

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*



Rev Me Up

Adele Dubois

Lisa has always been a Good Girl. When she flashes her breasts at the hunk riding by on his Harley, her wild impulse seems like harmless fun. How could she know he'd hit the curb and land at her feet? To make amends with the cop from Santa Fe, Lisa agrees to a cocktail with him. When she slides on the bike and wraps her arms around Antonio's buff body, they take off on the ultimate ride.

Antonio's in town for his brother's graduation before heading to FBI training. Lisa's there to break up with her cheating midshipman boyfriend. Revenge sex with a hot cop may be the perfect way to unleash her inner Bad Girl. But can she keep her feelings casual?

With sexy Antonio by her side and the lust blazing between them, this Bad Girl may have a chance to have it all. As long as an ex-boyfriend out for revenge doesn't destroy her new happiness.

Note: This book has been expanded from the original story published elsewhere.

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Rev Me Up

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Trademark Acknowledgements

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Midol: Bayer Corp.

Motrin: Mc Neil-PPC., Inc.

Pepto-Bismol: Proctor & Gamble Co.

Sudafed Sinus: Mc Neil-PPC. Inc.

Chapter One

The first thing Antonio Alvarez noticed about the woman on the sidewalk was her waist-length, light brown hair. He revved his Harley and watched her stroll along the curb line of this high-end tourist avenue with her head high and tanned arms swinging. Her hair swayed along her back, swishing between her shoulder blades, the tips caressing her bare waist above the rolled-down shorts curving over her hips. The white stretch of fabric that barely covered her round, slightly protruding butt clung to the split in her cheeks like the skin on a ripe peach. Below, the hem flashed orbs of alabaster skin like tiny quarter moons. A thong framed her tight, exquisite ass. Long, taut, tanned legs and small feet in high espadrilles moved in time to the sway of her hair. She must have heard his motorcycle behind her then, because she looked over her left shoulder and slowed her stride to check him out.

When she turned her face, their eyes met and Antonio's adrenaline surged as if she had kissed him. His heart raced and he revved the engine of his bike again. The noise made her laugh, a clear, pleasant sound that reverberated through the air, linking them. He breathed in her laugh, trying to capture the peal inside his chest to cheer him the rest of the day.

Antonio smiled.

The woman smiled back, flashing white, perfect teeth. The symmetry of her sculpted features and open, friendly expression drew him closer. Passersby strolled in the opposite direction eating ice cream, walking their dogs or pointing out quaint shops to visit. Antonio barely noticed them. The woman in the woven espadrilles, tight white shorts and gauzy red cotton tank top stood out in the crowd like a holograph against a flat surface. Suddenly, the reason for his visit to Annapolis vanished. Antonio needed to meet this woman and see her again.

And again.

Looking at her jolted his dulled senses and numbed heart to life after a long drought. He hadn't so much as glanced at another woman since Estela's death. It had been eighteen months since the woman he loved was killed in the line of duty and he had never been unfaithful to her memory.

Until now.

The woman on the sidewalk revived him like a swim upward from the cold depths of the sea.

His friends would say it was about time.

Antonio slowed and moved closer to the line of parked cars, allowing the traffic to go around him. He followed her on his bike and she played along, sauntering down the

street at an easy pace, smiling at him over her shoulder from time to time to let him know she accepted him there. For an instant he thought he saw a likeness to Estela in her smile, but the resemblance faded again with her profile.

He sped up for a better frontal view of her body. Scarlet lip gloss covered her full mouth. Red and gold hoop earrings peeked from beneath her long mane of hair. A filmy red tank top stopped at her midriff, revealing a red rhinestone bellybutton ring. Antonio's mouth watered. He wanted to drag his tongue from the hem of her shirt to the waistband of her shorts, lick a circle around the bellybutton ring and feel her hips quiver beneath his hands.

His eyes swept up and over her again. The tank top was edged in red lace, capping the tops of her large, firm breasts and hugging her cleavage. Her nipples were hard and protruded like ripe raisins inside the sheer fabric.

Antonio grinned. His presence excited her and that was good.

Her straw purse swung from the hand at her side. There were no rings on her fingers. He smiled again.

Excellent.

They reached the corner and the woman stopped to cross the street. Antonio slowed beside her. "What's your name?" he shouted over the purr of his engine.

The woman lifted her mouth in a sly, foxy grin. "Why should I tell you?" she shouted back.

"Because I'm the man you're going to marry," he called out, wishing he could kick himself in the head for saying such a dumb thing out loud. If he hadn't thought of Estela the moment before, he probably wouldn't have said it. But the memory of his lover reminded him how close he had once come to the altar.

He shook his head like he was trying to clear it. Shouting "marriage" to the *gringa* on the sidewalk had sounded like a limp dick line.

Apparently the woman disagreed, because she threw her head back and laughed. The sound revealed intrigue, not scorn. Antonio relaxed.

She licked her incredible, glossy lips. "Lisa. Lisa Gibson," she called.

The name would be tattooed on his brain forever.

Lisa.

She crossed the street at the intersection and continued her walk. Antonio switched gears and kept pace beside her, keeping one eye out for cars, pedestrians, strollers and roaming animals.

"Stop and talk to me!" Antonio called after her. The visit with his brother at the Naval Academy could wait.

She walked faster, teasing, as if trying to get away from him. The muscles of her trim legs moved in rhythmic time with the curve of her ass, and her high, full breasts swayed lightly as the breeze lifted her hair. She brushed stray strands from her eyes and looked over at him, clearly deciding.

"How can we get married if you won't talk to me first?" What the hell. He was into the banter now.

She shrugged, pretending disinterest. Her quick side-glance in his direction told him otherwise. Encouraged, Antonio followed, watching her limbs move between the breaks in the cars parked along the avenue.

He spotted a pub on the next far corner. "Want to stop for a drink?" He shouted over the hood of the sports car that blocked his view of her until she moved forward again.

Lisa quickened her pace, keeping time with him. "Okay."

Her mischievous smile reached all the way to her eyes and his heart leaped. He imagined sliding his hand along her smooth inner thigh beneath a secluded table and lifting the hem of her shorts with the tips of his fingers until they met heat.

Antonio gunned the engine, speeding up, anxious to get to the bar. But instead of keeping up with him, Lisa stopped dead on the sidewalk. Antonio twisted around in his seat just in time to see her raise her tank top over her chest and flash him her bare breasts.

The last thing he remembered before the crash was the perfect circumference of her pink, pointy nipples and the gravity-defying fullness of D-cup breasts that sucked the air from his lungs. The motorcycle seemed to take on a life of its own in that moment, with Antonio's eyes riveted to Lisa's magnificent tits. He sailed away between two parked cars and smacked the side of the curb with the Harley's front tire. Man and bike moved in one continuous arc of suspended slow motion before Antonio hit the ground and the Harley turned over on the sidewalk beside him. The last words he muttered before blackness came were, "No fucking helmet."

Antonio opened his eyes through a haze of pain, flat on his back on the dirty sidewalk, to the most voluptuous breasts he had ever seen hovering over his face. Soft hands cradled his head. The white crescent moons lifted up and down, up, down with each breath—leaning so close he could almost touch them with the tip of his tongue. He wanted to lift his head just one more inch—a tiny, nearly infinitesimal motion that would lead him to bliss, the place marked by the soft, round fullness of the heavy pillows skimming his nose.

He strained to follow the deep, dark recess of her cleavage, lost inside the red tank top that stretched over nipples as taut and long as pencil erasers. He traced the areolas with his eyes beneath the ultra thin cotton and, as he did, licked his lips. The sudden ache inside his jeans rivaled the bruise on his head.

"Are you okay?" Her voice was warm and lush like her body. Welcoming and open. Throaty. Lisa finished checking the base of his skull and laid his head with care against the hard pavement. Her hands were gentle, but strong. She sat back on her heels so that her eyes met his.

"You have quite a goose egg. We need to get you some ice."

She was worried; he could tell by the lines that formed between her furrowed, light brown brows and emerald green eyes. Could eyes that beautiful be real? His gaze dropped to her mouth. Oh man, despite the pounding in his head, he could think of a hundred things to do with a mouth as luscious as hers. A thousand. She wet her bottom lip with her tongue, clearly scared, unaware that the sight of her moist, pink tongue was the cause of the moan escaping his throat.

"Should I call an ambulance?" She rifled through the handbag resting beside her on the pavement, probably for a cell phone.

He reached up to her, trying to talk, but all he could do was shake his head and wince. His fingers brushed the side of her breast before settling on her bare forearm, and an electric shock shot through his groin at the softness of her skin.

What the hell was going on with him? Was lust a natural reaction to a motorcycle crash? Somehow, he didn't think so. Still, his insistent erection said otherwise. And hadn't fate brought him this incredibly sexy woman to wake up to?

She leaned over him again and her long hair fell forward, grazing his chest. He smelled the subtle fragrance of floral shampoo and took a deeper breath, trying to memorize the scent.

