases. He gathered condoms, lube and a new butt plug—this one nice and big and guaranteed to loosen and prepare her for his taking.

But when he walked out, she wasn't still sitting on the deck as ordered. Nope, she was stretched naked on the bed, legs spread wide, those fingers diving into her sweet pink pussy. This again?

Ah, how that smirk screamed it all—she was playing with fire and damn well knew the consequences.

Craved them, or so it would seem.

Coolly, Brenden strode across the room and onto the patio, dropping his handful of goodies on the table, stripping off his shirt and boxers then turning back to her. "Out here." His hand swept the order. "Now."

She shot him a sideways glance, arched those hips and plunged those fingers deep. "I'm busy."

What? Had he imagined she'd simply abide? Not his Sara, not ever.

"I'm warning you." She might just be sorry she was getting him so revved up. "Now."

He gave her five seconds to comply. Five seconds then he raged back inside, caught her by the arms and quite literally dragged her protesting butt from the bed and through the patio doors.

He expected a fight. Outrage. But once the breezy, seaside air enveloped them, her sputtering transformed into laughter. Little giggles that properly belonged to such a mischievous, maddening, wonderful woman.

And he was going to give her everything she so deserved. Deserved and desired, like no other he'd ever met.

A chill raced down her spine as he bent and swept two belts into his hand. Even as she watched him slowly fold them in half and felt him spinning her around, she never quite expected the double slap of sharp leather that lashed across her bare skin.

The searing pain, the unexplainable desire for another. A hunger that was not fed.

Instead, he took her by the hair and guided her forward. "Did you enjoy that? Fine, Italian calf suede...like butter, smooth as velvet."

"Felt rather like razors to me."

With a light chuckle, he seemed to delight in her disagreement, and as if to prove her wrong, he brushed the belts over her butt, petting her with them. Inarguably, they were heavenly soft. "You will place your hands on the rail and I suggest you don't move."

Her heart slammed against her ribs, pounding in her ears as he took one of the belts and threaded it through the rail, wrapping it around one wrist then the other, drawing it tight and fastening her hand to the deck.

"I asked you to stay on the deck, but you deliberately disobeyed me." His fingers lingered up her arm, leaving in their wake a trail of tingly fire as he circled behind her. "Tell me, Sara, what am I to do about that?"

She did not answer. Didn't have it in her to, not even as he made a *tsk-tsk* sound and took her hips in hand, scooting her ass out then repositioning her legs so she stood braced against the banister, her feet spread wide and her ass arched in the air.

Behind her Brenden waited in silence and the ocean winds whipped around her, laden with anticipation. Sara clung to the deck rail, her every muscle contracted as she waited for the next whack.

Wanting that belt, the sting of it slashing across her bare bottom and branding her his in a way she otherwise could never admit, much less accept.

"Well?" he finally spoke. "I asked you a question, Sara."

And she knew she had to answer, that he would tolerate no less. "Spank me," she ground out, casting all manner of pride to the breeze.

But for Brenden that wasn't enough. "Spank me, what?" As he made that demand, his hand splayed open her ass cheeks and he squirted warm goop between the globes. Turning away a moment, he set something on the table then returned to test her anus with one probing finger. "I see you're still nice and relaxed for me. Wet too. So I'll ask you again. Spank me, what?"

Son of a bitch with his smugness. Always making her beg.

Sara whimpered as a finger slid deep, opening her. "Spank me, please," she gulped out.

Another digit spread those already-loosened muscles. "Spank me, please, sir."

Smack! His free hand came down hard on her left cheek.

Then he abandoned her anus and whacked her right cheek with the belt she hadn't realized he still held, spiraling fire through her. Sara cried out, caught her lower lip

under her teeth, and ground out, "Please, sir," before another blow could come. "Spank me."

"You deserve it, don't you?"

"I deserve it. I'm bad."

Pleased by that, he returned to toying with her anus, caressing around its outer ring, teasing her without mercy. "If I'm going to take you here..." Two fingers plunged deep then retreated slowly. "I think perhaps a bigger plug is in order first."

A bigger one? More torture?

Her cunt ached at the thought. Creamed.

And somewhere deep inside herself, she screamed yes, yes, yes! Screamed it, no matter how badly she needed release. Needed him deep inside her. A finish to whatever this was between them.

Brenden disappeared behind her a moment then returned to squirt more of the warm gel across her anus, dispersing it through the primed hole with his finger, and she gasped, claspings her butt muscles around him.

"Good girl, but you need to stay calm. No tightening that ass up. Relax for me. Take it." His hand skimmed over her butt and he reached around her, holding the new butt plug to her mouth. The iridescent pink shimmered in the patio light with about five graduating ridges in width. "Kiss it goodbye."

Dear God. It would be the biggest thing to ever enter her butt. Butterflies swarming in her belly, Sara puckered up and laid one on the almost-cock-sized plug.

Grunting a sound of pleasure, he brought the rubber toy to her back entrance and slowly eased it in, stretching her to accommodate one pleasure bump at a time.

