

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*



SEXPLORATIONS

Touch Me
SAHARA KELLY

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Touch Me

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Edited by Sue-Ellen Gower

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TOUCH ME

Sahara Kelly

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BMW: Bayerische Motoren Werke Aktiengesellschaft Corporation

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Chapter One

"*Sunstone*. Nice name for a store." Delilah Jackson wandered through rainbows. "Does it mean anything?"

Eden Morell nodded. "It's about the warmth of sunshine and the rock that's the foundation of my life right now." She paused. "*Sunrock* sounded too Neolithic."

"Or too Fred Flintstone." Fenella Whitfield turned an amethyst geode over in her hand, watching purple fire dart from its center.

Laughter rang out, surprising Eden yet again. She was truly blessed to have met these incredible people, four writers of romance novels, four soul mates, four women who shared her love of the written word albeit in different ways and styles.

Dee's western romances were hotter than the desert sun, while Dini's sci-fi adventures were kick-ass exciting. Fenny's murder mysteries were definitely *can't-put-it-down* type novels and Stella's legal thrillers snapped sharply at the shins of those who held the law in their hands.

And then there was the strong sexual component, something that could easily be described as erotic, but wrapped as it was within strong tales with vibrant characters? No. It was simply part and parcel of the passion developing throughout their books.

As she'd done more than a few times since she'd met them, Eden asked herself if that's what was missing from her stories. And whether she had the skill to put it in.

The rainbows of light from the many crystals hanging in Sunstone's windows danced over Dini's short blonde hair, turning her into a magically petite creature. Her throaty chuckle of glee when she found a carved dragon spitting fire at a chained maiden didn't exactly fit the delicate image she presented, but that was Dini.

Eden was growing to love them all.

Dee—bold and courageous, unafraid to speak her mind but the first to hug when a hug was needed. Fenny—ladylike and elegant, yet possessed of a strongly protective nature when it came to her friends. And the dirtiest sense of humor Eden had ever run into. Dini? Well, Dini was unique. A little crazy, a little naughty and totally secure in her own individuality. She was almost exactly like her successful comic strip creation, Steampunk Suzie. Uninhibited, adventurous and so much fun to be around. Now that she had found herself a man—a cop no less—Dini’s smile would turn surprisingly gentle at times. Eden envied her that.

And Stella—she and Eden were the newbies in this elite group, but never made to feel that way. Stella was sharp, edgy, brilliant and outspoken. And yet even she had found a new road that allowed her to open up and reveal some unexpected facets of her personality.

There was *something*, mused Eden as she watched them, some bond that they’d forged, some sisterhood thing that might have originated in their writing but had surpassed it with their friendship.

It was a gift. And not one to be taken lightly. She sighed.

“What’s up, honey?” Fenny was leaning on the counter.

“Nothing.” Eden smiled. “I’m just contemplating how fortunate I am to know you all.”

Dee snorted. “You haven’t seen Fenny on a tear yet. Give her a few shots of tequila and the next thing you know she’s declared war on the Lesser Antilles.”

“And she’s going to let me do the bombing.” Dini nodded enthusiastically.

“What’s wrong with the Lesser Antilles?”

“Nothing at all.” Fenny shrugged. “It was just easier to say after that damn tequila than...um...Lichtenstein.”

“But I can still do the bombing, right?” Dini looked like a bloodthirsty elf.

Dee giggled. "Ignore her, Eden. Jonas took her out to the Bomb Squad's practice range or whatever they call it. She's been on cloud nine ever since."

"Yes, *yes*—" Dini bounced excitedly. "It was *wonderful*, Eden. They were all so nice to me. They let me see all the different kinds of bombs they defuse. They've got a mass of signatures in their database and one nice man bought me coffee and told me everything I ever needed to know about C4 and Semtex. You should see my notes. I'm set for at least four more novels."

Eden blinked. "Well. Wow. That must have been something, Dini."

"And you know what was the kicker? They want to make Suzie their *mascot*. Isn't that fabulous?" Dini folded her hands to her chest and sighed with much fluttering of eyelashes.

"You wanton wench." Dee grinned wickedly. "You seduced them all, didn't you? A smile here? A touch of the hand there?"

"Oh no." Dini assumed an innocently surprised look. "Me? Of course not. Jonas was right beside me the whole time. He'll tell you." Her lips quirked. "If the nice men wanted to talk a little about Suzie and get a few autographs—and a picture or two—well, it was a way for me to say thank you."

"Of course, dear." Fenny patted her shoulder maternally. "We all know how polite and kind you are." She slanted a glance down at Dini. "And that you probably left 'em drooling, hard as nails and ready to go jerk off behind a bunker."

Dini giggled wickedly. "I do hope so."

Dee shook her head. "See? A wench if ever there was one."

Dini curtsied. "Thank you." She tapped a finger on her lips. "And you know, I was thinking...maybe I'll get some stickers made for those really boring helmets those guys wear. Suzie in one of their protective suits—unzipped of course, gotta have some cleavage showing—" She turned to Stella. "I can do that, right?"

Stella, who was delightedly shaking a snow globe with a baby dragon coiled on top of it, nodded. "Sure can, hon. You've got copyright to Suzie. I told you that."

"Just checking." Dini nodded her thanks.

"Stella, how's your sister? Calliope?" Eden noted Stella's interest in the little dragon.

Stella rolled her eyes. "The same. I swear if I could ever get that girl to pay attention to herself she'd find a nice man and have herself some fun!"

Dini laughed. "I could introduce her to some really neat demolition experts."

"Nice idea." Fenny wandered around. "Eden, I have to say you've created a really super place here."

"Oh. Er, thanks Fenny." Eden blushed.

"No, I'm serious." She stopped in front of a display of crystals. "Sometimes these kinds of stores—well, you walk in and immediately wish you'd had tofu burgers for lunch, or that you knew which planet was in your ascendant and had straightened your chakra that morning. Know what I mean?"

"Or you get looked at like they're assessing your aura and it's failing dismally," Dee chimed in. "For those of us with little or no knowledge of that stuff, it can be intimidating." She snickered. "I'm not the sort of person to worry whether these pants make my *chi* look fat."

"Don't get any of those vibes here, Eden. That's what I'm saying." Fenny returned to the counter and watched as Eden continued mixing and measuring various compounds.

"I'm so glad." She tipped some herbs into a little muslin bag, sealed it, then wrapped it in sparkly tissue. "I wanted a *touch me* store. Yes, there's a lot of glass and I'd get more than a bit pissed off if someone threw a stone through the window, but these things—they're mostly what nature's created. They're meant to be touched, felt, sniffed—appreciated, I guess."

"Like that?" Fenny nodded at the growing pile of tiny packages. "Ground bat gizzards?"

"Of course." Eden chuckled. "*Not*. They're fragrance sachets. Herbs for relaxation to put under your pillow. Herbs for stimulation—"

"To put under your mattress?" Stella's mouth curved into a wide grin.

Eden blushed. "Er, well I recommend you put 'em near your workstation. I have others for *that* kind of stimulation."

"You *do*?" The chorus was nearly unanimous.

Eden rolled her eyes. "Guys, they're *herbs*. They give off a scent that some people find pleasant. They do not—I repeat—do *not* do a damn thing for your sex life. You do that, not something that smells pretty."

"Shit." Stella looked disappointed.

"Oh, like *your* sex life needs any help." Dee flashed a wicked grin at Stella.

"You can talk, baby." Stella stuck out her tongue at Dee.

"*Girls*." Fenny shook her head at them. "Behave or you won't get cookies at recess."

"Since we've gotten around to the topic of sex..." Eden interrupted the incipient uproar with a quiet diversionary comment.

"As we always do," grinned Fenny.

Eden took a breath. "I have a question."

Dini unstopped a bottle and sniffed. "Mmm. Nice. I like." She put the stopper back and prowled on. "Ask away, Eden. I recommend inserting tab A into slot B, of course, and repeating as necessary. For starters anyway."

Eden rolled her eyes. "That wasn't my question, Dini, but thanks for the tip. I'll make a note."

"What was your question?" Dee cocked her head interestedly.

Eden looked at them, four women, so different yet sharing so many experiences common to everyone who'd ever hooked a bra or snagged a hole in a pair of pantyhose. If she couldn't ask *them*, who could she ask?

"How hard is it to *write* sex?"

* * * * *

Eden stretched as the chimes on her door rang and the last of her customers left. It had been a long day even though it had started on the right note with a surprise visit from her friends.

She'd gotten some useful information too.

"It's just writing what *you* feel when you have sex, only in the words of your characters, Eden." Fenny had answered her more succinctly than the others and that was the phrase that Eden had been chewing over while she worked.

"Go find yourself a nice guy, doll." Dee had thrown in her two cents. "Rumple the sheets for a while. Let loose. Then shoo him out and write it all down."

Eden chuckled to herself as she tidied the counter and automatically put away the fragrance essence bottles in their correct places. *If only they knew.*

There was a flaw in the whole thing, she realized. She didn't really *enjoy* sex. She loved the cuddling and the contact and the kissing—but after that? It didn't do much for her. If she was lucky and the planets were aligned, she might—*might*—have an orgasm.

But most of the time? *Meh.*

Which was why she'd avoided adding much heat to her medical-themed romances. They sold well, and her technical knowledge was invaluable. Not every romance had to include erotic episodes, thank God.

A challenging medical case, a solid back story and some interesting characters, a few passionate kisses...she was good to go. But of late, her editor had urged her to up the heat level, get those interesting characters naked and give her readers a little more

than mystery amongst the IV tubes and heart monitors. *Get with the times*, she was told. *It's about sex, Eden.*

Trouble was, Eden wasn't about the sex.

And that was something she hadn't had the nerve to share with the girls. They'd left as more customers arrived, Dee with a hug and a kiss, Dini with a handful of candles. Fenny had grinned and told her not to forget their wine evening next week and Stella had blown her a kiss on the way out after a last longing look at the snowglobe with the baby dragon on it.

Eden was going to put him aside. Stella, she knew, was waiting for word on her latest submission. When she got the thumbs up, Eden would give it to her as a little souvenir. Friends did stuff like that for friends.

Maybe over the wine next week, she could pick their brains some more. About sex. Eden snorted to herself and grabbed a dust cloth, heading over to the window display. There was an hour or so until she closed, so she might as well use the time taking care of some chores.

With her three years of medical school and many more spent absorbing the intricacies of holistic medicine, it was utterly surprising that she was still so ignorant about the wonders of sexual intercourse.

She knew the nuts and bolts. She could name the organs involved, the autonomic reflexes that caused orgasmic spasms and probably still pick out the various areas of the cerebral cortex where activity diminished during the sexual arousal process. That was medicine.

She might have turned her back on it long ago, but it lingered nevertheless.

However, she still considered herself a bit of a failure in the groaning-screaming-eye-rolling department. She wasn't frigid—her vibrator worked just fine. But that was oddly clinical, impersonal and more like a pleasantly satiating workout than a sexual experience. The one time she'd tried it with candles and a Barry White CD, she'd felt like an idiot and spent most of her private masturbation moments worrying she'd fall

asleep and the house would burn down while Barry urged her to “get it on”. It hadn’t been the best self-induced orgasm in the world either.

The setting sun turned her crystals to fire as she absently whisked off dust particles and left them gleaming. Without realizing it, Eden’s thoughts turned to her brief marriage. Eddie Morell had been the man of her dreams, or so she’d thought. Star of the University of Florida football team, he’d swept her off her feet and into a whirlwind affair.

Had she enjoyed sex then? Well, sort of. It was Eddie. She’d been passionately in love with him and that made it all wonderful. Didn’t it?

Eden sighed. Looking back on it now, she acknowledged that it hadn’t been fireworks in bed with Eddie either. It was the love she felt for him that put the shine on the sex. The horniest she’d ever felt was when she’d been pregnant. And of course, in the natural fucked-up way of things, Eddie hadn’t wanted to touch her after she started showing.

Closing her eyes, Eden pushed away the memories that clawed at her heart. She’d never fully reclaim that piece of her that died with tiny Mattie. Nor would she ever forgive Eddie for walking away when she was so desperately in need of comfort.

She sighed. It was over, many years had passed and she’d moved on. Only now and again did she experience a few moments when grief pushed past her carefully erected barriers. She’d learned to live with it as too many other mothers did.