Lisa picked up his dislodged, hand-tooled brown leather wallet from the sidewalk. Her thumb circled the intricate designs before lifting it open. "Antonio Alvarez," she read aloud from his driver's license. "Santa Fe, New Mexico." Her eyes roamed the photograph and came back to his face, comparing. She traced her fingers over his police badge opposite the ID. "New Mexico's a long way from the Chesapeake Bay." She flipped the wallet closed. "Are you able to stand? You hit the ground pretty hard when your Harley jumped the curb."

She nibbled her lip again. "I'm really, really sorry. This is all my fault." Lisa leaned forward and over him again on her knees, arms straight, supporting herself with the palms of her hands. Her tank top fell away from her skin, giving Antonio a long look at paradise.

He imagined taking her from behind right here, opening the shell pink folds of her ready pussy and pounding himself against the curve of her ass until they both screamed with pleasure.

"I never really thought we'd see each other again. I wasn't going to actually meet you. We were just having fun, right? I got caught up in the moment." Fingers tapped the leather wallet. "And I hate cops. They're just as bad as naval officers. Cheaters and liars. If I'd known you were a cop I wouldn't have flashed you in the first place."

"This isn't Mardi Gras," Antonio growled. What made a woman bare her breasts to a total stranger? And what did she mean she wasn't planning to meet him? He was no cheater. Or liar.

A small crowd had gathered and a police siren sounded a few blocks over. Antonio blinked away the last of his daze and boosted himself to his elbows.

Lisa sat back on her heels again, watching him with wide-eyed worry as he hoisted himself from the concrete. He brushed dust and debris from the seat of his jeans and the shoulders of his black t-shirt before stepping over to his bike. Lisa stood and followed. The crowd lost interest at the apparent lack of blood and broken bones and moved on.

"Is your Harley okay?" She looked at Antonio's face and back to the chrome and leather as if trying to read them.

Antonio slid his hands over the spokes and wheels and then righted the cycle to standing position. He ran a critical eye over the length of the vehicle. "It seems fine. Better shape than me." He rubbed his sore elbow and touched the knot on the back of his head.

"I'm so glad." Her eyes widened again. "Not that you're hurt, I mean, but that your bike is all right. I feel bad enough as it is without having your motorcycle damaged too."

"Any cars scratched?" He turned toward the pale blue VW Beetle parked behind him.

"No, they're fine. Luckily, the car parked in front of the VW pulled out before the crash. There was enough space for your Harley to get through before you hit the curb."

"Lucky me." Antonio was unable to resist the dig. He enjoyed watching Lisa blush. His eyes dropped to her breasts and he realized how lucky he was to have seen them naked.

Though the sight had cost him.

His head pounded with a dull, rhythmic ache. "Got any Motrin inside that purse?"

Lisa opened her bag and pulled out a small bottle of pills. Inside were blue tablets, pink squares, white oblongs and brown ovals. "I've got Motrin, Midol, Pepto-Bismol and Sudafed Sinus." She shook a Motrin to the surface and handed it over.

Antonio popped the pain reliever into his mouth and swallowed it dry. "Thanks."

A police officer parked and got out of his car, lights flashing behind him as he approached the sidewalk. "This your Harley?"

Antonio nodded and reached for his ID badge. "I hopped the curb. We were just leaving."

"Anyone hurt? Need medical attention?" The cop looked from Antonio to Lisa.

Antonio shook his head and suppressed another wince.

"Miss?"

"Everything's fine, Officer. Thanks."

The patrolman nodded and went back to his cruiser. He switched off the red light and pulled away.

Antonio said, "You still owe me that drink. After getting me into an accident, it's the least you can do. And I deserve a chance to prove I'm one of the good guys."

Lisa snorted. "Men in uniform are all the same. Different colors, same cloth."

"I was born and bred in the West. Think valor and pioneering spirit." He offered his most charming grin.

"Think rattlesnakes and cactus." She shook her head. "Better not get close."

"Do I *look* prickly?"

Lisa chuckled. "I won't try to answer that." She met his eyes again and sighed. "But I guess I can't really refuse you a drink after what I did."

Antonio mounted his Harley and motioned for Lisa to hop on the back. He decided to keep going until they reached the harbor and the marina bar. Anything to keep her with him. He was relieved when Lisa agreed to the drive.

She slid in behind him and wrapped her arms tightly around his waist. He resisted the urge to moan at the feel of her grip on his body. Long, silky legs clung to his hips and he fought off the desire to caress them. When she pressed against his back with her warm, full breasts crushed against his spine, his cock stiffened again.

He imagined Lisa kneeling in front of him, taking his hard length into her mouth to the root and rubbing his balls with her fingertips while he leaned against his Harley. She would pull him out slowly, gliding her full lips along his shaft to the tip, licking the head of his cock with her wet, pink tongue.

He pressed the accelerator and his bike roared, ripping him from the fantasy. His erection throbbed.

A glance in the tilted rearview mirrors showed his passenger, not the traffic. He decided not to readjust the skewed mirrors right away. He watched as Lisa's hair flew behind her while they sped down the street. Men stared at her as they drove past, lust apparent on their faces. Antonio beamed with pride—and something else he couldn't at first identify. It took him a moment to realize the long lost emotion was...happiness.

It felt great to have his optimism back.

Ten minutes later, they reached the harbor. Sailboats, fishing vessels and yachts docked in the marina swayed in rhythmic time beside an upscale bayside inn. Blue skies and white clouds framed the panoramic coast. Antonio parked and helped Lisa dismount. He gripped her smooth, small hand in his and held it while their feet crunched over gravel toward the restaurant bar. A captain's wheel that said *Welcome to Pirate's Inn* adorned the heavy wooden door.

They found a dark booth at the rear of the bar with a half moon shaped seat cushion roomy enough for two. Its square-topped table was draped with a long, white tablecloth and had two chairs facing it on the opposite side. Antonio waited while Lisa scooted across the leather seat. He slid in next to her, leg touching hers, and relishing the warmth of her thigh through the fabric of his denims.

A casually dressed waiter sauntered to their table. At this time of day only a few tourists dotted the bar. Bowls of pretzels and oyster crackers lay waiting for the early dinner crowd. A single, middle-aged bartender wiped down the counter while soft rock filtered through the sound system. "What can I get you?" the waiter asked. He took their drinks order and disappeared across the dim room.

"What brings you to Annapolis?" Antonio leaned in closer, touching his shoulder to hers, turning his body slightly so he could see her stunning green eyes.

"What else?" she replied, with a shrug. "A guy."

Antonio swallowed his disappointment. "You have a boyfriend?" The vow he made a year ago when he said, "no more entanglements with women," vanished. "Is he somebody I can take?" He forced a chuckle.

To his relief, she smiled back. "Maybe. I came here to break up with him. He's a midshipman at the Naval Academy. His name is Rick. I found out he's been cheating on me. Probably for a long time."

Wow. The guy must be nuts. "Most men would kill for a woman like you." Antonio raised his arm and laid it along the back of the seat with his hand resting on Lisa's shoulder. To his surprise, she leaned her head against the inside of his arm and relaxed a little.

"Where are you staying?" he asked.

"The Riptide Hotel, outside town. We passed it on the way here."

"How were you planning to get to the campus? Did you rent a car?"

"I use taxis and the train. It's easier that way."

Antonio wondered how easy it would be to make a fast getaway by cab after a breakup. He pictured Rick chasing Lisa down the walkways of the Academy and then convincing her to change her mind.

He offered a better solution.

"I'll drive you there. I'm in Annapolis to see my brother, Tomas. He graduates from the Academy in two days."

"So does Rick. Small world, isn't it?" She tilted her head. "Hmm, he has a roommate named Thomas. Or maybe it's Tomas. I wonder if he's your brother."

The name Rick niggled at the back of Antonio's mind. Didn't Tomas have a roomie named Richard Bennett? He referred to him sometimes as Rick B. The B was for Baller. The Baller had a reputation for humping half the women in town. It was rumored that the more willing females were referred to his friends for occasional "dates". In return for these arrangements, Rick collected a nice fee, which explained why the guy always seemed to have cash.

How in the world did The Baller get someone as spectacular as Lisa? And why in the hell would the guy cheat on her? She was a living fantasy.

Antonio squeezed her shoulder as the waiter brought their drinks, a margarita for her and a Jack with rocks on the side for him. They lifted their glasses in a toast.

"To chance meetings and new beginnings," he said.

"And the health of my future husband," she added, blushing while she smiled at their private joke.

Antonio grinned. How she could blush over an innocent joke when she'd flashed him her breasts was a mystery. Still, he liked her sudden shyness. And he certainly more than liked Lisa.

They sipped their drinks and placed them back on the table. Antonio ran his fingers through strands of her hair.

"Do you really hate cops? Even Latino, reliable types like me?" He leaned over and grazed the fullness of her cheek with his lips, testing for a response, before pulling back.

"Not the guys on *Law and Order* or *CSI*. And I guess I have to admit you're...intriguing." She squeezed his biceps. "You're better looking than most, I'll grant you that. I like muscular men. And you have honest eyes."

She lifted her hand to the back of his head. "We haven't gotten any ice for your wound."

"Ice is the last thing I want to touch right now."

"Oh." She traced the line of his jaw with her fingertips. "What *do* you want?"