Three in and it became more than she could bear. Sara's instinct was to move forward, away from the intense invasion. But Brenden caught her by the pussy – quite literally.

“Remember to relax,” he reminded her. “Take it like my bad girl should.” And he claimed her clit between two fingers, pinching and holding that pulsing bud as he forced the plug in deeper yet leaving Sara to gasp and shudder.

One ridge to go and Sara’s knees went weak at the thought of the stretch and little nips of pain to come, but his hold on her cunt prevented any such hope of falling.

As if in encouragement, Brenden rolled the bundle of nerves pinned between his fingers. Vaulted her higher and higher, and despite her apprehension, Sara knew she wanted it all, she wanted more. More than she could ever bite off and chew.

And so with teeth ground together, she braced herself and arched her ass higher, welcoming the plug fully as he completed its entry but gave her no time to recover, standing back and whisking that butter-soft belt across her bottom.

Sara strangled a cry, propelled forward, but Brenden simply hauled her back into place, standing at her side and holding her ass firmly where he wanted it.

What followed was the most sensuous spanking she ever could have imagined, the smooth leather whisking over her butt, slapping and heating her skin, creating puffs of air that whispered between her ass cheeks.

Not hard, not violent, but every stroke of his arm disciplined, teaching her to love it, the way he held her, the smack of the belt across her inflamed skin, the frissons of pain and pleasure, the way she ached and needed him. Needed this.

“One day,” he promised in a faraway voice, “I will have spanked you with every belt I own.”

It was as if she were melting. With every smack dissolving into the submissive female he demanded she be, even as her body continued to tense, to climb higher than she ever dreamed possible.

“And,” he went, “you’ll have to help me shop for new ones.”

She moaned his name, whimpered with delight, and he rewarded her by taking that Italian calf suede and running it intimately between her legs. Across her hot, wet pussy,

her filled-to-the-max anus, stroking her as he murmured, "You make me very happy, Sara." Leaning forward, he kissed the middle of her back. "Are you ready to be split in half?"

And when Sara otherwise would have begged and pleaded, she could only laugh at that now tried-and-true joke between them. Laugh and moan eagerly. "Why don't you make good on that promise this time, chief?"

Make good, huh? If Sara was really serious about fulfilling his fantasy of taking her in the ass, then that implausible fantasy of her own just might come true...

He could very well split her in half, whether he put his cock in all the way or not.

One last time Brenden skimmed the leather strap over her fine butt, admiring the red streaks that cut across her white skin. The way she presented that sweet, round ass for more. Took and held that butt plug as if it belonged there.

As if he belonged there.

Because she'd never be more lubed and ready than he had her now. Never because in the morning he stood to lose this forget-me-not lady. Sara had made it clear she didn't want a relationship. She'd made him promise to let her go, and he very well might have to.

But tonight...tonight he made memories. The kind that woke a woman up sweating. Aching.

And needing him. Or so he could only hope.

Brenden dropped the belt from his sweaty palms, so hard he could hardly walk the few simple steps that carried him to the table and the condoms.

Suiting up claimed an eternity—the condom wrapper fumbled in his damp fingers and he relented, tearing the pouch open with his teeth.

He spit aside spermicide, thinking next time he'd open the condoms beforehand.

"Brenden, please hurry." Left waiting, Sara moaned and whimpered her impatience. The ocean winds kicked up, as if they knew a storm were brewing.

For he was thunder and Sara was lightning. Nature clashing in harmony.

"I'm hurrying, baby." On he rolled the rubber, taking the lube with him and setting it between her feet. He'd need it, plenty of it, but first his sweet Sara deserved an orgasm. A big one.

Taking her by the upper thighs, Brenden positioned himself behind her, his cock nudging that dripping pussy until he found her slit. Slowly, carefully, he wedged himself inside her. One inch then two, he drew on all his patience, letting her body expand to accommodate his size.

Only when he'd buried himself to his balls and knew she was stretched enough to take him completely did he relinquish control. Full force he thrust into her, bracing her body against his.

His howl filled the otherwise quiet afternoon—the neighbors might not be able to see them thanks to the vines, but surely they could hear. Waves crashed onto the beach, and in the distance Brenden swore he saw a glimmer of that lightning he was feeling.

"Oh God, more!" she demanded, and he delivered, drawing back and slamming into her again. "More, Brenden!"

His pleasure!

Over and over he rammed into her body, fucking her hard and slow, relishing every squeeze of that tight pussy, the way she tried to clamp him deep inside her. The way she just kept crying, "More! More!"

Brenden increased his pace and her ass humped against him, moving in tune with his rhythm.

Faster and faster. Deeper and harder.

Brenden let instinct take over, restraining nothing. It was pure primal mating the way they came together. He felt the shift as she reached ecstasy and with every

intention of driving her over the edge, Brenden slid his fingers between her ass cheeks, found that butt plug, and gently eased it out one pleasure bump at a time.

Sara went crazy, her tempo frantic and that cunt milking his cock, milking it as she screamed and her entire body went rigid, her cries carrying on the wind, fading until she was gasping for breath.

