



Cara
Hart

Sense and
Sensuality

hot for teacher series

Sense and Sensuality

A Hot for Teacher Tale

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*For my colleagues in the Rose Hill dungeon –
It's not Historical or Anime, but I guess you could call it porn.
How long is Anime porn anyway? 45 minutes or so?*

Chapter One

Eleanor McLaren was in Hell.

And she looked miserable. Eddie Harrington reached up to adjust the mask that covered most of his face. All nightclub employees were required to wear them, gold for the ladies and black for the men, in order to give the patrons a freer hand on their sexual reins. Or so his boss, Lucinda Steele, maintained. Not that loosened controls were needed by the people who frequented The Seven Circles—or Hell as Eddie termed the place in his own mind, given the reference to Dante that Luce had intended as well as the fact that he was stuck in this pit for an interminable sentence of punishment.

Of course, there were a few consolations, he thought, watching one of the women in Eleanor's party wend her way through the gyrating crowd to the bar. On any given night, one or more of those patrons of the female variety were willing to meet him after hours. And stay for several hours longer.

Though lately those rendezvous had become less frequent.

His eyes narrowed as Eleanor's friend pushed her way between two muscle-bound meatheads, giving them a look of disgust as they whistled at her.

"Can I have three Cosmos, two White Zins, and five Redheaded Sluts?" she shouted over the pounding beats of Nelly coming from the speakers hanging around the dance floor.

Eddie reached for the wine glasses as he nodded, glancing over at the group she'd left. One of the girls wore a glittery plastic tiara over her shoulder-length blonde curls and a feather boa. Her tee shirt had *Bachelorette* printed in rhinestones across her chest and she was drinking something out of a penis. He chuckled as he poured wine.

"You must be having some party," one of the 'roid warriors drawled, his eyes glued to her ass.

"We are," she answered dismissively, looking over his head at the crowd, her fingers tapping on the bar with the music. Eddie studied her face as he mixed the vodka, Cointreau, and

cranberry for the Cosmos. She looked vaguely familiar, very pretty, beautiful even, but he couldn't place her.

"How are you going to carry all this?" he asked, pouring the cocktails and adding a slice of lime to each. She turned back as he tossed his mixer into the sink and grabbed a new one.

"We'll help," volunteered the guy beside her.

"Yeah," said the other with a leer. "I love bachelorette parties."

"I don't think so," she answered, winking at Eddie as their faces fell.

Eddie twisted around to find the Jager for the Sluts, hiding his own grin. They resembled a couple of students he'd taught in English 101 last year, both of whom had barely scraped by with C minuses. Those guys wore the same puppy-face disappointment when they'd gotten their papers back.

Shaking the mixer, his eyebrows raised under his mask as she gave him the once over, a speculative sparkle in her eyes. For once he was thankful he had the damn thing on, since his cheeks heated under her intense gaze.

"I was actually hoping you could help me out." She leaned closer over the bar, her shirt falling lower to reveal her cleavage as she did. A wry smile curved her lips. "My friends and I are in need of a little entertainment. Know anyone who'd like to join us?"

Eddie forced a smile. She was attractive, and in the past, he'd have jumped at the opportunity to *entertain* her. Tonight, however, he wasn't in the mood. "I'd be happy to find someone for you. What are you looking for?"

A broad grin lit her face, and for a moment, he was sure he'd met her before. "Weeellll..." She gestured over to the corner booth where she'd left her friends. Eddie followed her gaze and stared at Eleanor. The poor girl sat rigidly in the corner, idly picking at a plate of food, a half-empty wine glass in front of her. Beside her, the bachelorette and their other friends laughed and teased, smacking each other lightly at some joke or lifting cocktail glasses to their lips. A clutter of empties surrounded them, along with clean plates. His focus never left Eleanor as her friend continued talking.

"It's my friend's bachelorette, and we wanted to get a stripper. Maybe a lap dance." He saw she turned back to him in his peripheral vision. "Someone hot."

"There are a few guys here who could help you out." Pete stood near the exit door just to the left of Eleanor's booth. Eddie lifted a hand and waved, catching the man's eye. He pushed off

of the wall and weaved his way over toward the bar. “What about him?”

The woman studied Pete. “Will he do private dances?”

“Of course. All of the guys do.”

“Excellent. Put this on my tab? It’s Brandon.” She gathered half of the glasses in her hands. “Have him come over with the shots, please.”

“What’s the bachelorette’s name?” Eddie asked as she turned.

“Meg. But it’s not for her. It’s for my sister, Eleanor.”

Eddie stared after the woman until she’d been swallowed by the surging crowd of clamoring customers. The lap dance was for *Eleanor*? Holy shit. He would never have believed she was the type to go to clubs like Hell and get a dance. Even now, she was stiff and uncomfortable as she accepted the glass her sister held out for her and set it aside. She turned her head away and watched the crowd with an impassive expression. No stretch of the imagination could deem her happy, or even resigned to being where she was. If anything, she looked poised to bolt as soon as her friends’ back were turned.

“Hey man, what’s up?” Pete asked from the other side of the bar. “Got a commission for me?”

Eddie observed the man, from the black mask that rendered his features anonymous to the tight black shirt that contrasted with his tan skin and flowed over his muscles like water. Luce always pointed to Pete as the epitome of the demonic portrait she was attempting to achieve with her employees. He would scare the shit out of Eleanor. The thought caused a squeezing in Eddie’s chest and his fists clenched.

“I need you to tend the bar for me. I’m taking a job.”

* * * *

“Come on, Ellie! You haven’t even finished your first one.” Meredith shoved another glass of wine into Elle’s face as she slid into the booth beside her. “You promised not to be a wet rag tonight.”

Shuddering as her sister used the name she’d hated since childhood, Elle took the wine, then placed the glass slightly to the side. “Someone has to be DD.”

“We came in a cab, hon,” Lindsay said, then chugged the dregs of her gin and tonic before picking up one of the Cosmos. “Remember?”

“Yeah. It isn’t every day one of your best friends gets married!” Meg, the bride, lifted her

own glass in a wobbly toast.

“We said we’d get completely shit-faced this time,” Amy put in. “Last time it was a little too tame.”

“Not fair!” Meredith cried. “You know I didn’t want a big hoopla after John dumped me. We did one bachelorette party for me. I didn’t need another one.”

Amy reached over to squeeze Meredith’s hand as Elle glanced over the swirling masses of dancers. Meredith was her twin, but even after twenty-eight years, she had no idea how to deal with her. And no words for how John had treated her, especially since she was the only one who’d urged caution when it came to the bastard. He’d seemed just a little too good to be true.

But Mere was happy with her childhood sweetheart now, and Elle had never said *I told you so*. The phrase just seemed to echo through her head every time the bastard was mentioned, and she had a feeling Mere heard it, too.

“Never mind that!” Lindsay leaned forward to point a finger in Elle’s direction. “Ellie is still the one at fault here. Loosen up, Professor!”

“You do realize that I could lose my job if the Dean found out I was here, don’t you?” Elle said. “I hardly think it would go over too well that I patronized strip clubs.”

“One time is not going to get you fired, Ellie!” Meredith shoved her a little harder than necessary. “Greg knows we’re here, and he said it was no big deal.”

“Your husband’s not the one with his ass on the line, is he, Mere?” Elle returned. “He might not object to you coming here, but it’s not his reputation I’m worried about.”

“Jesus, Ellie, it’s not the end of the world if they know you’re here!” Meredith shouted over the louder pulses of the DJ’s choice of songs. “You seriously worry too much.”

“Maybe she needs to get laid,” Meg cried as Ludakris rapped about wanting to lick someone and fulfill her fantasies.

Elle’s cheeks reddened and she stared into her pink wine. Why was it that every time they disagreed with her about something, her friends told her she needed sex? Sex was not the cure-all they seemed to think it was. And a girl needed a man to be interested enough in her to have sex, anyway.

Elle lifted a shaking hand to the bun at the back of her head, tucking a stray strand of hair back into the band that held the mass of brown curls in place. “Could we not talk about my sex life, please?”

“What sex life?” crowed Meg, twirling her purple feathered boa and pouring her Cosmo into the giant plastic penis Amy had bought her to use as a cup. “A good fucking is just what you need, girlfriend. Jason has about ten single friends coming to the wedding next weekend. Want me to hook you up?”

“No, thank you.” Elle tossed back the ends of her first glass of wine and sucked down half of the new one, her head swirling from the chill of the sweet liquid and the burn of the alcohol. Suddenly, getting drunk seemed like the best idea she’d ever had.

“Tim is really hot. And he just got out of a pretty serious relationship, so he’s bound to be interested in some no-strings sex.” Meg winked at Elle, who wrinkled her nose. No way was she going to have sex with Tim.

“I’ll pass, thanks. One night stands are not for me.”

“What about Eddie?” Lindsay asked, ignoring Elle’s protest. “If I was a free woman...”

Meg’s gaze turned back to Elle, a thoughtful expression on her face. “Eddie? No... He’s a bit too...*much* for Ellie, I think.”

That stung. Indignant, she crossed her arms over her chest. “Too much for me? *No* man is too much for me.”

“Come on, Ellie. Eddie’s the biggest player I’ve ever met.” Amy sipped her Cosmo. “You’re practically a virgin.”

“I am *not* a virgin!” Elle shouted. “I can handle any man.”

“Yeah, right,” scoffed Meredith. “You couldn’t handle a vibrator, much less the real thing.”