"I think you know exactly." He lowered his mouth to hers in a soft first kiss. Her mouth was warm and sweet with the taste of tequila. Antonio deepened the kiss, opening his mouth to brush his tongue along the inside of her bottom lip. She inhaled and responded in kind, taking his tongue inside her mouth and sucking it gently. Antonio moaned. It had been too long since he'd felt a woman in his arms. His cock rose inside his jeans, quivering, begging for her touch. He ran his tongue over hers again and then withdrew, kissing her full on the mouth before lifting her chin with the back of his hand.

Her breathing caught as Antonio pressed his lips to her neck and ran his tongue along the curve of her throat to the hollow of her collarbone. He lapped at the tender skin and heard her sharp intake of breath as he lowered his face to lick the tops of her breasts. The tips of her nipples struggled against the fabric of her tank top. He longed to pinch them and draw them into his mouth.

"Ahem."

Antonio opened his eyes and rested a butterfly kiss on the tiny beauty mark inside Lisa's cleavage.

"Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt."

Antonio could tell the waiter wasn't sorry at all.

The young server glanced nervously toward the bartender, probably his boss, as if to say, "I was sent to tell you to knock it off. This is a public place."

Instead, he said, "I wondered if your drinks are satisfactory. Would you like to order something from the menu?"

"Everything's fine," Antonio replied. He got the message. "We'll order food in a few minutes. Come back later."

The waiter nodded, glancing back to the bar. "Sure, okay. Be back in five minutes."

Antonio reached for a menu and opened it wide. The length and width of the cover blocked his body from view of the bar from his chest to his waist. "Hey, check this out. No one can see anything except my face and the tips of my fingers."

Lisa touched the edge of her menu to his, creating a large, private screen. "Now why would we need this?" Her lips twitched with mischief. She leaned over and kissed his lips lightly, once. She held her menu by the spine and ran the fingers of her free hand along his arm and across his chest. "I have to admit, this is a first for me. I've never made out with a total stranger in a restaurant before."

"Do you like it?" Antonio searched her eyes. "I hope so, because I'm overwhelmed by you." This woman could bring him to his knees if he wasn't careful.

"Yes." Her whispered reply matched the flash of desire he saw in her eyes.

Relief made him bolder. He brought his fingertips to her warm shoulder, trailed them to the swell of her breast and then fondled the soft curve. When she didn't stop him, he kissed the side of her cheek and hiked her tank top over her chest. Lisa's heavy breasts were bared like a surprise package. Her nipples hardened instantly at the change in temperature and her areola puckered.

Antonio groaned. "Your body is incredible." He cupped a breast in his palm, reveling in the silky feel of her skin. He captured the long, hard nipple between two fingers and rolled it between them. Lisa sighed and pressed tighter against his hand. He rubbed harder.

"I think the other one is feeling left out," he teased.

"Mmm."

Antonio pinched her left nipple and watched as the pink skin darkened. He ran the tips of his fingers around the areola and smiled as the skin constricted with his touch. His knuckles played against the round swell of her cleavage and seemed to disappear inside the valley between. He ran his hand across both breasts a final time and sighed with pleasure. Inside his jeans, his dick was rock-hard.

Reluctantly, he lowered her tank top as the waiter came back to the table.

"Ready?"

Antonio and Lisa exchanged knowing looks and closed their menus.

"So ready I could eat for hours." He looked at Lisa again and licked his mouth. He could almost taste her.

At the inference, Lisa's eyes widened.

The server swallowed hard. "What can I get you?"

Antonio noticed the boner the waiter carried and decided to torment him a little. He thumbed Lisa's nipple lazily across the front of her cotton tank top while ordering beer-battered shrimp and fries.

The waiter dropped his pencil and leaned down to pick it up. His baby face flushed as he stood and made eye contact with Lisa.

She smiled and, going along with the game, leaned over to kiss Antonio's earlobe. She ran the length of her tongue around the small orb and then nibbled it between her teeth. "I'll have the same," she said, breathing into Antonio's ear. Lisa faced the waiter again and shot him a two hundred-watt smile.

The waiter turned crimson and a bead of sweat formed along his sparsely bristled top lip. He gulped audibly. "Got it." Two short legs walked away from the table fast.

"That was fun," Antonio said, grazing Lisa's lips with a quick kiss. "But more is better, if you're willing."

"Will I like what you have in mind?"

"I think you're gonna love it. You have to promise, though, not to make a sound." Antonio met Lisa's eyes. "Will you sit still, no matter how good I make you feel?"

Lisa's face lit up and her green eyes sparkled. "Like a statue, baby."

Chapter Two

She sipped her margarita while they waited for their food. Her eyes roamed the length of Antonio's fantastic body from his hips to his neck. The bulges of his sculpted arms pressed against the sleeves of the black tee he wore, enticing her to trace the curves with her index finger.

Looking at him this close, he was even more handsome than he'd seemed on his Harley. Dark, piercing eyes and straight Castilian nose. Square jaw, clean, straight teeth and full mouth. Skin the color of vanilla caramel. His lips tasted both pungent and sweet like the whiskey and he smelled faintly of musk cologne, leather and sweat.

Desire rippled through her as his hand traveled the length of her thigh under the table. The peach-colored thong she wore dampened. Her abdomen tightened with anticipation as his fingers played at the hem.

"Tell me about yourself," she said as a distraction. "You drove a long way from New Mexico to see your brother graduate. Is he older or younger?" She tried to concentrate as he probed her slit with two fingers across the silky width of her panties. Her clit stiffened and she spread her legs slightly by reflex.

He grinned at her, clearly pretending his hand wasn't seeking moister pastures. "Younger by three years. When our father died of cancer—he was a cop too—I helped my mother rear Tomas. She worked a lot, so my brother and I became very close."

"And he wants a military career?" She tried to sit still as his thumb found the hard bud beneath the fabric of her thong and pressed.

Antonio nodded. "All the men in our family have served in one way or another. After the ceremony, I'm riding to Virginia for FBI training at Quantico." He leaned closer and his hot breath brushed her hair. A shiver ran from her neck to her chest, squeezing her nipples into hard pearls.

He tucked locks of her hair behind her ear and blew into it softly. "When I become FBI, I won't wear a uniform. Will you like me better then?"

"Do trench coats count?"

"Absolutely not." His thumb began to move.

An ocean was filling her shorts. Lisa's nipples ached and her pussy throbbed with need. She had never been so recklessly attracted to a man before. Not even Rick.

But, my God, what was she doing here?

She thought of Rick again and a flash of anger shot through her. He had called her a tight-ass. A lousy lay. He claimed he liked his women spicy, not sweet, and told her to lighten up or lose him.

Rick wanted a slut? Well, she'd decided to dress the part for once and see how he liked it. She would flaunt her boobs and ass while she said goodbye. But Rick would never have her again.

She thought of the letter inside her purse, from an angry woman who demanded Lisa give Ricky up. Her heart hardened. No problem. In the meantime, she would open her legs for someone new and flaunt the affair in Rick's face. It would serve him right, though it would barely even the score.

Dismissing thoughts of Rick, she turned her attention back to Antonio and the delicious movement of his thumb. Her gaze followed the lines of his powerful neck and shoulders. She bet the man had stamina. A relentless throb pounded between her legs, keeping rhythm with the digit brushing her swollen clit beneath the fabric of her thong. With a little more pressure, she would climax. She licked her mouth and sucked the fullness of her bottom lip at the thought of what lay beneath the zipper of his jeans.

Antonio moaned. "When you do that with your mouth, it drives me crazy."

Lisa stared at him through a haze of arousal and lifted her hips a fraction. Orgasm loomed.

"I told you not to move. Keep absolutely still."

She took a deep breath and relaxed her hips again. "Okay. I'll try."

"Do better than that...or I'll stop." His grin was wolfish as he paused over her clitoris and lifted his hand away.

"You bastard," Lisa said, but there was no heat in her words. She wanted him inside her. Fingers, cock, any part of him at all. "Don't you dare stop."

"Or what?" Antonio leaned closer and met her eyes again. His voice teased. "You'll scream? Flash your breasts for the other patrons?"

"Maybe. Or maybe I just won't fuck you later."

Antonio winced. "Ouch. That would be a bad thing. I wouldn't like that at all." He pretended defeat. "Guess I'd better continue." His fingers returned to her mound to play.

Lisa sighed.

The waiter approached their table with plates of shrimp. Antonio and Lisa sat straight in their seats and Lisa covered her lap with the hem of the tablecloth. Antonio lifted the elastic band of her thong with one finger and probed her wet opening. Lisa stifled a moan. He laid his finger across her slit and gathered essence on his fingertip. She could feel his slick finger slide away as he freed his hand from her panties and brought it back to the edge of the table.

The waiter served their food.

"It looks great." Antonio smiled at the waiter.

He looked back at Lisa and his dark eyes smoldered like hot coals. "I bet it tastes as good as it smells." He leaned his chin against his fist. Lisa watched as he inhaled her aroma from his middle finger.

The waiter's eyes ravished Lisa's breasts. He paused, taking a final look at her before moving away. "Enjoy your meal."