She'd come quite intensely. But she wasn't finished yet.

Beneath his hold and waning cock strokes, her body fell limp and Brenden reached round, encouraging her clit with the gentle coaxing of his fingers.

He circled his cock deep. Rolled and teased that tiny nub, fanning her desire anew because he needed one more out of her—he refused to take her as she'd offered if she didn't enjoy it too.

"Come on, love," he encouraged, and to his delight he felt her interest revive. The way her body hitched and her pussy muscles flexed and she sobbed in agreement to his request for "One more time."

"Brenden," she begged, "you're driving me crazy."

Again, she was his. All his.

"Glad to hear it." Brenden eased his cock from the hot confines of her pussy and reached between her ankles, sweeping up the bottle of lube.

This was it. Really it.

And as the pounding of his heart increased to near dangerous levels, he splayed her ass open and squirted the jelly liquid up and down her crack, using his fingers to spread it deep. Loving her every moan of longing and the concept that this woman wanted his cock—in her ass. Nearly loving her for it, for she was truly giving him a gift.

Never had he been more nervous. Excited. Uncertain.

Never had he dared to imagine he could enjoy a woman in such a manner.

Brenden aligned his cock with her anus, testing by slowly rubbing his head around the outer ring, pressing in gently, and her body's eagerness shocked him.

She arched against him and he barely held back, slipping inside the tight, hot hole until his cock was lodged barely halfway. Halfway, and it was more than enough, the way her ass gripped him so tight.

"Mon amour?" He had to ask, to know she was okay. No, more than okay. Enjoying. *"Do you like that?"*

"More," was her only answer. More, that he wouldn't give her, couldn't, but he did slowly begin stroking inside her, returning his fingers to her clit. He found the bud and claimed it between finger and thumb. But the position was near impossible.

He couldn't be gentle on her butt while pleasuring her pussy and hadn't a clue what to do about it, but before he had opportunity to address his concerns, she whisked his hand away and replaced it with her own. Plunged fingers deep in her pussy and never in his life had he imagined anything hotter.

Fire raged along his cock and as she played with her pussy, Brenden concentrated on her ass. On measuring every stroke carefully, no matter how carried away he felt. Withdrawing until he nearly slipped free then slowly easing in all over again.

Her body held him so perfectly, so intensely. Control was a thin thread and ecstasy a threat.

Only when she quaked with pleasure and cried out his name as a climax took hold of her body once again did he let go, increasing his pace, and the moment he did, Brenden burst. Came and came hard, his cock shooting seed so forcefully it almost hurt.

In the distance thunder rumbled. He really did see lightning.

And all of a sudden little droplets of rain spattered down, and as he eased from her ass, all Brenden could think was that they'd moved nature herself with their joining.

Chapter Ten

The cold rain seemed to sizzle on her flushed face and every ion of Sara's body tingled in sheer satisfaction. Pleasure hazy and uncertain.

To say he'd blown her mind...ha! That was the understatement of the century. All Sara could think, all she knew, was Brenden.

Brenden as he released the belts securing her wrists.

Brenden as he scooped her into his arms, cradling her and softly kissing her forehead.

Brenden as he carried her inside to the bathroom and gently deposited her into his huge garden bathtub, cranking the hot tap and stopping the plug.

Brenden.

Never had Sara known a more wonderful, perfect man than the one pouring lavender bubble bath under the stream of water. The same bubble bath she'd mentally questioned earlier, wondering who it belonged to.

It seemed it belonged to her. As if, somehow, he'd been ready for her.

Why did everything about this thing between them, about him, have to seem so right? So much like destiny. Even now he was smoothing bubbles over her shins, whispering in French that same sentence she remembered from earlier, and Sara closed her eyes, trying to find something wrong with the picture. With Brenden.

And she couldn't.

Couldn't do anything but lie there, reality easing its way back in as he eased his way up her leg with a loofah and the rainstorm outside amplified, thunder booming and lightning striking through the huge garden window.

Brenden bathed her lovingly all over, washing her most intimate places, never once touching her sexually. Over her belly the sponge roamed, over her breasts, spreading suds and rinsing her clean.

Even when he finished he said nothing, neither did she, but they both knew it.

Knew it, this thing, this feeling between them she couldn't even put a name to, though the emotion had her weak in the knees. Weak in the heart.

The head too.

Finished bathing her, he offered his hand and helped her from the tub, wrapping her in a warm towel. Then she was lifted into his arms once again and escorted to the bed. He slid her between the sheets, tucked a couple of pillows behind her head, and several minutes later left her with the remote, a glass of wine and the promise he'd back before she could decide on a movie for them.

This time she didn't mind waiting a bit.

He returned freshly showered and as naked as she was, climbed into bed and smothered her in his hold.

Out of nowhere he whisked out her glasses, her real ones, and slid them on her face.

Sara didn't know what to say, to do. Even when married she'd trained herself to avoid sexy moments with her old-lady glasses on. Her first instinct was to yank them off, an act Brenden promptly extinguished.