Elle’s mouth fell open as she saw the skepticism on her friends’ faces. “None of you think I’m woman enough to have sex?” None of them would meet her eyes. Hurt roiled through her belly. “Are you serious? Thanks a lot, guys.”

“Prove us wrong, then.” Meredith leaned back in the booth, darting a gaze over her shoulder. “Have sex with a guy you meet here tonight.”

“You must be joking.”

“Nope. Dead serious.” Her sister raised an eyebrow in a taunting gesture Elle’d always hated. “But if you don’t think you can do it...”

A bad feeling settled in the pit of her stomach, but no way was Elle going to back down from that eyebrow. “Who?”

Meredith jerked a thumb over her shoulder. “Him.”

Elle raised her gaze to meet eyes in the black mask of a Seven Circles employee who arrived with five shots in his hands. “Oh my God,” she whispered as her breath seized.

Chapter Two

He towered over the table, his hair, mahogany in the reddish light of the club, brushed back from his forehead. His dark eyes, sensuous lips, and chiseled jaw complete with a cleft chin were the only facial features visible beneath the requisite mask. A lack of oxygen must make a woman insane, because only a crazy woman would have the melting sensation flowing through her veins that Elle had at the sight of him. His hands, long-fingered and strong, made Elle wonder what pleasure they could wreak as they stroked her skin. She gasped for air, praying her distress was unnoticeable, as he set down the shot glasses and leaned forward, his muscles rippling beneath his white tee shirt and leather pants. Warmth puddled between her legs and she shifted subtly beneath the table.

“Are you all right, miss?” his deep voice rumbled as Elle attempted to breathe.

Sweet mother of God, the man was a walking, talking, tower of sexiness. Even his voice caused a zing of arousal to shoot through her limbs.

“F-fine, thanks,” she whimpered, shutting her eyes to block the sight of concern in his.

“You sure? You’re pretty pale.”

She opened her lids to find his face only inches away from hers. Barely containing a shriek of surprise, Elle scooted back on the bench, her gaze darting to find her sister’s smug smile and suppressed giggles of her friends. Humiliation mingling with lust, she returned her eyes to meet his, determined to ignore the look of worry in them. Worry wouldn’t aid her in proving she could sex it up just like any other red-blooded, normal woman. She inhaled deeply.

“I’m very sure,” she said in her sexiest tones, curving her lips in a coquette’s smile and adding a slight sweep of the tip of her tongue across her lower lip.

His eyes narrowed behind the mask, and he pushed away from the table. “Are you drunk?”

Heat washed over her face as the others burst into hysterical laughter. “No! I—” Words failed her for the second time that night and tears gathered in her eyes. *Damn, damn, damn!*

Elle grabbed one of the shots he'd placed on the table and downed it, then two more, slamming each of the miniature glasses down as she finished. She rose to her feet, steadier now that she'd consumed more alcohol in the last ten minutes than she had the entire past year, and faced her now silently staring friends.

"Fuck you all. I've had enough." She stepped onto the bench and climbed over her sister, not bothering to wait for her to move. "I'm going home."

Elle pushed her way through the crowd, ignoring several men who threw compliments out as she passed. They were all fucking bastards, as far as she was concerned, and they could all rot in hell.

"Hey, hey, pretty lady, where you goin' all alone?" A drunk grabbed her arm as she attempted to squeeze between two couples making out.

"Take your hand off me," she answered, anger overriding her instinct for preservation.

His fingers tightened. "Now, that's not a nice way to speak to a man who calls you pretty." He leaned close to her, his fetid breath brushing her face and his bleary eyes looking down at her chest. A wave of nausea rolled over Elle as she inhaled enough rum fumes to get a contact high.

She clenched her teeth. "Thank you for the compliment. Now please let me go."

"I think we should get to know each other better." He grinned, then pressed his face into the curve of her neck. Mistaking her shudder of disgust for one of pleasure, he licked her jaw.

Screaming in fury, Elle drew back her fist and threw a punch at his nose. A satisfying crunch sounded as she connected and he let loose a howl as he dropped her arm to cradle his face. Blood spurted from between his fingers.

"Goddamn it! You bitch!"

"Next time let the lady go when she asks you," came a familiar voice tinged with wry amusement from behind Elle. She stiffened as a hand landed her shoulder and tightened when she tried to pull away.

"I'll sue her and this fucking club!" the man continued to shout as several bouncers, all wearing black masks, converged on him and bore him away through the crowd.

"Excuse me, please," Elle said, determined not to turn around. The man had witnessed too much of her humiliation this evening. She refused to give him the further pleasure of seeing how much her hand was killing her. Or the fact that hearing his voice again had weakened her

knees, and the shaking of her fingers was due to more than pain.

“I don’t think so,” he murmured in her ear. A shiver raced down her spine and her eyes fluttered closed.

“Wh-why not?”

“Because I don’t trust that guy not to jump you as soon as you step through the front door, woman or not.” His breath skipped over her sensitive skin. Every single hair she possessed stood up in reaction and her stomach clenched with lust.

Elle inhaled, turning her face away from him. How could he arouse her this way? Only one other man had affected her like this, and even he did not produce the same intensity of feeling with a mere glance.

She crossed her arms over her chest, knowing her nipples would be poking holes in the flimsy silk halter-top Meredith insisted she wear tonight. Elle hated the thing, and the matching skirt and heels Mere had brought over when she picked Elle up, but there was no halting the Mere-train when she got rolling.

“How am I supposed to leave, then?”

“Come with me.” His hand slid down her arm from her shoulder to her hand, leaving a trail of fire in its wake. Elle’s breath stuttered in her chest as he tugged her through the crowd, her nerveless feet following with no contradictory command from her malfunctioning brain.

What had she gotten herself into?

Eddie’s erection pressed painfully against the zipper of his leathers. Damn Luce for insisting they wear these tight-ass pants. If he’d had his looser jeans on, there would have been some room for adjustment, but as it was, his poor cock was doomed to suffering.

A bead of sweat dripped into his eye as he threaded through the escalating sexuality of Hell’s patrons. For some reason, the atmosphere seemed heightened tonight, where normally the rampant lust of the customers didn’t even faze him. After all, seeing a chick fight another chick was hot—Ph.D. or no, he was male enough to get turned on by a couple of women pulling hair—but the sight of Eleanor delivering a perfect roundhouse to fracture that asshole’s nose shouldn’t have caused his simmering arousal to burst into full boil.

But boiling it was, and there was fuck-all he could do about it. *Would* do about it. Despite her sister’s request for a lap dance, there was something funny going on at that table, something

a little more vicious than female jokes. Why had she bolted? If Eleanor was unreceptive to a strip tease, he certainly would never have forced it on her, paid or not.

But his blood had curdled at the sight of her strained attempt at flirtation, and her so-called friends' laughter had caused a streak of unmitigated anger to race through his bones. His buddy Jason might be marrying that bitch Meg next week, but Eddie definitely didn't have to like her. Tolerate her, sure, for the sake of friendship and male-bonding bullshit, but like her? Absolutely not, not after her treatment of Eleanor.

His hand tightened around her limp fingers as he realized he'd just chosen a woman with whom he'd never had a casual conversation over a decade-long friendship.

What the fuck was wrong with him?

"Where are we going?" she shouted at him as he pushed open a door in the wall behind the DJ booth.

"Somewhere you can hang for a few minutes while we make sure that jerk leaves." He led her down the hallway, the silence ominous as the pounding beats of Eminem faded behind the closed door.

"Somewhere *where*?"

"Somewhere quiet."

"Like one of those rooms where people get private lap dances?" She halted, yanking her fingers from his. "I don't *think* so."

Eddie's teeth ground together. "Would you rather wait for a cab with the guy whose nose you just broke? I'm sure he'd be more than willing to get your name and your lawyer's."

"My what?" she shrieked. "No!"

"Then what does it matter what room you're in?" Silence followed. "Look, if you're worried about me, I—"

"It's not that," she said quickly. "I shouldn't be here at all. I could get fired if my boss ever found out. God, I can't believe my sister talked me into this."

"Stop," he cut into her babbling. Hoping she wouldn't notice the raging erection in his leathers, he turned and framed her face with his hands. Her lips parted slightly as he lightly rubbed his thumbs over her cheekbones. God, her skin was so soft, like silk beneath his rough calluses. "Stop," he repeated quietly, unnecessarily. "Stop, stop, stop."

"I have stopped," she whispered.

“Yes, you have.” He took a deep breath, inhaling her unique scent. Just a whiff of that hint of flowers, gardenia maybe, could bring blood zinging from his head to his groin. Here, away from the University, away from her friends, away from reality, he nearly came from the sweet fragrance of her own arousal underneath the flora of her perfume. He could hardly suppress his groan as they stared at each other, her breasts heaving beneath the wisp of peach intended to contain them.

She didn’t even look like herself. Perhaps that was why he was losing control. Why his passion was rising to the top, waiting to be skimmed off, just as he knew her cream would be. Slick and sweet, covering her pink flesh, begging for his tongue. Another drop of sweat fell into his eye, the burn of salt reminding him that she had no idea of his identity, hidden as he was behind the half-mask.

His throat was like dust as he tried to swallow. “The uh—” He cleared his throat. “The room is one of our private rooms, but no one will bother you there. You can wait until I’m certain that asshole is gone, and then I’ll call you a cab to get you home.”

Eleanor nodded slowly. “Thank you,” she whispered in a husky tone.

Eddie turned abruptly and strode down the darkened hall. Room Three would be open. He could leave her there while he called a taxi. She’d be safe; no one would bother her. Fifteen minutes, tops, and she’d be gone.