Antonio chuckled. "Oh we will." He leaned into her and traced his damp finger over her lips so that she could taste herself. "Lick your lips and bite them again. The way you do that drives me insane."

Lisa closed her eyes and complied. The end of his rough, thick finger lined her bottom lip and touched the tip of her tongue. Salt and a mild ocean scent blended to excite her senses.

He sucked his finger into his mouth as she opened her eyes. "Delicious." His eyes burned into her. "Like creamery butter and fine lobster tail. I can hardly wait to tongue fuck you."

Lisa's heart pounded so hard she could barely breathe. A long moan escaped her lips, though she tried to stop it. The room around her faded. She imagined his tongue probing her opening and then thrusting inside, rocking against her slippery walls. A jolt of lightning shot through her. "My hotel isn't far."

Did she actually say that out loud? Could she sound any more desperate and idiotic?

Antonio nodded. "Mine's close too." He pointed to their food. "But let's eat our meal first." He dipped a shrimp into cocktail sauce and fed it to her. "I'm not really hungry, but I like being here with you."

Lisa sucked the batter from her lips and opened her legs again. She wanted Antonio's hand back where it was – between her thighs.

He must have read her mind because, seconds later, after chewing a large shrimp, he whispered, "Take off your shorts."

"Off?" Her heart skittered inside her chest. Their play would go from very naughty to practically anti-social if she removed her pants inside a public restaurant. "Isn't that illegal?"

"No one can see us. Drop them to the floor so you can spread your legs for me." He nudged her ear with his nose. "C'mon. I want to see your slit."

Lisa shivered lightly. "Do you always do this with women in restaurants?"

"I copped a feel from my girlfriend Estela in line once at McDonald's. Does that count?"

Lisa smirked. "No, I don't think so." She tilted her head and watched him beneath lowered lids. "Who's Estela?" Antonio was probably cheating on Estela right now. Men in uniform would have sex with a willing woman whenever or wherever they could.

Just ask her mom.

She considered the sentiment and a flash of shame washed over her. Today *she* was the willing woman. What possessed her to act this way? Her behavior was totally out of character.

The answer came in a rush.

Revenge.

And she was enjoying it.

Antonio lifted her chin with two fingers and met her eyes. "Estela is a woman from my past. She's gone now." He waved his hand in a sign of reluctance to say more. "Look, I've never done this before. Believe me, I'm not that lucky. Do you think beautiful women take their clothes off for me every day?"

Antonio took her hand. "This is *loco*, I know." He leaned over and whispered against her cheek. "*Lo siento*. I'm sorry. I just got caught up in the moment."

Lisa had to laugh. "*Touché*."

"We're attracted to each other. That's all there is to it." Antonio brushed the words against the side of her mouth. "Or, at least, I'm devastated by you."

Lisa nudged him away. She needed a moment to think.

"And you're okay." She flicked a side-glance in his direction, checking his reaction. He seemed amused.

He was a tantalizing hunk and she'd wanted him from the first moment they'd made eye contact. Who was she kidding, saying "okay," as if he were nothing short of spectacular? But she was wary of men, especially men in uniform. And most especially, men in uniform in Annapolis. And for crying out loud, she barely knew him and he had already fondled her breasts and vagina. She *had* lost her mind.

"I have an idea," Antonio said. "Let's just concentrate on our food for a while. I want to get to know you. As far as I'm concerned, there's lots of time." He met her eyes and she was touched by the uncertainty she found there. He picked up a thick French fry and dipped the end in ketchup. "Open."

The fry touched her tongue and the tangy taste of tomato filled her mouth. She bit away the end and chewed. "Hmm, good. They're still warm."

Antonio traced the line of her lips with the tip of another potato. "Close your eyes," he said softly.

Shadows of light and dark filtered through her closed eyelids. Slick oil and the taste of salt coated the rim of her mouth and she licked them away. Her lips tingled from the feathery soft touch of the fry and her nipples hardened again.

"I could watch you do that all day. You have the most luscious mouth I've ever seen."

Lisa opened her eyes and smiled. "I know what you're thinking."

Antonio grinned and the satyr reappeared. "Do not."

"Oh yes, I do. About the blowjob this mouth could give you."

Antonio raised his eyebrows. "I can hope, can't I?"

Lisa had to laugh. She liked this guy more every minute. Though he was grittier than the men she'd dated before, he was easy to be with. She got the impression that what you saw was what you got with Antonio Alvarez. What a refreshing change.

Even if he was a cop.

"Tell me about yourself, Lisa Gibson. I want to know everything." Antonio popped another shrimp into her mouth and she chewed it before wiping her lips with a cloth napkin.

"Born and reared in a small Maryland town about an hour from here. I live with a roommate. We're computer geeks. I fix computers for a living."

Antonio seemed surprised. "No way."

"It's fun and I make a ton of money." She flashed him a grin. "It supports my lavish, hedonistic lifestyle. I pick men up in the street every day to indulge my fantasies when hard drives no longer turn me on."

The pupils of Antonio's eyes dilated and his lids became hooded. "I'd like to hear those fantasies." He leaned into her again. "Better yet, I want to fulfill them."

Lisa considered the man beside her. He was incredibly handsome, open and warm and had a fabulous body. He seemed able, and clearly willing, to bring her to multiple orgasms. Why was she holding back? How many women had a gorgeous guy offer to tongue fuck her?

Her panties dampened again and her labia swelled. Her clit throbbed and her breasts ached. She could smell her arousal through her clothes. This man was driving her wild, yet he had done no more in the past few minutes than feed her shrimp and fries.

She wanted his hand back inside her pants.

Now.

Lisa guided Antonio's hand to the warm space between her thighs. "My new fantasy includes both you *and* your Harley." She pressed her lips to his ear and whispered her deepest desires.

"*Con gusto*," he said, pulling at the waistband of her shorts. "Slide them off."

Lisa looked across the room from their dark corner and let her eyes travel to the other customers, the waiter and the bartender. Nobody watched them. The white tablecloth dragged nearly to the floor and the two chairs on the opposite side of the table offered extra cover.

She tucked the edges of her fingers inside the waistband of her shorts and thong and nudged them over her hips to the line of her public hair. At the first sight of her neatly trimmed bush, Antonio growled deep in his throat and traced the circle of her bellybutton ring with his heavy forefinger.

"My tongue goes there first. I love pierced navels."

Lisa smiled through her longing. "And after that, what will you do next?" The steady thump inside her chest made her voice quiver.

"Oh *bella* Lisa, you will soon find out." He tickled the crest of her mound with the edge of his nails and his eyes gleamed in seeming anticipation of the rest of her.

She tugged her shorts and panties over the swell of her hips in one smooth, continuous motion until they reached mid-thigh. Still holding on to the waistband, Lisa looked down and saw the short patch of light curls that brought the “Mmm” sound from Antonio’s lips. Feeling suddenly shy again, she paused. Could she really be doing this wild, reckless thing?

By the dazzling light in Antonio’s eyes, she knew she had reached an irreversible crossroad. If she stopped now, she could leave the restaurant and never look back. She could tuck the memory of Antonio away as an indiscreet, youthful skeleton in her still reasonably airy closet.

Then he rubbed the palm of his hand over her closed mound and hissed an expletive between his fine, white teeth. Lisa didn’t need to know Spanish to understand the meaning. She met his eyes. They dared her to open her thighs wide, to take her fingers and spread her labia, revealing the soft, delicate folds and hard bud inside. They challenged her to shed her doubts and enjoy the sexual experience awaiting her. He wanted to pleasure her, play with her and thrill her to climax.

Why not let him?

Antonio placed his hand over one of hers and tugged the waistband of her shorts. “You have nothing to fear from me,” he whispered. “It’s all right.” The lust she saw in his eyes seemed layered with reassurance. “I will stop whenever you want. If you want.” His hand paused, waiting for her cue. “And I am clean. Understand what I’m saying?”

When Lisa didn’t resist, he slid the edge of her shorts to her knees down one side and then the other. With one final push, her shorts and thong fell to her ankles on the carpet, hidden inside the tangle of chair legs and tablecloth tips. She lifted her feet and stepped out of their confines, kicking her sandals off too.

The leather seat felt cool and firm as it pressed against her naked bottom. Antonio shifted position and the cushion bobbed against her moist center. A surge of pleasure rushed through her as leather rippled along the base of her swollen pussy lips like massaging fingers.

Looking out over the quiet restaurant, she had to smile. From the waist up, she appeared like everyone else sharing a quiet meal or peaceful drink.

From the waist down, she was nude and on fire.

The thrill of committing a secret, illicit act shot adrenaline into her veins. She’d always been a Good Girl. Surges of energy raced through her blood.

“Turn toward me slightly,” Antonio said.

She lifted her right knee to the soft bench and used it as a lever to pivot her hips around. Her left leg dangled toward the floor for comfort while she draped her right leg over Antonio’s left thigh. The split in her pussy opened, exposing her pleasure center. Her clit was swollen to twice its normal size and throbbing with need.

Antonio moaned. “Your pussy is so pretty.”