The medical profession, one she’d chosen for her own life’s path, had failed Mattie. So she’d decided then and there, it wasn’t for her. Thank God she’d stumbled into the world of holistic health.

Eden’s world had changed, unexpectedly and tragically, but she’d come to terms with it, deciding that if she couldn’t cure people with technology and pharmaceuticals, perhaps she could help them achieve good health in other ways.

And sex? She could take it or leave it. She’d dated a little, but the weight she’d put on since college left her in doubt when it came to her own sex appeal. Added to her

less-than-enthusiastic opinion about the whole thing—well, she knew it wasn't surprising she hesitated to start writing hot sex into her novels.

"So, Eden. How the hell do you write hot sex when you have no frickin' clue *what that is?*" She posed the question to her reflection in a round Victorian gazing ball.

Her store sparkled and glittered in the deep reds and yellows of the sunset. Her crystals glowed, her jars of herbs and bottles of essences shone brilliantly. Flashes of light careened from glass to prism, creating a visual spectrum of beauty that was breathtaking.

But not a single thing answered Eden's question.

And then she turned as she heard a loud throaty growl in the street outside the bay window of her store.

It was a motorcycle—slowing down—and coming to a rumbling halt right in front of Sunstone.

Chapter Two

Eden found she was holding her breath as the man parked his bike, swung a long leg over the saddle and started undoing his helmet. *Ohmigod*. He was coming into Sunstone. Shit. What the hell could a biker want in *her* place? A crystal suncatcher for his handlebars?

As he pulled off the helmet, a tumble of black hair fell loose, down to his shoulders, and Eden watched in amazement as he eyed her store, tucked the silver-steel bullet headgear under one arm and strode toward her door. She also couldn't help but notice blood on side of his face.

The chimes tinkled, clanged and then gave up as he swung himself inside, looked around, blinked at the light and then spied Eden.

"Hi."

She swallowed. "Hello." He was tall, very tall, his presence overwhelmingly masculine in the rather delicate surroundings. Eden remembered her manners. "Can I help you with anything?"

He moved to the counter as she crossed the store and stepped behind it, feeling a mite more protected by the granite surface even though he'd dropped his helmet down on it with a solid thunk. "I hope so." He pointed to his cheek. "I need something for this, and your sign says healing, among the other stuff."

Eden's medical training leaped to the fore as she lapsed into trauma mode and reached out to move his chin so she could see the damage more clearly. She winced. "Ouch. This must've hurt. Dueling scar?"

Absently she moved his head this way and that, focused on the torn skin and the traces of dried blood.

"Yeah." He chuckled. "The gravel won."

"Not the Harley?" She reached beneath the counter for cotton and a bottle of water. Dampening the cotton, Eden carefully blotted up the debris and cleaned the scratch.

"That, dear girl, is *not* a Harley. It's a BMW touring bike, thank you very much."

"Okay. Whatever. Hold still."

Completely unimpressed, Eden dabbed away the last of the smears and narrowed her eyes in concentration. "Any deeper and this would've needed a stitch or two."

"I don't like stitches."

"Don't be a baby." Eden tossed away the soiled cotton and turned to rummage in one of the storage drawers. She had a tube of organic balm that would help heal and disinfect the wound at the same time. "I thought bikers were supposed to shrug something like this off as a mere scratch."

He squirmed as Eden began to dab the balm onto his face. "For the record, I'm not a *biker* in your sense of the word." He jumped. "Shoot, this stuff stings. And it doesn't exactly smell great either. What the hell is it?"

"Wheatgrass." Unconcernedly, Eden dabbed more of it, tracing down the firm cheek, ignoring the hint of stubble.

"Lovely. Now I have to go eat a ton of tofu to help it work, right?" His tone was wry.

"Jumping to conclusions here."

"And you haven't? You see my helmet, my jacket, my bike and automatically turn me into an Easy Rider." He tried to grin. "Ouch."

"Sorry. My mistake. What *do* they call you motorcycle riders these days?" If he was going to get cute with her, then damn it. She'd get cute back.

"Most often they call me Sean. Sean Patrick Rafferty."

"That would be the Polish Raffertys, I'm assuming."

"I see our reputation precedes us."

"But of course." Eden pulled away and put the cap back on the tube. "Here. On the house."

Sean blinked. "It feels better already. Thanks."

"You're welcome."

He sighed. "Wanna start over?"

Eden was helpless against the winsome puppy-eyed look he was throwing her way and couldn't help but laugh.

"I'm Sean Rafferty. Nice to meet you. I'm teaching a summer course at the University. High Energy Physics. I ride a BMW K1200 touring bike, not a hog, and I got this cut from a piece of gravel that flew up from a truck wheel. I'm a baby about pain and stitches and my mother always insisted that nature has some of the best cures around which is why I ended up here. She also told me not to drink to excess, not to do drugs and find myself a nice girl." He paused for breath. "Are you a nice girl?"

He held up his hand as Eden opened her mouth to answer. "Before you say a thing, I just want you to know I *was* wearing my helmet—I'd just flipped up the visor to take a drink of water." He shrugged. "Hazards of the road, I guess. So..." He leaned on the counter and gazed thoughtfully at Eden. "Back to my question. Are you a nice girl?"

"No. I dismember men who ride motorcycles and then I grind them up into paste. I use them for incantations and spells against people who take the best parking places at the mall over the holidays. Sometimes I need a dash of eye of newt to make it all work properly."

"God. Are you a wacky Wiccan?"

"What?"

Sean stifled a chuckle. "This is a vaudeville routine, isn't it?"

"I don't know. I think I've lost the thread of the conversation." Eden was trying desperately to follow along. "*Wacky Wiccan?*"

"You know." Sean gestured with long, well-formed fingers. "The kind of woman who insists her couch be facing the rising sun, talks to an aspidistra, won't wear anything that isn't natural and insists you bathe twice a day unless it's a full moon, in which case running around outside naked is apparently recommended. Must be hell come December."

Eden lifted one eyebrow. "I think they refer to it as *sky clad*."

"Hmm." Sean's gaze roamed over Eden's shoulders, coming to rest on her cleavage. "You ever run around naked? Excuse me, *sky clad*?"

She bit back a laugh. "My mother told me not to answer personal questions from strange men riding motorcycles. Especially BMWs."

"Good." He reached out and brushed a lock of hair casually away from her face. "We both listen to our mothers. Have dinner with me?"

"What?"

"You're repeating yourself."

"Did you just invite me to dinner?"

"Yes. Dinner. You know...food people eat at the end of the day when they get hungry. Oh—one other thing. What's your name?"

"What?"

"I have to say you repeat yourself a lot, don't you? I usually like to find out the names of the people I ask out to dinner. It makes ordering that much easier."

Eden sucked in air. "Mister Rafferty. Anyone ever tell you you're certifiably *nuts*?"

Sean grinned, white teeth flashing, a very masculine look that made Eden realize how damned handsome he was. "All the time. Especially my mother. But she loves me anyway. Want me to call her? She'll tell you I'm crazy but harmless. And it's Doctor or Professor Rafferty actually, but I'll settle for Sean. Especially if you're in my arms when you say it...maybe you could whisper it slowly...I wouldn't mind if you repeated it either..."

Eden found herself sputtering and coloring under the caressing weight of his gaze. Damn it, she was reacting to him like a starving woman in front of a delicatessen. He was starting to make her mouth water. "You work fast, don't you? Ever give a woman time to catch her breath, for God's sake?"

"If I think they're going to say no, then absolutely not." He straightened and picked up his helmet. "Look, I'm a down-to-earth, ordinary guy who'd enjoy your company at dinner. If you don't mind the stinky cream on my face. Nothing fancy, just a fun meal. No strings, okay?"

Eden lifted one eyebrow. "No strings? Then what was all that stuff about whispering your name while I'm in your arms?"

"Guess you'll have to have dinner with me and find out."

Eden opened her mouth to refuse but he was halfway out the door.

"I'll pick you up here at seven. My *other* bike's got four wheels and doors and everything." He winked. "It's a real car." The wind chimes rang as he opened the door and strode through.

Eden dragged herself together and dashed out from behind the counter. She swung the door wide, fully intending to yell after him and tell Mister-slash-Professor Rafferty in no uncertain terms she had *no* intention of having dinner with him.

But when she opened her mouth something else came out. "I'm not a wacky Wiccan, you dolt. And my name's Eden."

Sean, already muffled by his helmet, swung himself onto his bike, started it up and as it lowered off its stand, he waved at her and gave her a thumbs-up sign.

Weakly, Eden waved back as the smooth roar deepened and he was gone.

Oh Lord. What the fuck have I gone and done?

* * * * *

Professor Sean Rafferty came to the conclusion that he finally knew what a deuterium nucleus felt like after being whipped around a particle accelerator. He was a

bit dizzy, short of breath and that buzzing in his ears was probably a stray lepton trying to get out.

One look into a pair of sherry brown eyes—and he was cooked. Shattered into his constituent matter, a trembling mass of quarks and gluons, Sean leaned his head on his hand and made himself face the terrible truth.

He was a goner.

It wasn't a terribly scientific description of his current resting state, but by God it described it dead-on.

Glancing around the apartment, Sean sighed. It was an unholy mess and he shuddered at the thought of bringing anyone here, let alone Eden Morell. The mere fact he was thinking along those lines told him more than all the hours of self-examination he could have wallowed in. He *wanted* her. Fiercely, savagely, burningly and all those adjectives beloved of dramatic writers.

In two simple words, he lusted. And it scared the crap out of him since he wasn't given to the whole "bolt of lightning" scenario. Or he hadn't been up to now.

This was his sabbatical year, a break from his teaching at the University of Chicago. He'd jumped at the chance to spend his summer in Boston, where so much exciting physics was going on. He'd also jumped at the chance to end his relationship with Jeanine. They'd been together two years, which was a year too long for both of them.

But physicists were a lazy lot and very insular. She'd been a Research Associate and their affair had developed from late nights on an experiment, shared data and eventually a shared bed. Enthusiastic discussions about the theories of matter didn't really make for a solid romantic affair and after the heat had passed, that was pretty much all there was left.

Jeanine's chance to head to CERN in Switzerland had come at the same time as Sean's sabbatical approval. They'd hugged, kissed, wished each other well and parted amicably. Too amicably. It was the final line of an equation that should have been more complex if it was to succeed.

It hadn't. No harm done.

But Eden? All thoughts of equations had vaporized in Sean's brain when she'd smiled at him and touched his face. Absently his hand drifted to the scratch, healing nicely under that yucky cream. He hadn't had to ask if she was married—there was a sign saying "Ms." Eden Morell on her counter, but clearly she'd forgotten about it. She'd never have responded with that delicate hint of color in her cheeks if there'd been a Mr. Morell in her life.

He glanced at the clock. Still an hour before he had to head out and see her again. He knew where he'd take her—a tiny little restaurant that had the best Italian food on the planet. He hoped she'd like it, but she hadn't struck him as the type to demand dinner at the Ritz.

She'd been practical, charming, funny and warm. She had the kind of body that drove Sean nuts—ample curves, soft skin and a shape he couldn't wait to hold against his chest. He loved the ripe fullness of feminine breasts, the sloping dips and hills of a well-rounded ass. No slender-hipped supermodels for him, thank you. He wanted to know he was balls-deep into a *woman*, not an asexual, pouty-lipped clotheshorse who'd thrown up everything she'd eaten since puberty. He wanted a cushion for his pushin' as the saying went. He wanted softness, heat and plenty of flesh to hold onto.

His cock stiffened at the thought of *pushin'* into Eden. Christ. He was worse than some of his first-year grad students on the prowl for pussy. He rubbed his hand over his face and winced, then realized he was going to have to shave very carefully around the damn scratch. Although he knew he wasn't going to take Ms. Morell to bed tonight.

He was simply going to start the process that would get her there. He had time. And a strong feeling she'd succumb to seduction rather than the "let's get the check, go back to my place and fuck" strategy.

Heading into the shower, Sean grinned. Yes, physicists were a breed apart. But they did observe carefully, and he'd spent many hours doing just that—observing. Long nights manning experimental workstations allowed him time to watch his fellow

human beings as well as readouts. And he'd discovered a sort of intuition, a strong ability to gauge people based on things like body language, expressions and the way they spoke or answered questions. It had probably stemmed from his college minor in anthropology.

Physics had always been his first love, but a fascination with his fellow humans came in a close second.

