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# Master OF THE Game

EMMA  
PETERSEN

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Master of the Game

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# *MASTER OF THE GAME*

**Emma Petersen**

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## Chapter One

When people talked about mid-life crises, they usually meant balding men with spare tires who drove red sports cars and hung out at nightclubs with women more interested in what was in their wallets than in their pants. But Erin Anderson, despite being a woman with neither a sports car nor a spare tire, was square in the middle of one.

How else to explain that she'd let Nicci talk her in to yet another insane escapade?

"Umm...Nicci, why is that lady chained to the wall?" Erin shot her best friend a dirty look, knowing she'd been had again.

Erin watched as a man stepped behind the woman and smacked his hand against her bare bottom. The woman cried out but Erin couldn't hear the sound over the loud, thumping beat of the music. She tried to look away but couldn't as the man's hand continued to fall, the woman's ass reddening under the blows.

She turned to glance at Nicci, who was as engrossed in what was happening as Erin had been.

"Nicci?"

Nicci shook her head as if she were coming out of a trance and looked at her. "Uh, surprise?"

"Surprise? Nicci, you didn't tell me it was going to be *this* kind of party!"

Nicci smiled, her lips revealing even, white teeth. The contrast to her chocolate skin was striking. "I didn't? I'm pretty sure I did." Her grin widened.

"Niccole Palmetti, that used to work in high school but believe me, in the two decades since we graduated I've outgrown that trick."

"Have you?" Nicci turned back to the couple on the stage.

*Okay, time to go.*

“Give me the keys and call me when you’re ready to leave. I’ll come back and pick you up.” Taking advantage of her friend’s distraction, Erin tried to dig in Nicci’s purse.

“No keys,” Nicci said as she moved her purse out of Erin’s reach. “And no leaving. When was the last time you did something adventurous, Erin? Something for yourself?”

Adventurous? Erin was as acquainted with adventurous as she was BDSM. Sure, she had heard of it but that was the extent. Now, here she was standing in the middle of a mansion watching a man spank a woman with a wicked-looking flogger. And God...maybe even enjoying it?

Nicci looked at her pleadingly—the same look that had persuaded Erin to go skinny-dipping down at old man Johnson’s lake. What was next? Skipping third period to go make out with the captain of the football team. Yeah, that had worked out great the first time. About as well as an unplanned pregnancy and shotgun wedding could.

“Come on, Erin. Stay. Just for an hour and if you aren’t having a good time, we’ll leave.” Nicci held up three fingers. “Scout’s honor.”

Nicci had never been a Girl Scout. But then a man wearing a black leather mask walked by leading another man on a leash. And both of them were...well...beautiful. Her knees—and her resolve—weakens. “Okay, Nicci. One hour.”

Nicci squealed and hugged her. “Thanks, Eri! You won’t regret it.”

Erin hugged her back and tried to relax. What the hell was she thinking? Responsible single mothers didn’t do things like this.

She should have known something was up when Nicci had dressed her up, done her make-up and declared her a MILF, laughing when Erin turned beet red upon hearing what the acronym stood for.

She was definitely a mother. A forty-year-old mother. Forty wasn't a bad age and she didn't always feel old, but with an adult son, she couldn't help feeling like so much of life had passed her by.

Maybe this party was just what she needed, just the thing to add a little spice and excitement to her otherwise mundane life.

"You want a drink?" Nicci held out a glass with a bluish-looking liquid in it.

Erin raised an eyebrow. "What is it?" she asked as she took the glass.

"A blue Cadillac," Nicci answered, taking a long drink.

You can do this, Erin told herself. It's just a cocktail.

She took a sip and gasped. "Wow."

Nicci laughed and continued to drink hers like it was fruit juice. "Packs a punch huh?"

Erin nodded, taking another tentative swallow. She and Nicci had been best friends since the third grade and there had been times when Erin wanted to strangle her because Nicci got her into as much trouble as she had gotten her out of, but this latest adventure topped all others.

Her friend had always been the adventurous one, always ready and willing to try almost anything twice. Once to see if she liked it and the second time just to be sure she didn't.

"So this is the new lifestyle you've been experimenting with?"

"Sorta, but this isn't the club I usually go to. This is just a 'play and pain' party."

Since Erin's son had gone off to college, she had wanted to try new things, but getting tied up and flogged by a complete stranger hadn't been on her list.

"Come on, Erin, lighten up. No one's going to bite you." Nicci ushered a reluctant Erin through the crush.

"Do you promise?" Erin asked, only half joking. They passed another area where a stage had been erected. A man was shackled to something that looked like a cross and had a rubber ball stuffed in his mouth and tied in place.

Nicci smacked Erin's bottom and she jumped.

"There are probably more than a few biters here, but it's the spankers you really need to worry about," Nicci said, laughing. "Besides, when was the last time you got laid? And I'm talking about by someone other than your shower massager or BOB."

Erin dropped her friend's hand. Oh my God, she'd been clinging to it like a frightened third grade girl. She glared and said, "Nicci Palmetti, getting spanked and having sex are two very different things. I've overlooked a lot for the sake of our friendship, but I swear if anyone spans me, I won't talk to you for a week!"

"Promises, promises." Nicci danced away as Erin tried to swat her arm. "And you know what they say – don't knock it 'til you try it."

Erin gave Nicci a mock frown while her friend leered and made a spanking motion with her hand.

*Don't knock it, indeed.* Erin had to ask. "Have you tried it?"

A grin split Nicci's face and that was all the answer Erin needed. There wasn't much Nicci hadn't tried and Erin couldn't help but be a little envious.

"Where's the ladies room?" Erin shouted over the din.

"There's one in the side hall by the entrance where we came in. You want me to go with you to keep the sadists at bay?" Nicci brandished her flogger key chain and made a shooing motion with her hands.

"No, there's no need for both of us to have to stand in line. Wait for me?"

Nicci nodded, but a man calling her name had already distracted her.

Slowly making her way to the restroom, Erin tried to keep her gaze forward, but around every corner was another shocking scene. Before long, however, when she saw something different, she wasn't as surprised as she was curious.



Nicci was right. It *had* been forever since she'd had a non-self-induced orgasm. She didn't have any excuses now that Gregory was firmly settled in his junior year of university.

It was something to think about and that was what Erin did best. Weigh and consider a decision, thinking through every possibility before acting. After having little choice but to marry Gregory's father, she didn't like to leave things to chance. But perhaps she didn't have to. Who was to say she couldn't carefully search for a companion she enjoyed being with and after a reasonable length of time getting to know him, they couldn't have a friendship with an understanding?

Erin doubted she'd find him in this crowd, but she wouldn't be closed off to possibilities.

Rounding the corner, she saw the line for the restroom and groaned. Maybe she didn't have to worry about trying to be open and getting to know someone. After all, it looked like she'd be spending the rest of the night in line.

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later, Nicci was nowhere to be found. Erin was making her third pass through the mass of gyrating, scantily clothed bodies, keeping one eye out for her friend, who was probably in one of the many bedrooms upstairs. But Erin hadn't gathered the courage to make her way up there yet.

The music was loud, the liquor flowing and everyone seemed to be having a good time. Everyone else, anyway. It was hard to have a good time when she felt as conspicuous as a ninja in a nunnery. It wasn't just her age—it was also the outfit Nicci had talked her in to wearing.

"You'll look hot in this," she had said.

Hot? Looking down at the slips of material Nicci had called a skirt and blouse, Erin groaned. She didn't look hot. She looked cold. *Very cold.*

*Oh my God.*

Stopping mid-motion, her arms halfway up, she realized what she had been about to do.

*Yes, covering your nipples with your hands won't draw as much attention. Good thinking, Erin. Why don't you bend over while you're at it and give everyone a glimpse of your barely there panties?*

Who was she kidding? She couldn't do this. Being open to new possibilities was one thing. Exposing her body to dozens of people was another. She had to get out of there.

On the way to the bathroom, she had seen a door that led outside to a pool and pool house near the back yard.

Since it was too cold to swim, maybe it would be empty. The perfect place to hide until it was time to go. Wading through the thick crowd, she worked her way to the back door and sighed as the crisp night air met her overheated skin. The house was huge, but there had to be two hundred people packed into the first level alone.

Bending, careful not to flash anyone, she slipped off the ridiculously high heels Nicci had forced her feet into. The cool cement soothed her aching soles and the smell of chlorine and wet grass reminded her of childhood summers.

For the second time, Erin wondered who the house belonged to. She knew it was some rock musician friend of Nicci's, but Erin had never met him. The grounds were beautiful and perfectly manicured. Tiny winking lights strategically placed in the water and grass surrounding the gated pool area gave it an ethereal glow.

Walking, she gazed into the darkness. The home was located in the hills above Orange Patch Acres where the stars were much brighter without all the city lights and smog to dim them. This is how she should have spent her evening. Gazing into the night sky, looking for Orion and the Big Dipper while listening to crickets sing each other love songs.

Erin laughed. She knew it was corny, but the scene outside fit her so much better than the one inside. Tigers couldn't change their stripes and neither could she. She was safe, analytical, responsible Erin Anderson. Which wasn't a bad thing. Those attributes

had helped her raise a well-adjusted young man and survive after her husband died just two weeks after they had married.

She reached the pool-house door and turned the knob, relief washing over her when it twisted easily. On the way over, she had realized that it might be locked.

Swinging the door open, she gasped as a large figure illuminated by candlelight shifted in the shadows. "I'm sorry. I didn't know anyone was in here."

A cherry-red light glowed as the stranger inhaled. Exhaling, he blew out a column of fragrant smoke before tossing down the cigarette and grinding it out with his heel.

"No worries, love. The place is big enough for more than one person, but shut the door, will ya? There's a cold wind blowing."

Erin hesitated. She didn't know this man, but it was either go back to the party or take her chances here. Her instincts had always kept her safe and she listened to them now. There *was* something dangerous about him but she didn't feel the threat was to her physical safety.

Closing the door softly behind her, she walked into the room but backed up a little when he uncoiled his big body from where he lounged against a wall and came toward her.

Something fluttered in her stomach, an unfamiliar sensation that reminded her of arousal, but that was impossible. She hadn't even properly met the man.

"I'm Liam Donnelly."

His name was as Irish as his beautiful accent. She took a deep breath and held it as he walked into the moonlight shining through skylight. It took her a moment to realize he was holding his hand out because she had been too busy staring at his bare chest, stomach and the worn jeans that dipped low on his hips, giving her more than a glimpse of a happy trail.

*That's why they call it a happy trail. Because it leads to something that could make someone very happy.*

“Erin Anderson,” she said finally. Her normally clear and calm voice had taken on a breathy quality she barely recognized. What the hell was wrong with her? She hadn’t been laid in a very long time – that was what! And everything about this man screamed sex.

“It’s nice to meet you, Erin.”

She wanted him to say her name again. “Nice to meet you too.”

“Liam...my name is Liam,” he said, like a teacher instructing a reluctant student.

“Liam,” she repeated dutifully, an odd need to please him coming over her. “So, why are you hiding down here?”

A man this beautiful should never hide. Pitch-black hair complemented his ice-blue eyes. His nose was slightly crooked, as if he’d been in more than one barroom brawl. If she were prone to letting her imagination carry her away, she’d swear he wasn’t human. No human had such searing eyes. It was as if they could sink right into her soul.

“More than likely the same reason you are.”

“Because you felt old? Or because you realized your best friend had dressed you up like slutty, middle-aged Barbie and tricked you into going to a spanking party?”