Lisa used her thumbs and forefingers to open her vulva. Shivers ran through her and her nipples constricted beneath her tank top at the feel of her hands on her warm skin. Air conditioning wafted over her ready vagina, creating a pleasant temperature shift from hot to cool to hot again. Her clitoris seemed to lift and swell with her touch.

At the sight of her hard nipples and throbbing bud, Antonio's eyes flashed. "Masturbate for me. Slide your fingers in and out of yourself while I rub your clit." He glanced around the room. "Just don't make a sound and don't move a single part of your body except your hands. We don't want the waiter coming back to the table."

Lisa hoped she could last more than a few minutes. Colors were already forming behind her eyes and her breathing had slowed to an imperceptible rhythm. She looked down at her lap and watched while she slid two fingers inside her creamy opening and began to thrust.

Antonio circled her clit, matching the tempo she created. She sped up, fingering herself at a faster pace while Antonio increased the intensity on her sensitive bud. He decreased the pressure and touched her hand to slow it down, telling her silently not to come too quickly, to make it last. With his other hand, he took a French fry from his dish and traced her mouth. She chewed the end and swallowed and he laid the remainder on his plate. Taking another thick fry, he lowered it to her pussy.

Her fingers pumped in and out of her passage while the slick, oily French fry caressed her clitoris.

"You're incredible," he said. "Fantastic." He touched the small of her back with his free hand. "Are you ready?"

Lisa could no longer talk so she merely nodded her head. The brink of climax loomed as Antonio dropped the French fry to the floor and planted his wide thumb over her erect clit. He circled hard and fast while she thrust her fingers in and out of her channel. Thumb and fingers worked in perfect unison to lift her up and carry her away to the void.

She tried not to scream. *Don't attract attention*, she reminded herself through her sexual haze. Lisa remained perfectly still while she exploded across her fingers and into Antonio's hand. Waves of pleasure rolled over her in swift, hard rolls as her pussy tightened around her fingers and held them inside her. Antonio slowed the pace and pressure of his thumb, bringing her back with exquisite care to their time and space.

Seconds passed and her nipples softened, her vulva stopped throbbing and her passage relaxed. She took her fingers out of herself and reached inside her purse for tissues. She couldn't bring herself to look at Antonio yet.

She closed her eyes and kissed his cheek. "I'll be back. I need to use the ladies' room." She lifted her thong off the floor with her toes and stuffed it into her straw handbag. She guided her shorts over her feet and pulled them over her hips. Her espadrilles went on last.

Lisa went to the ladies' room to freshen up. When she looked in the mirror, nothing about her seemed mussed or amiss. No one could tell by looking at her that she'd just

had one of the best orgasms of her life. Only the twinkle deep in her eyes gave her satisfaction away.

She went to a stall to clean up and put on her thong. Afterward, she combed her long hair, washed her hands and reapplied lipstick.

When she emerged from the bathroom, Antonio was waiting on the other side of the door. He smiled and kissed her mouth tenderly. "I took care of the tab after my trip to the men's room. Let's go." He guided her by the elbow through the darkened bar toward the afternoon sunlight outside. A tall, well-muscled and tanned bouncer opened the heavy wooden door for her.

The security guard grinned widely, closing his eyes to near slits as he ravaged Lisa's breasts with his eyes. He ran his thick tongue across his lips as his glance traveled across her abdomen to the V between her thighs. Lisa watched Antonio to see if he noticed the guard's lecherous stare. Apparently he did, because he pushed the front door open wider and stepped back for Lisa to pass through.

"Thanks for choosing Pirate's Inn for your, uh, lunch," the bouncer said. He inched closer and whispered into Lisa's ear. "You were great. You made my day." Lisa felt her face flush while her breath caught. She met the man's deep blue eyes.

"See me the next time you come in, okay?" He handed her a tiny square videocassette. "This is the only copy." He tossed a glance in Antonio's direction. "I can do the same as him, only better." The bouncer glimpsed the wall above her head.

Lisa turned, followed his line of vision and lifted her chin to study the bank of monitors behind her. Her heart pounded so hard in her chest she could hear the rush of blood in her ears. Broadcast on the center screen, clear as day, was an overhead view of the booth she and Antonio had shared. A zoom lens brought the picture forward.

Their waiter was picking up a single French fry from the floor.

Antonio frowned, still holding the door, not understanding the delay.

Lisa pointed to the security screens and held up the videotape. "Surprise," she said, deadpan.

Chapter Three

Antonio gripped Lisa by the wrist and pulled her through the restaurant door into the parking lot. “*Jesus Christ!*” he shouted, kicking gravel and dirt into arcs with the tip of his leather boot. “I can’t believe it!”

Lisa thumped her temple with two fingers. “I should have known better. With today’s technology, why wouldn’t an upscale restaurant use a security system?” She walked alongside Antonio to his Harley and shoved the tape into her purse. He was rubbing his hand through his hair and muttering to himself in Spanish.

“*Lo siento*. I am really, really, sorry,” he said, taking her hand and kissing the soft spot inside her wrist. “If I had any idea someone was watching, I never would have risked it.”

“I’ve never considered a career as a porn star. Maybe this will be my lucky break.” She tittered with nervous laughter.

“How can you make jokes?” They reached the Harley and Antonio took her hand, pulling her tight against him while he leaned his back against the bike. “Aren’t you angry?” He searched her eyes, seeming to look for cues.

Lisa leaned into him and gave his lips a light kiss. “Embarrassed, yes; mad, no. It was my fault for allowing such a crazy thing to happen.” She nuzzled his neck with her nose. “And it was great. Fantastic.” Her inner Bad Girl had been unleashed and the transformation was exhilarating.

Antonio’s muscles flexed and rippled beneath her chest. His grip around her waist tightened. “You are the most beautiful, exciting woman I have ever met.” His voice was husky and gruff, and his dark eyes flashed. “I’ve never been so turned-on in my life. It took every ounce of strength I had not to come when you did.”

Lisa reveled in the masculine feel of his strong body against hers. Cop or no cop, he sure molded against her well. “That would have been a bit, um...”

“Messy? Yeah.” Antonio kissed her hair.

“Still, I can’t leave you unsatisfied.” She dragged her hand across the crotch of his jeans, exploring. What size mystery package awaited her? Lisa felt the instant swell of Antonio’s erection and smiled with anticipation.

The man was hung like a stallion.

A growl hummed from deep in his throat. “Okay, knock it off. I can’t take anymore. My cock will burst into flames soon.”

Lisa laughed and moved her hand. “Can’t have that. At least, not until you let me put out the fire.” She looked up at him and locked her eyes onto his, taunting.

He gripped her wrist and hugged it to his chest. His expression turned deadly serious. "I want to see you again. Understand? I'm heading to Quantico for training in a few days, but we can still see each other. I'll come back this way."

"I bet." Lisa tried to sound offhand, but her tone fell flat.

"You don't believe me?" Strong fingers raised her chin and their eyes locked. "You think I'm just playing around? Look, I know what we're doing is wild, but your effect on me makes me that way." He added under his breath, "I can't imagine why a man would want another woman with you around, anyway."

Lisa snorted a laugh. "You mean Rick? Yeah, well, Rick thinks I'm a lousy piece of ass. Just ask him. God knows he's told me often enough."

"The man must be deranged. Or he says that to keep you off balance, under control." Antonio stroked her hair and touched her jaw with the back of his hand. "Don't you see that? If he blames you for his cheating, he doesn't have to admit he's deficient. Incapable of love."

"And here I thought he was just a prick in uniform." Lisa considered Antonio's words. "Are you sure you're not a psychologist?"

"Cops know a lot about people, my sweet. We become experts on human nature. And my instincts tell me you're a woman worth hanging onto. Rick is an asshole."

Lisa leaned up and kissed him again. His mouth was warm and welcoming and full of tenderness.

His tenderness sealed her decision to explore Antonio Alvarez and see where the road they were traveling would lead. "Let's go say goodbye to that asshole. Right now. All right? I want him out of my life."

Antonio nodded. "Good. Because I want you in mine."

Lisa stepped back and waited for Antonio to mount his bike. She tucked her purse in the storage compartment, slid into the seat behind him and wrapped her arms tightly around his waist. His tanned neck looked inviting above the edge of his t-shirt and she leaned forward to lay kisses there. Antonio responded by lifting one shoulder in acknowledgement. He started the engine and drove them away from the harbor.

The cool afternoon breeze wafted through her hair and over the skin on her face like a tender caress. Lisa opened her mouth and stuck out her tongue to taste the fresh bay air and smiled as the wind tickled her mouth. A gust ruffled the tiny hairs on her arms, creating goose bumps along the length of her body. Her nipples hardened. She pressed her breasts against Antonio's back, savoring the feel of his taut muscles against the sensitive tips. He must have felt her excitement because he opened the throttle and picked up speed.

The hum of the engine vibrated through her seat on the Harley, thrumming like a thousand tiny tongues between her open legs. The late day sun warmed her thighs, which were exposed to the hip by the pull on her shorts. Air currents tugged and tapped at the hems as if trying to tear them away to lick the folds of her damp pussy.