It might take a couple of days, but he’d convince himself it was a good thing for her to have gone. By Monday morning, there would be no lingering doubts about his honor or her lusciousness. He could see her in the halls of the English Department without wondering what having her would be like. If she’d taste as good as she looked. If her hair would fall halfway to her ass once he’d gotten it out of that damn bun. If she would fuck with the same passion as she read Chaucer. If, here in this Circle of Hell, he shouldn’t act like Milton’s Satan and lead his own little Eve down the road of sin.

Damn, he was a fool. But an honorable fool.

“Here it is.” Eddie turned the handle and pushed open the door. Her eyes widened as she took in the gold nameplate that read *Betrayers and Mutineers* and the plush black velvet chaise in the center of the room. Her cheeks reddened at the sight of the whips and manacles hanging at intervals along the oak paneled walls and the mural of an orgy along the far wall.

Eddie’s own cheeks heated. “I’ll be quick.”

“Will you stay with me?” she asked, and his cock jerked in his pants.
He was so fucked.

Chapter Three

What the fuck was wrong with her?

Oh, this was fantastic. She'd been reduced to vulgarity three times tonight, a record for her, who prided herself on her intellect and refined language. She was an English professor who dropped f-bombs. *Fuck*.

A hysterical giggle escaped her lips as she stepped into the room. *Fuck, fuck, fuck*. She was in a stripper's lap dance room. She could swear all she liked. *Fuck and fuck again*.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

Elle nodded. "You keep asking me that."

"Because you continue to act like something's wrong."

The door snicked shut behind her as she wandered over to inspect the mural. Twenty or so couples cavorted naked along the wall, each in different positions. "I'm well enough," she said, reaching out to trace the outline of a man's engorged penis, the tip of which disappeared into his partner's mouth. His own tongue was buried in her pussy.

A wave of heat rushed through her. Her eyes narrowed as she stared at the vivid depiction of the classic sixty-nine. She hated the term, but here, the word *pussy* sounded right. "Cock," she whispered to herself. "Cunt, pussy, fuck."

"Did you say something?"

"No!" She whirled, her cheeks heating guiltily. "I was just admiring the painting."

A glint of amusement lit his gaze, all she could distinguish of his features behind the mask. "Really?"

"Well, yes. The figures are very well-done, very true-to-life." Oh God, she was babbling again. "I never thought that modern art was particularly attractive. All those blobs, and abstract shapes. Why call it art if I could do it with a tube of paint and a canvas? Give it some esoteric explanation and the critics love it. I have no respect for art that looks like something I could do."

"You prefer the classical painters to modernists, then?" he asked, stepping closer to her.

She backed into the wall, her hands flat against the plaster, her breath faltering as he came within inches of her body.

Her knees resembled pudding in their viscosity, and she held them together to prevent trembling. “I suppose I do.”

“As do I.” He reached down to grasp her right hand, and raised it to his lips. “We should probably make sure you didn’t break anything.”

Elle thought she would come as his breath wafted over her knuckles and he grazed an open mouthed kiss over her skin. “Oh my God,” she breathed. “You are...”

“What?” he asked, his gaze glued to hers as he brushed a thumb across her fingers. “Not broken, I think. What am I?”

“Too much.” She pressed her head into the wall behind her, her chest arching as she gasped for air. “You’re too much. God, they were right. I can’t handle this.”

“What are you talking about?” A frown crossed his lips, and his eyes narrowed to a dangerous slit. “You mean your friends? Is that what they were laughing about?”

“I can’t— It doesn’t—” Elle struggled to find the words through the haze of lust clouding her mind. Frustration, both intellectual and sexual, seeped into her boggy thoughts. “Who gives a shit? I can handle it. I need you to fuck me. Right now.”

“You what?” His eyes flew wide in astonishment. “You can’t mean that.”

“I do.” She tugged the fingers that had loosened on her own, and dragged his hand to her breast. Automatically, his thumb rubbed the hardened peak he found there and she whimpered. “They were right. I do need to get laid. Fuck me now.”

“You don’t even know my name,” he protested, even as he stepped into her writhing body, pressing his huge erection against the vee of her thighs. “What if I have a disease?”

“Do you?” she asked, grasping the tight muscles of his ass.

“No.” He rubbed his bristled jaw against the curve of her neck and she gasped, shivering with pleasure at the sensation.

“And I’m on the pill.” Elle pulled him tighter against her cleft as his free hand drifted down to the bare skin below her skirt. “There, we’ve been responsible adults. Can we fuck now?”

“Hell, yes,” he groaned, then pressed his lips to hers.

God, the man could kiss. His tongue licked the seam of her lips and she opened willingly,

moaning into his mouth as he devoured her. He moved in counterpoint to his hips, one retreating while the other attacked, a dueling dance of seduction of a sort Elle had never experienced. Her few clumsy attempts at making love in the past had ended in disaster, which she'd always assumed was her fault. She was too aggressive. Or too passive. Or too kinky. Or not kinky enough.

Whenever one lover had claimed something was wrong, she'd taken the opposite approach the next time. Always, she'd tried her best to please the man she was with. And always, somehow, she failed.

With this man, her mystery man, she had no chance to do anything at all. Her heart had nearly stopped when his fingers curled around her breast after she'd placed his hand against her. And even though he'd protested, his body had reacted as though he couldn't wait to get inside her.

And she thanked the powers that be for it.

Her hands slid up his body, lifting his shirt as they went. His muscles were hard beneath her fingertips, a rippling mass of man. She dragged the tee upwards, and he lifted his arms obligingly, allowing her to strip off the soft cotton with ease.

"You are amazing," she whispered, running her nails down the center of his chest, between his well-developed pecs, and along the central ridge of his abdominals to his navel. He looked just as she always thought a man should look—muscled, but not overly bulging. Big, but not huge. Well, that part of him, anyway. A certain aspect of him was certainly more than adequate to fulfill her fantasies, if she judged correctly as he urged his groin firmly against her again.

"So are you." He skimmed the backs of his fingers along the curve of her cheek and she nearly purred like a well-fed feline. "Are you sure you want to do this? You still don't know who I am."

Elle traced her fingertips over the ridge of his mask where his eyebrows would be. "I think the air of mystery adds to the experience."

He pulled back just a bit. "Does it?" he asked in a flat tone.

"You have to understand," she said, running her fingers through his thick hair, gently gripping a few strands. "I don't normally act this way."

"I think I got that part when you mentioned your boss firing you." His hands came up to

grasp her wrists.

“But there’s something about you,” she rushed on, tightening her grip when he tugged lightly. “I want you. More than I’ve ever wanted anyone in my life. Can’t that just be enough?”

The plaintive tone was what did it. He’d spent the last two years imagining her when he jacked-off. This was the opportunity he’d never dared dream he’d have. He must be one lucky son of a bitch, because the woman of all his fantasies was practically begging him to have her.

He jerked her hands out of his hair, hoping the pain would knock some sense into him. Eleanor was not the kind of woman who would fuck a guy in the strip club. He had no right to take advantage of the fact that she’d had a few too many—he’d watched her down three shots in succession, so he should know. But even as his scalp stung, and he intended to call Josh or Scott to come take her to the cab that was probably idling at the curb outside, he dialed Steven’s extension, watching the rejection creep over Eleanor’s delicate features.

“Yeah?”

“Steve, I’ve got to take off the rest of the night. There’s been a family emergency. Pete’s covering the bar for me.” A spark of hope lit in her eyes, and a rush of heat spread inside his chest.

“Will you be able to cover tomorrow night’s shift?” the assistant manager asked over the sounds of the club.

“I should, yeah.”

“Fine. See you then.” The phone clicked in his ear and he gently replaced his receiver.

Eleanor’s eyes flared as he stalked back toward her, his cock straining against his leathers in agony with every step. “Here are the rules.” Her eyebrows flew up in confusion. “You do what I tell you. If you aren’t comfortable, you say stop, and I stop. But that’s the end of it. We’re done, you leave. Understand?”

Her jaw clenched. “You won’t hurt me. And you won’t tell anyone.”

“Of course,” he said, somewhat offended that she would think he might be violent with her. But she didn’t know him—not really, even though they were friends at work. Here, she had no idea of his capabilities, and he was a little pissed that she would take the risk of placing herself at a total stranger’s mercy. Eddie was almost tempted to teach her a lesson, but the very thought of scaring her made him physically ill.

“Then I understand.” She lifted her chin. “What should I do first?”

“Tell me your name.” He crossed his arms over his bare chest, ignoring the raging desire that flooded him when she’d agreed.

“My name?”

“Yes. Your name.”

“Elle,” she said, mimicking his posture.

Elle. He liked it. The nickname fit her better than the pretentious Eleanor. What the hell were her parents thinking when they named her? “Well, Elle,” he drawled, testing the new version out, learning how it rolled off his tongue. “Take off your shirt.”

“What?” Her arms fell to her sides, her pants of excitement contradicting the confused protest.

“Slowly, if you please.” He raised his own eyebrows, knowing she couldn’t see them. Fucking mask. Although, if it weren’t for the mask, she wouldn’t be here with him now.

He could see her hands trembling, the hem of the halter between her fingertips. She began to pull the material up and over her head. Her stomach muscles clenched, and he swallowed hard at the sight of the navel piercing she hid. Who knew proper Eleanor McLaren would have a belly ring? What other secrets did she hide beneath her schoolmarm demeanor? His palms itched to find out.