He chuckled and the sensation in her belly spread. “A spanking party? Are you always so straightforward?”

Oh God, if just his laugh made her sex clench, what would the rest of him do?

“Yes. With a teenage son you have to be,” she said, smiling nervously.

*Remember Gregory. A woman rearing an impressionable young man doesn’t have sex with strangers.*

No, but a woman who had already reared a brilliant, self-sufficient young man might.

*Gregory is living his life. Isn’t it about time you lived yours?*

“A teenage son? You? I don’t believe it.”

"Well, he's not exactly a teenager anymore." She knew he was saying it only to be nice but it was still good to hear.

Just like it felt good to stand here talking to him while thinking wicked thoughts she'd never act on. Images flooded her mind, of kneeling before him, unzipping his pants and pulling his cock free. Would it be as big as the rest of him?

Heat spiked through her and she swallowed hard, trying to concentrate on the words coming from his lips.

"So, you left the party because you felt old?"

She licked her lips and nodded solemnly. "And because my nipples were showing. And I think there was a man following me, trying to work up the nerve to ask me if he could spank me." What was it about this man that had her saying the first thing that popped into her mind? God, she wanted to bend over so *he* could spank her.

*Wow. Did I just think that?* Her face heated and Erin was grateful the room was dim.

He laughed again and the husky sound sent a shiver through her and his eyes lowered. "I don't know if that's a bad thing...that they're showing. It would be a crime to cover such beauty."

Erin covered her breasts with her hands, her nipples hard against her palms as the heat gripping her intensified into an inferno. "It was cold on the way over here." It was a lame excuse but one she hoped he believed.

The smile eased off his lips, his expression turning serious. Stepping closer, he took her hands in his and pulled them down. "Now don't go doing that, love. I didn't mean to embarrass you."

Electricity licked through her the moment his large, warm hands engulfed hers.

*You only live once.*

She looked up at him and bit her bottom lip. "I'm not embarrassed."

His head tilted and he looked at her curiously. "If you're not embarrassed, then why did you cover yourself?"

"I'm not cold anymore."

Liam Donnelly was more jaded than a man of twenty-eight should be. After letting his band mate, Gavin, talk him into coming to what was supposed to be a small gathering, he'd taken one look at the crowd and headed for cover.

After years on the road, where the only thing that came easier than women and sex was drugs, he'd had more than enough of parties.

Especially "play and pain" house parties where there were few rules and almost everyone in attendance ignored the basic tenets of the lifestyle, the majority of them being kids trying out their first reckless taste of kink. There was nothing for him in that press of bodies, some so high on X they wouldn't remember, tomorrow morning, half the things they'd done tonight. Or with whom they had done them.

He'd been there, done that. Hadn't gotten the bloody T-shirt but had gotten a stint in rehab and a new outlook on the two lifestyles that had warred for control of his life.

One, his music, he couldn't live without. The other, who he was, was ingrained in his very being but that didn't mean he had to share it with everyone and anyone.

*I'm not cold anymore*, she had said. The four words kicked him in the gut and flicked fire through his veins, more potent than any drug he'd encountered. When she had opened the door, he'd been afraid that Gavin had found him and would try to drag him back to the party, but instead it had been an angel.

Only angels didn't wear shirts he could see through when the light hit them just right. He didn't know what it was about this woman that made his dick ache. Women had been throwing themselves at him since he turned fourteen and for the past three years, while he had been getting his mind and body healthy, he'd chosen to remain celibate. That was over the moment she opened the door.

Sure, his temporary vow of celibacy made him the butt of many jokes with his band mates, but it was something that he had to do for himself. He'd been so sick of waking up next to woman after woman, most of whose names he'd never known. And all of whom only wanted him because he was a rock star.

But this woman...she was different. He'd love to wake up next to her after he'd fucked her into a near coma. She didn't want him because of who he was. He'd seen no recognition when she heard his name. No calculating look or dollar signs flashed in her eyes. And yes, she wanted him. Even before her softly whispered admission, he knew she wanted him.

"I don't normally do things like this."

It wasn't the first time Liam had heard those words, but it was the first time in a long time that he believed them. "Like what, love? Talk to strange men in candlelit pool houses?" he joked, trying to put her at ease. He could see the indecision in her eyes, the rational side no doubt telling her to run, and that was the last thing he wanted. "Do you want to play a game?"

A frown creased her brow at his abrupt change of subject. "A game?"

Liam nodded. "It's called Master, May I."

Her brow wrinkled and he knew she was trying to figure out what the game would entail. "Master, May I? I've heard of Mother, May I, but never Master."

"Do you want to play, Erin?" He didn't know why he was pushing. He hadn't played the type of game he had in mind in a very long time and the last time he had, it had left him cold and unsatisfied. But this time, with this woman, he knew it would be different.

"Ho-how do you play?" The tremor in her voice was endearing, but it was also hot as hell because it meant she was already well on her way to where he wanted her to be.

Leaning down, he buried his face in the soft curve of her neck and breathed in her scent. His cock twitched as she stiffened and then, with a low moan, relaxed against him. God, she smelled good—subtly of jasmine, sandalwood and something spicy he couldn't place.

"All you have to do is remember three rules." He licked the side of her neck, groaning as her pulse sped up beneath his mouth. Clutching her hips he pulled her closer to his body. "One, until we're done playing, my name is Master." Another lick.

“Two, anytime you want to stop all you have to do is say the word apple. And three, you can’t come until I say you can. If you think you’ve reached the point where you don’t think you can hold off any longer, all you have to do is ask.”

Pulling back, he looked into her eyes, trying to gauge her reaction. They were wide, her full lips parted, her breath coming in soft pants. She was with him. Hell, she was more than with him—she was a little ahead of him.

“Now what will you say when you want me to let you come?”

Her soft brown eyes fluttered shut and color rode high on her cheeks. “Master, may I?”

“And what will you say when you no longer want to play?”

“Apple.”

Liam swatted her bottom, enjoying the way her breath hitched as the flat of his hand connected with her ass. “Good girl.”

*Master, may I?*

Yes, she had definitely lost her mind. Why else would she be in a pool house about to fuck a complete stranger? She could try to lie to herself and pretend it wasn’t about to happen. That he’d been talking about something totally different than making her come.

The way her cunt ached, softened and dampened, there was no way to deny what was about to happen, even if she were the kind to run from the truth. But she wasn’t and though the rational part of her told her to turn around and walk right out, her body had already staged a coup. Her legs wouldn’t move and the only functioning parts of her were the parts that wanted to find out what Liam had in mind.

To know how the first hard, deep thrust of his cock would feel. Would he be gentle and coaxing or demanding and rough?

She’d had very few lovers and none had made her cream her panties with so few words as Liam had. How many other chances would she have for the kind of sex he



offered? Anonymous, no holds barred, melt your bones, pussy-gushing, back-clawing sex.

From the moment she heard Liam's deep, melodic voice, she knew if given the chance he'd fuck her senseless. Who needed sense anyway? Not when you had a chance to have the orgasm of a lifetime with a man who looked like he could make a woman come by crooking his little finger at her.

Maybe not little. There was nothing small about this man. He towered over her, his broad shoulders blotting out the moon shining in through the skylight and she loved it. His height made her feel small and vulnerable, but the care he took when he touched her made her feel cherished and desired.

*I shouldn't do this.*

Erin shivered as the heated tips of Liam's fingers slowly flicked her buttons free, his large hands unexpectedly nimble as he traced the edges of her blouse apart, revealing more and more of her naked skin.

*The hell I shouldn't.*

Her body begged her not to mess this up, every inch seeming to cry out for the fucking she knew he'd give her.

Just as he reached the last button, Erin remembered she didn't have a bra on because Nicci had said one wouldn't look right with the shirt.

She looked up, her breath catching at the stark need on Liam's face. He looked like a man starved, a man bent on slaking a hunger and heaven help anyone or anything that got in his way.

It should have frightened her, given her the strength to walk out the door. It didn't. The look made her cunt ache and her already-soaked panties wetter. Instinctively, she knew he wouldn't hurt her, not in a bad way. If he wanted to, he wouldn't have given her a word to stop him. A word she doubted would cross her lips.

Time stood still as he pulled her shirt apart, groaning as her breasts and dark nipples were exposed.

"God, you have the greatest tits I've ever seen."

She did? Erin looked down and liquid heat shot through her at the sight of his blunt finger tracing the curve of her breast. Sparks of sensation followed in the wake spreading outward, drawing her nipples tight and making her knees tremble.

"So fucking responsive," Liam whispered as he bent and blew on an impudent crest, watching it bead. "Is your cunt just as responsive?"

No one had ever talked to her in such a dirty way and like thick warm honey, the question poured over her, rooting her in place. She stayed silent, not knowing how to answer the question.

*Smack.*

His hand landed hard on her right butt cheek. The wispy material of her skirt did little to dull the blow and he had used just enough force for it to sting. It was a good sting, one that melted straight through her to her core. She could feel her juices seep from between the swollen lips of her sex and her clit throbbed in response.

The line between dream and reality, pain and pleasure blurred and Erin knew she was in trouble. Her chest heaved as if she had run a long distance and she bowed her head, suddenly afraid to look into his eyes. Scared to see her own dark need mirrored in them. She craved things she'd never even thought of before but in this man's hands, she knew she'd find everything she wanted and so much more.

"I didn't hear your answer, little one."

She couldn't think, couldn't feel beyond the demand burning through her veins. There was something she was supposed to say. A certain way she was supposed to answer but as his hand fell again, this blow harder than the first, everything fled her mind except the fire he was stoking.

"Hmmm... Why do I have the feeling that for all your protestations earlier, you are going to enjoy getting your ass spanked?"

She shook her head, denying his words. She didn't like getting her ass spanked. *Did she?* Oh God, the way her cunt spasmed and the give of wetness she felt just at the thought of it made her think there was a good possibility she did. She was famished, her body vibrating with arousal and everything he did just pushed it further.

She needed...

"Master, may I?"

His eyes heated like twin blue fires and she wondered how she could have ever thought of them as cold.

"May you what, little one?"

She hesitated, her throat tight, as she was caught up in the madness of it. Calling a man she'd didn't know Master, and worse, actually meaning it. She wanted him to master her, mold her into whatever he wanted her to be. His pet, his slut, his treasure, anything, as long as she was his.

Had he cast a spell on her? What else could explain how she fell so fast and so deep into the web he was weaving. He had barely touched her and already she was on the verge of coming.

His smile was predatory. If this was the way the wolf looked when Little Red Riding Hood had met him, it was little wonder she hadn't *begged* him to eat her.

"May you what, little one?" he asked again, the hard, long column of his cock prodding her belly. He reached over and grabbed a silver packet from a bowl on a small end table.

"May I come? May I please come, Master?"

He growled deep in his throat. "Already, love?"

"Yes please, Master."

It was as if her words had broken a dam. One minute Liam's hands were on her waist, the next he lifted her, pinning her between his big body and the door, his hands

brunching her skirt to her waist and snapping the delicate strings that held her panties together.

With each brutal yank, Erin had the answer to her earlier question. There'd be nothing gentle about their fucking. But she didn't want gentle. She wanted the strength and power she'd seen in him from the first moment their eyes met. Clutching his shoulders, she dug into the hard muscle and sinew as it flexed beneath her fingertips.

She was about to fuck a complete stranger. The thought should have stopped her dead in her tracks. It didn't. Instead, the thrill of the forbidden only pushed the need higher and harder.