He had a feeling it was going to be extremely helpful when it came to seducing one Eden Morell. If ever there was a woman who needed seducing, it was her. And as the water drummed over his body, Sean realized he was *really* looking forward to getting started.

His cock twitched, hardened and agreed, reminding him that although he wasn't heading out to get laid, there was still a very active sex drive throbbing between his legs. And the mere *thought* of Eden was enough to stimulate that natural process which resulted in a fully developed boner.

It had been some time since Professor Sean Rafferty, Ph.D., had jerked off in the shower. But sometimes, life could be reduced to the simplest of equations. In this case, it was hand plus cock, plus friction times constrictive pressure, equals orgasm.

Einstein would have been proud.

Chapter Three

"So how do you feel about sex?"

Eden nearly spewed her mouthful of wine across the table at Sean's unexpected question. "*What?*"

"In romance novels." His smile was pure innocence. "What did you think I meant?"

Eden cleared her throat. "It has its place." She wiped her lips with her napkin and leaned back in her chair. "As long as it furthers the development of a meaningful relationship and doesn't overwhelm the actual storyline...I'm okay with it."

Yes, her cheeks might feel a bit flushed, but she refused to let his question unsettle her. She was unsettled enough by his mere presence. And the second glass of wine she'd let him talk her into, over her *one-glass-is-my-limit* objections.

He'd also talked her into the fettuccini Alfredo, which had been superlative, a few calamari on the side—she'd never tried them—and an almost finished portion of tiramisu now rested between her plate and Sean's, since they'd agreed to split it.

Eden was beginning to understand that Sean Rafferty was a force to be reckoned with once he got an idea fixed in his head.

Right now, that force was watching her, his eyes a fascinating blend of green and little gold sparkly bits. To call them hazel was doing them an injustice, just as calling him handsome didn't come anywhere near to covering the masculine vibes she was picking up from him across the table.

"A very literary answer."

Eden had to sort through her scattered thoughts to pick up the threads of the conversation. "Thank you."

“And nicely phrased, although a bit skimpy when it comes to your personal opinion.”

She tilted her head to one side. “How so?”

Sean pushed the remains of his meal out of the way, leaned over and picked up her hand, toying with her fingers. “Here we have the hand of a woman who creates romance. She owns a store that could easily be described as a little magical grotto in Boston. Putting on my deerstalker hat for a minute, I’d deduce that she still has a belief in romance and that magic still exists. Especially between a man and a woman. Hence the writing.”

“Elementary, dear Holmes.”

“Tsk, tsk. That was *elementary, dear Watson*.”

“Sue me.”

“Whatever.” Sean waved his free hand dismissively. “Point is, I’m not sure why you’re here with me tonight and not already spoken for. Not hounded by hordes of lusty males, slaving at the thought of being near you.”

Eden barely held back an inelegant snort. “Yeah. Right.”

“I’m serious.”

“Me too.” Eden sighed. “After my divorce – well, potential dates don’t always want to deal with second-hand goods. And those that did? They figured I was ripe and ready for a quick roll in the hay.” She shrugged. “I wasn’t. Odd as it may seem, women do quite nicely without sex. We don’t turn into drooling nymphos if we have to actually go a few years without doing the nasty.”

Sean swallowed. “A few *years*?”

“Mmm hmm.” She casually sipped her wine. Damn, it was tasty stuff and definitely having an effect on her knees. Or maybe it was Sean. Either way, Eden was more relaxed than she’d been with a man in – well, a few years.

"Good God, woman." Sean was still staring at her with an interesting mix of astonishment and horror. "Years?"

"Don't be a Neanderthal. It doesn't go with the degree." Eden watched him over the rim of her glass. "Besides, it's only sex." She shrugged dismissively.

Sean tightened his grip on her hand, surprising her, since she'd almost forgotten he was still holding it. For some reason, she'd been quite content to leave their fingers entwined. "Eden. You definitely have need of some Rafferty in your life. And in your bed."

"Sean, I appreciate the offer. Really I do." She smiled at him. "But honestly? I'm not a sexual person. I'm fine without the fuss and bother. And let's face it—" She glanced ruefully down at herself. "I'm not the sort of woman that a man looks at and thinks wickedly erotic thoughts. I'm more the cookies-and-milk type."

"Bullshit."

Eden blinked at the expletive.

Sean didn't give her time to respond. "That's utter and total bullshit, fostered by advertisers who have managed to convince most of the female population that they should aspire to look like transgender robots."

"Gosh, Sean. Why don't you tell me how you *really* feel?" She quirked an eyebrow at him.

"Don't make a joke of it, Eden. I'm serious."

And he was, realized Eden. There wasn't a trace of a smile on his face, just a tension radiating from his eyebrows to the hand that still held hers. "Okay. I'm listening."

He took a breath. "For some stupid reason, women try to make themselves look like what they see, what they're shown in every media outlet from here to Outer Mongolia. Skinny, sexless, pouty-lipped abnormalities. Do you really think men want that in a woman?"

Eden opened her mouth to answer but he forestalled her. "Haven't you ever wondered why these women starve themselves to skeletons then go spend thousands for fake breasts to replace the ones they would have had in the first place if they'd left well enough alone and let nature provide for them?"

"I—"

"All those hipbones sticking out. Ribcages on display. And what do guys drool over? Breasts. *That's* what guys want. The things that make a woman a *woman*. Hips. Curves. Soft skin over soft flesh. Thighs than can cradle a man between them and not leave bruises. An ass that feels warm and full in a man's hands, not something that's more like the carcass of a dead cow covered in skin."

"Eeeuw."

"Sorry. Bad analogy." Sean shifted his shoulders in an apologetic shrug. "But it's a subject that gets my temper going."

"No kidding."

"And when someone like you, someone who has all the *best* attributes of womankind, starts demeaning herself based on a false assumption...well, it just pisses me off."

"Oh." Eden gulped. "Sorry."

"Don't be." He squeezed her hand. "Just don't apologize for what you perceive as shortcomings. Because in my book, they're not. I look at you and I see a woman with more sex appeal than a thousand magazine ads. I see heat, passion and sweaty nights sprawled with you in rumpled sheets. I see a body I'd like to lick from top to toe and then do it again in case I missed anything. I see breasts I'd like to—"

"*Sean*. I get the point." Eden knew her cheeks were on fire.

"Do you?" He watched her intently. "I wonder. I wonder if you know how much I'd like to slide that shirt off your shoulders right here and right now. How I burn at the

thought of finding your nipples hard and ready for me to suck and lick and taste...and then I look at your lips and wonder what they'd feel like wrapped around my cock."

"Uh..." Eden's words caught in her throat. Heat poured over her, intense and almost painful as her body responded to Sean's fantasies with eagerness.

"I'm not going to do it, Eden. Not yet. But soon. There's not a damn thing to be gained by playing games here. We're adults. I'm responding to you sexually because you're everything I find desirable in a woman. Everything I love to touch, to kiss, to taste and to take to bed. Why should I hide it? I want to fuck you. I want you to fuck me. I want us both brain-dead from the best sex anyone's ever had since the Big Bang." He winced. "No pun intended."

Eden's tension eased as she laughed. "Physics creeps in there, huh?"

He laughed back. "Can't help it. But seriously? You do it for me, Eden. I love talking to you. Listening to you. Looking at you and wondering what's underneath those soft, silky clothes of yours."

His gaze drifted over her and Eden swore she could feel the caress.

"I want to taste you something fierce." He leaned close enough for Eden to catch a whiff of his scent, clean and masculine. "I want to make you come with my tongue, Eden. I want to watch you orgasm while I'm between your legs. And then I'll do it all over again. I'm passionate about doing things right and believe that experimentation is the only way to achieve perfection."

She found herself leaning toward him and watching his mouth as he lowered his voice to a whisper.

"Would you let me, I wonder? Would you let me love your pussy like that?"

"Can I get you folks anything else?"

The waitress stood at their table—a welcome interruption for Eden who was about to slide off her chair and embarrass herself by grabbing her dinner date and devouring

him right then and there. The mere *idea* that she could feel this way about a man stunned her.

Sean flashed a glance at Eden and she managed to shake her head. "No, I'm fine, thanks. That was great."

Sean agreed. "Fabulous food as always. I guess we only need the check, thanks."

Money changed hands as Eden took a last sip of her iced water, resisting the urge to upend the glass and pour it over herself. The fact that she would have welcomed the chill added to her confusion.

It had been a long time since she'd gotten turned on to the *really-damp-panties* stage by a man, let alone by just his *words*. In fact, she wasn't sure she ever had.

Her skin tingled as he took her arm and led her from the restaurant and back to the car. "Where to?" He glanced at her. "Where's home?"

"The store." She answered almost absently, her mind still dancing around some deliriously erotic images. "I live above it."

"Handy." He grinned and started the engine, letting something melodic from the radio fill the silence.

Eden didn't feel the need to speak either. The heat was there, shimmering between them. Sean had thrown down the gauntlet—honestly told her what he wanted from her. Now it was her turn to decide if she was on the same page. If she was interested in sharing some of those sexual delights.

Lost in her thoughts, she was almost surprised when he pulled up in front of Sunstone and silence fell as he turned off the car. She waited, oddly moved as he walked around and opened her door. The old-fashioned courtesy seemed to fit him, to be a part of who he was.

She slid out of the passenger seat and stood, finding herself bracketed by his arms.

"Eden, I've enjoyed tonight more than I've enjoyed anything in quite some time. I'm not seeing anyone, not in any kind of relationship. I'd like to start one with you. I

want to see you again and maybe explore some of my more decadent fantasies with you." His lips curved into a grin. "Well, maybe we'll start with the simpler ones. I don't want to shock you."

She couldn't help smiling back. "I enjoyed tonight too, Sean. It's been longer than I can remember since I had a date." She glanced up at him through her eyelashes. "I take it this *was* a date, right?"

"If you have to ask then it's definitely been too long." He leaned closer, his arms slipping comfortably around her. "But to refresh your memory, yes, this was a date. And – since that's been established – we're going to end the date traditionally."

"We are?"

"Yes." He pulled her gently against him. "Oh yes we are."

She knew the kiss was coming and wanted it. What Eden didn't know was that it would taste so sweet or start a hot shiver of excitement deep in her belly.

Sean's lips were firm and warm, brushing hers at first as he settled their bodies together. But then his shoulders shifted and Eden found herself opening her mouth, encouraging him, urging him on, moving her hands to his shoulders and eventually his neck and his head.

Greedily she sucked his tongue between her lips, sliding her own against it, thrusting into the sweet wetness, touching his teeth, anxious now to learn about his taste, how he felt as they kissed. Her hands fisted in the softness of his hair, clinging tightly of their own volition.

His body was hard, pressed to her breasts, her thighs, a warm solid mass surrounding her, encompassing her even as his mouth claimed hers and she claimed him right back. She was vaguely aware of hands stroking her, delicate but purposeful touches of Sean's fingers playing up and down her back.

She gasped into his mouth when his touch slipped beneath her blouse to the bare skin, heightening her arousal and bringing a soft moan to the back of her throat.

"Mmm." He purred the sound as his lips eased from hers. "God, you taste like sunshine and heaven. I could kiss you for hours."

"Yeah." Eden fought the urge to pant and drag his head back to hers. "Yeah."

"I want you, Eden Morell. Saying goodnight to you at this moment is going to be right up on the *toughest things I've ever done in my life* list."

His face was dappled with light from the streetlamp and she couldn't read his eyes. "You do? It is?"

"Silly questions." He grasped one of her hands and brought it between their bodies. "Touch me, Eden. Touch me and find out exactly what you've done to me."

She let him draw her fingers down, down until they rested beneath his belt. Sucking in air, Eden explored. He was harder than nails, bulging against his pants, distended and throbbing—a pulse that echoed her heartbeat pounded in his erect cock.

God, what it would be like to draw down his zipper and see for herself—

"But I'm going to say goodnight."

Eden almost moaned with disappointment.

"I'm going to let you go upstairs alone. I'll probably go home and take a cold shower. Or perhaps I'll take care of this..." He glanced down at himself. "Perhaps I'll masturbate tonight and think of you."

"Sean, I don't—"

He kissed her again, hard and quick. "It's okay. You don't have to say anything. Just promise you'll see me again. Next week. I'll call the store and give you my number." He reached for her arms and held them tightly. "Promise me, Eden."