"They stay on," he told her, his voice gentle with encouragement yet characteristically steel with intent. "So what are we watching?"

Okay, fine. He was just lucky she wasn't in the mood to debate his bossiness.

"*Blood Dawn*." Sara punched the button on the remote and the movie flicked on then she turned up the volume. "It's new, just came out on DVD. We're pay-per-viewing it, so I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all, my Bubble Queen."

The new pet name made her both smile and cringe. “Why did you just call me that?”

A finger stroked lovingly along her jaw. “Because you’ve a beautiful bubble butt and the willful personality of a queen if I’ve ever met one.”

“A bubble butt?” She’d never heard that one before.

“High, perfectly round. As if when God made you, he blew two bubbles and they attached to your long legs.”

She’d had nicknames in her life—Stinker being her father’s favorite—but never had any felt so...intimate. Or oddly fitting. She told herself being called Bubble Queen was unique, weird...that was all.

But deep down, she knew it was more.

Tossing aside the remote, she snuggled into his embrace, trying to get comfortable, to breathe deeply and calm the beating in her heart that was recklessly increasing. But she just couldn’t. Then he had the nerve to go and say, “So *Blood Dawn* it is. That’s right, I’ve got myself a horror-movie buff.”

“What do you mean, you’ve got yourself?” What? Had she become his property now?

In that instant their lovemaking flashed through her mind. Struck like a bass drum, pounding in her heart, booming in her ears. The way he’d made her take that butt plug and how he’d spanked her with that belt. The way he’d taken her so hard and furiously then again so slow and almost sweetly—in the ass.

The way she’d exploded into a hundred million bits. Not once but twice.

And if so commanded, she could again.

As it was, he’d taken her outside, overlooking the ocean, and not once had she thought of Andrew.

Not once.

Oh God. Her heart rate zoomed, her hands shook, and she was pretty certain if she tried to scream, nothing would come out.

What was she doing? Why was she here, in this man's bed, in his arms? Once again brewing up notions of destiny and fate? Had she completely lost her mind?

They were meant to be...not.

Frantic, Sara tried to wriggle free and scoot away, but he would have none of it. He held her there and she felt as if Freddy Krueger were about to jump from the walk-in closet where he kept all those butt-plugs and belts.

"That's right, I've got you. You're in my arms, aren't you?" And in that exasperatingly tender way of his, he kissed the top of her head, and whispered, "What's wrong, *mon amour*?"

Wiping her sweaty palms on the lush bedspread, grasping at the soft fabric for some sort of grip on her feelings, Sara blinked back tears, recognizing the emotion taking over her. Making her head pound. "Sometimes you really scare me."

To tell the truth, she'd feel safer actually being in *Blood Dawn*, not just watching it. Not that either of them was paying attention to what they were paying for.

Correction, what he was paying for. What was with all this they and them and us stuff?

There was no them. No us. No, absolutely not!

Shit, her throat was closing up. And why? Hadn't she been through this type of thing enough already? She had four failed marriages to prove it.

But that was just it. This was different. He wasn't like her exes.

She'd never felt like this in all her life. So comfortable, so right. As if she could talk to him, be herself around him. Not pretend and constantly put on a sexy show.

And yet one look from him and she was swept away by passion.

So Sara did the only thing she could. She bolted.

Ducking under his arm, she leapt from the bed and ran. Sprinted like mad for the door, knowing she had to get out of there and fast.

"Sara!"

She was naked. Had no money or keys or means. Nothing but the keen ability to see and the overwhelming need to escape.

"Sara! Stop!" Oh great, he was chasing her. She couldn't, absolutely could not let him catch her.

She ran and ran hard, not caring about anything but getting the heck out of there before she never got out of there. Not without a divorce lawyer.

Down the hall she raced, footsteps closing in behind her.

"Sara! Stop!" He caught her arm and she wrenched at his hold, refusing to stop. She'd made it to the living room...the door was only a few feet away.

He was holding her back, pulling her behind him so he could block her escape. "Calm down, Sara. Talk to me."

"Leave me alone!" She jerked her arm free, and as he lunged toward her, she spun in the opposite direction, hopping on and over the couch and landing with a repercussion that shot straight up her spine. Ouch.

Sara whirled around and there he was, hair ruffled and naked and looking like a caveman whose she-lady was rebelling. Only the furniture stood between them, a very mere defense in the shadow of his raven gaze.

"Sara."

"Brenden..." Slowly, she inched her way to the left, closer toward making a break for the door, and like an animal after its prey, he mirrored her every movement. "You said..." She gasped, her breathing ragged from running so hard. "You said I could go after we finished making love, as you so politely put it, remember? You had me twice. Now let me go."

One dark eyebrow quirked high. "Naked? No. It's storming its ass off out there."

So here they were again.

Yeah, okay. Maybe she'd temporarily lost her mind. Maybe. That or fleeing would turn out to be the smartest thing she'd done – ever. Storm or not. Naked or not.

Because if she returned to his bedroom he'd find some way. Some excuse or put-off or reason for her to wait until the next day. And the next. That was how he did it. He promised her she could go, but she couldn't. Not really.