Eddie’s tongue nearly fell out of his mouth when she revealed a peach lace strapless bra beneath the halter. Strands of hair tumbled from their confinement as she whipped the shirt over her head, drifting over her collarbones and falling almost to the curve of peach on the milky white of her breast. Silk fluttered to the floor as she crossed her arms over her stomach and stood before him, defiance shining from her eyes.

“Ah, ah,” he murmured, stepping closer, watching her breathing hitch. “Don’t hide.”

He gently pulled her arms away from her body, holding them a little to the sides, and stared.

“What now?” she asked, an anxious tone to her voice.

Eddie met her gaze, happy to see the desire hadn’t been lost in the tension. Instead, her lust was heightened by her reluctance. And this was going to drive that peak even higher.

“I’m going to lick your little pussy.”

“Holy shit,” she gasped.

Chapter Four

Elle was surprised she hadn't fainted from too much oxygen, considering the fact that she was hyperventilating. Her mystery lover stepped closer, dropping a fingertip to her shoulder, then tracing the line of her clavicle, down her sternum, between her heaving breasts and over her belly to flick the bar at her navel before he gripped her hips with his big hands.

"This ring is hot," he murmured in her ear, his searing breath causing a shiver to race through her.

"Oh." It had been a drunken decision over Spring Break her senior year, back in her wild phase. That and the tattoo on the small of her back. She'd never been particularly fond of either embellishment, but if it turned him on...

His lips wandered down her neck, stopping every few inches along the trail his finger had blazed to place a wet kiss to some piece of her flaming skin. With each sweep of his tongue, each scrape of teeth, her breath stuttered and heat swirled in her limbs, culminating in her pussy, which grew wetter by the millisecond. He took his time, advancing leisurely toward his stated goal, lowering his body until he knelt at her feet.

"I've been wanting to do this since I first saw you," he breathed against her piercing, swishing his tongue inside the little cavern, sending a streak of sensation straight between her thighs so intense her knees jolted. He glanced up to meet her eyes, a twinkle of mischief shining from his mask. She grabbed a fistful of his hair and tilted her head back to stare at the ceiling.

"Have you?" she squeaked as his hands drifted down her legs to her ankles, then caressed a path along the backs to her knees. His fingers lingered in the crease there, stroking lightly.

"Um-hm." He bit her gently to the left of her jeweled bar. "For so long, Elle."

"Not that long," she protested.

"Longer than you think," he said against the skin on the right of her navel before nipping there, too. He lifted her left leg, steadying her on her right foot as he brought her ankle to his mouth and traced the curve of her bone with his tongue.

Elle trembled with lust, her fingers clutching his broad shoulders, digging in to maintain some semblance of balance. “Oh God, you’re good.”

“Damn right,” he chuckled as he moved upwards, his palm sliding along the length of her calf, then her thigh, his mouth close behind. A moan escaped her as he came within inches of her pussy, the swollen folds throbbing, a trickle of moisture soaking her panties.

He set her foot on the floor and she glanced down in disappointment, startled to see her skirt puddled around her right ankle and his lean fingers curling around it. “You took off my skirt.”

He grinned. “Of course.”

“I didn’t even feel it,” she mumbled, gasping when he lifted her right leg to rest on his shoulder, leaving her feeling incredibly exposed and vulnerable. Sweet Jesus, she was actually allowing a stranger to touch her in ways no other man had. Elle stiffened, her eyes wide. What was she *doing*? She couldn’t do this, she couldn’t let him—

Her thoughts scattered when he pressed his mouth to the inside of her thigh, then moved higher and kissed her through her panties. A keening cry burst from her throat, and she ground her teeth to keep from screaming as his finger brushed against her wet pussy and pulled the triangle of her thong to the side.

“Fuck me,” he said, breathless himself. “You wax.”

Elle looked down and met his astonished eyes. A flare of recognition lit in her mind, but her fractured thoughts could not place him. For a moment, her calf draped over his shoulder, his mouth paused six inches from her aching cunt, the world shrieked to a halt.

Then he leaned forward slowly, his tongue extending to trace over her needy folds, the rasp of it nearly making her come. His gaze never left hers as he proceeded to reduce her to a quivering mass of pleasure, tingles and zings shooting through the weakened muscles of her thighs and belly. She broke the stare, disappointment over her lack of control overwhelmed by sensation, when he simultaneously suckled her clit and drove two fingers into her weeping sheath. Her knees buckled, and she would have fallen to the floor if he hadn’t held her steady with his free hand. Hips writhing, she tangled her fingers in his hair, holding him tightly to her as he continued to lap her cream, her eyes squeezing closed as she pressed her head back against the wall. Strangled moans escaped her throat more frequently with each pass of his tongue.

He fucked her with his fingers, varying the speed and depth, until she ached to be filled

with him, with something thicker and harder, with his cock.

“Oh God,” she whimpered. “This is so good—but I need—I need...”

After a particularly hard thrust, he pulled back, his thumb coming up to replace his mouth. “What do you need, baby?”

“This—you—more...” Mind blank, all she could utter were single words, unable to complete a coherent thought. “God, I can’t...”

“You like this?” he growled, and she shuddered as his fingers slid slowly up into her pussy. Her thighs spasmed at the feel of his stubble scraping along the crease, nuzzling her bare mound. She’d had no idea it could feel so good to be touched there when she’d made the rash decision to go for a Brazilian. But the pain of the procedure just might have been worth the sensations now.

“Yes...”

“What about this?” he murmured, spreading her apart and shoved the length of his tongue into her vagina, rotating it as he thrust his separated digits in tandem.

“Oh my—” Sparks burst behind her eyelids as ripples began through her lower body, expanding and contracting in widening circles of ecstasy, until her entire frame shook with rapture.

She was gorgeous.

It was a simple word, a superlative, true, but not nearly enough to describe plain Jane Eleanor McLaren in the midst of an orgasm. Watching her come, seeing her muscles twitch, feeling her cunt hug his fingers, Eddie wondered if he hadn’t always known that she would be this magnificent. If somewhere in the back of his mind, he hadn’t realized that the images of her he’d pictured while massaging his cock in the middle of the night would pale in contrast to the truth of her.

Of Elle.

Flushed and sated, she relaxed against the wall, her leg falling from its position at his shoulder even as he continued to stroke his tongue gently along her plump feminine flesh. With one last swirl over her swollen clit, he rose, dragging his fingers from the tight sheath that housed them. He waited until she opened her eyes, wonder mixed with the sparkle of pleasure, before he deliberately held her gaze and sucked his sopping digits into his mouth.

Her eyes widened with a flare of lust. Eddie's lips curled slightly at the corners as he withdrew his fingers with a pop.

"You taste like the freshest spring morning."

The blush on her cheeks deepened. "I—I don't know what to say."

"You can say whatever you want," he murmured, pressing her naked body back against the wall, his hands flat beside her head. His nipples, already hard, brushed against the rough lace of the bra she still wore. A few tendrils of her hair had come loose from their confinement and wrapped around his wrists, almost as if they wished to hold him captive. It would have been an easy task to escape the bindings, but he found, to his astonishment, that he was perfectly at ease with being Elle's hostage.

A bolt of something unidentifiable ripped through his chest.

Ignoring it, he shifted so his groin was cradled in the vee of her thighs. The heat of her scorched him even through his leather pants, and it was all he could do to refrain from jerking them off and burying his throbbing cock inside the damp haven he knew awaited him. But any further intercourse had to be her choice. He didn't intend to force sex from her because he'd gotten her off.

He may have dreamed of fucking her into oblivion, but the reality could only come at Elle's instigation, not his.

Her hands crept up to almost tentatively land on his pecs, her long fingers brushing down his sides to settle at either side of his waist. She pressed her face into the curve of his neck and bit gently. His hips jerked at the slight pain and he grinned.

Perhaps he'd unleashed the tiger from the pussycat. And that was a marvelous thing, indeed.

"I want—" Her voice cracked with hesitancy and she drew in a deep breath, then wrapped her arms around him to clutch his ass. "I want you inside me. Hard and deep." She reached up to tug his earlobe with her teeth, sending shivers along his spine and causing a responsive thrust of his groin against her mound.

They both moaned.

"Do you?" he growled. "Because you don't owe me anything."

She stilled in his embrace, the distant beat of bass from the dance floor the only sound besides their harsh breaths.

Jesus, he was a dumbass. He had given her an out, and from her actions, he was pretty certain she was going to take it.

Why the hell was he being so noble? Any other woman who'd offered her body to him would have been accepted immediately. But the one woman he truly wanted had granted his most secret wish, and he pushed her away.

He stepped back, gave himself the space he needed to let her walk out of the room. "I'm sorry. This was a mistake."

"I didn't think so," she said, crossing her arms over her chest, oblivious to her own nudity, though Eddie was definitely not. Her rounded hips and trim waist, not to mention the bare pussy that screamed *come and get me*, tantalized him. He felt his control slipping. "At least, not until now."

"You want to have sex with a stranger, and you don't think that's a mistake?"

"Maybe it is, but that's my problem, isn't it?" she asked, stepping up to jab a nail into the center of his chest, a stab he felt all the way through his heart. "All I wanted was a little fuck and chuck, just like everyone else I know does on a regular basis. Hell, my almost-brother-in-law did it up until the day he ditched my sister for a woman with a boatload of cash."

"He sounds like an asshole." Eddie wrapped his hand around the finger she kept poking at him, emphasizing her words like a hammer. "You really want to be like him?"