He didn't bother to take his pants off but pulled them low enough to let his cock spring forward. She looked down, wanting to see the part of him that soon would be inside her, but couldn't make out anything past their melding chests.

She heard him tear open the packet and thanked God one of them had the sense to remember protection. Liam wedged a hand between their bodies. He didn't play with her clit, just touched the moisture slicking her sex before something thicker, hotter replaced those digits and she cried out as he sank in, balls deep, with one measured, rough thrust.

He didn't withdraw but pressed harder, higher, nudging her cervix and pleasure pain splintered through her. He held still, giving her tight muscles time to relax around him.

"Oh God."

Liam's hands clenched painfully on her hips as he pulled out.

"Please," she begged and cried out as he slammed back in deep, pounding her against the door.

She could feel every thick inch of his cock as it dragged against the sensitive walls of her cunt. Each forward thrust hitting her G-spot, that place inside her that she had only heard and read about. After tonight, she knew she would be a credible witness for its existence.

Liam buried his face in the crook of her neck, sucking her skin in to his mouth, nipping and biting down as he fucked her deep, ramming inside her so hard she wondered if he'd hammer her straight through the door.

The juicy sounds of her cunt combined with his grunts of enjoyment pushed Erin to the edge, the pleasure too acute to hold her tongue. "Yes, oh God, right there!"

She balanced on the edge, her pussy clamping on his cock, tighter than a fist. Just one more thrust and she'd freefall. She tried to work her hips faster, but his hands restricted her movements.

"You didn't ask, little one."

Mewls of frustration escaped her lips as she clawed his back. She didn't understand how he could remember such a thing when she was having a hard time remembering how to breathe. "Master, may I come?"

He didn't answer, but his thrusts slowed until he was pressed deep and still inside her. "What will you give me if I let you come, little one?"

"Anything, Master, anything," she said, her voice hoarse and pleading.

"Good girl."

Erin knew she should have been worried about the satisfaction she heard in his voice but his next words obliterated all her other thoughts.

"Come for me, little one." Angling up, he hit her spot and a cry ripped from her throat. It wasn't an explosion—it was a detonation.

"Oh God! Yes!"

Spasms started deep in her belly, rippling violently outward in waves. Her cunt flooded his cock with wetness, milking and contracting on it as if trying to strangle every last drop of cum from it.

Dizzy and breathless, Erin sagged against him, trembling as he whispered, "Don't forget your promise, pet. I'm not quite through with you yet."

Liam was dying. His breath billowed out of his chest like a stallion that has finally caught a long-sought-after mare. Minutes after her orgasm faded, Erin's pussy continued to spasm on his cock. Her hot, wet walls clenched and released on him in a series of internal caresses that made his knees weak.

It had taken everything he had not to keep pounding into her tight, juicy cunt until he pumped her full of the cum drawing his heavy sac tight.

He was lucky he had never encountered Erin when he was a teenager. If he'd had a taste of her pussy then, he wouldn't have made it out of puberty alive.

Lying collapsed against him, her gasps feathering the skin on his neck, making him swell larger and thicker inside her, his cock demanded satisfaction. But Liam fought it, knowing he wouldn't be completely satisfied until he could see how far he could take the promise she'd made.

Would she remember it? She'd been desperate to come, making sounds he'd never forget if he lived to be a thousand. Gathering her closer, he stood to his full height and walked them to the bench that sat against one wall of the pool house.

Her arms flopped outward as he laid her down, her back meeting the padded cushion. She wasn't asleep and she hadn't blacked out. A smile stretched his mouth. Playing possum, was she?

Lodged deep inside her, he braced his weight on his forearms and leaned down to take a long, leisurely lick of her nipple. His lips covered it as he pulled it into his mouth before he suckled hard.

Erin cried out, her cunt spasmed and he felt a rush of wetness coat his cock.

"We're not quite done yet, love."

She moaned as he pulled out, her overworked muscles clutching at his cock as his length dragged against her sensitive nerve endings.

Her eyes opened and she nibbled her lip.

Surprised, Liam watched as she scooted back on the bench, sitting up she braced her back against the wall and pulled her knees up, exposing the tight pink pussy he had just pounded. It looked as beautiful as it had felt. Glistening lips, tiny hard little clit and the wet slit that molded to fit his dick better than a warm liquid glove.

So the kitten had turned vixen, huh? He'd see about that when he had her on all fours, fucking her from behind or in front of him swallowing his cock.

Her hand delved between her legs to play with the moisture there and he arched an eyebrow. She hadn't said the safe word, so the game was still on. While it was...

"Did I say you could touch *my* pussy, little one?"

Fingers buried in her creamy cunt, her hand froze and her eyes widened.

Grabbing her hand, he pulled it up to his lips. Holding her gaze, he slowly licked her juices from her fingertips, sucking each one into his mouth until she moaned and trembled.

"Whose pussy is this?" he asked, dropping her wrist as he bent down to he kiss the soft flesh of her belly.

"Yours," she said on a sigh as he replaced her fingers with two of his own, pushing into her hot, wet cunt.

Crooking his fingers, he grazed her G-spot and she cried out. Bracing her weight on her arms, she thrust her hips forward until he sank in all the way. Stilling his fingers, he leaned down and bit the vulnerable flesh of her inner thigh.

"Yours, what?" he coaxed, licking the spot to soothe it.

She moaned and spread her legs wider. "Yours, Master."

God, he loved hearing those words come out of her mouth, especially when she was on the verge of coming again. Fuck, she was amazing.

Liam had had more than his fair share of pussy, but none had made him want to come so badly it felt as if his balls would spontaneously combust. He sucked her nipple

into his mouth, drawing hard, loving the way her breath shuddered out when he bit down.

He licked and suckled her breasts as he finger-fucked her sopping cunt. The grinding movement of her hips became frenzied and her cries escalated until he could tell she was about to come again.

He lifted his head, his mouth making a popping sound when he released her nipple, and pulled his drenched fingers free. "The first one was a freebie. You'll have to work for the rest."

He couldn't wait to make her come again. Make her lose control. To see her eyes roll back, hear her moan, beg him to fuck her. Goddamn, it had to be the sexiest thing he had ever experienced. He couldn't wait to do it again and again.

Standing, he looked down at her as she leaned against the wall as if her arms could no longer hold her weight. He fisted his thick erection, pumping it.

"Lie down," he ordered and was pleased when she scrambled to obey. She tried to hold his gaze but flitted back and forth from his eyes to his dick as she awaited his next move.

Liam continued to jack off for her, loving the way her little pink tongue darted out to wet her plump lips. He imagined it on his cock, groaning as the image kicked the tension riding his balls higher. Her mouth looked as though it had been made to suck dick.

His spine stiffened and he could feel the orgasm tighten his sac. No fucking way was he was going spill in his hand when he could come in the tightest, juiciest pussy his cock had ever stretched.

He released his dick and walked to the built-in refrigerator in the back of the pool house. After pulling a tray from the freezer, he snagged one of the ties that held back the curtains to two separate dressing rooms.

Drawing a wooden chair up next to the bench, he set down his acquisitions before grabbing one of the candles that lit the room. Placing it with the other stuff, he picked



up the tie and held out his hand. Her eyes grew big, but she hesitated only a moment before placing her hand in his.

Something swelled fiercely in his chest. Her trust awed him and he knew he'd never do anything to betray it. He secured one of her wrists to the end of the bench before doing the other.

"Still with me, love?"

She nodded, her innocent expression at odds with the tiny laugh lines at her eyes. "What's the word you say if you want to stop playing?" *We aren't playing. Nothing about this feels like a game.* Liam ignored the thought and waited for her answer.

"Apple."

He smiled and she returned it. Liam did something he had never done while playing with a partner. Kneeling, he brushed his mouth over hers, once, twice before his tongue darted between her lips to spar with hers. Their groans were simultaneous as she arched into the kiss, lifting her head to get closer.

Pulling back, they gasped for breath and he could see what he felt shining in her eyes. He closed his eyes against it, knowing emotions could become entangled and signals crossed during moments of intense play.

Shaking his head as if to clear the fog from his brain, he picked up the candle. Dipping his finger in the wax pooling at the top, he tested the temperature. Not hot enough to scald but hot enough to sting.

Perfect.

"Remember, love, don't fight the pain. Just let it roll over you."

Something was wrong. Nothing should feel this right, this perfect but everything Liam said and did fit into place.

From his gruff orders to the first orgasm he'd fucked her to, Erin felt more and more that she was in over her head, yet it was exactly where she wanted to be. Nothing she had experienced in the forty years she had been on this earth had ever felt the way

Liam's cock had as he pounded inside her. The juicy, wet sound of her pussy had been an unlikely aphrodisiac to her.

"Still with me, love?" he asked again and she nodded. She was with him more than she'd ever been with anyone. This must be how addiction felt because she wasn't so sure she could deny him anything right now. He could take her any way he wanted and she'd beg for more. In her mouth, her ass, anywhere.

Her pussy clenched at the thought of Liam working his huge cock into her virgin asshole. More than one man had asked but she'd never been tempted to let anyone fuck her there. But Liam, God, it was almost as if the night wouldn't be complete until he did.

*Just let it roll over you...*

She was about to let a man pour hot wax on her breasts and the only thing she could find wrong with the situation was that the longer it took for him to do it, the longer it would take for him to fuck her again.

He paused a moment, as if giving her a chance to back out, but heaven help her, she didn't want to. Slowly, his eyes never leaving hers, he tilted the candle slightly and let the first drop fall.

She cried out, taking deep breaths and concentrated on the pain as it gripped her. Soon, it morphed into something different. Although her skin stung even as the hot liquid cooled, the fiery sensation sank beyond her skin into her very core. Leaning down, he sucked the crest into his mouth and she arched up, trying to get closer to the warm wetness of his mouth as his tongue loosened and lifted the wax.

Liam stood and the wicked smile that was quickly becoming familiar widened as he tipped the candle again, letting more wax splash over her this time.

Trembling, Erin closed her eyes as the feeling of pleasure-pain swamped her senses. She sighed as Liam's mouth followed the trail the candle wax made.

Heat spread outward, pooling deep in her cunt. Incredibly, she was on the verge of coming again.

"Master, may I?" she panted.

He looked at her a long moment and her heart sank. He had said the first time he made her come was a freebie and she'd have to work for the rest.

"Please," she whispered and nearly cried out in relief when he put the candle down. Anticipation pushed her harder and she knew she'd only need a thrust or two before she would come.

The bench groaned as Liam climbed onto it and made a place for himself between her thighs. Erin looked at him as he buried his face in her pussy, licking her clit before tracing her slit with the tip of his tongue.

"Oooh!" she moaned, her thighs trembling as her stomach tightened. She couldn't let herself come, not yet, not without his permission.

"Master, please! I want to come so badly."

He ignored her, burying his face deeper into her pussy, tongue fucking her as he dug his hands into the soft flesh of her hips.

Gripping the bonds, she held on, praying she wouldn't come before he gave her permission. "Please, please, please," she begged. One more agile stroke and she knew she'd be lost.

Lifting his head, he looked at her. "Not yet, love."

Relief and frustration warred within her. The frustration dissipated faster than a puff of smoke as he climbed into the cradle of her thighs, his cock stabbing the slick folds of her cunt.

Erin hummed with pleasure as he tunneled deep into her swollen flesh. Wiggling her hips beneath his, she buried her face in the crook of his neck, licking the salt off his skin. A feminine thrill ran through her when he growled deep in his chest and rocked against her.