So Sara yanked a cashmere throw from the back of the couch and slung it around her. "There, I'm covered."

"No, Sara. No way."

See? Never satisfied!

Thinking to fake him out, she leapt right then quickly left again. But he was not to be fooled and there he loomed, blocking her direction, so she really did rush in the opposite way, but he was right on top of her every shift in movement. Chuckling at her. "You're being ridiculous, you know?"

Yes, she knew. If only he would –

Out of nowhere the son of a bitch pounced on the couch, caught her by the arms and hurled her over.

"Brenden!"

One bouncy thump and they landed together on the cushions, him beneath her, but she was the one pinned flat on her back. One arm locked tight around her breasts, those lips lingering above her head as he laughed at her and Sara didn't bother to fight it.

He had her. Wasn't letting go.

"Sara, Sara..." Brenden stroked her hair, brushed it aside and scooted lower beneath her so his cheek rested against hers. Warmth on warmth. "I told you once before, my sweet Bubble Queen, never do I take liberties that aren't mine to take. Sex with spankings goes hand in hand just as belts made of soft, fine leather do. I'm not ashamed to admit that dominating you turns me on. Why are you?" Then his squashing

grip across her chest loosened slightly, and he urged her, "Roll over and look at me. Don't try anything, either."

With little choice, Sara obeyed, but that didn't mean she had to be careful with the elbows.

A few pokes and grunts later, she lay belly down along his length, his arm still dangled around her back possessively, but she couldn't look into those eyes. Those dark depths would be her downfall.

"Now listen to me, Sara." Taking her chin by his fingers, he forced her to face him. To stare deep in the demanding pitch-black gaze that rendered her helpless. "Don't you know I'd never hurt you for real? Never, Sara. I'm not that sort of man, I swear it."

That's what he thought this was all about?

"I do. I know that. But—" Blinking back tears, she swallowed and tried to look away, anything to avoid the truth. But there it was, and here she was, trapped by the very thing she was trying to escape. "It's not that I'm scared of you. It's the way you make me feel, here." She eased her hands between their chests, to rest at their hearts beating harshly in unison. "I'm terrified, Brenden."

He smiled a little, sighed, and Sara noticed his Adam's apple bob. "Well then, *mon amour*, in that case, I'm a little frightened myself. Do you want to know what I said to you earlier in French?"

An offer she ought to deny because if he'd said it in French, it couldn't be good. Had to be romantic.

Still she nodded, encouraging something she had no business encouraging, and Brenden slid a hand through her hair, drawing her closer until they were nose to nose and those eyes of his were devouring her whole as he murmured, "I don't know how I'll ever forget your forget-me-not eyes, my love."

For a moment Sara couldn't speak. Couldn't breathe.

Terror rose to the forefront all over.

“Brenden.” Her voice cracked, but she forced herself to say it. “You know how you taught me that fear can be arousing?”

To which he looked mighty pleased with himself, cocky smile and all. “Did running from me turn you on?”

“No...” Exasperated, she pushed up on his chest, needing some space between them.

To her surprise—and relief—he allowed her to sit up and Sara scooted down the couch, pushing her dorky glasses back into place. “You don’t understand. I’m scared to death of what’s happening between us. Scared and maybe that’s really why I want to stay and exactly why I have to go. Because I’m turned-on by the thought of daring another relationship. Turned-on by the fear. But this isn’t real.”

Only then did she have the courage glance up into those eyes, to gauge his reaction. Big mistake.

Because, as always, he wasn’t backing down. “That being the case, Sara, I also taught you to trust your feelings and stop fighting them.”

At that reminder, she wanted to full-out strangle him. “But don’t you see! You can’t keep me, Brenden! No man can. I’ve been married four times. Four, Brenden. I’m not the settling-down type of woman. Besides, your mother will hate me! You said so yourself!”

Somehow she’d gone from trying to make him understand to screaming her message, as if being louder would somehow make him stop grinning. Stop preying on her with that gaze.

“You can’t change me, Brenden! This is who I am! Who I’ll always be!”

“Change you?” Brenden laughed at the prospect. Why would he want to do that?

She was the most alluring piece of ass he’d ever gotten, quite literally.

A woman who kissed strangers. Who'd shot him down and stole his car. Who'd blown his mind leaving that butt plug in even after taking off on him.

A total badass. One his mother certainly wouldn't like and thank God for that.

But also a true sweetheart, one whose eyes had teared up with emotion when he spoke of his childhood. Who cared...and not about a ring.

As he sat there, staring at the little lady perched on the edge of the couch, arms crossed and waiting for a response, the past couple of days flicked through his mind.

The thrill that had rushed through him watching her disappear in his car. Or when he'd caught her sitting on that jackass's lap. Or when she'd gone waltzing by his store and he thought he'd lost her.

The desire he'd had over and over to tame this elusive little butterfly, and the very real reality that he couldn't—that, more than anything, turned Brenden on.