"Not particularly, but I did want to learn the nature of the draw. What made him cheat? It had to be good if he was willing to risk losing my sister." She glanced away. "No one ever walked away from *her* before that."

The devastated expression she wore sliced through Eddie's resolve. "I'm not walking away."

"And *I* didn't retreat, did I?" Her hand dropped to her side. "Oh shit, I'm naked."

He chuckled. "Yeah, almost. You're cursing, too."

Her chin lifted defiantly, despite the chagrin in her eyes. "I'm an adult. I can say whatever I bloody well want to say."

"I just didn't think a classy lady like you would use words like that."

Her eyebrow lifted as she began stalking toward him. Surprised, and not a little intrigued, he stepped back until his knees hit the divan in the center of the room.

"Would a classy lady do this?" His arms closed around her as she leapt into his embrace.

Chapter Five

They fell backwards, landing on the sofa, legs tangling and hands groping as her lips fused with his. She held his head still as she ravaged his mouth, her tongue now the aggressor, darting in and out in imitation of what he desperately wanted to do to her with his cock. Blood roared through his brain, until all he could sense was her. Her hips undulating against his, her breasts pressed to his chest, her purrs of pleasure in his ear, her lips hard against his.

Their mingled panting grew harsher as he felt his cock growing even harder in his leathers, more aroused than he could ever remember being in his life. Sweet Jesus, this woman was going to be the death of him, right here in Hell.

And he couldn't care less.

"I want to lick your cock, suck it so hard you come in my mouth," she breathed.

He almost came right there. "God—" He swallowed. "Okay."

She chuckled, the sound a vibration in the back of her throat. "Just *okay*?"

"Yeah." He blinked at her as she sat up, running her palms down his stomach. "Okay."

"I like a simple answer," she murmured, her fingers fumbling at his waist, caressing his sac through his pants gently before slowly loosening the button and unzipping his fly. His balls tightened beneath her ministrations, and a shudder ripped through him as his dick popped free of its constraints.

Eddie moaned in satisfaction as relief flooded through him. Without the pressure from his leathers, his cock was free to expand in comfort.

"You're not wearing any underwear." She frowned.

"Nope." He reached a hand up to tangle in her hair and pulled her face closer to his. "Is that a problem?"

"Definitely not." Elle grinned. "I think I like that as much as you liked my waxing."

"Mmm." He leaned forward to press a light kiss on her lips, and was gratified to hear her breath catch. "I love that smooth skin."

She sat straight, jerking more of her curly brown hair loose in her haste. Confusion lit her eyes as she stared down at him, her chest heaving with shattered breaths. He was losing her, he realized, but wasn't willing to allow her foray into sexual freedom to come to such a sudden end. She seemed so determined to join the ranks of the adventurous, and he was afraid the next time she worked up the courage to proposition another guy, the man, whoever he would be, might not be as safe as Eddie was.

He settled his hands at her waist, stroking upwards to meet the lace of her bra. "Take this off, Elle. I want to see your sweet breasts."

Indecision lurked in her eyes. She needed a push.

"Do it. Now."

Slowly she nodded, her arms reaching behind her back at awkward angles to undo the clasp. Her full breasts bounced slightly as she dropped the peach bit of lace, elastic, and silk to the ground. Eddie's mouth watered. Her skin was milky with just a hint of pink beneath the surface, tipped with large, round areolas and a small beaded nipple in the center of each. The dusky rose color had him licking his lips.

"You're beautiful, Elle." Eddie leaned up to trace the tip of his tongue around the edge of her areola and she shivered. They both gasped as she shifted above him, the sweltering wet flesh between her legs caressing the length of his cock.

"Condom—" he choked out. "Drawer in side of divan."

She nodded and leaned down to open the little compartment that contained an array of birth control and other paraphernalia. Her pussy grazed his cock again and he hissed, the heat of her nearly as scorching as the temperature of his own arousal. Although she may have been a bit shy to be so blatantly displayed when she wasn't caught in the throes of an orgasm, that hesitation had done nothing to diminish her lust.

Eddie leaned his head back with a silent sigh of relief.

Elle straightened, dropping an extra large orange condom wrapper on his chest. "I figured you'd need the biggest size available, stud," she said with a leer and a wink.

He choked on a laugh. "I aim to please, milady."

"Oh, I think you will." She tiptoed her fingers down the crease of his abdominals, along his pubic hair, and grasped his cock. He stiffened. "In fact, I'm sure of it."

"Jesus—"

The tip of her tongue poking out of the corner of her lips, Elle grinned and ran her palm along his length. Shudders raced through Eddie's body as she manipulated his hardened penis, lingering over the sensitive tip, slathering the drop of fluid she found there over the thick shaft. He watched her face as she touched him, amazed at the almost feline satisfaction he glimpsed in her gaze, mixed with a curiosity he found stunning. She was even lovelier when she focused on pleasing him, on finding her own pleasure through her sexual torture.

He glanced at the mirror on the ceiling and caught his breath. The lithe line of her back, with its graceful curves at her waist and hips, was reflected over his twitching body, tendrils of her hair flowing down to the middle of her back.

"Take your hair down," he gasped, a moment before he saw her tongue peek out to tenderly lick the tip of his cock. Eddie jerked. "Oh my God, that's amazing!"

"Thank you." Mischievous glinted in her brown gaze before she leaned over and sucked half of his cock into her mouth.

"Christ—" he gritted between clenched teeth, the swirling of her tongue around his engorged flesh causing his hips to thrust upwards. His hands, until now fisted at his sides as he held his torso off the divan, reached blindly for her head as he fell back against the sloped crest of the sofa. Fingers entwined with her brunette locks, he could watch her alternately enveloping him in her mouth and slowly drawing away, until only the very tip of him remained encased between her full lips.

She tortured him for what seemed like hours, until his control began to falter and he could feel the beginnings of an orgasm gathering in his balls.

"Elle, stop," he said, tightening his grip on her hair and towing her gently away from his cock, every cell in his body protesting. His heels ground into the soft fabric beneath him in an attempt to keep her mouth around him, but he resolutely pulled her away.

"Why?" she asked, her fist coming to encircle him, pumping him even as he reached down to yank her hand off his agonizingly rigid cock.

"Because I'm going to come, baby, and I want to do it inside you."

She cocked her head to the side. "I wanted to taste your come."

Jesus. How much could a sane man stand? "Not this time, love. I need to feel that soft pussy around me," he coaxed, watching the arousal grow from a burning ember to a flaring flame in her eyes. "I want that heat to milk me as I explode. I need it. You need it, too, baby, I know

you do.”

“Yes...” she breathed, reaching for the packet still sitting on his chest, now damp with his sweat. She tore open the wrapper and rolled the condom slowly over his aching erection, every inch bringing a fresh pang of pleasure.

Eddie grasped her waist and pulled her higher over his cock, her fingers gripping him, lightly stroking him as she aimed. With excruciating slowness, she lowered her hips, so that he entered her a bare centimeter at a time, drawing twin moans from their throats. Finally, *finally*, she settled onto his lap, her hands pressed lightly on his pecs, fingers idly tracing his nipples.

Their gazes locked. She leaned down over him to brush her lips against his and his hands ran up along her spine to enfold her in his supine embrace. The new angle brought ripples of pleasure as her pussy clenched his cock, and she gasped.

He growled and gripped her hips again, lifting her, then thrusting up to meet her downward motion. Her moan trilled about the groan he uttered when they began to move in tandem, her lifting until he nearly slid out of her sweet cunt and Eddie thrusting up to meet her as she returned. Her tight pussy, so soft, so wet, encompassed his cock so fully that his world narrowed to the single focus of his eyes on hers and the joining of their bodies. Again and again, they rocked against each other, the sounds of their pleasure mixed with the slapping of damp flesh on flesh.

Heat gathered in Eddie’s balls, and he reached between them to caress Elle’s clit, wanting her to come with him, unwilling to leave her behind. She reared back, her breasts jiggling as she lifted and sank down upon him harder, her urgency growing as his began to reach boiling point. Eddie felt the contractions in her cunt ripple an instant before she slammed down to sheathe his cock and convulsed, her throat arched back as she screamed her ecstasy. The surprise in her eyes reflected back to him in the mirror above them as his own orgasm ripped through him, and he went deaf and blind with pleasure.

Elle fell against his sweaty chest, both of them panting with repletion as the last spasms of pleasure twitched through her limbs. She’d never come like that, ever. Not even with the aid of her trusty vibrator, with its rotating beads and clit stimulator.

She licked her lips and tasted the combination of her perspiration and his, smiling as he grunted when her tongue flicked against his nipple.

“Sorry,” she muttered.

“Not a problem.”

His hands swept along her back in a gentle caress, soothing her antsy nerves. Beneath her cheek, his breathing calmed as her own did, yet for some reason, his heart rate remained a little fast. She wrinkled her nose. Could he have some kind of condition that made this kind of activity dangerous? She hoped not. What a waste that would be.

“I should probably thank you,” she said after several minutes.

His hands stilled. “Thank me?”

The irritated tone in his voice had her tensing. “That was the best sex I’ve ever had. Shouldn’t I thank you for that?”

A snort escaping him rocked her. “You’re welcome.” She thought his lips brushed against the top of her head, but that would be a lover’s gesture, and he didn’t love her. “If you were thanking me for having sex with you, I would have been forced to spank you.”

She jumped when his palm landed on the curve of her ass with a quiet *pop*. “Ouch!”