"You wanna come, little one?" His panting breath as he worked over her, pounded into her, turned her on even more and she knew it was just a matter of time before she exploded again.

"Yes, but..."

"But what, little one? Tell me what you want."

His thrusts sped up until he was slamming deep into her. Her gasps were barely audible over the sounds of skin slapping against skin.

She was so close.

"You, Master. I wanna feel you come inside me." She hadn't known exactly how much she wanted it until she said the words.

"Fuck." It was a curse and a prayer. Erin could feel how her words affected Liam. His cock swelled larger inside her and with every ramming thrust, he grunted with the effort to stave off his orgasm. She would have none of it. Placing her feet flat on the surface, she tilted her hips, allowing him to go deeper.

It was her turn to curse as his mouth covered one of her breasts and he sucked the crest deep, drawing hard before biting down.

Raising his head, he looked into her eyes as he pounded into her drenched cunt.

"Come," he commanded and she did. She cried out, her pussy spasming as one orgasm blended into another. He fucked her through both, pounding into her until she could only whimper piteously.

"That it's, baby, that's it. God, you feel so fucking good."

Erin was done. Wrung out, there was no way she would be able to come again. Or so she thought until Liam flexed his hips, digging down deep until his sac hit her ass and his pubic bone ground against her clit. She yelped as he flung her into another orgasm, the spasms jerking her body like a limp dishrag and she felt liquid gush from her cunt as it clamped down on his cock.

He buried his face in the curve of her neck, his triumphant shout muffled as he stiffened and shuddered against her. Ramming deep one last time, he came.

Liam collapsed on top of Erin, groaning every time her warm, wet walls clenched and released on him. He took a deep breath, not because he was out of breath—well, he was—but more to make sure his lungs still worked.

There was a moment at the end, when he was coming, that he had been convinced his lungs had collapsed. What else could explain the flashing pop of lights that had gone off behind his eyes?

It couldn't have been just coming inside this magnificent woman. Couldn't have been.

"I think I'm in love," Liam said, laughing as he untied her wrists.

He thought he felt her stiffen and told himself it was because his weight was mashing her into the uncomfortable bench beneath them. Moving as if every bone in his body ached, he slowly lifted himself and looked down at her. Her large doe eyes were heavy-lidded, her lips bruised from his kisses and her face flushed from her recent orgasms.

"Hey." He felt like an awkward teenager. As if he were an infatuated boy right after he'd bottomed out in his first cunt, only the feeling was better and *worse*. He never wanted to see another woman again the way he'd seen Erin, but if the slight look of apprehension on her face was any indication, she wasn't feeling the same. Especially after he'd mentioned the dreaded L word.

He shouldn't have fucked it up by kidding around about love.

Now he knew what his dad had meant when he'd said good pussy could make a man daft. He'd slept with more women than he could remember and not once had he encountered the kind of pussy his father had spoken about. Until tonight.

Now, as the woman beneath him bit her lip and looked at him with those soft brown eyes, he couldn't tell if finally finding it was a good thing or not.

Maneuvering off her, he stood, hoping his knees wouldn't humiliate him by giving out. He went to the bathroom to dispose of the condom.

Coming back into the room, he extended his hand and prayed she would take it. His chest tightened as she placed her small hand in his and allowed him to pull her up.

She opened her mouth to speak and he just knew she was going to tell him it was after midnight, time for all band rats and princesses to part ways. Covering her mouth with his effectively stalled her words.

Deepening the kiss, he slipped his hands around her waist, drawing her body close to his. Enjoying the way her nipples stabbed against his chest.

When he pulled away, they were both breathing heavily. Eyes still closed, she lifted her hand and touched it to her swollen lips.

"Come, love."

Her eyes popped open and her pupils dilated. Her breath came in pants and if Liam hadn't known better, he'd believe that just by saying the word, he'd almost propelled her into another orgasm.

He'd heard of a Dominant being able to give a command to make his long-time submissive come, but never a case of partners who'd known each other for as little time as he and Erin. It had just been his imagination, nothing more.

"There's a shower. Let's get you cleaned up," he clarified, not saying the word again.

She didn't try to speak as he took her hand and led her to the set of showers at the back of the pool house. Dropping her hand, he twisted the spigots until all four nozzles came on.

He turned back to find her watching him. Moving slowly, he took off her blouse and helped her step out of the skirt before pulling off his jeans.

He didn't know if the outfit was something she wore often, but he wanted to burn it. To ensure no other man would be able to see her the way he had tonight, but he didn't have that right. He had no rights where she was concerned.

Liam took both her hands in his and led her under the spray of water. They stood for a moment, quiet, each lost in their own thoughts.

Feeling the fool, he reluctantly let go of her hands and picked up a bottle of shower gel. Pouring a healthy dollop into his hand he rubbed it between his palms until suds formed.

He started at her arms, massaging the fragrant soap into her skin, working his way up to her shoulders as she stood meekly and let him bathe her. He didn't worry about her silence, but he did miss the gregarious woman he had met earlier tonight.

Maybe he'd pushed her too far, too fast. Or had his lame attempt at a joke really spooked her? If the shoe had been on the other foot and a woman had mentioned love right after sex, he would have headed for the nearest exit before the last syllable left her mouth.

A sick thought crept into his mind. Had she reacted the way she did because she was already in a relationship? Maybe even married? Neither of them had asked the other their marital status, but just because he hadn't found a ring on any of her slim fingers didn't mean she wasn't married or didn't have a man at home waiting for her.

Misery burned in his gut and he resisted the urge to ask her. He had already fucked up once tonight and ruined a great after-sex glow. Besides, he was acting like a fucking twat. Who cared if she was in a relationship, when he had her right where he wanted her for now?

His large hands covered her breasts and his groan echoed hers as her nipples hardened beneath his palms. He pulled a hand-held showerhead free of the wall mount and rinsed her breasts, letting the pulsing stream linger on her sensitive crests.

She was his for now and he would have to be satisfied with that.

*I think I'm in love.* He had said it jokingly, but nothing about the situation was funny to Erin.

Now she knew why women like her didn't have one-night stands. And it wasn't just because of moral opposition. As she stood letting Liam bathe her, her mind raced. She never wanted this night to end, never wanted to walk away from this man who accidentally turned fantastic sex into something neither of them wanted it to be.

Erin knew she wasn't in love with Liam. If great orgasms made people fall in love, she'd be married to her BOB. No, what she was feeling was just part of the euphoria that sometimes comes along with mind-numbing orgasms. It was nothing to worry about.

She shivered as he continued to tease her with the shower massager, moving it lower to glance over her mound but never settling it between her legs.

Smiling, she leaned her head back and looked at him as he bit his lip in concentration, his expression unexpectedly boyish.

Unable to resist, she speared her fingers through his blue-black locks, loving the way they glided beneath her fingertips. He looked up from what he was doing and returned her smile.

"Ready for another round, love?"

Was she?

She was, but first she wanted to try something. He had tasted her, eaten her pussy until she nearly expired from the pleasure and she wanted to return the favor.

Sucking dick had never really been one of her favorite pastimes and she didn't want to examine why giving him as much pleasure as he had given her was suddenly so important to her.

Holding his gaze, she dropped to her knees and pressed an open-mouth kiss to the taut skin on his stomach. Fascinated, she leaned back and watched as the cut muscles in



his abdomen jumped. Her tongue darted out to take a taste here and there as she followed the trail of hair that led to his cock.

She could hear his breathing deepen over the continuous pelt of the water. Wrapping her fingers around him, she squeezed, trying to touch her middle finger to her thumb. It wouldn't reach.

*Fuck.* No wonder her poor pussy was sore.

Taking his cock into her mouth, she sucked hard, reveling in the way he said her name on a shuddery breath and his hands clenched against his side as if he were afraid to touch her.

That would never do. Sucking harder, she bobbed down on his cock, encouraging him with her moans and movements to fuck her mouth. Groaning, he gave in, spearing his hands through her hair. His hips hitched forward, driving his cock deep into her throat.

Erin sat back on her heels, her hand between her legs, touching the hard little kernel of her clit. She could feel moisture trickle down her thigh as her cunt clenched.

He stopped mid-thrust. Pulling him free from her mouth, she looked up at him expectantly.

"Did I say you could play with *my* pussy?" he growled.

The gruff command in his voice did nothing to persuade Erin to remove her fingers. They were sunk knuckle-deep in her cunt and she had been finger-fucking herself in tune to his rhythm as he rode her mouth. Dragging them free, she held his eyes as she slowly licked her cream off her fingers.

Liam groaned deep in his throat. "You don't come until I say you come, remember?"

Erin sucked her pinky into her mouth and nodded. "Yes, Master."

"Good girl," he said and pushed her head back toward his dick.

Using one hand to stroke him and the other to cradle the heavy weight of his balls, she licked the head of his cock, dipping her tongue into the tiny slit. Ducking her head, she sucked the soft flesh of his sac into her mouth, suckling gently before working her way back up the shaft.

She hadn't known giving head could be such a turn-on. She loved the thin veil of restrained violence in his movements as he thrust into her mouth. The sounds he made as he trembled on the verge of coming.

She moaned as his hands tightened in her hair, as his thrusts built in strength and speed until he jerked against her and spilled his cum into her mouth. Holding his gaze, she swallowed before licking her lips and asking, "Master, may I?"

Panting, he looked down at her and nodded.

Erin's ass met the cool tile as she sat and spread her legs, her eyes still on his as she worked her fingers in and out of her cunt. It wasn't enough. Her fingers weren't big enough to stretch and fill the way his cock did.

Whimpering, she thrust harder trying to get to that place where pain and pleasure blurred, but she only became frustrated.

"Master, please."

Kneeling, he pushed her hand out of the way and stabbed two thick fingers into her sex.

"Yes!"

That's what she needed. The feel of him stretching her apart, gliding roughly along her sensitive walls as he finger-fucked her hard.

"Come, little one."

Erin cried out as her cunt contracted around his fingers. Faster and faster he rubbed and her breath choked out with each thrust. Pain-tinged ecstasy blossomed along her nerve endings and spread out as she came, her body shaking uncontrollably.

"Liam!"

Turning off the shower, Liam got out and wrapped a towel around his waist. Grabbing another one, he wrapped it around Erin and swung her up into his arms.

He hadn't corrected her when she came and cried out his real name. He had been too caught up in the sensation of the moisture that soaked his hand as she writhed against it, her pussy flexing fiercely as she came.

Just the thought of it made him hard. Touching her made him hard. After she had nearly sucked the life out of him, he hadn't thought he'd be able to get it up again for at least half an hour. But the combination of her body cradled against his chest and the image of her plump lips wrapped around his cock made him hard enough to hammer nails. Holding her closer, he almost loathed putting her down.

It was a wonder he wasn't dizzy. All the blood in his body had seemed to gravitate to his dick the last couple of hours and it was all her fault. He knew they should get dressed and return to the party. It was still in full swing and someone could be looking for her. And he knew it was just a matter of time before Gavin came looking for him.

Laying her down, he climbed up onto the bench beside her. He needed more.

Fuck.

Liam was all too familiar with the signs of addiction and knew if he wasn't careful he'd be jonesing for a woman about whom he knew nothing more than her name. Maybe if he knew something about her, he could shake the monkey he felt settling firmly on his back.

"Erin's a beautiful name."