She nodded, helpless, aroused and bewildered by what they'd come so close to sharing. "Yes. Yes, Sean. I want to see you again."

"That's my girl." His strained laugh echoed across the hood of the car as he walked around it. "Go inside. I'll wait." There was a rough chuckle. "But not much longer, Eden."

She caught his meaning. He wouldn't wait. As she unlocked her door, gave him a little wave and then closed it behind her, Eden realized she didn't want to wait either. She wanted to *know* Sean Rafferty in the biblical sense.

And she also wanted to know if there were any batteries in her old vibrator.

* * * * *

"Well, hey now." Dee's eyebrows were raised almost to her hairline. "You've really hit the jackpot, Eden." She paused. "You bitch."

There was laughter around Fenny's table where Eden had gathered with her friends. She hadn't intended to regale them with her amorous adventures, but in that uncanny way women have, the other four had taken one look at her and intuitively deduced she'd found herself a man. Or had sex. Or both. And promptly demanded information and details.

Eden groaned. "I swear to God, Dee. *I did not have sex with that man.*"

"Hmm. Back to politics. It didn't work *then*, either." Stella rolled her eyes. "Try again, Eden."

"He's a *physicist* too?" Dini bounced in her chair. "I bet he could tell me all about supercolliders. He'd be fabulous for research, Eden."

"Down, girl." Fenny rested her hand on Dini's head as she walked past and kept the enthusiastic elf seated. "I think Eden's research is more about human bodies than cosmological particles." She pushed a dish of candy corn into the center of the table. "So you had a fabulous Italian dinner, talked hot sex, kissed him and then he went home. Did I get the basics right?"

Eden, her mouth full of the terribly awful candy she couldn't resist, nodded, chewed and swallowed. "Yep. And every day since, he's sent cute things to me."

"Like what?" Dini looked fascinated. "God, this stuff is really bad." She grabbed her own handful of sweets. "Got any more?"

"I got a little bunch of flowers the next day. Then a funny card. And yesterday he sent me a t-shirt with a picture of Einstein and a quote on it...*It's a miracle that curiosity survives formal education.*"

Four sighs followed her words as the candy corn vanished and Eden's friends absorbed the vicarious delight of having a man shower them with gifts.

"He's seducing you, you realize that, don't you?" Dee pushed the dish away.

"Yes." Eden nodded. "He pretty much made that clear up front."

"So how do you feel about being the *seducee*?" Dini glanced at Fenny. "Is that a word?"

Fenny shrugged. "Not sure. But it works for me."

Eden twisted her fingers together on the table. "I kinda think I like the idea. He's so much fun to be with. We talked about everything under the sun. We even talked about the sun. Solar energy, stuff like that. He—he *listened*, you know?" She looked up to meet four sets of eyes fixed on her face.

"It was a conversation in the truest sense of the word. A dialogue between two people, not just one hogging the limelight. I reckon I talked more to him than I've done to any guy in years. He's just that type."

"Nothing like a guy with good ears." Dini nodded sagely.

"Especially when he's between your legs and you're hanging on to 'em." Dee snickered.

Eden laughed with everyone else, but knew she was blushing as well. "Yes, well there is that."

Stella leaned over and touched Eden lightly on the hand. "You want my advice? Go for it, Eden. He sounds like a really good guy. Even if it's not forever, it could be wonderful while it lasts."

"I'm leaning that way." Eden swallowed. "It's been a long time for me. I have—" she glanced down at herself awkwardly, "issues with my physical appearance and sex."

Derisive snorts greeted this statement but Eden lifted her hand to quell them. "I know, it's stupid. Believe me, Sean made that clear. But I'm still female and still have doubts about whether I'm sexually appealing or not."

"If I was a guy, I'd do you, babe." Dee finished off the candy corn.

"You say that to all the girls." Fenny chuckled.

"Well, I really like you all. So, logically speaking, if I was a guy and liked you all, I'd be doing you. Right?"

"Not all at once, I hope." Dini sighed as she finished the last of her candy corn.

"Well, probably not."

"Although it would make a hell of an orgy scene..." Stella sounded thoughtful.

Eden shook her head. "Girl-girl won't fly. Besides, I don't think I can even imagine it. I have to go the ordinary route first."

Fenny smiled. "Something tells me that if and when you get to it, it won't be *ordinary*, Eden. Not by any stretch of the imagination."

Eden shrugged. "I've listened to you all waxing eloquent about sex. If you must know, the reason I don't write it—or haven't up to this point—is that I'm not..." she paused, searching for the right words, "I'm not a very sexual person."

"What do you mean, Eden?" Dini tipped her head to one side, looking like a curiously inquisitive elf.

"I mean I like the kissing and so on." Eden waved her hand to encompass all the bits and pieces of *so on*. "But when I get into it...it's over and done with and I have to wonder what all the fuss is about."

Dee frowned. "Do you *come*, Eden?"

"Jesus, Dee." Eden blushed.

"I mean it. Do you come? You're an almost-ex-doctor, for chrissake, you know what I'm talking about. Of all of us here, you could probably describe an orgasm in the most accurate of clinical terms."

"Yeah." Dini nodded. "What she said."

Eden bit her lip. There were so many advantages to having wonderful friends. But sometimes they did tend to put her on the spot. "I suppose it would be accurate to say that penetrative intercourse doesn't seem to result in a sexual release for me."

"Be sure to catch the special on this topic tonight at nine on the Women's Health Channel." The irrepressible Dini choked back a snort. "This is *sex* we're talking about, Eden, not a workshop on gender-specific physiology. You gotta work up some enthusiasm for it, sweetie."

"Maybe that's not so much Eden's problem as her lovers'." Fenny tugged thoughtfully at her lower lip.

"Huh?" Eden tried to follow Fenny's line of thought. And failed miserably.

"Look, we've all had those times when it was all about the guy, right? Didn't do a damn thing for us?"

Nods and a chorus of groans greeted Fenny's words. "Yeah. No kidding." That was Dee.

"More than I can count," Stella agreed.

"So let's just suppose that our Eden here hasn't yet run into the guy who really turns her on. Who gases up the engine before throwing her into gear and hitting the accelerator? You know — gets her hot and wet and ready to come."

"Jesus, Fenny." Once again, Eden blushed and hid behind her hands. "Don't hold back on my account. Even though I do happen to be sitting *right here*."

"It's statistically possible, Fenny." Dini nodded. "Eden, do you orgasm with your vibrator?"

"Okay. That's *it*." Eden straightened and slapped her hands down on the table. "I adore you guys, you know that. But *not* when you're talking about my orgasms or my vibrator. That's just wrong on too many levels to count."

"Wuss."

"Chicken."

"Am not."

"Are too."

"Braaaa-cluck cluck cluck..."

The soft chicken noises emanating from somewhere suspiciously near Dini's mouth tipped Eden over the edge. She stood, pushing her chair back with a scrape and leaned forward, placing both fists firmly on the table.

"I am *not* a wuss or a chicken or anything else. I *do* know what an orgasm is. It's the quick cycling of muscle contractions in the lower pelvis surrounding and engaging the primary sexual organs. It's controlled by the autonomic nervous system."

She paused for breath. "I've had them, thank you. My vibrator works just fine in that department. Men *don't*."

She sat down with a thump as the applause erupted.

"That's my girl." Fenny giggled. "You tell 'em."

"I'm so proud." Dini wiped an imaginary tear from her eye. "Womanhood is redeemed."

"Oh shut up, all of you." Eden burst out laughing and lowered her head to the table. "You should all be taken out and shot at dawn."

Stella, who was laughing as hard as anyone, finally caught her breath. "Okay. So the question remains. Are you going to give Sean Rafferty a trial run? See if he can do at least as well as your vibrator?"

Eden sighed. "That's the crux of the matter. I don't know."

Dee shook her head. "You're lying through your perfect teeth, honey. You *do* know. All we want is to hear you say it."

"And ask you a bunch of really intimate questions afterwards." Dini's eyes gleamed wickedly. "You'd better be ready."

“She will be.” Fenny hugged Eden. “She’s ready for Sean, ready for us. And perhaps ready to add some spice to her writing, huh, Eden?”

Eden, knowing they were right, merely put her head back down on the table and groaned.

Chapter Four

Eden's heart rate accelerated as she pressed the buzzer beneath Sean's name. He'd urged her to let him cook for her, to come over to his apartment on Sunday afternoon.

"What, no football?" Eden found herself teasing him.

"It's a bye week for my team. No game."

She'd smiled at the humor in his voice. "Good timing."

"Honestly? Don't tell the rest of my gender, but I'm not a huge football fan."

"Okay, it's our secret. But if I ever let it slip to *my* gender, you'll be besieged." She grinned to herself. "A man who cooks and doesn't like football? Hell, Sean, that puts you right up there on Mount Olympus with the *Gods of Desirable Males*. And they're few and far between. Especially in this neck of the woods."

"So what do you say? Will you come and taste my award-winning chicken Paprikash?"

"Mmm. Sounds good."

"Awesome. Any time after about three. You have my address—want me to come pick you up?"

"Nope." She'd known exactly where he lived, having been a Bostonian ever since she could remember. "You stay with your cooking pots. I'll be there."

And the die was cast. It had been easy—almost *too* easy. Eden wanted to see him again, to explore the chemistry between them and find out if it was real. If being in the same room with him would once again light up her sexual impulses, or if that had been a freak moment in time stimulated by wine and a handsome man.

"Is this a beautiful woman with an appetite for physics and Hungarian cooking?"

The voice sounded tinny through the speaker. Eden chuckled. “No. It’s the Wicked Witch and her minions delivering your order for eight vats of pickled toad feet.”

“Oh good. I just ran out. Come up to the sixth floor and follow the divine fragrance.”

The electronic chimes let Eden inside and she quickly found herself on the sixth floor of the nicely modernized old building. And yes, there was an incredible smell in the corridor, easily traceable to Sean’s apartment number.

She barely had time to raise her hand before the door opened and Sean was smiling at her. Clad, improbably, in an apron that announced she should “Kiss the Cook”.

He took the decision out of her hands by grabbing her wrist, tugging her inside and kissing her thoroughly.

“Hi.”

“Mmm.” Eden couldn’t help her mouth watering. Besides the fact he was every bit as yummy in jeans, a t-shirt and bare feet as he was in more formal clothing or bike gear, he tasted of spices and really fine culinary flavors. They’d blended on his tongue, which he was busily sliding over hers once again.

“I figure kissing you is a much better way to let you taste what I’m cooking than giving you a spoonful. Besides, I like kissing you more than stirring the pot.”

Privately, Eden agreed, but she still put a hand on his chest and pushed away a little even though he was stirring her personal pot rather nicely. “Does this mean I don’t get that spoonful? It smells heavenly.”

Sean sighed dramatically. “Oh well. If you must. Come on into the kitchen.”

She glanced around at the neat apartment, noticing the preponderance of books—not unexpected given his choice of occupation. But it was tidy, all the same. Lived-in, certainly, as evidenced by the keys casually dropped on a pile of papers next to the door, the jacket hanging unevenly on a tiny hall tree and the eclectic rock-band posters tacked here and there.

The kitchen adjoined the living area, separated only by a countertop where Sean obviously ate, since there were two stools tucked beneath it.

"Here." He pulled her in front of the stove, lifted the lid of a large pot and waved some of the fragrant steam toward her.

"Ohhh." Eden sniffed appreciatively. "That's good."

"It's got a while to simmer. No tasting 'til then." He brushed her hair away from her cheek and his gaze fell to her lips. "Not with a spoon, anyway."

"You're a wicked man. And a good cook." Eden watched him. "That's a dangerous combination."

"I know." His smile was more a sensual curve of his mouth. "Let's go sit down for a bit and let the chicken do its thing."

Keeping her hand in his, Sean took her into the living room, pausing as she moved instinctively to the window and stared out over the Charles River. "My God, this is a fabulous view."

Fall colors were beginning to dapple the trees on either side of the water, a few boats bobbed happily and several crews were sculling their way through the little waves, cleaving white wakes and dimples from their oars. They were probably from the University boathouses that dotted the opposite bank.

"It is, isn't it?" Sean stood close beside her. "I loved it in the summer. I can't wait to see it in the winter."

"You're staying that long?" Eden turned to him. "I thought you said it was only a summer course."

"It was." He stroked her neck, making her tingle. "Then I met you."