At twenty-five miles per hour a pleasant tingle massaged the insides of her knees and the tender patches along her inner thighs. Lisa shifted her pelvis on the bike and groaned with pleasure as she found a ridge on the upholstery piping that pressed against her clit with each steady rumble. She breathed in the scent of Antonio's damp skin while she rested the side of her face against his neck and watched the sunlight sparkle over the bay. Her arms tightened around his waist as the Harley accelerated along the scenic highway.

At forty-five miles per hour the engine vibrations shot straight into her slit like piston rods pounding her pussy again and again. She closed her eyes and absorbed the sensations, letting waves of pleasure wash over her as the steady rhythm penetrated her moist opening.

She found the ridge on the upholstery that rubbed her clit in just *exactly* the right spot and began rocking her hips against it hard and slow while the Harley roared.

At sixty miles per hour the vibration sucked and pulled her wet, throbbing passage while she pleased her clit against the leather seat in a tight, circular motion.

The Harley tore down the highway at seventy-five when Lisa threw her head back and opened her mouth to release her silent screams. Thunderous orgasm pounded through her and she fought to hold on tighter to Antonio's waist as the waves of climax washed over her. With each pulse, her pussy gushed cream across the crotch of her silky thong. She could feel its warmth spread over her skin and across her thatch of trimmed curls. She pressed her clit against the nub in the seat a final time, milking the last of her juices while her body began its slow descent from the orgasmic high.

She rubbed her face into Antonio's shirt, reveling in his scent. The bone and defined muscle beneath his shoulder blades increased her longing to bury herself in his arms, to lick every inch of him and taste the texture of his skin. She moaned. No man before him had had this heady effect on her. She smiled with self-satisfaction and nuzzled his shoulder again.

He had brought out the wild woman in her.

Antonio slowed the bike and turned off the highway onto a narrow, rutted path of blacktop coated with sand. He guided the Harley along the ribbon behind a stand of dunes covered with thick beach grass to a secluded stretch of shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay. A long abandoned fishing shack lay between the first set of dunes and the next, providing intimate cover for them and the Harley.

The motorcycle came to a stop behind the fishing shack. Lisa stepped off and waited while Antonio secured the vehicle upright and then turned to her.

He didn't say a word, but rushed to her with his arms outstretched and eyes flashing desire, wrapping her tightly against his brawny chest. His strong arms gripped her in a warm embrace while he whispered Spanish words of endearment into the crown of her hair.

Lisa glided one hand along the definition of his arm and thought he must be made of finely honed steel coated with skin, sinew and muscle. The ends of her fingertips tingled with exquisite pleasure.

He lifted her face and crushed his mouth against hers in a deep, lingering kiss. His firm mouth devoured hers and she felt the edge of his teeth with the tip of her tongue as she opened her jaw to allow him access. His tongue plunged in search of hers, and she met it willingly, her knees growing weak with the thrill.

He deepened the kiss again until she was breathless. In one swift motion, his mouth broke free while iron hands gripped the hem of her tank top and yanked it over her head. The slip of fabric looked like nothing more than tinted tissue paper in his large hands. He tossed it over the seat of his Harley and turned back to absorb her breasts with his eyes. The tip of his tongue emerged through the opening of his lips and he licked them in seeming anticipation.

He leaned against the old fishing shack and pulled her to him. Strong hands cupped her breasts and kneaded them between his palms. Her nipples and areolas hardened to long, pink points as if welcoming his mouth to suck them in turn. As he did, she rolled her head back slowly to savor the feel of his lips and teeth as he nipped and nibbled the hard ends. Rolls of thunder swelled through her abdomen and down to her pussy as her clit stiffened in readiness. She wanted his tongue inside her, lapping at her, licking her to higher orgasmic heights.

He sucked and rubbed her breasts harder, moaning between his gasps of pleasure. Her pussy gushed and throbbed with desire as his hands roamed her body, touching every inch, seeking all of her intimate places through cloth.

Antonio yanked her shorts past her knees and watched as she dropped them to the ground and kicked them away.

"Leave your thong on and your shoes too." His voice was husky. He pulled his t-shirt off and threw it beside her shorts.

She took a step forward and thumbed one brown nipple in small circles while her tongue tasted his other. Antonio groaned as she sucked his areola into her mouth and pinched his other nipple at the same time. She glided her palm over his chest, relishing the feel of the satiny black hair and well-defined muscles beneath. Tracing the ripples of his tight abs with her fingers, she felt his stomach clench and his body shiver at her touch.

"Please," he begged.

She lowered both hands to the front of his jeans, opened the snap and pulled the zipper down over his massive erection. His cock strained against the fabric for a single instant before bursting from the confines of the denim as she yanked the fly of his pants open wide.

He wasn't wearing underwear.

Lisa stared at the long, thick cock that stretched out from a dark patch of hair to greet her. The wide, silky head glistened and trembled as the bay air caressed the tip. His balls were heavy and large, half hidden inside the crotch of his open jeans.

"Touch it," he whispered.

She wrapped her hand around his cock and stroked the smooth staff from the base along the underside, to the swollen, throbbing head. Blue veins stretched beneath the skin and a drop of clear liquid formed at the top. Lisa dipped her finger into the droplet and rubbed it over the sensitive head. Antonio gasped while she jerked him off and he thrust his hips forward.

His phallus grew even harder beneath her hand and quivered while she stroked at a steadier, more rhythmic pace. Her mouth watered at the sight of her hand pounding the impressive length of him. She could feel his need swell beneath her fingers and knew if she didn't slow down, he would come before she was ready to let him.

She released her grip on his rod a little at a time until her hand petted his cock up and down from root to head with the merest touch. Antonio shivered and thrust his hips forward again in an unspoken plea to finish him off. Lisa shook her head and pursed her lips to form the word "no".

He grabbed her in a viselike grip by her upper arms and dragged her forward, surrounding her mouth with his in a deep, desperate kiss. His tongue plunged into her mouth, ravishing its depths as one hand reached to squeeze her breast. Fingers played along the underside of her heavy breast, drifted along the skin of her abdomen and found their way into the front of her panties. His third finger met her clit and circled it in quick, hard jabs. Using his other hand to hold her firmly in place, he gripped one cheek of her ass and pressed her hips tighter against his finger as he increased the speed and the pressure.

Lisa moaned as the heat of climax neared. Antonio's fingers plunged inside her opening and fucked her hard while the base of his palm massaged her swollen clit.

Just before reaching orgasm, Antonio stopped. Lisa's eyes startled open and her ragged breathing slowed. When she tried to nudge his fingers back to her clitoris, he pulled his hand out of her panties.

"Don't stop!" She barely recognized her own strangled voice.

Antonio's smile was apparent in his reply. "I have better things in store for you, my sweet. Both now and later. I promise."

As he spoke the last words, Antonio pulled her panties down. He bent low and pressed his mouth against her mound. Hot breath washed over her as he thrust the length of his stiffened tongue into her warm, wet slit. Lisa gasped with delight as the tip of his tongue traveled from the opening of her pussy up to the peak of her pulsating clit. His tongue lapped her engorged bud in a hard, fast tempo that brought instant heat. She pressed her hips tighter against his mouth and wrapped her hands in his hair while she held his face to her pussy. His tongue probed and heaved, licking her clit in a

seemingly unbreakable rhythm until she felt the brink of orgasm catch, hold, swell...and, ahh, toss her over the edge of the abyss into blackness.

Her climax thundered on and on until she could barely remain on her feet. She gripped Antonio's head and thrust her pussy against his mouth until she was drained and exhausted from the effort. She released her hold on his hair and enjoyed the last flickers of his probing tongue as it tasted the opening of her channel and finally drew away.

Antonio rose to his feet. His stiff cock throbbed and the head shimmered with dewy juices beneath the waistband of his jeans. He lifted Lisa's thong over her hips again, took her hand and guided her to the small stack of concrete blocks that formed a rudimentary staircase at the shack entrance.

Lisa sat on the cold concrete. The blocks were rough beneath the tender skin of her ass, but did not chafe her.

Antonio pulled his jeans past his hips and stood before her with his ready mast centered between her lips. She reached for his balls and rubbed them firmly with both hands while he slid the full length of his cock into her waiting, open mouth.

He tasted like salt and sea and smelled like the clean, briny scent of high tide at midnight. His cock was huge inside her mouth, thrusting fast, in and out past her lips to the back of her throat. Lisa reached around to squeeze the cheeks of his ass while he pumped the underside of his rod along the smooth softness of her tongue. She released her palms from his buttocks and pulled her mouth free so that she could take him in her hands and lick the length of him.

She dragged her tongue all the way up his shaft from the root to the head. She touched her tongue to the opening and played in the creamy juices that spread along the top. His cock jumped at the sensations she created. She wrapped her mouth over the head again and sucked gently, vibrating the end of her tongue along the underside to pleasure him.

Antonio growled low in his throat and pulled his dick away. He gripped his rod with one hand and leaned over her, thrusting his cock between her breasts. Using both hands now, he squeezed her breasts together and began sliding his cock up and down between them.

He pressed his hard shaft tight against her breastbone and pummeled his cock in long strokes between the soft, warm cushions. As the friction increased, so did the tempo of his breathing, until the grunts escaping his lips came in fast, hard pants.