She yawned sleepily and turned onto her side to face him. "Thank you. It was my maternal great-grandmother's name."

"Really?"

She nodded. "Yes, my grandparents came to America from Ireland as newlyweds and never got a chance to go back to see their families. The story goes that when I was

born my grandmother took one look at me and said I was the spitting image of her mother. Hence my name."

Her family was from Ireland. Lots of families had Irish ancestors—it shouldn't please him that they shared the same heritage.

*Don't ask. It doesn't matter. "Do you know what part?"*

She smiled at him, her eyes sparkling as she did a pretty decent imitation of an Irish brogue. "Aye, from County Donegal they were."

Liam said nothing, just looked at her and marveled at the hell of a coincidence. He had been born in Inishowen and frequently visited his parents, who still lived there.

"Have you been there?" He wanted to take her there. He could see the two of them walking along the cliffs near his parent's home. Liam never thought himself a masochist, but he just kept tightening the noose.

*You can't have her. She might belong to someone else. You know nothing about her.*

And why couldn't he have her? If she wasn't married—something he was trying to build his nerve up to confirm—and he wasn't married, what was to stop them from seeing each other again?

He was crazy. He had to be—they hadn't even said goodbye yet and he was already thinking about their next encounter. "To Ireland?" she asked, shaking her head. "No, but I've always wanted to take Gregory."

Blood froze in his veins. "Gregory?" he asked, trying to keep his voice neutral.

"Yes. My son. It's a little too late now to be taking family vacations."

"Too late?" He ignored the fierce relief that swept through him and prayed her Gregory was the only man in her life.

"He'll be twenty soon and the last thing a man wants to do is take trips with his mother."

He had to know. "What about Mr. Anderson?"

"He passed away before our son was born."

He resisted the urge to shout, "Yes!" and pump his fist in the air. After all, they were discussing her deceased husband and not some football game.

"What about you?"

"Me? Am I married you mean?"

She nodded and he couldn't help moving a little closer to her. Now that he knew there was nothing to stop him from seeing her again, his desire returned with a vengeance.

Not that it had really gone anywhere. He had just been too distracted with concerns of her marital status to give in to the temptation of her.

"No. Not married, never married," he said as he covered her mouth with his, his hand delving between her legs, not playing but testing her wetness.

No preliminaries. No teasing. Just him inside her now.

"I'm curious," she panted as he lifted his head. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight." He answered without hesitation as he grabbed another condom. If her age didn't bother him, there was no reason his should bother her. "One more time," he said and he didn't know if he spoke more to himself or her as he spread her legs and settled between them.

"Mmm," she breathed, gasping as he tunneled into her swollen pussy.

He went from zero to sixty in a heartbeat and he didn't know if it was because he now knew that nothing stood in his way or if that was just what she did to him.

He pounded into her. The sounds of her wet cunt suctioning his cock in again and again curled his toes. He couldn't go fast enough or deep enough and the sting of her nails raking his back made it all the better.

He slowed his pace, not wanting to leave her behind, but it was unnecessary.

"Master, may I?"

He stroked into her harder, angling up, desperate to feel her pussy cream all over his dick. "You wanna come, little one?"

"God yes!"

"Come for me, Erin. Come for me now."

Her body trembled and he felt the first wave ripple through her cunt as she cried out. Liam didn't let it go once it gripped her. He rammed into her, working his cock deeper, slamming against her womb.

"Liam!"

It was his name that did it. Grunting with the force of it, he came, her muscles milking him as his cock jerked inside her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Erin's heart still raced. It had been at least twenty minutes since Liam had returned from the bathroom and rolled them onto their sides before throwing a careless arm around her, drawing her close.

Now lying beside to him, she listened to his steady breathing. His hand was warm in the small of her back, pressing her breasts against his chest.

All of the candles had guttered out but one, leaving her just enough light to see his face. She tried to memorize his features. The raven slashes of his eyebrows and thick, lush eyelashes. The slight crook in his nose and the full mouth that looked so innocent in repose.

But she knew better. Those same lips were quick to stretch into a bone-meltingly wicked grin.

No regrets.

She didn't have one. Even though their time had ended way before she wanted it to, she'd still treasured every single second of it.

For a moment, she had actually thought they might be able to make something together beyond this chance meeting and great sex.

*Twenty-eight.*

She had just fucked a man who was a mere eight years older than her son. Guilt clenched in her belly. She had been wrong. She couldn't fight who she was and she wasn't the type of women who ran around sleeping with men who were young enough to hang around with her son.

*Why not? He's legal. He's single.* That made him fair game and her age didn't bother him.

Of course it hadn't, because he'd no doubt forget her name by tomorrow. It was what men his age did. They sowed their wild oats with anyone who had a pulse and a pussy.

She had both, so that made *her* fair game.

Not that she blamed him. In a way, hadn't she done the exact thing? He had been there and convenient.

And she was a liar.

If it had been any other man but Liam, she would have turned around and walked right out the door.

It didn't matter. A forty-year-old woman would not fit into his life, even if he wanted her to.

Gingerly, she lifted his arm and slipped from underneath it. Gathering her clothes, she wiggled into the barely there skirt and felt even more exposed since she couldn't find her panties.

Even fooling around in high school, she had never misplaced her underwear. The lack of them made her feel sordid and cheap. Tears stung her eyes and she took a deep breath. *This* was why she wouldn't be seeking out someone else for a friendship with benefits. Obviously, she was too sensitive for such an arrangement.

*Erin, stop deceiving yourself. It's not the situation you're upset about. It's never seeing him again.*

She found her blouse, but couldn't stand the thought of anyone seeing her swollen nipples and the marks on her breasts from Liam's love bites.

The partygoers might be well versed on the morning/evening-after protocol, but she wasn't. Also, though she knew sooner or later she'd have to tell Nicci, she wanted to keep this secret a little longer.

She leaned down and pressed her lips against Liam's before covering him with a towel. Even the chaste brush of his dry warm lips against hers sent a shock of heat and longing through her.

Grabbing a shirt off a hook near the door, she slipped it on. She'd ask Nicci to return it for her.

Erin almost jumped out of her skin when her cell phone rang. Checking to make sure Liam still slept, she answered. "Shh!"

"Shh? Huh? Erin, where are you?" It was Nicci.

Grabbing her shoes, she opened the door. It creaked, gunshot loud, as she closed it behind her.

"Erin? Erin?"

"Hold on just a minute," she whispered. Walking quickly, she made her way to the other side entrance that led to the garage. "Are you ready?"

"Yeah, I'm sorry I disappeared on you. I was talking to Gavin. Where are you?"

"I'm on my way to the car. Talk to you when I get there." Erin flipped the phone shut before Nicci could ask her any more questions.

Nicci stood leaning against her midnight-blue Maserati. "If I didn't know better, I'd swear you are doing the walk of shame."

Erin's cheeks heated. Damn perceptive of Nicci.

"Umm..." She tried to stall, tried to think of a way to tell her best friend that she'd just had the best sex of her life with a complete stranger. But the words wouldn't come. Liam didn't feel like a stranger. It felt as though she had known him forever.



It was probably the same way all women in her position thought and felt. It was easier to reconcile their actions if they did. Along with lying.

Getting in the car, she put on her seatbelt, thankful Nicci would be distracted while racing the car down the hill that lead to the main road.

Nicci stopped at the first red light on the road that led out of the hills and looked at her. "So, where were you?"

She had never lied to Nicci, on purpose or by omission, but tonight seemed like a night for firsts. "I took a dip in the pool." At least it would explain why her hair was wet.

Nicci's eyes narrowed. "Really? In this weather? Alone?"

Erin shifted in her seat, her face heating. "It's not that cold and yes, *alone*. After all, you did abandon me." It was an underhanded jab, but hopefully it would get Nicci off her back.

Nicci put her hand on Erin's knee and squeezed. Her friend wasn't fooled but didn't push it. That's why they had been friends for so long—Nicci knew when to push and when to back off and let Erin process.

Covering Nicci's hand with her own, Erin squeezed. Tears welled in her eyes. She blinked rapidly and took a deep calming breath.

*There's no reason to cry. It was just sex. You'll forget him in time. Oh God,* she thought as a tear slid down her cheek. *Now, I'm not just lying to my best friend, I'm also lying to myself.*

## **Chapter Two**

Liam woke from the best sleep he'd had in ages. He knew it was a beautiful morning before he even opened his eyes. Like something out of a coffee commercial, the sun was shining, streaming in through the skylight. Birds were chirping and he had just spent an amazing night with a woman who'd make little blue pills obsolete if she could be bottled.

He opened his eyes, expecting to find Erin lying beside him.

He was alone.

Maybe she'd gone to the bathroom. He swung his legs over the bench and ignored the way his cock tented the towel in his lap. He'd worry about his massive hard-on once he found Erin. Once he'd kissed her good morning, touched her to make sure she wasn't just an incredibly erotic dream.

Wrapping the towel around his waist, he padded through the pool house to the bathroom.

Empty.

Ignoring the tightening in his chest, he checked the two dressing rooms and showers.

All empty.

There was no one in the pool house but him.

"Fuck."

She must have left after he'd fallen asleep. Embarrassment, anger and hurt flooded through him. He tried to ignore the first and last and hold on to the anger.

Anger was safe and he wouldn't need to examine why her leaving him without so much as a goodbye made him feel hurt and embarrassed.

Pussy was abundant in his world and one-night stands the norm, he had just overemphasized it because she had been the first woman he'd been with in three years.

The knot in his stomach hardened. It hadn't been just sex. Though he had been too chicken to say the words to her last night, he had never experienced anything like what he had with her.

Raking his hands through his hair, he dropped the towel and went to take a shower.

The shower did him good—cold enough to clear his mind but not cold enough to get rid of his monster erection. Only one person would do that.

Erin.

Stepping into his jeans, he pulled them up and zipped them. He looked around for his shirt but couldn't find it. Erin had to have taken it. He didn't know what time she had left, but it had been pretty cold last night, especially in the tiny bit of clothes she had been wearing.

He liked the idea of her wearing his shirt, having something to remember him by. And in a tiny way, something that marked her as his. It was one of his favorite band tees that read *OTK, Over the Knee*.

He had started to open the door when he saw a scrap of red lace. Heat shot through his body. Adjusting the crotch of his jeans, he bent and picked it up. Erin's panties.

He inhaled deeply, drinking her scent into his senses before tucking them into his pocket and opening the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Gavin, I need you to help me find a woman."

Liam's band mate looked at him. "I tried to do that last night, mate, but you disappeared. "

"No, I mean a woman who was here last night."

Gavin carelessly waved his hand to indicate the bodies of about a dozen women, all in various stages of undress, sleeping on the floor. "Take your pick. It's about bloody time you put the stupid notion of celibacy to rest."

Liam resisted the urge to shake his friend. "I met a woman last night. A petite thing, big almond-shaped brown eyes and brownish-red hair." He skipped the part about her gorgeous breasts and fantastic body. There was no way he wanted even Gavin's mind on Erin's attributes.

"Okay. What was her name?" Gavin asked, looking bored.

"Erin, Erin Anderson. She's at least one-fourth Irish, her grandparents emigrated here from County Donegal. She has a son about twenty and she came to the party last night with her best friend." And he thought he knew nothing about Erin.

Gavin perked up. Liam didn't know if it was because after three years, he was finally expressing interest in a woman or because he had mentioned their hometown.

"Hmm...and where did you say you encountered this woman?"

Liam hadn't said. "In the pool house. I was hiding there and she came out to hide too."