"Sean, I—" Eden floundered at the implications of what he'd just said.

"Don't worry, Eden. I was pretty much sold on the idea of extending my stay. I'm on a year's sabbatical. Once I'd gotten here I realized the surroundings—including you—were a lot more attractive than the experimental facility in Illinois that was my

other option.” He leaned down and tugged on her earlobe with his teeth. “I love to teach. I’d forgotten how much over the past few years.”

She sighed, half with pleasure, half with relief. Relief that he would be there for longer than a month or so. And relief that he hadn’t made such an important decision based on a woman he’d only known for a week or so. She would have been very uncomfortable at the notion she’d changed his life.

Although she was starting to wonder if he’d changed hers.

He seemed to love touching her, she realized. Whether it was a hug, a stroke of his fingertips or a quick nibbling kiss, there was always some part of him touching some part of her.

While her eyes absorbed the picturesque view, her body analyzed its responses to this man.

And they were all positive. She could detect his scent over the delicious cooking smells and he made her mouth water even more. There was something distinctive, something her trained nose recognized as male spice. If she could’ve duplicated it, she would have, but it was too elemental to be categorized into essential oils.

Eden could barely overcome the urge to turn her head, bury it in his neck and inhale. Once again she found herself surprised at her own yearnings. It might have been a combination of the warm afternoon sunshine, the scent of something wonderful coming from the stove—or it might simply have been Sean himself.

Whatever it was, Eden felt the tensions dissolving from her spine as their bodies leaned comfortably together. She was ready to accept his offer of wine, thus ignoring the lecture she’d given herself on the way to his apartment. The one about not mixing too much wine with too much sexy man.

She sat down on his couch as he opened the bottle, luxuriating in the rare sensation of being waited on, of having her wants and needs considered, and being desired. She’d seen it in his eyes and wondered if he’d seen something similar in her own gaze.

And as she sipped the soft white Chablis, Eden arrived at the conclusion she knew, deep in her heart, was inevitable.

She was going to have sex with Sean Patrick Rafferty.

"What?" He was grinning at her from his seat next to her on the small couch.

"Nothing. Just thinking how nice this is and how glad I am you're not much of a football fan."

He put his glass on the coffee table in front of them. "So. Talk to me."

"I'd rather listen to you. Tell me something scientific."

"Hmm." Sean thought for a moment or two. "Okay. If it's green—it's biology. If it stinks—it's chemistry. And if it doesn't work—it's physics."

Eden laughed. "That's pretty fundamental. And definitely a slap in the face of all three."

"At least I chose the non-green, non-stinky one." His toes idly brushed her ankle and rubbed her bare calf. "Why didn't you ever go back to medicine?"

Eden had told Sean about her abortive try at being a doctor. They'd touched on the general topics. She'd never told him the details. Never told him about the child she'd had to watch fade away as a disease stole his short life. A disease for which there was no cure in anybody's medicine cabinet. It was a loss that had claimed more than her son. It had destroyed her marriage as well.

Now wasn't the time to get into that. She was feeling too relaxed, too comfortable to raise pain from her past. She simply smiled into her wine. "I like the idea of magic. It's more colorful. And it smells better. I go for non-stinky too."

"Oh, speaking of which..." Sean pulled open the little drawer beneath the coffee table and pulled out a small bottle. "A student of mine came into class with a few of these the other day. She's thinking of starting a little online business or something. Wanted to get people's reactions." He held it toward Eden. "I thought of you and swiped a bottle. Want to give it your professional opinion?"

Eden took the little vial from Sean's hand, curious as to its contents. "Perfume?"

Sean nodded. "Yep. Try it."

Eden eased the stopper out and lifted it to her nose, letting the initial scent free into the air. This would be the "top note", the first thing a customer detects when she tries a new scent.

"Oooh. This is...nice." She sniffed. "Delicate. Warm. Sunshine and flowers. Green lily, maybe, with a touch of violets." She tapped a drop onto her fingertip and rubbed it on the pulse point at her wrist, then beneath her ear. "Still nice. Not too sweet a middle note."

"Huh?" Sean looked puzzled.

"Perfume is made up of notes. Like music. The top note is the most prominent when you first smell it. The middle note is released by the warmth of the body. And the base note lingers, tying the other notes together." She sniffed again and nodded in approval. "That's a simplified explanation, of course, since some perfumes are combinations of over a dozen different essences. But this one's got *something*, a uniquely feminine personality without being too gooey."

"Gooey? That's a technical phrase I suppose."

"Of course." She held out her wrist. "Here. Tell me what you think."

Sean took Eden's wrist, but didn't bend to sniff it. He pulled on it, tugging her close to him on the couch. "I think I'd rather smell it here."

He leaned over her, his chest hard against her arm, his breath against the skin of her neck. Gently he brushed her hair aside then ran his finger down the sensitive muscle to her shoulder. "God, your skin's like velvet. Silk velvet."

Scarcely breathing, Eden stayed still, waiting—wondering—wanting him to touch her some more. She felt his movement as he lowered his face to her throat and inhaled deeply. "Mmm. I like."

“Me too.” Eden wasn’t sure if she was referring to the perfume or to having Sean’s lips mere inches from her skin.

“If I remember rightly, the pulse points are where a woman should put perfume, yes?”

Eden nodded. “Yes.”

Carefully, Sean untied the ribbon at the front of her gathered blouse, loosening it. He slid one shoulder down, then leaned over and pushed the other down to match, revealing the top of the daring bustier Eden had decided to wear on the spur of the moment.

“There’s a pulse point here, isn’t there?” His fingertips brushed the tops of her breasts and settled in her deep cleavage. “Here, where it’s warm and dark and rich with a woman’s body heat.”

Eden’s head fell back onto the couch as Sean dipped low to run his tongue between the two soft mounds. The slick touch of his tongue, the scent of him mingling with the softly arousing fragrance—she was helpless before the sensual onslaught, reduced to a whimpering, quivering lump of putty.

At that moment, she did the only thing possible.

She moaned.

* * * * *

Sean wanted everything, right that moment. He wanted to tear Eden’s clothes away, he wanted to touch her, fill his hands with those incredible breasts, strip his own clothes off and leap on her. He wanted to fuck her right there in his living room on his couch.

But he knew he wasn’t about to go there, even though his cock was painfully hard just from the feel of her skin and that tiny sound she’d made as he’d licked her.

No, he was going to take it slow with Eden. She was jittery about sex, uncomfortable with her body and unused to a man exploring her sensuality. If ever a woman needed a slow and gentle sexual experience, it was Eden.

He knew all this. He just wished his cock was on the same page.

So he took his time, letting her get used to the sensation of his tongue on her skin. She didn't object when he slipped the loose blouse down to her elbows and toyed with the lace of her corset thing. God, it lifted her breasts and they swelled above the fabric, white mountains and a deep valley that stunned him with their loveliness. He was a sucker for a real woman, big breasts and all the delicious curves that came along with her. He was a sucker for Eden.

"Baby, help me here?" He shifted and tugged at his own t-shirt. "I want to feel your body against me when I kiss you. Skin to skin."

She lifted her head, a dazed look in her eyes, and nodded. "Okay."

Her hands drifted to his chest and together they pulled his shirt free, enabling him to strip it over his head and toss it aside. "Now this..." Unhampered by his own garment, he grasped Eden's blouse and knelt beside her, watching as she lifted her arms and let him take it off her like a little girl.

Automatically, her hands fell to cover herself.

"None of that." Sean grasped her wrists, pushed them to either side of her body and bent toward her, his chest pressing against her corset and the mounds above. Now it was his turn to moan a little at the heat and softness burning into him.

"Kiss me, Eden. Let me know you want this."

She had to be with him in this seduction he was attempting. Sean couldn't push brazenly past her inhibitions and just fuck her, even though she might have been willing at that moment for him to do exactly that.

No, he needed to know that she was aroused, not just physically but emotionally. That she'd meet his touches with touches of her own. And if she wasn't ready, well he'd just wait until she was.

He waited, nerves jangling, watching her eyes, seeing what he hoped was the dawning of desire behind the heavy-lidded gaze she was giving him. "I think...I think I want this, Sean."

Her hands shifted and he released them, thrilled to his toes when she lifted them to his chest, running her palms over his skin and coming to rest on his shoulders. "Please kiss me?"

"My pleasure."

They turned a little, Eden resting back on the cushions behind her and Sean following her down to lie over her. Softness pressed against hardness, her body slithered wonderfully against his and with slow tenderness Sean lowered his head to her mouth.

She closed her eyes and welcomed him.

It was bliss, lying in the sunshine with his tongue drifting over Eden's mouth. The warmth on his back was nothing compared to the warmth against his front. Slowly – oh so slowly – he urged her lips apart and dipped within, tasting Eden's unique flavors, mingling them with his own and teasing her tongue into a dance that started a slow burn all the way to his balls.

Sean poured all the passion he possessed into that kiss. He moved his head, angling so that he could plunge deep, encouraging her to do the same. Gently he aroused her, with little more than his tongue and slight movements of his body as it rubbed against hers.

He wanted to shout with pleasure when her fingers flexed and began to grasp him tighter, when her mouth turned greedy and she returned the kiss with mounting fervor. He knew, at that moment, he'd passed a barrier with Eden. That she'd opened to him for this particular embrace – willingly and enthusiastically.

The journey had begun.

He extended the kiss, taking time to simply enjoy it for what it was. The start of passion between them, the first slow steps to the ultimate pleasure. Teasingly he plunged his tongue in and out of her mouth, daring her to imitate his moves.

She did, making him want to shout with delight. A tiny whimper from her throat encouraged him and he gently slid his hands to the top of her skirt, finding the loose waistband easy to push down.

Eden tensed as his fingers found the skin of her belly and stroked it.

“Shh.” He eased back. “I want to see you, baby. Let me get rid of the skirt? Tell me it’s okay?”

A flash of uncertainty crossed her features. There it was again, that damned insecurity about her body. Well, he’d just have to do something about that. To take it away and toss it in the trash where it belonged.

“Eden, please? Let me enjoy you? Give me the pleasure of touching you. Exploring you. I ache with the need, baby. Help me out here.”

She bit her lip – then nodded. It wasn’t an eager nod, but it was a nod all the same.

Heaving an internal sigh of relief, Sean moved and began tugging her skirt down over her hips. He barely caught his own moan of lust as her white skin emerged, revealed to his gaze. She lifted her bottom as he freed her, a little awkwardly, cursing the tangled silky stuff and finally – thankfully – throwing it aside.

“Dear God, you’re incredible, Eden. Truly incredible. There’s not a man alive who wouldn’t get a hard-on from looking at you right this minute.”

Lush white curves shone against the dark blue of Sean’s couch. Her breasts mounded above the corset and below – well, below lay heaven.

Sean eagerly ran his palms over her rounded thighs, relishing the softness of her skin, the interesting places tucked behind her knees and tried to drag his gaze from the tiny triangle of black lace hiding her pussy.

“You have the most amazing taste in lingerie, sweetheart.”

“Sean, I’m — embarrassed. You’re looking at me.”

She didn’t move, but Sean noticed the flush in her cheeks and the trembling of her mouth. She was fighting a private battle with herself, lying still instead of grabbing something and hiding.

At that precise moment, Sean Patrick Rafferty fell past the need to fuck this wonderful woman. He fell head over heels in love with her.

And scared the crap out of himself.

Chapter Five

Eden's brain scrambled to keep up with her body. She was racked with anxieties, yet each time Sean touched her she wanted more. The urge to cover her body with her hands waned before the need to lift her hips and beg him to touch her between her thighs. She was conflicted, aroused and aware—more physically aware of her own responses than she'd thought possible.

Her breasts were aching, the crotch of her thong panties was soaked, and although she wished it were dark, she couldn't help basking in the expression of delight she saw on Sean's face.

He couldn't fake that, could he? Was it possible he truly was admiring her body? That he liked the full hips, the soft belly, the large breasts? All the things that Eden had condemned to herself? He certainly didn't seem to be able to stop touching her.

She jumped a little as he nuzzled her navel, nipped the skin around it and stroked her thighs. She choked back a laugh as he tickled her with his tongue. Surely any minute now he'd strip the rest of their clothes off and just do it, fuck her and conclude this portion of the afternoon's entertainment.