“Shush,” he chuckled as she sat up and rubbed her tush in mock offense. “That didn’t hurt.”

“No, but since you’ve already spanked me, it won’t be a problem to thank you for having sex with me.” Elle glanced away from the dangerous glint that came into his eyes behind the mask. “It’s been a while, and—”

His hand covered her mouth. “You’re pissing me off, Elle.” He pushed himself up and removed his palm to kiss her deeply. She inhaled sharply at the feel of him stiffening inside her. He broke off with a curse. “I need to get you out of here. This is a strip club for God’s sake. I can’t believe I—”

“I get the point.” Elle scrambled off his lap, her sensitive pussy throbbing at the loss of him. She hissed as a ripple of arousal zinged through her blood. What was wrong with her? She had seduced a stripper in a naughty bar, and now was disappointed when he wanted her to leave. *Get real, Eleanor. It’s not like you’ve found the man of your dreams in this hellhole! You wanted a one night stand. Now you’ve had one.*

He grabbed her arm when she bent over to grab her bra and thong from where they were scattered on the floor. “I’m going to take care of personal business, then escort you out, okay? Stay here until I come to get you.”

She wrenched her arm out of his grip, avoiding his stare as she slipped into her underwear. Normally she would be embarrassed to hell to be naked in front of a man, but nothing about this situation was normal. “Yeah, okay.”

“Elle, I—” Out of the corner of her eye, she saw him touch his mask and grimace. “Shit. Don’t go anywhere. I’ll be right back.”

With a nod, she reached for her skirt and halter top, not turning around until she heard the snick of the door closing. Quickly, she pulled on her clothes, not willing to be naked when he returned, then sat on the divan. What time was it, she wondered, hoping her sister and their friends had left. She had absolutely zero desire to see them on the dance floor, and have them know she had a fling with the hot stripper. That little secret she wanted to keep to herself.

Not because she was embarrassed, but because they would hound her until she surrendered every single detail, and she was *not* about to kiss and tell.

The door opened and she turned. “That was—”

Rather than her stripper, a tall black-haired woman stood in the entrance. Even more gorgeous than Meredith, her body and face would have put even Aphrodite to shame. Elle’s mouth gaped in surprise.

“Show’s over, hon,” the woman stated. “Time to go. There are paying customers waiting for this room.”

“Wh-what?” Elle stammered.

“Cab’s outside. Please follow me.” Gesturing out the door, the woman tapped her foot with impatience. “I know Harry’s a hot one, but others are waiting. You can’t expect to have his attention for the entire night.”

Elle’s pulse pounded in her ear. “His attention?”

“Yeah, he’s got another dried up old maid lined up for a romp, so let’s get you out of sight before she shows. He hates it when his women meet. Says he can’t stand a catfight.” She smirked. “I was surprised he still did you after you hit that guy.”

On shaky legs, Elle rose and walked with what she hoped was dignity to the door. “Harry’s not to worry. I can see myself out.”

“I’m sure you can, honey,” the raven-haired beauty murmured as Elle stalked away. “I’m sure you can.”

Chapter Six

“Dr. McLaren!”

Elle slowed. “Yes, Dr. Harrington?”

“I’ve told you to call me Eddie,” he said, slightly breathlessly as he leaped up the flight of stairs between them two steps at a time.

“You addressed me at Dr, therefore, I should address you as the same, don’t you think?”

She gave him a small smile. God, what the man could do to her. If only she hadn’t ruined her taste for attractive men by having sex in a strip club. But once the cold truth of what had happened hit her, she’d sworn off men. After all, if she couldn’t find a man who was attracted to her without the benefit of her sister paying for him, what was the use of attempting to find one?

It might have taken her a few sleepless nights, but since Friday night’s fiasco in *The Seven Circles*, she’d realized that he had slept with her—fucked her—because Meredith had paid for it, along with the drinks she’d purchased before Elle had stormed off. Maybe he hadn’t meant to do more than give her a lap dance, but she was the one who had begged for sex. And what guy would turn down a willing woman, even one who didn’t really appeal to him?

“Hellooo? Anyone in there?”

Elle blinked, then shook her head. “Sorry, Eddie. I’m not myself today.”

“Interesting weekend?” he asked as they continued down the hall toward the elevator. “I had papers to grade that kept me from any fun. What about you?”

Why was he being so friendly? Usually he said hello and moved on. “Uh, yes. I stayed home to finish working on the assignments due last Thursday.”

“Chaucer as witty as always?”

She raised her brows as she pushed the call button for the elevator. “Eternally. The question is whether I can teach my students to appreciate his charms.”

“I’m sure you have no problem demonstrating the man’s charms.” Eddie grinned, his smile at odds with the intensity in his gaze.

Was he flirting with her? Elle shot him a suspicious glance. They stepped into the elevator and waited for the doors to close. “Thanks.”

“Listen, now that I have you alone, I was wondering...” He hesitated, dropping his gaze from hers in a gesture she would have thought shy if not for the fact that the man didn’t have a reticent bone in his body. He oozed sex appeal, with his wavy mahogany hair, broad shoulders, and the dimple in his chin. Elle’s breath halted for a moment as his eyes rose to meet hers again.

Eddie Harrington looked exactly like her stripper.

Elle choked and began coughing. It wasn’t possible. Eddie was a Ph.D. He’d never be caught in a strip club as a patron, much less as an employee. Besides, he could pick up a woman anywhere. What did he need with lap dances or clandestine sexual escapades? Elle knew of at least three of the doctoral students who would be willing to sleep with him in this department alone, thanks to the indiscretions of lavatory chats.

“Are you all right?” he asked, a hand on her shoulder as she bent double.

“F-fine, thanks,” she gasped. “Sorry, swallowed wrong. What were you saying?”

The elevator dinged for the third floor. “I—uh—was wondering—well, hoping, actually, that you would maybe—possibly be free—tomorrow, or Thursday, maybe, to have—uh—” He cleared his throat. “To have dinner with me?”

“Excuse me?”

Eddie chuckled nervously. “You want to go out with me? Sometime?” He adjusted his tie. “Don’t look so shocked.”

Elle purposely wiped her expression clear of any emotion. “You want to have dinner with me?”

“Yeah.”

“With me?”

“Yes, El—uh— *Eleanor*, with you.” Exasperated, Eddie held the elevator door open on the fifth floor when she stood motionless. “Is that so hard to comprehend?”

“Yes, actually.”

One of her Chaucer students came around the hall and stopped short. “Hi, Dr. McLaren! I just stopped by your office. Do you have a minute to discuss the reading assignment with me? I’m a little confused about ‘The Merchant’s Tale.’”

“Sure, Jennifer. I’ll be right with you,” Elle answered, stepping out of the elevator. “I just

need to speak with Dr. Harrington for a second, and then I'll be in my office."

"Thanks, Doctor!" Jennifer glanced at Eddie with appreciation in her eyes before turning around. "Take all the time you need."

A blush crept over Elle's cheeks. "Well."

"Smart girl," Eddie muttered. His own face was a subtle shade of pink when Elle glanced up at him. Playboy Harrington was embarrassed? "So, dinner?"

"I don't know what to say, Eddie. Is this a business dinner?"

Surprise lit his expression. "Why would you think that?"

"Because you've known me for two years, and this is about the most you've ever spoken to me before." Elle shrugged. "Plus, you're technically my superior, so you can't be asking me out personally. That would be a violation of school policy."

"Hang school policy." He crossed his arms over his chest, biceps bulging through the navy of his sport coat. "Is it wrong for two friends to have dinner to get to know each other better?"

Elle's pulse picked up at the sight, and a slight dampness began forming in her pussy, just as it always did when she was in close proximity of Dr. Edward Harrington for longer than two minutes. It was the reason she studiously avoided him at the holiday party. No need for him to know how he affected her.

"I supposed not."

"Then you'll have dinner with me?"

"No. I can't." A streak of disappointment and something akin to devastation raced through her as his arms fell to his sides and sorrow crossed his face for a moment. "I'm sorry, Eddie, but I'm just not interested," she lied, stepping around him and trotting toward her office.

As much as she might want him, she was certainly not interested in having her heart broken. Not after it had been chipped Friday night.

Nickelback's *Something in Your Mouth* trilled from Eddie's pocket as he watched Elle run away from him. Again.

All right, *not* again, since he hadn't actually seen her run out of Hell Friday night, but she was running this time, though she made a decent attempt at a quick walk to cover the fact that she wanted to get the hell out of Dodge. In her customary conservative little suit, the skirt

brushing the back of her knees and clinging to her ass, her hair in a bun and sexy black rimmed glasses, she was the picture of his every naughty librarian fantasy. Blood rushed to his groin at the memory of how well she had fulfilled his desires the other night.

His phone beeped twice to alert him to the presence of a voicemail as the elevator slid open behind him. Feminine giggles sounded as he glanced over his shoulder to see two freshmen step out of the car, their books against their chests.

“Hi, Professor,” one said.

“How are you, Dr. Harrington?” the other asked.

“Fine, thanks,” he muttered, adjusting his coat to hide his arousal and turning his attention to his phone. Damn Luce. She’d probably blasted his voicemail when he hadn’t answered her call. Eddie sighed. If he could get away with murder, she would definitely be under ground by now. Borrowing money from her had been the stupidest idea of his life. He might have wanted to be independent from his wealthy parents, but Luce’s hold on him was tighter than theirs had ever been.