He couldn't change her. Couldn't tame her. Wouldn't anyway but couldn't. She was stubborn and wild and he'd never been so captivated by a woman in all his life.

And so he stood and offered her hand. "Come here, Sara."

To his great pleasure, she did not resist, and he enveloped those fingers in his and hauled her to her feet. Wet trails streaked her cheeks and Brenden kissed each one away. "I want to show you something."

He led her to the door, opened it to the storm that raged outside. The wind whipped into the house, spattering them with moisture through the screen door, and Brenden released her.

Just as he could not tame this butterfly, he could not cage her. Sara deserved to fly free.

She looked at him, uncertain, and Brenden pointed to black sky that raged with fury. "When we were making love, Sara, I had this thought. You're lightning and I'm thunder and we clash and come together in harmony."

That earned half a smile. "Ah, the corny side comes out."

Smartass.

How he wanted to pull her into his arms, to caress that other cheek into a smile and kiss her senseless. But for her sake, he stayed his distance. "Sara, we just met and I can't promise we'll have an ideal relationship. Can't promise I'll marry you. Certainly can't promise love, not yet, and neither can you."

"Brenden, I'm not —"

But he held up his hand, silencing her. "I can't promise you lots of things, but I can promise you this. The you I want is the you who you are. The one in glasses, standing before me now. The one who'll always keep me on my toes and fighting to have her. Even the one who flirts with other guys..." He winked, sending home his message. "Because how else will you earn those spankings?"

And with those words Brenden swung open the screen door, nodding to the nearby telephone table. "There's my keys, so go if you have to. But I'd like you to stay. Watch that movie with me. In the morning, give me your number and say you'll see me again. Not because you're scared but because you like the way I make you feel. Your choice."

She stayed.

* * * * *

In the dark, shadow-filled room, the final credits for *Blood Dawn* rolled on the television screen. Eerie music filled the air.

Outside, thunder still groaned. Lightning provided glimmers through the uncovered French doors. The weather reporter had predicted possible tornados.

Sara lay naked and cuddled under the blankets, wrapped in the safety of Brenden's arms. Never had she felt warmer, more secure. This man's embrace, the glorious heat of his skin against her skin...

Sara basked in how wonderful being with him could feel, if only she could let herself.

If only.

Brenden kissed her cheek adoringly, nestling even closer against her. The bulge of his flaccid cock and balls snuggled her bottom and a thrill rushed through Sara at the prospect of making love once more.

But Brenden did not harden, did not attempt to touch her sexually. Only lovingly. "Sara love, there's something I'm wondering."

Sara rested her body in his direction, thinking she could lie like this forever. Warm and satisfied and happy. "Hmmm?"

"Your friend Andrew, did you love him?"

Unexpected, the question thrust her from her comfort zone. Her entire body stiffened against his.

Initially, she wanted to rail at Brenden for asking. For caring.

For making this about more than sex.

How dare he bring up Andrew? Make her remember when all she wanted was to forget, at least for the moment?

Instead, Sara swallowed and forced out a crackly, "Very much."

Her answer apparently didn't suffice. "I mean, love him," Brenden posed pointedly.

"I did." So much that just admitting it made her throat tight. "I do, even still."

Maybe that's why every relationship she attempted failed. Andrew occupied all four chambers of her heart. There was room for no other.

Not even Brenden, who trailed fingers tenderly along her curled arm, as if he sensed her unease and wanted to relax her—though that didn't stop him from pressing on with the uncomfortable topic. "Did he know? Did he love you too?"

"I don't think either of us knew. But..." Sara thought of those last weeks with Andrew, the ridiculous, loopy grins he'd given her. The feats he constantly attempted, all in the name of impressing her. "But we felt it. I only wish we hadn't."

That hand stroked and petted, encouraging her to talk. "It must've hurt terribly to have lost him before you ever had a chance to express —"

"No," Sara cut Brenden off, namely because he was right—it hurt. Terribly. It was far easier to be angry than face those feelings. "No, what pains me is that he died because of our attraction. If things would've stayed the same, like when we were kids, he'd still be alive."

"You blame yourself?" The question echoed with haunting despair. Guilt, justified or not, was something Brenden could relate to.

"Somewhat, but mainly I blame love."

"Oh sweetheart..." With his arm beneath her shoulders, Brenden simultaneously tugged her and rolled himself, pulling her atop him. Anxiously, Sara tried to wriggle away, but that locking arm around her shoulder blades would tolerate no such escape. "Will you promise me something?" His thumb captured her chin, forcing her to look at him.

Unenthusiastically, she lay there stretched atop him, his heart beating against hers. Her eyes averted. "I'd really rather not."

"Andrew must be rather disappointed."

Only then did she meet his gaze and only so he could see her irritation. "What's that supposed mean?"

"He sounds like a nice kid, that's all. It seems to me you're making him into a ghost rather than a memory." That thumb abandoned her chin and swept over her cheek, collecting a stray tear. "I think he'd want you to be happy."

"You mean you think he'd want me to be with you. So I should, right?" But even as she made that harsh accusation, Sara didn't believe Brenden would actually try to manipulate her that way.