"Was she collared?"

Liam shook his head. "No, she's not a regular in the lifestyle."

Gavin looked pensive. "So she doesn't have a Master as far as you know?"

Liam shook his head again. But Erin did have a Master, damn it. *Him*.

Memories of her breathy voice asking, *Master, may I?* replayed in his mind and he shifted as his cock bulged behind his zipper. She had been perfect. From the way her voice hitched in the back of her throat to the way her cunt spasmed on his dick as she came.

"Okay, I'll ask around. You sure she wasn't one of the regular strays from the club?"

“Definitely not a stray.” Liam thanked his friend and went upstairs to find another T-shirt in the guest room where his bag was stowed. “Call my cell phone when you get something.”

## Chapter Three

Erin couldn't concentrate on what Gregory was saying. Usually she was so excited when her son called home. She still was, but thoughts of Liam preoccupied her.

"Mom, did you hear me?"

She nodded until she realized he couldn't see her. "Yes, Greggy. I heard you."

"Okay, so you'll pick me up tomorrow at the John Wayne airport at ten, right?"

Absently, she agreed and then jotted down, *Tomorrow, ten, John Wayne, Greggy*. Before, she would never have had to write herself a note to remember to pick up her son.

"Mom, are you okay?"

Erin heard the concern in her son's voice and immediately felt guilty. Here she was pining over a man she barely knew, in any other sense than the biblical, and worrying her son unnecessarily because of it.

"I'm fine, Greggy. Sorry, my mind was somewhere else."

"It's okay, Mom. You know I worry about you being in the house all by yourself."

Erin smiled and wondered for the millionth time how she could be so blessed. Gregory was the sweetest, most loving son a mother could have. "I know, but I'm okay. Really. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Kay, Mom. Tomorrow. Love you."

"Love you too, Gregory."

In his senior year of high school he had come to her, afraid to tell her he'd been offered a full academic scholarship to Yale. It had always been just the two of them and he had hadn't wanted to abandon her.

Not once did she think of trying to stop him from going. He deserved the best and that included his education.

And with him halfway across the country, it was difficult to use him as an excuse and a crutch.

She hadn't even been aware she had done so until Nicci pointed it out. And when she had, Erin had tried to stop herself from doing it, but after seventeen years as a single mother and sole provider, it was easier to say, "I'm sorry. I can't. Gregory needs..." than to face the world again.

With Gregory at Yale, she had no choice.

If only she could stop thinking about Liam. It had been a week and still his touch was imprinted on her skin. It would help if she could stop sleeping in the shirt she had worn home. But it was the one comfort she allowed herself at night when the darkness and solitude got to be too much.

When she had grabbed it, she hadn't realized it was his until she was about to put it in the wash and she had smelled his cologne. Her body had clenched as if it too remembered. She had tried to go back to BOB but gave up. Even after thirty minutes with her favorite vibe, she hadn't been able to make herself orgasm.

*You didn't have permission to come.*

Frustrated and angry, she'd thrown it across the room and hadn't tried again since. Even when her body begged for release, she ignored it and tried to occupy her time with other things.

It was ridiculous. Liam wasn't at home obsessing over her. He was probably at the club Nicci had told her about, playing with someone his own age. Nausea churned in her belly and she swallowed convulsively. He had the right to do whatever he wanted with whomever he wanted.

And so did she.

Picking up the phone, she dialed Nicci's number. The two of them hadn't spoken much since the party.

"Naughty Nicci at your service."

Her best friend's unorthodox greeting startled a laugh out of her. "Hey, Nic. You got any plans tonight?"

"Hey, Eri. Yeah, I'm going to Habana's. It's two-for-one dirty martini night. Why?"

Erin clutched the phone tighter. "Are you going on a date or with the girls?"

"I was gonna meet Barb and Shell up there. "

"Do you think they'd mind if I tagged along?"

Nicci was silent and Erin knew she had surprised her friend. Not once had she ever initiated a night out. Usually, Nicci had to drag Erin, kicking and protesting.

"Course not." Nicci didn't sound too enthusiastic, but Erin wasn't offended. She knew it was just the shock. "You driving, or you want me to pick you up?"

Twisting a lock of hair around her finger, Erin remembered all the other times she and Nicci had spent hours doing just this. Talking and laughing on the phone about nothing. No matter what, Nicci had always been there and Erin knew she always would be.

"I'll drive. I'll pick you up at nine. Thanks, Nic. I love you."

Before her friend could pepper her with questions, Erin gently hung up the phone and went to get dressed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Erin was putting on her other earring when the doorbell rang.

Nicci! Erin should have known her friend would never give up a chance to drive her Maserati. Nicci treated that car the way a man treated his penis. Always touching it, fondling it.



"I'm coming, Nic," she yelled as she bent down, fastening the strap on her high-heeled sandals, before walking to the door. "Nicci, I thought I was picking you—" The words died in her throat as she swung the door open.

Liam Donnelly stood on her front porch.

He had to be a figment of her lust-addled brain. She hadn't stopped thinking, hadn't stopped dreaming about him, since the party and now, here he was, suddenly on her doorstep.

It had taken more than promises of backstage passes and free concert tickets to make Nicci Palmetti give him Erin's address. She had looked at him suspiciously even after Gavin had vouched for him.

"So you're the walk of shame," she had said. He hadn't asked what she meant because the look in her eyes as she said it hadn't been exactly friendly.

After making him promise he wouldn't hurt her best friend, she had given him the address and told him he could see Erin tomorrow because she and Nicci had plans tonight.

The hell he would. After six agonizing days, seventeen hours and forty-five minutes, there was no way he was going to wait another twenty-four hours to see Erin.

She had swung the door open, words dying on her lips and the breath left his lungs in a rush. He had nearly convinced himself that he had built up her beauty and his body's reaction in his mind. No one was that beautiful and no woman could make his cock hard and aching with just a word.

His memories weren't exaggerated. As his eyes raked her body from head to toe, missing nothing, Liam knew why he hadn't felt "right" the past week. Why food hadn't appealed to him and he was continually off during rehearsal.

He was addicted and Erin was his new drug of choice.

But never had an addiction been motivated by something as pure as what he felt for Erin. He refused to name the emotion tightening his chest. Not yet—it was too soon and

too new. He might have only spent four hours with her but he had been changed during that time. He knew it without a shadow of doubt.

Her chocolate-brown eyes widened as she let go of the door handle and backed up. He had worried when Nicci said they were going out. Worried that she'd be wearing something similar to what he had seen her in that night.

The thought of another man seeing her half-dressed enraged him. Looking at her tasteful black summer dress, however, he knew he had worried for no reason. Thankfully, she was fully covered. Good.

It was one less thing he'd get to punish her for.

And yes, he was going to punish her. For not saying goodbye, for running and for putting him through hell.

Uninvited, he crossed the threshold and closed the door softly behind him. "Beautiful dress, love. Lose it."

Her breath hitched and he could see her responsive little nipples tighten behind the fabric.

"Liam," her hand trembled as she put it to her chest. "What are you doing here?"

"What did you call me? You couldn't have forgotten that fast. Another reason you'll be punished." He stalked her as she continued to back away from him.

She ignored both his order and question. "What are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same. I never gave you permission to leave me."

*I never gave you permission to leave me.*

It had finally happened. After too many years alone, she had started creating a world of her own. What else would explain the fact that her brain had conjured up Liam, here in her house? Telling her to take off her dress. Threatening to punish her.

God, she had to be crazy. Why else would she be so turned on? She could feel wetness seep from between the swollen lips of her sex.

"I'm waiting."

"Liam, I-I..." What could she say to him? That she had enjoyed the night, but it had been a one-time thing? That it had been okay for her to fuck a complete stranger her own age, but not one twelve years younger? She opened her mouth again, but nothing would come out.

"I. Am. Waiting." He looked angry, and combined with the harshness in his voice, she was lost. Almost.

"Liam, I'm sorry. I have plans."

"I called Nicci on the way here and cancelled them. The longer you take to obey, the longer your punishment will be."

He'd cancelled them?

Erin tried to work up some righteous indignation. He had no right, no right at all.

His hands dropped to his waistband and her brain ceased to function as she watched him unbuckle his pants and pull his belt free. Would he spank her with it? Heat pooled in her stomach and she barely held back a moan. The thought really shouldn't excite her so much.

*Nicci is waiting for you. She'd never let anyone cancel your plans.*

"Liam, you have to leave. As I said, I have plans." She would never know how she got those words out of her mouth.

"Say the word and I'll leave."

He didn't have to tell her which word. She'd never forget as long as she drew breath.

Heart thudding, she opened her mouth...and nothing came out.

He chuckled, deep, dark and taunting. "That's what I thought. Now lose the dress."

*Just one more night. Just one more night.*

That's all she would take. Maybe it would get him out of her system and then she could move on.

She really needed to stop lying to herself. Nothing would do that and a night of fucking him wouldn't help.

But she was past caring.

Hooking her fingers beneath the straps on both sides of the dress, she slipped them off. The dress slithered down her body, the soft material feathering against her nipples, leaving her nude except for the tiny triangle of her bikini panties.

Holding his gaze, she stepped out of the dress as it pooled at her feet. She wanted to close her eyes against the hunger she saw mirrored in his. Against the tiny spark of hope that blossomed in her chest. It didn't matter that he sought her out. That he was here with her.

Liam was here because he wanted her. Lust was something she could deal with. The age difference between them wasn't. Her desire for him would change, but the twelve years wedged between them never would.

He turned, walked into the living room and sat on the couch. She followed him automatically, stopping a few feet from him. Crooking a finger, he gestured for her to come to him.

She straddled him, moaning as his hard cock brushed her mound. Caught up in the small teasing sensation, she didn't realize he was moving her until she lay, ass up, over his lap.

His fingertip traced the line of her thong along the crease of her ass. The heat radiating off his big body sank into hers and she relaxed against him.

The first blow startled her, and with a yelp, she tried to rear up. Pressing her down, he held her effortlessly as his hand fell again and again.

In her need for him, she had forgotten about his threat of punishment. She writhed against him, heat pooling between her thighs as he brought his hand down harder.

Her cunt was so wet it probably soaked his pants. She wasn't the only one affected – the hard column of his cock stabbed into her belly and her sex clenched.

“Spread your legs.”

Erin obeyed the gruff order eagerly. He touched the moisture on her inner thighs, trailing it until he reached her slick cunt lips.

Pulling aside her panties, he touched her clit and she groaned. Such a soft touch, not close enough to make her come.

Wiggling her ass, she arched up, encouraging him to touch her harder, deeper.

He teased her slit, spreading her moisture before dipping his fingers inside. Two fingers were a relief—three stretched her and burned just a bit as he worked them deeper.

Erin cried out, her cries matching the rhythm he set, the liquid sound of his fingers fucking her pussy loud in the room.

Her hips rocked into his movements and she could feel her orgasm tightening the muscles of her belly.

“Master, may I?”

His hand stopped, fingers lodged deep in her cunt and Erin whimpered in frustration. “So now you remember my name.” Slowly he pulled his fingers from her body. Her warm, wet walls clutched at him as if by her need alone she could drag him back into her body.

“Please, Master.”

He paid no attention to her pleas as he pushed her off his lap and helped her stand in front of him. “Where’s your bedroom?”

Trembling, she lowered her head. “Upstairs.”

“Give me your hands.”

She complied quickly, hoping it would make him give her a reprieve. She didn’t know if she could take any more.