Hey Harry, it's me. I'm assuming you're in class, since otherwise you'd have answered my call. Just wanted to remind you that we've got that wedding this weekend. You know, your friend Jason's big par-tay. I'm really looking forward to meeting your friends. Ciao, darling. I'll see you tonight. Don't forget, your shift starts at seven. Kisses!

Eddie gritted his teeth as he listened to Luce’s sugar-sweet poison. He hated it when she called him Harry. As a pseudonym for use at Hell, it worked wonders. But hearing the name outside of his proverbial prison grated him the wrong way. And the last thing he wanted to do was take her as his date to Jason’s wedding. Elle would be there, for one. And two, he just plain hated the bitch.

He stalked down the hall, refusing to glance into Elle’s office as he passed it.

Why had she taken off the other night? He’d gone to dispose of the used condom, and met Luce on his way to Room Three, who told him his commission had decided not to wait for him to walk her out. Feeling ridiculous, he’d run down the hall to confirm her words, the walls seeming to close in on him as he realized Elle had left him. The same feeling of abandonment struck him in the middle of the night for the next couple of days, and again when she’d rejected his offer of dinner just now.

Had he done something wrong? Maybe he should have lost his urge for hygiene to help

her dress and escort her out, but he never thought she'd wander the halls of the club alone in order to escape him. He knew she'd enjoyed their lovemaking—and that's what it had become, as trite as that sounded. Though their encounter had begun as a couple of horny adults getting it on, the end had been the most sexually and emotionally fulfilling sex he'd ever had.

Get over it, Harrington! You fucked a hottie in the club, and now she's done with you. It's happened before, it'll happen again. It's not the end of the world, you ass.

And yet, it certainly felt like his world was crashing down on his head.

Elle packed a hell of a punch, only this time, it wasn't his nose that she'd fractured.

Chapter Seven

“Thank you so much for coming!”

Elle blocked out the sound of Meg’s happiness as she strode toward the limo that had carried the bridesmaids to the church. “Damn it!” she cried as she tripped over the hem of her rose silk dress. Why had Meg chosen these long gowns? She knew Elle could never walk in one.

Sighing, Elle clutched her bouquet of white and pink roses in one hand while she gathered the trailing length of her gown in the other. “I hate this shit.”

“Too bad. You look absolutely beautiful.”

She stumbled, dropping her bouquet as she threw her hands out to break her fall. But before she hit the ground, a strong arm circled her waist and pulled her upright.

“You okay?” Eddie Harrington retrieved her slightly battered roses and held them out to her, a smiling lurking in his eyes. Looking sinfully delicious in his tux, he gave her a little bow as she accepted the flowers.

“Very well, thanks.” Brushing the sweep of hair the hairdresser had draped over her forehead, Elle swallowed. “What are you doing here?”

“I know Jason from college,” he murmured, reaching up to tuck a wayward curl behind her ear. She shivered at the contact and stepped back. The man made her more nervous than the prospect of her dissertation defense ever had. That ordeal was a breeze compared to Eddie Harrington and his suave moves.

He cleared his throat. “I have to go back. Forgot something. I’ll see you at the reception?”

She nodded, speechless as he grasped her free hand and lifted it to his lips. Tingles raced up her arm from knuckles to shoulder as a spasm gripped her heart when his mouth caressed the back of her hand. “Til then, milady.”

With a wink, he turned and started to leave. “Eddie?” she called.

“Yes?” He glanced back over his shoulder.

“Did you mean it when you asked me out?”

His eyes narrowed. “I’ve never lied to you, Elle.”

Elle blinked. How did he know she preferred that name to her other nicknames? The niggles of suspicion that had taken root the other day began to bloom in her mind, but she ruthlessly stomped on the weed. “Then would you save a dance for me tonight?”

“What about dinner?”

“It’s open for negotiation.”

A blinding grin split his face, delight shining from his gaze. “Then all my dances are yours.”

Heart racing out of control, an answering smile curved Elle’s lips as she watched his tight buns flex, his whistle the sweetest sound she’d heard.

* * * *

Thank God Tim was looking for a quick lay. If Eddie was very lucky, Tim would keep Luce busy for most of the night, allowing him to escape with Elle before the bitch returned to the party.

Her hair was loose for once, and he’d almost come in his pants when she walked up the aisle, the hesitant expression she wore contrasting with the aura of absolute sex she exuded with her brunette curls tumbling down her back. The simple Grecian style gown she wore draped her curves perfectly, and it was all he could do to stay in the pew and not carry her off to the nearest room to fuck the brains out of them both. He’d been in a church, for God’s sake, and he could barely sit still for the huge erection he’d sported. Jason’s elderly aunt had glanced over at the tent in his tux and winked.

Standing in the corner, a Tom Collins in hand, he watched Elle socialize with Jason’s guests. She fidgeted with her hair every two seconds, and frequently glanced over her shoulder, paying little attention to the discussion around her. For an intelligent woman, she was uncomfortable with anyone outside of her academic world. He’d seen her debate the merits of Chaucer over Shakespeare, whom she’d termed “a literary thief,” with perfect ease, but she couldn’t hold a simple conversation with someone’s grandmother at a wedding.

Tenderness swept through his chest as the DJ announced the bar was open, and the dance floor was calling. He drained his drink, then set the glass on a nearby table before cutting through the crowd toward her. *Bless the Broken Road* played as she glanced up, her eyes

sweeping the crowd until they landed on him. A sweet smile lit her face, and his breath caught. God, he loved her.

Confusion crossed her brow and he realized he had stopped in his tracks. Blood rushing in his head, blocking out the croons of Rascal Flatts, he swallowed and took the hardest step of his life—toward the woman he loved.

“Hi,” he said in an inane attempt at conversation. “This dance is mine, I believe.”

“I believe it is,” she answered softly, taking the hand he held out for her.

“Ah, so this is who’s held your attention, Eleanor,” said the nattily dressed woman with whom she’d been speaking.

“Yes, Mrs. Cunningham. This is Dr Edward Harrington.” Elle smiled shyly up at him. “We work together.”

“The infamous Eddie, I presume.” Mrs. Cunningham raised an eyebrow. “Careful with this one, Eleanor. Meghan has told me about him.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Elle answered, shooting a narrow-eyed gaze at Eddie. “I’m always careful.”

“I know you are, darling.” Mrs. Cunningham patted Elle on the cheek, then shot daggers at Eddie with her eyes. “Hurt this one, sonny, and you’ll regret it.”

Eddie’s eyes widened. “No, ma’am.”

“Very well. Go dance, you two.” A wry smile crossed her lips. “I have a good feeling.”

Eddie stared at the strange woman over his shoulder as Elle pulled him onto the dance floor. “Did she just threaten me?”

Elle giggled. “Yes.”

Swinging her into his arms, Eddie growled into the curve of her neck before whispering in her ear, “Should I be frightened?”

A shiver ran down Elle’s back under his fingers and her breath faltered as they swayed. “No.”

A new song came on and Eddie pulled Elle closer, holding her still when she stumbled slightly. He knew she could feel his cock straining at his pants, but didn’t expect her to cuddle closer, cupping him with her hips.

“Jesus, Elle.” He stared into her eyes, shocked she would have been so aggressive in public. “Are you drunk?”

She blinked, halting. “Why does every man think I’m drunk if I act like I want him?”

“Because you’re not all that attractive, hon.”

Elle’s eyes widened with horror as Luce’s voice came from behind Eddie. He swore as he stepped back to see his poisonous boss standing with a hand on her hip, studying the nails on the other, a smug grin on her face. “Could I have my date back, please? We both know you’re not woman enough for a man like Harry, anyway. Been there, done that.”

“You—he—Harry—Eddie—” Elle sputtered, cheeks red and eyes flashing with rage. “Oh, you bastard!”

Eddie held his hands in front of him in surrender. “Elle, I can explain.”

“I’m sure you can, you silver-tongued asshole!” The other dancers began to stop and stare. “You almost had me, you know. I was falling for that bullshit of yours!”

“Elle, you’re cursing again,” he said, stunned.

“And a classy lady like me wouldn’t do that, would she?” Elle bellowed.

“She sure wouldn’t fuck a stripper,” Luce chimed in.

Elle drew back and belted her in the face.

Chapter Eight

“Elle, wait a minute!”

“Fuck off, you asshole!” Elle stormed down a hall blindly, ignoring the screams of the woman from The Seven Circles threatening to “sue her ass.” The beautiful bitch could do whatever she wanted—legally and with fucking *Harry*.

“Elle, please! Give me a chance to explain!”

She whirled. “Explain what? How you fucked me for shits and giggles in a strip club? How you’re a stripper? Or is it a whore?”

He skidded to a halt, a stricken look on his face. “No!”

“No to which part, Eddie? Or should I call you Harry?”

“No!” He swiped a hand over his forehead. “Absolutely not!”

“Well, I must say, your repertoire has vastly decreased.”

“Shit, Elle, I hate that name. I’m not a stripper. I am definitely not a whore, thank you very much—”

“Oh, no? Thank you, then, for playing one when I needed a warm body last week.” She struggled to hold back the tears burning at the back of her throat. Once again, Eddie Harrington was the witness to her humiliation. At least this time, she knew who he was.

“Stop it, Elle.” He grabbed her shoulders and shook her. “*You* asked *me* to have sex with you. It was not my idea.”

She laughed, unable to contain a hysterical note. “Of course. So sorry for forcing you to do something so heinous. My apologies. Now please leave me alone.”

“No.”

“What?” Elle stared at his desperate face, incredulous. “You’ve humiliated me. You’ve left me. God knows what you’ve told your friends about me. Did you have a good laugh at my expense? I hope so, because it’s the last one. Can’t you just let me be now?”