"Eden." He'd moved back to her face and was staring at her, a flush on his cheeks, his eyes roaming over her. *"Stop thinking. Start feeling."*

"I can't—I don't—I want—"

"What? What do you want, Eden? Just tell me and it's yours. I'm your slave at this moment. Looking at you makes me want to come. Touching you is driving me crazy. Making you feel the same way is my mission right now, so tell me. Please."

"Jesus, Sean." She took a breath, her breasts rising and falling against him. *"Just touch me."*

He smiled then, a sweetly passionate smile. And lifted his hands to her corset, unsnapping the hooks. "I want your breasts in my hands. In my mouth. Would you like that, do you think?" He flashed a quick glance at her. "Do you have sensitive nipples, Eden? Will you moan again when I suck them?"

Her own cheeks were burning at his words and the visions he was creating. Her throat was dry, her pussy wet and her nipples—well, if they could have spoken they would have screamed "hell yeah".

When the corset fell away and her breasts tumbled heavily across her torso, she sighed—partly from relief as the constricting garment loosened and partly from eagerness. She felt full, fuller than she could have imagined. A fullness that only Sean's mouth could draw away.

Almost reverently Sean cupped her, lifting both breasts, weighing them, staring at them with awe. "Magnificent. Just magnificent." His thumbs flicked over her nipples and Eden choked back a tiny squeal at the sharp pleasure of it.

"If you liked that, you're gonna love *this*..." His mouth was on her, wide and wet, pulling her nipple and her areola into his mouth. One hand played with a breast while he suckled the other, strong and sure and tender. He laved her nipple into hardness, then nibbled on it, only to suck it deeply once more.

She surrendered and cried out then, feeling the tug in her womb, her pussy and barely registering the fact that her toes were curling. It was Sean's mouth and lips and tongue that focused all her attention, that and what incredible magic he was making with them.

Scarcely aware that he'd separated the halves of her corset and pushed them aside, Eden let herself topple into the waves of heat and arousal. There was only a shadow of her previous hesitation, barely a second to worry about her body and an eternity to enjoy what Sean was doing to it.

He seemed to really like her breasts. Which was an understatement to top all understatements.

Little nips and nibbles were followed by smooth licks of his tongue. He lifted them, pressed them together and sucked both nipples at once, nearly lifting her off the couch. Christ, she was so damn wet she wondered if she'd come right then and there. She knew there were women who could orgasm through nipple play.

She'd read about it, wondered about it and dismissed it. Now there was Sean and his talented touches. What had seemed a rare improbability loomed as a distinct possibility.

Eden felt her hips moving of their own volition, her thighs—those rounded thighs she privately thought of as chubby—were parting in a movement as natural as breathing. She wanted, she hungered, she needed in a way that was foreign to her.

Never before had a man reduced her to a big quivering mass of sensual desires. She wasn't sure if she liked it or not—the urgency burning within her was almost frightening.

As if he could read her thoughts, Sean slid a hand over the curve of her belly and down between her thighs. "So wet, Eden. So hot. A man could drown, burn alive just from touching your pussy." His fingers stroked gently over and around the lace of her thong.

"I want to burn. I want to drown. Let me?"

He didn't wait for an answer. He was settling himself between her legs before she could catch her breath, and when his tongue stroked over the panty, any thoughts of breathing fled her mind completely.

He didn't strip her, didn't rip the thong from her body. He didn't thrust a finger into her pussy—something she'd never enjoyed. He simply ate at her, through the now-soaked lace. He pushed and probed with his tongue and his fingers, fluttering, stroking, teasing her until she knew her body was showering him with liquid and her clit was fully aroused beneath her thong.

Then, and only then, did he gently ease the fabric to one side. She felt the cool air and the heat of his breath on her burning flesh.

Lifting her head with difficulty, she looked down at him. "Sean?"

"You are beautiful. So incredibly beautiful. Pink, swollen, aroused and your scent is driving me insane. Everything a man wants his woman to be, Eden. Every damn thing."

She swallowed a lump in her throat, watching him stare at her pussy. "I—uh—"

"Shhh." Once again he stopped her from saying any more. "I'm going to make you come, baby. And watch you. I promised I would. I keep my promises."

He lowered his head, keeping his gaze on her face.

And began to dip into her most sensitive folds with his tongue as he watched her.

It was the most incredibly erotic moment in Eden's life. She'd never imagined she could watch a man licking her pussy, or that she could enjoy it as much as she was. Her past lovers, her ex-husband, the lackadaisical attitude toward sex and intercourse—every notion Eden had ever had about fucking vanished as Sean's mouth found her clit and gently sucked.

She bit back a scream as his tongue circled it with incredible delicacy, teasing, arousing even more, taking her to the very edge and holding her there. All the while watching her face.

Her fingers were scrabbling on the couch, her buttocks clenching against the sharp sizzle igniting at the base of her spine. She held his gaze as long as she could but eventually her neck arched and her head fell back as her eyes closed and her world narrowed down to the tiny spot between her legs and the man who was working it with more skill than she could have imagined.

Shudders began to course through her limbs, one thigh moved to rest on Sean's shoulder while the other leg sprawled lasciviously off the edge of the couch. Her body was opening itself to his mouth, readying itself for that one final moment—that one final touch—

It came when Sean unerringly read her arousal level and licked again, a long slow pressure of heat and moisture from the entrance to her cunt all the way up to just beneath her clit.

The stroke tipped Eden over the edge and blinding flashes illuminated the darkness into which she fell.

There was a sound – perhaps it was her scream – Eden didn’t know. For those long moments she rode out a thunderous wave of pleasure, electric tingles cramping her belly in a rhythm as old as time itself. The spasms rocked her with their intensity and duration, shaking her from her scalp to her toenails.

Vaguely she tried to absorb the sensations, to catalog them, to understand them. But it was too hard, too much effort and much more wonderful to just experience them. So Eden let go and came for Sean while he watched her and pressed his mouth into her pussy lips, drinking down her pleasure as he shared it with her.

And finally Sean moved a little and smiled. His lips shone with her juices, his eyes glowed with his own desire. “I always keep my promises, sweetheart. *Always.*”

* * * * *

Sean watched Eden as she slept, a white river of silk skin flowing over his couch in the rays of the setting sun. He tucked one of his afghans around her so she wouldn’t get cold, smiling as he recalled watching her expressions. Her contorted face as she’d orgasmed, muscles stiff and pulsing around him. Her surprise as it receded, leaving her limp and sated.

And finally her relaxation, mellowing as her eyelids drooped and she succumbed to the overwhelming urge to take a nap.

Yep, his work there was done for the time being.

Sure, he was hard as a rock, had damn near come in his jeans just from the taste and smell of her, let alone watching her ride her climax. But he was a man of stern principles

and he knew that fucking her right afterward, or even during, wasn't the way to accomplish his major goal.

He *wanted* Eden. Physically of course, but he wanted her tied to him in a stronger way than the simple bonds of sexual pleasure. He wanted her to look at him as more than just a man who could get her off.

He wanted her to look at him as more than a fuck buddy, a useful tongue or a skilled lover. He wanted her to look at him with her *heart*.

He stirred his chicken dish absently. It was almost ready, almost time to wake her and see if she was hungry. Then they could move on to dessert. His cock, still erect and reminding him that—principles aside—he was a man in need, pressed against his fly and he shifted himself inside his jeans for the fortieth time in the past half hour.

He'd wait for dessert, but damn if it was going to be easy. It would, however, be worth it, providing he didn't self-combust first.

Putting the finishing touches to the food, Sean turned the burners off and walked around the divider into the living room.

"Hey, sleepyhead." He brushed his fingers down her cheek, itching to explore further but restraining his urges. "Time to wake up."

She groaned and blinked at him. "Good God. I fell asleep." She struggled to sit up. "I'm so sorry. That's not like me."

"You're allowed. Great sex will do that to a person."

She nodded. "Yes. It releases endorphins and the aftermath is usually—" She cut herself off and blushed. "You don't need a lecture, at this point. And I'm embarrassed." She stifled a yawn and pulled the blanket around herself.

"Hungry? Dinner's ready."

"Mmm."

Still warm and a little sleepy, the vision of a rumpled and fulfilled Eden was burning itself into Sean's brain. He turned away, as much as to quell his desire for her as to prepare their meal.

"I could use a quick trip to your restroom if you wouldn't mind..."

He grinned and waved his hand to the entryway. "Down the hall to the left. Don't take too long though. You're going to love the Paprikash. It's perfect and ready to eat."

"Okay. Thanks."

In the manner typical of all women, Eden bundled the afghan around her like a bath towel. There was some genetic quirk that made them awkward after sex. Like he hadn't explored her body. Why the hell that was, Sean had no idea, but he was amused and charmed anyway. Especially when the afghan snagged on the coffee table and he got an eyeful of two beautifully ripe and curved butt cheeks with a tiny strip of black fabric dividing them.

It was a disappointment when she returned wearing his robe. "I borrowed this. It was on the back of your bathroom door. Hope you don't mind?"

He shook his head as he ladled out their meal and she settled onto one of the stools. "Not at all. I'd rather you stayed naked so I could look at you, but I'd have gotten distracted. And I need to eat something and keep up my strength." He waggled his eyebrows as he came to sit next to her. "So do you. *Bon appétit.*"

With a blush, Eden began to eat, hesitantly at first, then with enthusiasm. "God, Sean, this is so good. What's in it?"

He shook his head. "Not telling. You'd do something horribly practical like count calories."

She grinned. "You're right. Better I don't know." Another forkful disappeared. "I'll just enjoy it and worry about the calories tomorrow."

Sean watched her. "How come it's so hard for you to believe you're beautiful?"

Eden sighed and took a sip of her wine.

"Even now. Look at you. You're trying to think of a tactful way to tell me you're not attractive." He frowned. "Don't bother, Eden. You won't change my mind about you."

"Look, it's—it's hard to explain." She glanced up at him. "It's not that I think I'm ugly, it's just that I'm not used to hearing myself described the way you do. And yes, there's the whole *gotta-be-tiny* philosophy." A crease formed between her eyebrows as she thought. "We have no chance to escape it, Sean. No chance to really see ourselves through anyone else's eyes."

He reached out and toyed with a curl of her hair. "See yourself through my eyes, sweetheart. See the softness, the warmth, the passion. See the woman I see."

"I don't know how." Eden's voice was a little sad.

"I'll teach you how. I'll teach you to see your breasts as incredibly luscious fruit that I can't wait to feast on. I'll teach you that each one of your curves is a new adventure in exploration for my mouth and my fingers. I'll teach you that your pussy—"

She reached out and pushed her palm over his lips. "Christ, Sean. I'm eating dinner here." Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes wide even as she chuckled awkwardly. "It's not that I don't enjoy all these compliments, but maybe we should start slow with them."

He nodded, all too aware that he wasn't doing himself any favors either. "Okay." He shifted on the stool, his cock a thick rod doing its best to strain the limits of his fly. "But let me ask you something. I get the sense you've never really accepted that you're a sexual woman, let alone a beautiful one."

"You're terrifying me with your acuity." She reached for a piece of bread and munched it thoughtfully. "What makes you say that?"

"Oh I dunno. Instinct maybe. Or the look of pure astonishment on your face when you came around my mouth?"

Eden choked over her bread and Sean slapped her on the back. He chuckled, watching as she fought for air, eyes watering and cheeks bright red.

"Damn, Sean." She cleared her throat. "Give me a little warning when you're about to say something outrageous."

"Okay. So answer my question."

"I forgot what you asked."

"Liar." He tugged on her ear. For some reason, he couldn't stop touching her, no matter the cost to him in personal agonizing cock-and-ball torture. "I want to know about you. And sex."

She moved a little on the stool, pushing her empty plate aside with a sigh of satisfaction. "There's little to tell. Not a whole lot to know. I've had sex. That's about it."

"Yeah. Right." He raised an eyebrow. "Come on. Spill it."

Eden rolled her eyes. "You're not going to give up on this, are you?"

"Nope."

"Shit." She grimaced. "Okay. I've had sex. It's been—pleasant." She took a breath. "But until you, until just now over there on the couch, I haven't had an actual orgasm with a man." Eden glared at him. "Is *that* what you wanted to know?"

Sean stared at her. "Truly?"

"I don't lie." She straightened her shoulders. "I'm just not a very sexual person."

Sean started to laugh, his whole body shaking as he roared.