He looped the forgotten belt around her wrists and tightened. Not enough to hurt but just enough so she couldn’t worm free.

He stepped around her and headed for the stairs. "Come."

Her knees weakened and she almost collapsed as her cunt spasmed. It was the word she wanted to hear, but not in the right context. She scrambled to catch up with him as he took the stairs two at a time, walking through her house as if he owned it.

When she reached her bedroom, she found Liam rifling through her dresser drawers. She watched as he pulled out her purple vibe—one she had only used once because it was a little too big—and her favorite almond-scented lube.

"Get on the bed, hands and knees." He didn't turn to face her.

Erin scrambled onto the bed as best she could with her hands tied. Lying on her stomach, she put her weight on her arms and elbows and got to her knees.

Liam placed the items he'd found, along with the foil packets he took out of his pocket, on the bed before taking the loose end of the belt and securing it to the headboard.

She shivered as the metallic rasp of a zipper met her ears. She couldn't see him but she imagined his thick, hard cock springing free as he worked his pants down.

Heat splintered through her. She had no idea what he had in store but she couldn't wait to find out.

The bed dipped as he climbed onto it. She shivered as his hand trailed the length of her back, from the space between her shoulder blades to the curve of her buttocks.

His hand slipped between her splayed thighs, touching the arousal on her slick folds. She swallowed as the vibrator buzzed to life. Using it, he traced her slit before holding it against her clit.

Trembling, she groaned as tension knotted in her belly. Just one second more and she would come. "M-Mas-ter, may I?" she panted, her inner thighs trembling.

"No." He took the vibe off her clit and pressed it between her cunt lips. Her wet pussy enveloped it greedily, clutching the toy as he pushed it deeper.

"Master, please. Oh God, please." The vibe glanced her G-spot and she could feel the rush of wetness as her sex spasmed.

"No," he repeated as he pushed it deeper.

She circled her hips, grinding against the empty air in vain, whimpering as the vibrations rippled through her cunt.

Liam traced her swollen pussy lips as they clutched the toy, rubbing her wetness upward until he reached the cleft of her ass. Dipping between her cheeks, he touched the puckered flesh there.

Erin moaned. Her pussy clenched and she thought about the night at the pool. She had wanted him to fuck her ass then but hadn't known how to ask. The thought of Liam working his huge cock into her virgin asshole had sent fire through her then, just as it did now.

Arching her back, she stuck out her ass, moaning as he spread her ass cheeks and poured the cold gel. "Are you going to give me this ass, love?"

"Yes," she panted, her breath choking out of her lungs as his blunt fingertips massaged the lube into her back entrance, revealing enriched nerve endings she wasn't aware she had. "Yes, Master."

"Good girl," he praised as he pulled his fingers free and applied more gel.

The hot weight of his body draped over hers, pressing her into the bed. "Easy, love. Take a deep breath for me."

Inhaling deeply, she held it as he pressed his cock against her tiny hole and pushed. Pressure turned to burning as he worked himself in deeper, past the tight ring of muscle.

The sensation of fullness gripped her as he stretched her apart, waiting for her muscles to relax before tunneling deeper.

"You okay, love?"

"Yesss..." she hissed as his hand wedged between her body and the bed. Liam rocked against her slowly, tunneling his cock deeper into her ass. Gripping the vibe in his hand, he echoed the movement, fucking her cunt in the same rhythm he fucked her ass.

"Oh God!" Dual sensation pooled deep in her belly and built excruciatingly slowly. It wasn't enough, she needed more. "Harder."

She didn't think he was going to comply at first. The first slamming thrust snatched the breath out of her chest. Followed by another and another, until he was fucking her ass hard and deep.

Her pussy gushed moisture and the wet sound of his hand pounding against it pushed her over the edge. Erin cried out as the first wave hit her, her body jerking as she convulsed.

"Liam!"

"Fuck!" Liam tried to hold on but couldn't. Thrusting once, twice, he groaned as if he were taking his last breath. Erin's body clamped down on his cock like a vise and he shook with the force of his orgasm.

He heard her cry out his name again as if from a great distance. Boneless, he collapsed against her, knowing he needed to get off her or his weight would smash her.

Rolling to his side, he kept their bodies connected, savoring the way her body pulsed around his cock. He loved the way she sighed his name and trembled against him. If that didn't convince her they belonged together, nothing would.

Liam pulled out of her and went to the attached bathroom for a warm washcloth. After cleaning himself, he walked back into the bedroom and wiped the warm cloth between her cheeks. He returned it to the sink, then came back and lay down beside her.

Pulling the vibe from her spasming cunt, he let it drop to the floor beside the bed and gathered her closer. His eyes grew heavy. The last thing he remembered was holding Erin, her warm breath feathering against his chest.



\* \* \* \* \*

Minutes, or maybe hours, later he woke, content and filled with more peace than he'd ever known in his life. Erin's leg was thrown over his waist and he smiled as he watched her sleep.

God, she was beautiful. And it wasn't just a physical beauty. It radiated from the depths of her, shining through her eyes and her smile.

Would it always be like this with her? This need to be with her. And not just sexually. Though that was definitely part of it.

He didn't think he would ever tire of her. Of how she made him feel. He pictured them old and gray, rocking on the porch, his cock tenting his pants. He would want her even as he took his last breath.

"Mmmm."

Liam echoed her moan as the soft flesh of her belly brushed his cock and it twitched, hardening as if the touch had been something more than accidental.

"Are you awake?"

"Mmm, maybe." Erin stretched. "Is it always going to be this way?" Her voice echoed his earlier thought, so low, that at first Liam thought he imagined the question.

"Which way, love?"

A minute passed, followed by another then another until Liam feared she wouldn't answer.

"Urgent." She hesitated before adding, "Consuming. Almost like..."

"Like?" he prodded. Liam understood, he didn't want to put a name to the emotion tightening his chest but he knew what it was.

She sighed. "Like love, but..."

His heart started to pound. Did she feel it too? "But?" he asked as calmly as he could.

She snuggled deeper into the covers beneath her, huddling closer to the warmth of his body and yawned. "Ignore me, I'm being silly. Great sex does that to me sometimes."

Part of him wanted to push her, make her finish what she had begun to say but they had all time in the world. Tomorrow would be soon enough to tell her how he felt.

\* \* \* \* \*

Liam didn't realize at first what woke him the second time. Shifting, he reached for Erin to find himself in bed alone. He panicked but calmed when he remembered he was at her house. She couldn't run from her own house.

Sunlight streamed in through the window as Liam opened his eyes. Stretching, he squinted against the brightness and noticed Erin stood fully dressed at the foot of the bed. "Morning, love."

"I have to go. I have to pick my son up from the airport. His plane lands at ten."

Liam sat up and rubbed his eyes. Sleeping with her in his arms was better than any sedative but he didn't know how he had slept with his cock as hard as it was. "Come back to bed, we have a couple of hours before we need to get to the airport." He lay down and pulled back the covers.

"Liam, this has been nice. It really has, but the two nights we've had are it."

He sat up and looked at her. She had to be kidding. This was the complete opposite of the morning after he had imagined. "What's the problem? I'll have to meet him sooner or later."

She looked guilty and uncomfortable. "I can't let you meet my son."

He reared his head back as if she had slapped him. "What? Why not?" Confusion and hurt quickly spread through his chest.

"This is where it ends. It's been fun, but it's over."

"Over?" It was as though she spoke another language. How the hell was it over when she hadn't even given it a chance to begin? Flinging off the blankets he stood.

“What the hell are you talking about, Erin? It’s just begun. We have our whole lives in front of us.”

She shook her head sadly. “No, Liam. *You* have your whole life in front of you. I’ve lived the part of my life that you’re barely beginning.”

A frown marred Liam’s handsome face and Erin wanted so badly to go to him and rub the crease between his brows until it disappeared.

She had to be strong. Had to make him understand why it would never work between them. It was for both their goods. Sooner or later, he’d meet someone his age. Someone he could have babies with and that wasn’t her. She had already had her baby twenty years ago.

Raking his hand through his hair, he walked toward her.

“Apple.” The word was out of her mouth before she realized it, before he could touch her and make her reconsider.

He stopped as if he’d hit an invisible wall and the blood drained from his face.

The hurt mirrored in his gorgeous eyes speared through Erin’s chest.

*It’s for your own good.*

But was it really? Or was she too much of a coward to admit she was making him leave before he had a chance to do it on his own?

“You’re making a mistake,” he whispered hoarsely.

“You’re welcome to take a shower before you leave. Just lock the front door behind you.” Her resolve weakening, Erin practically ran from the room.

Slamming out of the house, she got in her car and started it.

She’d never forget the look on his face. As if she had broken his heart, but that was impossible. *He just got caught up in the euphoria of good sex and mistook it for something deeper.*

But it wasn’t.

It wasn’t.

She was no more than a few blocks from her house before she had to pull over and put the car in park. Tears ran down her cheeks and she slammed her hands against the wheel, embracing the pain in an attempt to ignore the ache in her chest. Sobs shook her body. It intensified, hurting like nothing ever had before.

"I made the right decision," she whispered. "I made the right decision."

Erin didn't know how long her breakdown lasted, but by the time she had composed herself and repaired her makeup, it was a quarter to ten. If she didn't hurry she'd be late picking up Gregory.

Miraculously, there was no traffic on the 405 and Erin managed to make it to the airport on time. Nicci had called her cell phone repeatedly until Erin finally turned it off. She didn't want to talk to her best friend, who'd no doubt have questions about Liam.

She didn't want to talk to anyone.

Pulling up to the area designated for passenger pick up, she scanned the exits for Gregory's familiar face.

Waving, she honked when she spotted him. She popped the trunk and got out of the car to help him with his luggage.

"Hey, Mom." Taller than her by a good seven inches, he towered over her. Crushing her in a bear hug, he lifted her off the ground and Erin hung on for a little bit longer than she had planned.

She took a deep breath, hoping in vain she could smell his baby scent once again, if only for a second. But there was nothing baby-like about her son.

Setting her back on the ground, he gave her a strange look and it was all she could do not to crumple.

"Are you okay, Mom?"

She laughed, the sound hollow and bleak to her own ears and walked to the driver-side door. "Of course, just a little tired."

Gregory reluctantly accepted her answer and got into the passenger seat.

"Are you hungry?" she asked. "I could use a little something to eat."

He looked at her and she prayed her eyes and nose weren't red.

"Yeah, I could go for something too."

Relieved, Erin pulled out of the airport and headed for the freeway. By the time they grabbed something to eat and made it back home, Liam should be long gone.

"So what will it be, kiddo?" She winced. She had tried to break the habit of calling him that because he wasn't a kid. "Perry's Deli, Mastriano's, Scout's?" she asked, naming some of the restaurants at the mall near the airport.

"I'm open, Mom. Can we swing by the house so I can change?"

Erin panicked. What if Liam wasn't gone yet? How the hell would she explain him to Gregory?

"You look fine." She laughed nervously and prayed he wouldn't notice they were coming up on the 55 freeway.

"Mom, what is going on?"

She had never kept anything from her son. They had always shared an open and honest relationship. How would he feel about her behavior, about her seeing a man so near his age, even if her brief fling was over?

As he was growing up, she had been careful not to bring many men to the house, not wanting to confuse him or give him false hope that she would remarry.

"Mom, are you sick? Is that what you're hiding from me?"