Lisa felt his cock swell, shiver and hold still for one, two, three seconds before it quivered a final time. Antonio shouted as he spurted across her chest, pulling back to shoot his seed across one nipple. Lisa looked down and watched as the white cream clung to her areola and drizzled along the valley of her cleavage.

Antonio recovered, then zipped his pants and stepped over to his Harley where he found a large kerchief and some paper napkins in the storage compartment. He carried them to her side, stooped in front of her and gently wiped her breasts clean.

With the last swipe of the kerchief, he kissed her nipples softly in turn. His eyes seemed to search hers for the acceptance she readily gave him.

"You are beyond words." He kissed her mouth tenderly and helped her to her feet. When she stood, he wrapped her in his arms and held her to him, soft breasts to sturdy chest. Fingers drifted through the length of her hair. "Stay with me."

Lisa looked up at him and her heart skipped a beat.

His dark eyes bored through her with the depth of their emotion. "I was dead inside until I met you."

She laid a kiss against his shoulder. "Tell me."

Antonio nodded and then reached for their clothes. He held them while Lisa used the paper napkins to clean up. After, she pulled on her shorts. He tugged his black tee across his chest and waited while she put on her tank top. When they were redressed, he stuffed the trash inside the Harley and then took her hand to lead her down to the water's edge.

"My brother and I fished here two years ago, the last time I came to visit." He found a stand of rocks where they could sit. "I didn't drive out last time, but flew in from Santa Fe. Estela brought me to the airport." His eyes searched the early evening sky. "I couldn't know she'd be shot in the next few months, answering a call for backup during an armed robbery."

Lisa's breath caught in her throat. "You told me she was 'gone'. I just assumed you broke up. Now I understand. I'm so sorry." She touched her fingers to his jawline and traced the strong, chiseled bones. "Did you love her?"

Antonio closed his eyes and nodded. "I never planned to get involved with another cop. The job has enough problems without worrying about a lover too." He shrugged and sucked his teeth. "But what can you do? When the right woman comes along you don't argue." He leaned over to plant a kiss on Lisa's neck. "Kinda like today. With you."

Lisa touched his hair and ran her fingers against the side of his face. He was so good-looking it made her insides ache. "I'm glad we met too. You've unleashed the woman in me."

Antonio smiled. "That's the nicest compliment I've ever had." His hand roamed her thigh. "And I'm not half finished pleasing you yet."

Lisa felt herself blush, which seemed to amuse Antonio immensely.

"You're sweet and incredibly sexy at the same time. The way I'm drawn to you makes my head hurt. Estela was pretty and smart and...comfortable, you know? I feel guilty enjoying you so much while her memory fades. I've tried to hold on to her." Antonio squeezed Lisa's hand. "Do you think she'll forgive me? Will she understand?"

Lisa stroked his face and searched his eyes, hoping to say the words that would assuage his guilt. "I think she'd want you to find peace. To not be alone in the world."

Antonio stayed quiet for what seemed a long time. "And so I met you."

Lisa leaned her head against Antonio's shoulder and watched the gulls sail over the water as she nudged a clam shell with the toe of her shoe. "And I found you."

Antonio looked out over the bay. "Now all we need to do is figure out where we go from here."

Lisa kissed his shoulder and rose to her feet. "The first thing we do is go to town. I want to talk to Rick."

"And I need to see my brother. He's expecting me." Antonio stood and placed his arm around her waist. "I'll get together with Tomas while you meet Rick. Join us for a beer when you're ready, okay? I think you'll like my little bro." Antonio squeezed her hip. "You'll see that not all men in uniform are bad news."

"Two down, about two million to go," Lisa replied, laughing. They strolled back to the Harley.

Lisa took her purse from the storage bin and found her cell phone. She dialed the midshipmen's quarters. It took several tries and two misdirected messages before Rick finally answered the phone. He agreed to meet Lisa at a pizza restaurant off campus in twenty minutes. For the first time in their long, tumultuous relationship, Lisa couldn't read Rick's tone of voice. He sounded excited and mysterious when he said he had something for her.

"I want to show you something too," she said, before ending the call.

Antonio furrowed his brow. "Show him something?"

"A letter. Though when he sees you and your Harley, he's gonna shit a battleship."

* * * * *

They cruised through the outskirts of town just before twilight. The cool evening air rustled Lisa's hair and swept its crisp caress over her bare arms. Her body shivered with the drop in temperature and the contrasting warmth radiating from Antonio's back.

Anxiety rippled through her at thoughts of seeing Ricky again.

She imagined his surprise and consternation when she rode up to meet him on the back of Antonio's Harley. His reaction would be as predictable as a winter frost. He'd bite his lower lip and work his jaw in circles like it was filled with mouthwash. His nose would crinkle and his cornflower blue eyes would close to imperceptible slits. Two deep, vertical ridges would form between his eyes to the mid-point of his sculpted, aquiline nose. His right hand would shoot up to his wavy blond hair and scratch his head.

Richard Bennett always said that no other man could touch what he had claimed. Thrust a motorcycle between Lisa's legs and Ricky would see red. With Antonio riding his Harley like a dark, majestic prince and her clinging possessively to his back, Ricky would come out fighting.

Lisa smiled to herself.

A group of midshipmen strolled along the sidewalk, laughing and jostling as the motorcycle passed. A few saw Lisa at the same instant, stopped and belted out a chorus of howls and wolf whistles while they waved.

Lisa grinned and waved back. Antonio laughed out loud and shot them the bird. The sailors hooted good-naturedly and went on their way before fading out of sight.

Lisa saw Rick approach the pizza shop on the next block before he noticed her on the motorcycle. Why would he? He seemed polished and confident in his uniform, head up and shoulders back like a man with the world at his feet. She was dressed like a slut and clinging to another man. Rick had taken her fidelity so much for granted it wouldn't occur to him that she was on the Harley. Rick would expect a taxi, her stepping from the back seat dressed in a crisp, modest sundress with her hair pulled in a ponytail, thrilled breathless to see him. His chest would puff out as it always did and he would motion for her to come to him for a welcoming kiss.

She squeezed Antonio's trim, taut waist and her confidence surged. She'd always known she was smart and competent, but who would have thought she could be conniving too? The idea made her smile. She had always been so practical and forthright that even *she* wouldn't have believed her behavior a mere twenty-four hours ago.

But here she was three orgasms with a stranger later, feeling sexier than ever and loving every moment. Who knew she was capable of letting go?

Certainly not Rick.

The bike rumbled to a stop along the curb of the restaurant, a few feet from where Rick stood. Rick glanced at the Harley and away again, seeming to watch the blacktopped road for signs of a taxi. He thrust his hands deep in his pockets and shuffled his feet, clearly impatient with the wait.

Lisa poked Antonio in the side and then pointed discreetly at Rick when Antonio turned his head. Antonio nodded. When Rick failed to notice them on the motorcycle, Antonio gunned the engine and moved closer. Rick pivoted, scowled and made eye contact. His eyes roamed Antonio's features, discarded them and moved on. They caressed Lisa's long, bare leg and followed the shape of her ankle and calf to the top of her exposed thigh. She saw Rick lick his lips while his blue eyes moved over her haunch to the curve of her ass to study the shape. His nostrils flared.

Rick's gaze washed over her bare midriff to the thrust of her breasts and seemed to penetrate the fabric of her tank top. She could almost feel his mouth cling to her nipples and squeeze them between his lips. He stared at her breasts so long she was surprised he didn't recognize them.

The recognition came a moment later when Rick's stare moved, finally, to her face and met her eyes. His brow furrowed with confusion and then the flash of realization struck that dropped his jaw.

Chapter Four

Rick strode toward Lisa on the Harley, his face flushed with rage.

"Who the fuck is this?" he demanded, pointing at Antonio's nose. "And what the fuck are you doing on his bike?" His eyes roamed her body again and he sucked in a deep, loud breath.

Antonio reached out to shake Rick's hand. The gesture seemed to knock Rick off balance as a flash of uncertainty crossed his face. His eyes narrowed.

"Antonio Alvarez. I offered Lisa a ride to see you."

Rick's expression relaxed slightly, but his gaze stayed sharp. He stuck out his jaw instead of his hand. "I'll call a taxi for her return trip. She's *my* girl."

Antonio watched while Lisa hopped off the back and dropped his hand to his side. "I think that's for her to decide, don't you?"

"It's already decided, smartass. You can go now." Rick's hands balled into fists.

Antonio's dark eyes flashed with an unspoken, angry retort. He seemed to dismiss Rick only with effort and, instead, turned a cool head to Lisa. "You know where I'll be." He shoved the Harley into gear and revved the engine before driving away.

Lisa turned to Rick and couldn't help but smirk. "If I didn't know you better, I'd say you were jealous."

"Why wouldn't I be?" Rick shot back. "You show up hanging onto some jerk-off and dressed like that."

Lisa stepped close and whispered against the soft lobe of Rick's ear. She could feel the heat of her breath waft over his skin. "But I dressed this way for you, baby. I thought you liked your women sexy." She pressed the fullness of her breasts against his upper arm and rubbed her nipples across his sleeve before stepping back.