"I don't think it's *that* funny." Eden looked offended.

"It's not funny. It's utter bullshit." Sean's sides ached.

"I can't see—"

He held up a hand to stop her from speaking and sucked in air. "You're trying to tell me that the woman I just brought to a screaming orgasm, the woman with breasts a man could toy with for a week and not get bored, the woman with thighs and a body designed for the ultimate pleasure and a pussy that's so hot and sweet I can still taste it—you're trying to tell me that's *not* a sexual woman?" He started to chuckle again.

"Bullshit, Eden. Utter and complete bullshit." He reached for her, pulled her off her stool and into his arms and kissed her. Thoroughly.

By the time he was done, they were both panting.

"Not a sexual woman? I don't think so, sweetheart." Sean quickly untied the robe and pulled it apart, ignoring her gasp. He slid from his stool and pressed his cock against her softness. "If you weren't a sexual woman, I wouldn't be hard as nails and desperate to get inside you."

"Oh." Eden's eyes turned sultry as he ground his hardness around her mound. "Oooh."

"And if you weren't a sexual woman, we wouldn't be going to do what we're going to do now."

"What's that?"

"We're going to dance. Together. Naked."

Chapter Six

Eden's jaw dropped as Sean stepped away from her and slowly stripped. Apparently he didn't believe in wearing underwear on a Sunday.

With a sigh of relief he unzipped his fly and let his jeans fall to the floor, kicking them away with his bare feet. "Thank God. I was dying."

"So I see." Like a compass needle to north, Eden's gaze dropped to his groin. He was hard, so hard and thick and – and *male*.. It looked like he had red marks on his cock from the seam of his pants. "Oh my."

"Thank you." He preened. "I'm rather attached to it myself."

It surprised a laugh out of her. "I'm sorry. You must have been very uncomfortable." She glanced at him uncertainly, not sure what else to say to a naked man with such a blatant erection. Which was pointing solidly in her direction. "But I'm flattered." She paused. "I think."

"Come here and get acquainted." He tugged at the lapels of the robe, then slid it down over her shoulders, dropping it on top of his jeans. "And this needs to go now, too, much as I love looking at you in it." Deft fingers found the elastic of her thong and pushed it down as well.

It joined the pile of disused clothing on the floor.

"Better." Sean pulled her into his arms and began swaying with her to the soft music he'd turned on.

Self-consciously, Eden burrowed against his chest, loving the male scent, the different textures of his skin and the sensation of that solid length nestled against her belly. "This is...strange." She rested her arms around his neck. "But not bad strange, just...*strange* strange."

As they moved together, Sean stroked his hands up and down her spine, a soothing touch that relaxed Eden even as it aroused her. She sighed, feeling tensions drift away as a new kind of excitement flared to life deep inside her.

“Eden?” It was a soft whisper in her ear. “Make love with me.”

She stilled at his words, letting him hold her close. He hadn’t asked her to fuck him. He hadn’t pulled her to the floor or dragged her to his bed. He was simply holding her and asking a question she hadn’t expected to hear.

Those two words. *Make love*.

Eden melted. “Okay.”

She felt his indrawn breath even as he reached for her hand and guided her to a door off the living room. “We’ll be more comfortable in here.” It was his bedroom and most of it was filled with a huge king-sized bed.

Letting go of her wrist, Sean nodded at it. “Lie down for me. Tell me this is what you want?”

Obediently, she moved to the big mattress and—with an instinctive feminine gesture—turned down the linens. A sound behind her distracted her and she turned to see Sean sheathing his cock. Another thing she didn’t have to worry about. He was as tuned in to the idea of safe sex as she was.

“Please? Lie down? I want to see you there. I want to remember you there every time I walk in from this moment on.”

God, he was good.

Cautiously, Eden lay down on her back, awkwardly aware of her body, not sure what to do with her hands. She scooted toward the center of the bed, feeling color flood her cheeks as her embarrassment ratcheted up a couple of notches. Sean’s eyes were firmly fastened to her body, as if he was indeed taking a mental snapshot of her at this particular instant. She wasn’t sure she wanted to see the resulting photo.

Then he was over her, arms either side of her shoulders, staring into her eyes. "Jesus, Eden. It seems I've wanted you like this for a lifetime."

She drowned in the heat of his gaze, relaxing a little as he smiled at her. "You say the right things, Sean. It scares me."

"Don't be scared." He adjusted his position and rubbed his cock against her pussy lips. "Mmm. That feels so damn good." He shifted. "Bend your knees for me, baby."

Carefully, Eden lifted her legs and spread them wide, bending as Sean had asked. It opened her fully to his view and that realization darted a bolt of erotic nerves through her body.

Slowly, and with enormous control, Sean began to enter her. "I can't wait for this, baby. Let me know if I'm hurting you, okay?"

His head fell forward and he watched himself as he began to disappear within her folds. "Oh shit." He shivered a little, his skin flushing and his nipples tight buds against the flat plane of his chest.

Eden was amazed at his reactions. "Are you all right?"

"More than all right." Sean pushed in a little further, filling her, stretching her in a way she'd never experienced before. It was as if her brain could sense the way her body expanded to accommodate Sean's cock, could feel the ridges and valleys of his hard length meet the soft walls within her and make themselves at home.

"God, Eden. Oh God."

He was all the way in, pressed flush against her pussy, taking up all the empty spaces she'd never realized were so deep inside.

And he stopped, holding himself frozen above her. "It's not enough."

Eden blinked. "I'm sorry..."

"No. Stop. It's not you." Sean's gaze snapped to her face. "I want *all* of you, Eden."

Before she could point out that there wasn't much of her left he hadn't already had, Sean eased away from her and began to sit between her legs, moving her thighs to rest on top of his. "Come here. Trust me."

With a minimum amount of wriggling, Eden found herself sitting on Sean's lap, her legs behind him, ankles crossed. He was in the same position, facing her, his legs a seat on which she rested, her pussy mere inches from his cock.

"Take me inside you now, baby. This way. Please." Sean's eyelids were heavy and his voice hoarse as his hands roamed freely over her skin and her breasts brushed against him.

Aroused, confused and eager, Eden slithered forward those few precious inches and found Sean's cock positioned perfectly. Rising up a little, she guided him back to her pussy and took a breath.

Lowering down on him, she sighed with pleasure. And when he pulled her closer, making sure their bodies touched *everywhere* — it was sheer and utter heaven.

* * * * *

Sean never could figure out why he'd urged Eden into that particular position. But at the moment she sank down on him, he thanked whatever madness had taken over his brain.

He didn't want to just fuck her, thrusting himself into her from above, or have her riding him while he lay beneath her. He wanted to share the experience as intensely as he could, as fiercely as his heart demanded.

This way, with her tight against him from pussy to nose, he felt *part* of Eden, surrounded by not only the tightness of her slick cunt, but also the rest of her. There was nothing to separate them, it was all about flesh against flesh. A truly total experience.

He held her still, relishing the grasp of her inner muscles, the scent of her sexual arousal, the soft warmth of her body as it rested against his. They were so close he

could feel the throbbing of her clit where it pressed against his groin, echoing the beating of his own heart and the thunder of arousal pulsing in his cock.

She gasped a little, her eyes wide and staring into his. "Sean – this is – *amazing*," she whispered, the surprise in her words a reinforcement of his own pleasure.

"Yeah." He brought his face to hers and kissed her gently, lingeringly, his hands reaching for her buttocks and squeezing them. "Yes, it is."

He licked her lips with his tongue, smiling as she parted them and touched him with her tongue in return. A tiny shift of his hips and she sighed, moving responsively, little whimpers of pleasure sounding in her throat as their combined movements abraded her clit and made her fingertips dig into his spine.

"That's it, baby. You don't need to do anything but *feel* –"

Slowly, Sean began to rock them both, finding the rhythm that suited their bodies, happy that her heels were tightening behind him and her hips relaxing into the dance.

"Can you come like this?" He spoke softly as he eased her even closer, already sensing ripples of response in her cunt.

"Oh –" Eden's eyes closed and her head tipped back a little. She surrendered to the moment, a slow breath of delight lifting her breasts and rubbing her hard nipples along his skin.

"Just relax and let it happen. There's no rush. No hurry. All you have to do is enjoy."

Easy for you to say, boyo.. Sean quelled his impatience, knowing that this moment, with this woman, was important in ways he probably couldn't yet comprehend. He was so close, his balls tight, his cock struggling with the urge to thrust deep, to fill Eden as he exploded his way into orgasm.

And yet he too was moved, entranced by the unique sensations of this position. It was the first time he'd ever experimented with it – and he knew he was glad he'd

waited until it could be Eden sitting cross-legged around him, Eden with his cock inside her, Eden straining against him.

Yeah. It had to be Eden. All doubts fled from his mind as she moaned and he sensed her thighs relax then tense again as she too demanded more.

Lost in each other, they swayed together, the last of the daylight dappling them with warm shadows, two figures silhouetted against the dusk—and sighing with pleasure.

Sean had no idea how long they loved like this—time seemed to have little or no meaning when compared to the intensity he felt. It could have been five minutes or an eon. The universe was collapsing around him, filling his brain with starlight and symphonies, his focus sinking slowly into the heat of Eden’s body, the slick simmer that caressed his cock and the magic coalescing around them as they swayed in harmony.

Finally, Eden shuddered. “Sean, do that again. Please.”

He was barely aware that he’d pushed a little harder, rubbed against her a little more strongly or pushed her so high with barely a breath.

But her nails were digging into him now and he became aware of her heart thundering rapidly against him. Her thighs were taut, her heels clamping into him—she was so near.

And so was he. The lingering wonder of their joining became a fire, erupting forcefully as they moved more quickly, with more purpose.

Unable to control it any longer, Sean let go, let his hips thrust upward, let his cock free to do what it needed to do so desperately.

“Now, Eden. *Now.*”

One last, fierce plundering move—and he came, a massive explosion of sensation, blinding lights flashing within his retinas, his balls detonating with all the force of the galaxy behind them.

He pumped into Eden, filling the condom, filling her, lured even further into his release by the strangled sound she made as she, too, orgasmed around him.

She shuddered in his clasp, her spine arched, her breasts squashed as she gripped him tightly with arms that banded him like iron.

Together they soared, hitting heights that took Sean's breath away and stripped him of every notion he'd ever had about fucking, coming and experiencing sexual release.

It lasted longer than he'd ever imagined possible and when it finally ended, leaving them both limp and exhausted, Sean mentally tipped his hat to whoever had come up with the idea of Tantric-type sex.

It sure as hell did it for him.

And to judge from the satisfied smile on Eden's face and the tiny purring sound she made as they tumbled together onto Sean's bed – it had done it for her too.

Panting a little, Sean managed to peel himself off her, stagger to the bathroom and tidy himself up. She hadn't moved when he returned moments later.

"Hello." He slid onto the bed beside her and pulled up the covers.

"Hi, yourself." She sounded tired and very relaxed.

"So." He snuggled her close, tucking her head onto his shoulder. "Now you understand conservation of energy."

"Mmm." Eden nuzzled his chest and threw an arm over him. "I really like your lecture technique, Professor."

"If you liked that, wait till we get to conservation of momentum."

She laughed and stifled a yawn. "Put me down for that seminar. Any time."

"It's an invitation-only session. And you're the only one invited."

"Good." Sleepily, Eden sighed in his arms.

And Sean smiled, knowing his mother would be very pleased he'd found himself a nice girl at last.

* * * * *

Eden opened her eyes and wondered where the hell she was. For all of two seconds. Then a snuffling snore from next to her tripped the right switch in her brain and it all came flooding back.

Sean.

She had been right about him. He was dangerous. Sweet, passionate, sexually inventive and — *dangerous*. In the short amount of time they'd spent together, he'd made her think, made her laugh, made her feel beautiful *and* made her orgasm.

When it came to cooking her goose, Sean had lit the flames, turned up the thermostat and basted it as it roasted.

Eden was as “done” as any woman could ever be. And it made her apprehensive just thinking about the ramifications. She slid quietly from his embrace, tucking the covers around him.

She closed the door to his bathroom, tidied herself as silently as possible and crept back out to pick up the discarded robe and leave him to his well-deserved rest. She couldn't help grinning as a twinge or two darted along her thigh muscles. Couple more workouts like that and she might even drop a few pounds.