The worry in his voice did her in and she blinked back tears. She took the next exit and pulled into a vacant parking lot. Taking a deep breath, she looked at her son. "I'm not sick, Greg. I met someone."

A relieved smile lit his face, giving her a glimpse of the boy he had been. "Is that all? Whew! You scared me there for a minute. When do I get to meet him? Is he at the house?"

She tried to return his smile. "No. I told him I had to pick you up and asked him to leave."

"Why did you do that? He's probably going to think I don't want to meet him now."

Erin didn't know how to answer. There was so much she needed to tell Greg but didn't know how. "You won't be meeting him." She turned away and looked out the window.

It was such a beautiful day. The sky was a bright blue and fluffy clouds scattered across it, reminding her of the times she and Greg used to lie on the grass in their backyard and point out clouds that reminded them of things.

She wished life was that simple again. It had been just the two of them and occasionally crazy Nicci, but they had been happy.

Now, she doubted she'd ever be happy again.

"Mom?"

Erin turned to face her son when she heard the concern in his voice.

"What's going on? Why didn't you want me to meet your friend?"

She clenched her eyes shut at the fresh wave of pain that rolled over her. "He's not my friend, Greg."

"Did he hurt you?" Her son's fists clenched and she laid a hand over his. He was just as fiercely protective as he had always been.

"No, it just didn't work out." A tear slipped down her cheek and Greg brushed it away. "Enough of this. Let's go get something to eat."

\* \* \* \* \*

When Erin and Gregory pulled into the driveway hours later, Nicci's car was parked in the second space.

"Cool, Aunt Nicci's here," Gregory said as he walked to the front door.

Dread settled in Erin's stomach as she followed him into the house. Nicci had obviously tired of waiting for Erin to answer her phone.

Her face heated as she saw her black dress lying where she'd left it the night before.

Thankfully, Gregory didn't notice. He set his luggage down and went in search of Nicci.

Scooping up the dress, Erin stuffed it in the hall closet and followed the sound of Nicci and Gregory's voices.

"If you weren't my nephew!" Nicci gave a wolf whistle and walked a circle around Gregory. She shot Erin a dirty look. "I can certainly appreciate a man, no matter what his age."

The jab hit home and Erin's face flushed hotter.

Who had Nicci been talking to?

"So, squirto, how's the Ivy League treating you?" Nicci turned back to Gregory and the two chatted about school and the weather in Connecticut.

Erin left them to entertain each other and took advantage of the chance to go upstairs and straighten her room. She had just finished stripping her bed when Nicci walked in.

"Getting rid of evidence?" she asked, leaning against the doorjamb.

Erin's turbulent emotions fractured. "What the hell is your problem, Nicci?"

She shook her head. "I'm not the one with the problem, Erin. Why didn't you tell me you were seeing Liam?"

"Because I wasn't seeing him."

Nicci advanced into the room and picked up Liam's belt. "That's right, you were only fucking him."

Snatching it from her, Erin rolled it with the sheets and stuffed everything in the hamper. She turned back to Nicci. "I don't understand how it's any of your business."

"It's my business when you use someone I consider to be my friend to play 'How Erin Got Her Groove Back'."

What about me? I'm supposed to be your best friend.

"Fuck you, Nicci." Erin had never cursed Nicci or even raised her voice to her in anger, but her accusation stung. She hadn't used Liam. Had she?

"Haven't you done enough fucking already, Erin?"

"Get out." Erin couldn't believe Nicci could talk to her like that. When she didn't have all the facts.

"If you wanted a fling, someone just to have fun with, you should have told me. You broke his heart, Erin. I would never forgive anyone for doing that to you."

Shell-shocked, she sat on the bed and watched Nicci walk out.

You broke his heart.

Erin buried her face in her hands and took a deep, shuddery breath. Nicci had never been angry with her nor she with Nicci.

She was so confused.

"Mom?"

She looked up to find Gregory standing in her doorway. "Aunt Nicci was really upset when she left." He hesitated. "I heard you guys arguing. Kind of freaked me out. You guys never argue."

*It kinda freaked me out too. "I'm sorry you had to hear that."*

"Aunt Nicci just misunderstood, right? You'd never purposely hurt someone."

She nodded, guilt and misery making her stomach hurt. "Yeah, it was just a misunderstanding."

He smiled. "You gonna call Aunt Nicci and get everything resolved?"

If only it were that easy.

"Mom, why did you stop seeing Liam?"



Erin swallowed hard and ignored the color that rode high on her cheekbones. "It just didn't work out, baby." It wasn't a lie. It hadn't worked out because they were never together.

"You said that. But why didn't it work out?"

She didn't want to answer the question but she did because she had never lied to her son before and she refused to start now. "Because he was only eight years older than you," she whispered, unable to meet his eyes.

"Do you care for him?"

Tears burned her eyes and she nodded. She did care for Liam, more than she wanted to admit.

"Didn't you tell me, growing up, that race didn't matter, people love who they love?" He didn't wait for her to answer. "So, wouldn't it be the same with age? If you love him and he loves you, isn't that all that matters?"

"Yes, but—"

"No buts, Mom. Call him."

"I will."

Gregory looked like he wanted to argue but settled for her promise that she wouldn't wait too long before she called Liam.

## **Chapter Four**

Gregory had been gone for almost a week and Erin still couldn't get over how quiet the house seemed. Not until she met Liam had she noticed how empty her home seemed.

Despite her promise, she still hadn't called Liam. If he cared for her and she cared for him, what did it matter what anyone else thought?

Grabbing the phone off her nightstand, she dialed Nicci's cell phone number. "Nicci, I need Liam's phone number."

It was so quiet, she thought Nicci had hung up.

"Why?"

"I think I love him," she whispered.

Nicci sighed with relief. "'Bout damn time. I'll let the "think" part slide because I know how hard this is for you." She gave Erin his cell phone number and house phone number after making her promise she would call back after she spoke with him.

Erin's hands shook as she dialed his home.

It was disconnected.

Her heartbeat thudded against her rib cage as she dialed his cell phone and got the same message. She called Nicci back and told her both numbers had been disconnected.

"Damn it. Don't move. I'll be right there."

She didn't know what Nicci could do if he didn't want to talk to her. She had blown it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nicci knew someone who would know where Liam had gone.

Erin was nervous and recognized the house immediately as Nicci pulled into the drive. She followed Nicci as she walked through the front door without knocking. The house looked different during the day and without hundreds of people packed into it.

"Gavin," Nicci called out.

A man who bore a striking resemblance to Liam appeared at the top of the stairs. Jeans rode low on his hips and his bare feet peeked from beneath the frayed hems.

"You bellowed, your highness?"

He had the same accent too.

Erin sighed, her heart pounding as she prayed Liam was here.

"We—I mean *she*—needs to talk to Liam."

The man slowly came down the stairs, his eyes raking over Nicci and then Erin. He stopped a few feet away from her, a grimace on his handsome face. "So you must be Yoko."

"Yoko? Come on, Gavin. Isn't that a little melodramatic?" Nicci asked before Erin could answer.

"I don't think so, your highness," he said. "Yoko destroyed The Beatles and this one destroyed *our* band."

Nicci placed her hands on her hips. "Stop calling me that. And, Gavin, OTK is great but The Beatles, it is not. Now, where the hell is Liam?"

Gavin sighed. "Why should I tell her? Or you for that matter?" He walked around them, stopping behind Nicci.

Whirling to face him, she said, "Can the crap, Gavin. You love Liam and you know good and damn well you're going to do what's best for him."

"Love? Darling Nicci, I didn't think you had a sentimental bone in your body."

Nicci growled and took a step toward him, the look in her eyes promising bodily harm. Erin had no idea what the hell was going on between these two and she couldn't bring herself to care right now. She had to find Liam.

Grabbing Nicci's arm, she turned to Gavin. "Please. Please, I need to talk to him," she pleaded.

It seemed to have no effect on Gavin whatsoever.

"From what I hear, you've done enough talking." He turned to pour himself a drink, moving just in time to avoid Nicci's hand as she struck out.

"Nicci," Erin hissed, pinching her arm.

"Ow!" Nicci cried. "That hurt."

Gavin lifted his glass to his lips and smiled before taking a sip. "What? Our dirty little Nicci can dish but can't take it?"

"Enough." Erin nearly screamed. "Deal with your own issues on your own time. I need to find Liam."

Finally taking mercy on her, Gavin told her. "Gone, home to Inishowen to lick his wounds."

Erin's knees buckled, the grip she had on Nicci's arm not enough to prevent her from dropping to her knees.

It was over. She had lost Liam.

Nicci dropped to her side and wrapped her arms around her, holding her as she wept. "Hush, Erin. Pull it together. It's not over yet."

"It is. I pushed him away and now he's gone."

Gavin heaved another sigh, louder than the last. "She has Yoko's brains too, huh? Has your friend never heard of a plane, your highness?"

Erin looked up at him and then looked at Nicci. She couldn't, could she?

Nicci gave her a watery smile. "You've always wanted to go to Ireland."

## Chapter Five

Liam still had jet lag. But no matter what he did, he couldn't relax enough to go to sleep. Nothing helped – not even his father's favorite homemade brew.

He couldn't get Erin off his mind. He couldn't believe he had misread the signals so badly. That she hadn't felt about him the same way he felt about her.

He'd tasted the truth in her kisses. In her passion as she shuddered beneath him. There was no way he could have been fooling himself but obviously he had been.

Liam walked out of the cottage that had once belonged to his grandparents. Normally, when he came home to visit he stayed with his parents, but this time he was no good for company, so he spent his time alone.

Taking long walks in the hills, trying to think of a way to stop the pain.

Erin. He missed her. Missed her so much he was imagining she was calling his name.

"Liam!"

*I have truly lost it.* He turned. She couldn't be real. Erin, *his* Erin, here in Inishowen, less than five feet from him?

"Hi." Erin smiled.

He reached out and touched her face. He had to know if she was real. Heat splintered through him as his fingertips brushed the softness of her cheek.

Trembling, he touched her again, not absolutely convinced she wasn't a trick of his mind. The second time her hand covered his and she leaned into the caress.

"What are you doing here?"

She hesitated. "I-I always wanted to see Ireland, remember? Plus it's not every day I can hang out with a rock star."

"Who told you? Gavin?"

Erin nodded. "Yes, his new nickname for me is Yoko."

"You don't mind? What I do, umm did for a living?"

Erin shook her head. "That you're an award winning artist who has sold millions of albums? Nah, not at all but..."

"But..."

Closing her eyes she took a deep breath and held it a moment before speaking again. "I love you." She said it so softly that he thought he misheard her. She said it again and it came out on a rush. "I love you, Liam, and I want to spend my entire life with you and I couldn't care less what you do for a living as long as it makes you happy." Her voice dropped to a whisper again. "That's if you still want me."

Still want her?

He scooped her up and crushed her to his chest. He spun them around until they were both dizzy. He pulled her down to the grass. "What about our age difference?"

She peppered his face with kisses as she straddled him. "Nothing matters except that we love each other. You do love me?"

He covered her mouth with his and when he pulled back they both were out of breath. "I love you," he confirmed.

She writhed against him, grinding her mound against his erection and he could tell she was close.

"Master, may I?" she moaned and the three words were the second sweetest...after I love you.

"Yes, love. Yes, you may."

## **About the Author**

Emma Petersen wrote her first romance in high school after falling in love with historical romances and has been writing ever since. She lives in sunny California with a cool cat named Toussaint and is working through an addiction to shoes.

The author welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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