"Not at all. I rather think he'd be jealous. Unluckily for me, Andrew's stiff competition, no disrespect intended."

In the quiet moment that followed, Sara realized something. Unlike her exes, who demanded all the love she didn't have to give, Brenden wasn't striving to push Andrew out.

Brenden was just trying to understand her, to make her feel better.

"Actually," she found herself saying, "I think Andrew would like you."

In the distance, lightning shimmered and illuminated the room and Sara watched Brenden digest her words with a small smile. "I was thinking just now about what you said about my brother yesterday. How ridiculous it is of me to blame myself."

"It is."

"I was wondering, wherever Charles is, up in heaven, maybe sitting on the clouds, what he must think of my father and mother. Kara. Me. He probably wishes we'd all stop making ourselves miserable and live the life he can't."

Sara blinked in silent agreement and laid her head on the pillow beside his. Cheek to cheek, stubble to soft skin, heart to bleeding heart, they lay there together, basking in that truth. Forgiving themselves and banishing the incessant ache in their lives.

After a long while Brenden threaded fingers through her hair, tugging at knotted strands playfully. "What's your phone number, Sara?"

"555-5555," she murmured, not ready for the moment to fade, not when she'd needed this sort of comfort for so long in her life.

But also not yet ready for what it all meant.

"Vixen." The hand at her back slid south and swatted her butt in fine tradition. "I'm serious, what's your number?"

"9-1-1."

He responded with another sound slap to her bare bottom. "I will find out, you know?"

"Maybe you shouldn't." Thinking a distraction was long overdue, Sara shimmied her body south, letting her breasts rub over his hard muscles this way and that, creating

friction and heat until she found herself nestled in the juncture of his legs. "I keep warning you, Brenden, I can be a bad girl."

"What—" He groaned as she gathered that huge cock, rolling it in her palms and feeling it come to life. "What could you possibly do wrong?"

With a kiss to the tip, she permitted her tongue to leisurely slide down and around the long shaft, tasting every salty inch. Suckling, even nipping a little, here and there. "You know I'm a terrible flirt. Even with strangers."

Heightening pleasure strangled his every word. "I suppose I'd just have to spank you, my dear."

That brought a smile—not to mention the curious urge to be even naughtier.

"I'm serious." Back up his cock again she wandered, licking and loving. "You know I'm in the habit of misbehaving. Sometimes I need distractions. I party too hard. I act badly. I even steal cars."

"All resolvable with a sound spanking."

"That so?" she whispered speculatively, blowing over the hot, sensitive skin of his balls then tasting them too. One at a time she suckled them deep, massaging them with her lips.

Then she returned to his cock, planting tiny kisses up and down, teasing him mercilessly.

His back arched, thrusting his cock toward her as he again groaned. "You're driving me insane, you realize?"

Was she? Well, then she might as well move slower. Taunt more.

After all, she had a reputation to maintain.

"That's how I roll, chief." Kiss, kiss, kiss... Lick, lick, lick... "That's how I roll..."

Her beast reared up, pushing her face down in his lap, against that cock so hot and hard, holding her there firmly as he delivered a well-deserved swat to her butt then another. "You must like getting spanked, love."

Maybe she did...just maybe she did.

Chapter Eleven

It really was beautiful, the sun rising up over the ocean, a brilliant ball of fire amidst a sky lit up orange, sending streaks of light across the furious waves that slammed the beach.

Really beautiful, actually being able to see it, her eyesight not dimmed by sunglasses. Her heart not wrenching her to look away.

It was truly a new dawn.

Her hands grasped the rail exactly where they'd been fastened the night before and Sara had no idea what drove her out here so early, except that she'd felt compelled. More attracted to the ocean than she had been since...

Andrew.

Andrew, who'd died nothing but a boy. Andrew, who'd just begun to notice she was a girl...and paid dearly for it.

How bittersweet to remember those innocent days of childhood. They'd climbed trees together. Slung mud together. And if he'd stuffed worms in her shoes, he made no apologies.

When they ran, he expected her to keep up. When they climbed, he raced her to the top. If she fell, he yelled at her to hurry.

Andrew had appreciated Sara for Sara, who she really was, not the pretty girl the rest of the boys expected. That her brothers poked fun at her for not being. Never had Andrew expected change from her, never would she have given it. But it came anyway, just as the tide eventually swept all to the shore.

God, how his smiles had made her heart pound...

The same, familiar way Brenden's did now.

He really had split her in half. Not her pussy but her life. Her whole existence. The way he bossed her about, always seeming to know what she wanted even when she didn't.

The way he reacted so intensely to her many little mishaps, like kissing strangers and stealing his car and escaping his belted clutches. None of those times had he truly become mad. He'd become sexual. Turned-on.

It was still hard for her to conceptualize, but he claimed to like her pushing his buttons, and when she thought about their lovemaking, the clash of them coming together, so intense, almost dangerous yet so perfect... Sara could truly believe his analogy that he was thunder and she was lightning.