Walking back out into the living room, Eden switched on one of the table lamps and realized she wasn't as worried about those few pounds as she'd been in the past. She moved into the kitchen area and — obeying an instinctive female urge — began clearing away the remnants of the fabulous dinner Sean had cooked for her.

Nibbling on a slice of bread, Eden accepted the fact that she was changing the way she felt about herself. Sean found her attractive. Maybe she'd been too critical in the past, too ready to push men away and use her weight as an excuse. Maybe there was something about her curves that a man could admire.

Sean had admired them. Oh *boy*, had he admired them.

Eden shivered at the remembrance of the heat between them. The passion that had sizzled up her spine and threatened to fry her brain cells. The unanticipated explosion

of her orgasm and that incredible sensation of spasming around a man's cock. Around *Sean's* cock.

It was certainly unlike anything she'd experienced before.

On the countertop, which was now cleared of dishes, Eden noticed a full-sized pad of paper with a few unintelligible scribbles on it and an equation or two underneath. Since snores were still audible from the bedroom, she obeyed an impulse and sat down, drawing the pad toward her and carefully removing Sean's page, setting it to one side.

Ideas began forming in her head, a story outline she'd been toying with for some time. *Now* she had what it needed. Now she knew she could enrich the plot with a romance that went beyond her normal boundaries.

Intently, she started making notes in her usual haphazard fashion. A name, a setting, a draft of what would puzzle and confuse the doctors in a small, out of the way, country clinic.

And the arrival of a specialist, one who would help solve the riddle. And who would work his way into the heart of the case physician—a woman who had no use for a man in her life.

Until he talked her into bed.

Eden's pencil scribbled frantically as more and more thoughts occurred to her, more details about the lovers, more ideas for their adventures, both medical and romantic. She made an asterisk next to one or two things she needed to check, disease symptoms, current treatments and up-to-date information that would add the necessary accuracy to her work, something she was adamant about.

She jumped a foot in the air when a hand landed on her shoulder.

"I should've known. Great sex, a nap and the writer's back at her work." Sean's voice was sleepy and warm..

She grinned, put her pencil down and turned, finding him conveniently within hugging distance. Putting her arms around him seemed natural—finding him still naked was an added blessing.

“Can’t help it. You inspired me.”

“Always happy to do my bit for literature.” He chuckled. “Was it the dinner or the conservation of energy lecture?”

“Probably some of both.” She daringly nipped his skin. “I like the tastes. You *and* the chicken.”

“Mmm. God, woman. You’re insatiable.” Sean stroked her hair affectionately. “Are you familiar with the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle?”

“Uh-uh.” She shook her head then slipped a hand down to find his erection, already growing harder within her grasp. “Does it have anything to do with this?” Eden stroked him gently.

“Oh yes.” He moaned a little. “It has everything to do with that.”

“Oh good.” Eden squeezed him carefully. “I think it’s time we got down to some basic physics, don’t you?”

He sighed. “If we must.”

“How about if I promise to show you what I know about a perfect vacuum?”

Even in the low light, Eden could see Sean’s eyes crossing. She laughed, eager to pursue this topic, hungry for whatever else they could come up with during the night ahead.

Her notes lay forgotten on the counter as Sean tugged her back to bed. There’d be time enough to write the story. Right now, it was time for one thing only.

More research.

Chapter Seven

"Why didn't you guys *tell* me?"

Eden was bubbling over with excitement as she sat around Fenny's table, looking at the four smiling faces of her friends.

"We did." Dee looked at her helplessly. "You just didn't listen to us."

"I mean about what a difference it makes adding a sexual element to the story."

"Eden, your stories are phenomenal. Even without the sex." Fenny stared at her. "I don't care what your editor tells you, it's all there on the page."

"Yes, but—" Eden waved her hands absently. "Putting the sex in there adds so much more. Now it *really* makes sense that Allison goes a little nuts when Bryan starts exhibiting the symptoms—"

"No diseases, please. I'm eating." Stella interrupted Eden by reaching over for a cookie.

"Honey, nothing's really changed. You're just adding another layer to your story."

"I know, Fenny. The plot's still there. But I guess it's a thrill to find something that works with the plot, adds a kick to the book *and* keeps my editor happy all at once."

Dini leaned toward her. "You wrote four chapters since when, *Sunday*?" She blinked. "It's only Wednesday. I'm so frickin' jealous. Now stop with the writer stuff and tell us about the *good* stuff. Sean. Sex. Orgasms."

"Oh lord." Eden blushed.

"Yeah. What she said." Dee brushed cookie crumbs off her hands. "Is he hell in the sack, or what?"

"C'mon, Eden." Dini looked encouragingly at her. "Now you're writing sex, that's gotta mean you're *having* sex. And good sex too."

Dee nodded. "Yep. We write fiction. So I have to imagine the West at sunset and what it feels like to do it on horseback. I can do that. But it'll be a whole lot better if I can talk Cam into coming with me to rent a horse one of these days. Realism, you know."

"And I've never done it in zero gravity, Eden." Dini looked crestfallen. "Jonas couldn't get me a trip on the Vomit Comet. He did try though."

Fenny rolled her eyes. "Eeeeeuww. Why you'd want one is beyond me. Going up that high, freefalling for ten seconds—no thank you."

"Coward." Dini shrugged. "I need the experience. Just *think* of anti-gravity sex, Fenny. The possibilities..."

Eden felt a stab of envy at Dini's boundless quest for adventure, but then Stella touched her arm.

"Did you come, Eden? More than once?" Stella grinned. "Spill it."

"Now girls." Fenny's lips curled into a smile. "Eden'll tell us when she's ready." She paused. "Are you ready, Eden? Because if you're not, your cookie supply is going to be shut off. Immediately."

Eden looked at them, her friends, fellow writers, supporters and cheerleaders. They'd come to mean so much to her, to play such an important role in her life. They cared about her, for no other reason than they liked her. What else could she do?

She licked her lips. "Any of you ever hear of Tantric sex?" A couple of heartbeats of complete silence followed.

"Oooh." Dini broke it with a word of surprise.

"Hey now." Dee's eyebrows rose.

"You contemplated *his* navel?" Fenny looked stunned.

"You both came for hours and hours and hours, right?" Stella snickered.

Eden laughed aloud. "Sort of and not really. At least I don't think so." She took a sip of the soda sitting next to her, while her friends continued staring at her, mouths agape.

"No, I didn't contemplate his navel, nor he mine. At least not in any special way other than in the usual course of things." She blinked. "If that makes sense."

Fenny nodded. Then shook her head. "Yes. No. It doesn't make sense but it's fascinating. Go on."

Eden sighed. "It was...wonderful. One of those moments that your brain puts into the *utterly unforgettable* file."

"She came." Stella looked smug.

"Sure sounds like it," Dee agreed.

"Wait a minute here." Dini bounced on her chair. "Tantric sex. I want to know more. Did you have to...like, *smoke* something beforehand? Meditate? Put warm stones on each other? *What?*"

Stella giggled. "Dini, where do you get this stuff? How you gonna fuck a guy until he's brain dead if he's got hot stones on him? They'd fall off." She paused. "He's got his own *hot stones* anyway."

The general laughter that greeted this statement gave Eden a chance to catch her breath. "Okay, guys. It wasn't any of that zen stuff. It was just one of those beautifully karmic moments when bodies fit, the light's right, the stars are lined up and you're with a guy who's making everything perfect." She toyed with her soda can. "He cooked dinner for me."

"He cooks?"

"That's pretty Tantric of him."

Eden grinned at Fenny and Stella. "Not only cooks, but cooks *Hungarian* food. He made me chicken Paprikash. It was awesome." She sighed. "And he likes it when I eat. He gets mad if I start with the whole I-need-to-diet thing. And I guess he *does* like me the way I am, since he..." Her voice trailed off. Some things she really couldn't share, even with her closest friends. She couldn't tell them about the "lessons" she and Sean had shared. How she'd spent considerable time with his cock in her mouth, only to

have him fulfill a promise and lick her from head to toe, making her squirm, pant and finally scream out yet another orgasm.

Nope, not sharing that.

"I'm so glad." Fenny was at her side, hugging her. "Sometimes we have to see ourselves through other people's eyes. Especially men's eyes. Otherwise we get hung up on all the wrong things, believe me."

Eden glanced up at her. "You too?"

"Sure." Fenny nodded. "I had the age thing against me. I never imagined Michael would be interested in an older woman. I didn't feel *desirable*, you know?" She grinned. "He taught me otherwise, bless him." She held Eden at arm's length and studied her face. "I'm thinking Sean is teaching you that you're pretty damn gorgeous and sexy."

The color burned in Eden's cheeks. "Well, yeah. I guess."

"Yaaaay!" Dini thumped the table enthusiastically. "This is totally awesome, Eden. So when can I meet him and pick his brains about nuclear particles?"

"Uhhh..." Eden gulped.

"What're his plans for the end of this course, Eden?" Dee looked serious. "He's not a permanent appointment at the University, right?"

Eden shook her head. "No. But he's extended his summer course through the next academic year. He's here until next May at least." She flattened her hands on the table and spread her fingers. "After that? Well, we'll face that when it comes."

"And so you've got a boyfriend now, too." Dini smiled, a huge happy smile from ear to ear.

Eden sputtered out a gurgle of laughter. "God, there's got to be a better word than *boyfriend*. I'm way beyond having a boyfriend in my life."

"Lover?" Fenny tossed it out.

"Stud?" Stella smirked.

"Penile support?" Dee quirked an eyebrow, then lifted both of them at the resultant laughter. "What? It's true, isn't it?"

Eden nodded. "In some ways, I suppose it is. But he's more than that. Much more."

"Sounds like it could get intense, babe." Dee's gaze was fixed on Eden's face.

"It could. I hope it will." Eden nodded then paused. "In fact, I think it already has." She pressed a hand to her body, as if she felt something sharp digging into her. "It scares the crap out of me, if you want the truth."

"Been there." Fenny sighed. "We're all scared, Eden. That's a good sign. It means that Sean is important now. That you care about him, about your relationship. If you didn't care, you wouldn't feel scared."

"She's right." Dini agreed. "It's a big step, letting someone into your life when you haven't done it before. And yes, it's a big fat scary thing. I didn't sleep for a week after meeting Jonas."

Dee chuckled at that. "Well, you were fucking his brains out most of the time, which probably explains it."

"Pppffffffhhtttttt." Dini stuck her tongue out at Dee.

"Nothing wrong with that." Stella casually licked melted chocolate chips off her fingers. "Besides, you tore up the sheets with Cam, didn't you, Dee? Can't throw stones if you're in a glass house, honey."

Eden watched as Dee's lips curled and Fenny calmly moved in to divert any bitch-slapping potential.

"Whatever." She dismissed the argument. "I'm just real pleased that our Eden's now officially orgasmic." She raised her soda. "A toast. To physics, physics professors, our special guys and orgasms."

"Hear hear."

As everyone joined Fenny's toast, the strains of some hot jazz sounded and four women glanced down at their bags while Dini patted her jeans pocket.

"Mine." Stella dived into her briefcase, pulling out her cell phone and frowning at it as she answered it.

"So seriously, Eden. Can I meet Sean soon?" Dini touched Eden's arm. "I really do have a whole bunch of questions he might be able to help me with."

"Give me a little time to get used to being with him, Dini. It's all real new right now and I need to make sure he's ready before..." Eden never had chance to finish her answer.

"Holy fucking shit."

Stella was sitting, stunned, her mouth open, staring at her cell phone.

"Stella?" Fenny was beside her in an instant. "Are you okay, honey? Was it bad news?"

Stella blinked. "I don't think so." She swallowed. "That was my sister. You know, Callie the dweeb?"

They all nodded.

"I can't believe it. She just told me she'd won a sweepstakes prize."

"Oooh. That's fabulous."

"Wow. Did she make pots of money?"

"What was it, a big fancy sports car?"

Stella shook her head and sighed as she put her cell phone away then turned to her friends.

"Get this. My geeky sister's just won an all-expenses-paid trip to a resort. In Florida." She paused. "And it's *clothing-optional*..."

About the Author

Sahara Kelly was transplanted from old England to New England, where she now lives with her husband and teenage son. Making the transition from her historical regency novels to Romantica™ has been surprisingly easy, and now Sahara can't imagine writing anything else. She is dedicated to the premise that everybody should have fantasies.

Sahara welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and e-mail address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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