“No, I can’t.”

“Why, for God’s sake?”

“Because I love you.”

Elle stopped struggling in his grasp. His palms began to gently stroke her arms, as though attempting to heat her skin. Warmth blossomed in her stomach and spread through her limbs.

“What?”

“I’m in love with you.” He tipped her chin up with one hand and brushed her lower lip with his thumb. “I’ve been in love with you forever now. Don’t you remember, I told you last week that I’ve wanted to touch you for so long?”

“If you love me, why are you working in a strip club?”

He thumbed away a tear. “I borrowed some money from Lucinda. I knew her in high school, and she knew how much I wanted to escape my dad. When I needed money for grad school, since I wouldn’t take his, she offered to loan me everything. But when I tried to pay her back, she demanded I work at the bar. She refused any other payment, and when I threatened her, she said she’d sue me for breach of contract.

“At first, it wasn’t so bad, and since no one sees our faces, there was no danger of being discovered and losing my post at the University. But I got tired of working there, and she tightened the reins. Threatened to go to the administration if I quit. And then you showed up for a bachelorette party, and your sister ordered some entertainment for you.”

“So you thought it would be entertaining to seduce me?” Elle said, shoving at him.

He let her go and she stepped back, running into the wall. Her breath caught as she realized he’d made her come while standing against a wall, and her pussy, already wet from dancing with him, throbbed with arousal.

“You knew I didn’t know who you were.”

“I meant to escort you out, sweetheart, remember?” He leaned on the wall, bracketing her body with his arms. Heart thudding in her chest, she closed her eyes. “But I couldn’t refuse your demand, not when I needed you so badly. You wanted me then. Do you want me now?”

“Yes... NO!” She wiped a hand over her lips, her chest heaving. “How could I? I don’t trust you.”

“Yes, you do, baby,” Eddie whispered against her ear. Shivers of pleasure shook her as she fought to remain standing. She stumbled against him as the wall behind her moved. His arms closed around her waist as he backed her into an empty ballroom. “You know me. I love you.

I'm going to make you love me, too."

"No..." she whimpered as he pressed her to the wall, the faint strains of Meg's first dance song coming through the cracks in the removable divider. "You're only using me..."

"Never," he breathed into her ear, gently taking the lobe into his mouth, and lowered the zipper at the back of her dress. "You've caught me good, Miss Elle. That name suits you so much better than Eleanor, by the way."

"Mmm... Oh God!" He thrust his groin gently into the vee of her thighs, and her pussy clenched with need. "Eddie—God, I—"

"Sshhh, don't say anything." The tip of his tongue rasped along the side of her neck, and down into her cleavage. With a quiet swish, the straps of her gown fell to her elbows, exposing her bra.

"God, Elle, another lace strapless? You're going to kill me with your lingerie," he groaned just before he slipped a hand between the lace and her skin, brushing his thumb over her hardened peak. Swirls of giddy sensation left her gasping for breath when he pulled her breast free and twirled his tongue over her areola. "Who knew you had such sexy undies?"

"Who knew—you—went—commando?" she panted, clutching his head to keep him feasting at her nipple.

His hands wandered lower, gathering silk as they went, until he had slipped her gown over her hips and it fluttered to the floor.

"Holy shit," he muttered, staring at the white lace merry widow she wore, a dumbfounded expression on his face.

"I have sexy undies, remember?"

Eddie's cock throbbed in his pants, his gaze glued to the lace covering her curves. She even had the clip-on stockings, so that there was a tantalizingly bare strip of thigh available for his gaze. God, she was a sexy woman, and if he was smart, he'd keep her for the rest of his life.

"Are you going to stare at me, or are you going to fuck me?"

His eyes shot back up to meet her amused expression. "I never thought I'd see the day smooth-player Eddie Harrington couldn't speak."

"Oh, I can speak, baby, but I think you want me to do a hell of a lot more than that," he growled, stripping off his jacket, tie, and cummerbund, then reaching into his back pocket for his

wallet. After withdrawing the condom he'd slipped in there earlier today, on the off chance that he'd be able to coax Elle into a rendezvous, he dropped the wallet onto the pile of their clothes.

Holding her gaze, he slipped a hand between her thighs, unsurprised to find her dripping with moisture through the thin lace covering her mound. "Excited, are we, Dr. McLaren?"

She plucked the condom out of his numb fingers as she lowered her gaze to his groin. "I do believe we are, Dr. Harrington." With a smug smile, she reached for his fly. "But I am willing to do a little interpretation of the literature if you wish."

He raised a brow. "I do indeed—Jesus," he gasped as she closed a fist around his aching cock. "I love it when you do that."

"And I love it when you're inside me," she murmured against his lips as they glued themselves to hers.

Fingers shaking, she tore open the package and rolled the condom over his throbbing length. He yanked the thin silk of her thong, tearing it, then wrapped one of her legs around his waist as he crowded her against the wall. "Are you ready for me, baby? I'm going to take you so deep."

"Hard and fast and deep, Eddie."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

They gasped in tandem as he thrust home, bracing her with his arm at her waist and the other holding her leg around his hips. He withdrew, then lunged forward, burying his length inside her, again and again, until he couldn't tell when he left off and she began. Her pussy clamped around him like her fist had, milking pleasure from him with every thrust, his knees trembling with the effort. Her heel dug into his ass, urging him faster and faster, refusing to let him slow. Tension built in the base of his spine, gathering heat in his balls, driving his frantic lunges to a higher level, her gasps and moans ringing in his ears.

"Oh God, Eddie—oh God, I can't—"

Ripples waves of pleasure swamped him as her sheath contracted around him. She screamed into his mouth, which he'd pressed to hers to smother the sounds of her ecstasy. His own groan of satisfaction ripped through his chest and he came.

They leaned on the wall in exhaustion, their shuddering pants echoing in his ears, as Eddie waited for his heartbeat to return to normal.

“Sweet Jesus,” Elle muttered, her mouth against the curve of his shoulder.

“You said it.” He heard her chuckle and lowered them to the floor, careful to keep her resting on him so she wouldn’t be on the carpet.

Minutes passed as they lay there, thoughts of her reaction consuming him. Would she hate him now? Was it too much to hope she’d allow him to court her? Recite some poetry—Byron, maybe, every woman loved Byron—send her flowers, take her out to dinner, make wild love in a bed for once?

“All right,” she murmured, halting the list of gallantries he would perform to win her.

“What?” he asked cautiously.

“I love you, too, and if you quit working at that bar, I’ll hit you.”

“What!”

She leaned up over him and grinned. “Your boss might hate me, but that mask is sexy.”

Epilogue

Eleanor McLaren Harrington was in Hell.

And she looked gorgeous. With her hair floating down her back and a halter top cupping her magnificent breasts, she danced up a storm in the middle of the gyrating crowd on the dance floor. Eddie shook his head and hid a smile as he watched his wife. When she put aside her professorial dignity, she could party like a rock star.

“Hey, sexy, could we get a couple of Kamikazes?”

He glanced over to see two co-eds leaning over the bar, their breasts spilling out of the low-cut shirts they wore. “Sure.”

Reaching without thought for the ingredients and mixer for the shots, his gaze drifted back to where Elle had been. Three large guys now stood around the same spot. Eddie frowned.

“While you’re at it, you think you could dance for us?”

The question pulled his attention back to the girls who’d ordered the drinks he was making. “Sorry, ladies, I don’t dance for payment.”

They pouted prettily, the same pout the freshman girls in his English 101 gave him when they wanted a higher grade. “For free, then?”

“I don’t think so, sweetie,” Elle cut in, emerging from between a couple of tall, muscle heads to saunter up to the bar. “Anyone who tries to take him from me gets punched.”

“Yeah, right,” the shorter one sneered.

“I wouldn’t doubt her, ladies. She packs one hell of a jab.” Eddie laughed at their crestfallen faces. “Just ask Luce.”

He pointed to where his boss stood by the DJ booth, a plaster cast still in place over the nose she’d had three surgeries to fix after Elle broke it at Jason’s wedding last year. She’d threatened to sue, but when Eddie pointed out that he did a better job of managing the bar than she ever had, she relented. As long as Elle didn’t come near her, Luce didn’t care where his wife partied.

“Oh shit,” the tall one mumbled. “Know anyone else who’ll dance for us?”

“I will,” Elle volunteered, waiting to laugh until after they fled with their shots.

“Bullshit, baby.” Eddie leaned across the bar to grab her face with his hands. “You only dance for me, got it?”

Elle smiled her sexy grin, the one that said she couldn’t wait to get him alone in Room Three, before pressing her mouth to his. “I got it.”

About the Author

Cara Hart loves books, so much so that she decided to give writing one a shot. Now she's a fully fledged member of RAA – Romance Addicts Anonymous. When she's not writing, she's taking classes so she can pursue an advanced degree in English or working at her day job at her local university. Her favorite activity is sipping Earl Grey while reading a great book. Cara is a member of *Romance Writers of America*, *Capital Region RWA*, and *Hearts Through History RWA* Chapters. She lives in New York City.

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Eddie Harrington has never lacked for partners in his pleasure games. But for some reason, Eleanor is the one woman he can't get out of his head. She is definitely not the type he usually pursues. Then he sees her at a bar, looking like his wildest fantasy. And one night with her is not going to be enough. The man who never commits just might have met his match—until a mistake from his past forces her to choose between trusting him or walking away.

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