On some higher level, just as with Andrew, she and Brenden understood each other.

"Now I know you're out here thinking of me, *mon amour*."

Speak of the devil—that she was.

Sara barked with laughter and spun around just in time to be gathered into his strong hold. Still in his robe, Brenden wrapped her in his heat and held her there against his warm, hard body, his chin resting atop her head. "Remembering last night?"

"Remembering lots of things."

"Nothing you need to escape, I hope?"

"No." Sara turned in his embrace, facing the beach, facing Andrew and her past. Something she'd always avoided until Brenden, just as she'd avoided intimacy. A tactic Brenden seemed to have stripped her of, just the way his lovemaking stripped her to the core. "Not anymore."

She scooted her sliding glasses back into place.

"Good. But just in case, I have a present for you." From his pocket he whisked a sheet of folded paper. "A travel agent for the travel agent."

"What?" No clue what he was talking about, she tried to catch the paper he waved in front of her.

"You haven't given me your number yet," her murmured in her ear, somehow holding her even tighter, as if he had no intention of ever letting her go as he kept the paper from her. "That's most frustrating, you realize?"

"Haven't I warned you about me?"

"Sara, love, I know you're afraid of starting another relationship. And I know you still don't fully believe I want you for you, naughty tendencies included. So I'm going to prove it. I have a deal for you. You give me your number, promise to see me again and again and again, and as a security measure I'll give you this." He waved the paper about, worrying Sara that it would catch on the wind. "Freedom, love. As long as we're together, you go wherever you want, whenever you want, on me—just in case you get bored or I start suffocating you. My travel agent has been given your info and she's at your disposal. Only one condition."

Did he really think he had to bribe her? That she could be bought? Always the businessman, but a relationship was anything but.

Sara pushed against him, not sure she liked where this conversation was headed. "Brenden, I can't accept that—"

"Listen to me." He cut her protest off, but at the same time he released her. She spun around, glaring up at him and ready for a fight but surprised to find those hawk eyes softer than she'd ever seen them. That voice asking for once, not demanding. "You'll have your fun, vent your steam then you come back to me. That's how our relationship will work."

What relationship? But despite her resistance, Sara went weak in the knees at the thought of a man willing to give her that. "Why? We hardly know each other."

"I happen think we know each other very well. It isn't about time. We have all that in the world." He didn't grab her, didn't even touch her arms as he leaned forward and whispered in her ear as if sharing a secret. "You fire my blood, Sara. No other woman

can make me feel this way. Please don't take yourself away. Three days or three years, I don't want to lose you."

"And your mother?"

"You think I have these sort of feelings for my mother?"

"No! I mean..." Sara stifled laughter. "Won't she hate me?"

"Who cares? It's our box, not hers. As I keep telling you, I don't want to change you. I don't want you to settle down, to be tame and well-behaved. I just want you."

Then he backed away, for once giving her the space she needed to make her own decision, and in that moment Sara knew it wasn't about whether his mother would approve or whether she could come and go as she pleased. It was about being with a man whose soul truly mirrored hers. A man who shared her deepest, darkest desires, one who could never bore her. Never lose her heart, not once he had it. So she whisked the paper from his grasp and tore it in half. "I've got a better idea."

He dared to close the distance he'd allowed between them, backing her against the rail but saying nothing—because with that one telling sentence, she'd already told him.

She was his.

And being his, the last thing Sara wanted was to travel without him. After all, she'd always dreamt of having an international affair. But what was a fantasy without her fantasy man? "Let's go together. A real vacation—not a working one." Naughtily, she grabbed his cock and juggled it in her grasp as she grinned up at him and practically cooed, "I promise to be bad as ever."

And with a groan of delight, he cloaked her in his arms, clasping her tight. "I'm counting on it, *mon amour*."

So maybe that fifth bouquet would prove right on after all, but for now she'd settle for giving her king her number and being his Bubble Queen.

It seemed destiny was real after all.

About the Author

Slip between the sheets with Alyssa Brooks, erotic romance author.

Author of fun, flirty and contemporary erotic romance and erotica, Alyssa Brooks currently writes for several publishers including Ellora's Cave. She resides in Amish country, Pennsylvania, where every day is a little crazier and the house gets a little messier. Taming her bad-boy husband is a never-ending task, but Alyssa's become a pro at giving him plenty of incentive. Proud mom to a young daughter, two stepsons, and a puppy that has a particular taste for shoes and unrolling toilet paper, Alyssa loves her hectic existence and is ever grateful for her awesome job as an author, where with a little research she can become anyone, doing anything, and fall in love over and over and over again. The imaginary sex is great too!

Alyssa welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and e-mail address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

Tell Us What You Think

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can e-mail us at Comments@EllorasCave.com.

Also by Alyssa Brooks

Desperate Seduction

Taking Tara



Discover for yourself why readers can't get enough of the multiple award-winning publisher Ellora's Cave. Whether you prefer e-books or paperbacks, be sure to visit EC on the web at www.ellorascave.com for an erotic reading experience that will leave you breathless.

www.ellorascave.com