"Uh I do. I mean, you look fantastic. It's just that...you surprised me. I've never seen you like this before." Rick looked her up and down and grinned. He traced the bellybutton ring. "You never told me about this. When did you have your navel pierced?"

Lisa watched with satisfaction as Rick's eyes roamed her body again. "It's a clip-on. Just for you. I thought it would be fun." She reached out to drag her palm along Rick's chest. "Like it?"

Rick glanced down the road to watch Antonio's silhouette fade and turned back to Lisa. His stance relaxed. "Yeah, I like it. I like it a lot." He leaned forward and kissed her.

"Listen, I don't care about food," he said afterward. "I didn't meet you here so that we could have pizza. I want to talk to you. A friend of mine has an apartment down the block and said I could use it." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a single key on a ring. "I was hoping we could spend some time alone. I don't have to report back until graduation."

Goose bumps formed along her arms when he traced the curve of her neck to the swell of her breasts and made lazy circles above her cleavage. He knew her skin was ultra-sensitive there and seemed to enjoy watching as her nipples turned to hard, long points.

Lisa had to admit that Rick looked handsome in his uniform. God knew, his body was magnificent, with his V-shaped chest and waist, and his rippled, washboard abs. She loved his blond hair and blue eyes and the way he looked at her as if he could consume her whole. Even after two years, he'd never failed to make her want him.

Too bad he was a worthless, two-faced prick.

"You look so hot in this skimpy outfit," Rick said, his voice gruff. "I'm hard as stone."

Lisa replied on a slow exhale. "And my pussy is wet. I've been horny all day."

"Jeez...when did you start talking like that?" He slid his fingers along the curve of her shoulder to her upper arm and squeezed gently. "Say 'wet pussy' again." His breathing slowed as his eyes met hers, anticipating the words.

"Wet pussy," Lisa whispered against his mouth. She heard his sharp intake of breath and felt him shudder. "You like fucking my moist, warm cunt?"

"Jesus Christ, let's go." Rick took her hand and she let him lead her down the street to the apartment.

The place was a standard-issue bachelor dump, complete with empty beer cans strewn across the coffee table, half empty bags of pretzels and chips lying open on the sofa and soft porn magazines scattered on the floor.

Lisa looked around for a bathroom. "I need to freshen up, baby."

Rick pointed to a door off the kitchen. "The head's that way."

The dingy bathroom had no clean, folded towels in the closet, but a dispenser of liquid soap stood near the sink and toilet paper sat atop the toilet tank. Lisa peeled long sheets of paper off the roll and folded them into makeshift towels. She returned to the sink to wash her face and hands and then pulled off her tank top and hung it on the doorknob. A tinge of guilt washed over her as she rinsed traces of Antonio from her skin. Two men in one day. She'd never thought herself capable of juggling lovers.

As she dried her breasts with a thick square of paper she remembered the letter in her purse. She took a deep breath to boost her resolve, redressed and ran a comb through her hair.

Lisa returned to the living room and tossed her straw purse on the couch. Rick walked around the room straightening up, apologizing for his friend's mess and

seeming more considerate of her than usual. "Want a soda or beer, hon?" he asked. "Help yourself. And bring me something too, will you?"

Lisa went to the fridge and found two ice-cold Coronas, popped the tops and brought them to the living room. Rick finished tidying and patted the sofa next to him. Lisa handed him a beer and sat down.

"To us," Rick said, clinking his bottle against hers. He took a long pull and wiped the back of his hand over his mouth. "Ah that tastes good." He looked at Lisa and leered. "But not as good as your sweet, pink pussy." He licked his lips. "I want to feel your clit inside my mouth tonight, baby. Then I want to fuck you like I've never fucked you before. Back door."

Lisa grinned and took a sip of her beer. She placed the bottle on the coffee table. "Why, because I've dressed the part?"

Rick set his beer next to hers, moved closer and wrapped his arm around her shoulders. "Because you did it for me, baby. Do you have any idea how turned-on that makes me?" He took her hand and pressed it against the hard front of his pants. She could feel heat pour through the cloth like fire licking hot coals.

Rick closed his eyes and moved her hand over his erection in long, hard strokes. "Oh yeah, just like that, baby. You do that so good."

"I thought I was a lousy lay. That's what you said."

Rick opened his eyes through a veil of arousal and looked at her. He took her hand off his crotch and kissed it. "You know I love you, Lisa. I'm sorry I said that."

He leaned forward and covered her lips with his. His mouth was warm and he opened it slightly to explore her tongue. Electricity hummed along her nerve endings at the familiar way he devoured her mouth while he fondled her breasts.

"Ricky," she breathed as he yanked her tank top up and over her breasts and lowered his face to her cleavage. He began licking the underside of her left breast in small, quick strokes all the way up to her nipple. His tongue roamed the perimeter of her areola and then flicked the tip until Lisa moaned despite herself.

"Your body is so beautiful," he said in a rush and took her nipple into his mouth to suck. His hands grasped her breasts on the outer sides and squeezed them together, crushing them inside his palms. He slowly pushed her down on the sofa cushions and lay on top of her, grinding his erection against her mound. His fingers hooked inside her shorts to pull them off just as her foot knocked her purse to the floor. She heard the contents skitter across the dingy carpet.

The sounds issued stern reminders of her business here. Lisa braced her hands on his chest and pushed him away. "No, wait," she panted, tempted to give in to the desire he aroused and feel his hard cock plunge inside her one last time. She fought off useless nostalgia and tried to clear her head.

"What?" A look of annoyance crossed Rick's face. "Baby, we haven't seen each other in weeks. I'm dying here. C'mon. Take your shorts off."

At his impatient tone, Lisa's resolve returned. "I changed my mind. Ask one of your fuck mates to bend over for you." She pulled her top down.

"What the hell are you talking about?" He shifted away from her and sat up on the sofa.

Lisa reached for her purse and fumbled along the floor, throwing stray items inside before lifting it to her lap. She retrieved the letter. "You've been cheating on me, Rick. For a long time. Maybe since the beginning." Her heart ached with the thought of him touching other women. Thank goodness she'd always insisted on condoms. "Why, Ricky?"

"I don't know what you're talking about. You've gone nuts tonight. First you show up dressed to kill with some guy on a motorcycle. You get me all hot and bothered and push me away and now you accuse me of cheating. Have you lost your mind?"

Lisa's temper flared. "No, I think I came to my senses just in time." She flung the letter at him. "Read it."

Rick tossed the letter aside without glancing at the envelope. "Why are you fighting with me? I asked to meet you because I want to talk about our future. I graduate in two days. After that, I become a commissioned officer. I'll probably be deployed. Don't you want to talk about us?"

Lisa's curiosity piqued despite herself. Rick had never mentioned a future before. "We'll talk about us after you answer my question. Read the note."

Rick sighed and picked up the envelope. He unfolded the three-page letter written by a clearly angry, bitter woman who claimed to be Rick's girlfriend. The note was filled with dates, times and places she'd had sex with him. This crappy apartment included. The woman claimed other girls phoned while she was with him, but he'd assured her she was his "only one". Apparently, the other woman had learned about Lisa, because she wrote to demand that Lisa step down and give Rick up.

Rick appeared to keep his cool as he scanned the last page, but Lisa could tell he'd been rattled. His face flushed and his eyelids fluttered. Rick refolded the letter and threw it on the floor. "Bullshit," he said. "You're the only woman I love."

"That doesn't quite answer my question," Lisa replied. "The guy I was with tonight, Antonio? I think he might be your roommate Tomas's brother." She let the information sink in. "When I told him about you, he didn't say a word against you, but I could tell something wasn't quite right." She lowered her voice to a whisper. "Does Antonio know something I don't, Ricky?"

Rick jumped to his feet and threw his hands in the air. "Fuck Antonio! Who is this guy to you? He roars in on his big ass bike and now I'm supposed to go on the defensive?"

Lisa considered the man before her. Suddenly, she wasn't sure what she had ever seen in him. With his features all twisted with anger and flushed with rhetoric, he didn't look like the Rick of her daydreams anymore. "Should you feel defensive?"

Rick reached for his beer and took a swallow. He set the bottle down and met her eyes. "Will you please let me talk to you about what I have in mind? You keep changing the subject." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a small, velvet box. To Lisa's surprise, he dropped down on one knee before her.

"Lisa Gibson, I love you. I think you'd make a great wife. I want to live with you and have children with you." It was clear he'd rehearsed. He offered the box and lifted the lid. A stunning one-carat diamond sat inside. "Will you marry me?"

Lisa hadn't seen this coming. For a moment or two she couldn't speak. The lining of her mouth went dry. She wondered what it would be like to become an officer's wife, to put duty ahead of self while her husband sailed around the world and likely cheated on her every chance he got.

She could think of only one word.

Lonely.

"You want to marry me? Are you ready to pledge your fidelity?" Lisa's voice was tight.

Rick stood and then sat next to her on the sofa. He still held the jewelry box. "There you go again, talking about shit like that. I just asked you to marry me and that's all you can think of to say?"

She took a sip of beer and placed the bottle back on the table. "I want details, Rick. Why are you asking me now?"

This question seemed to throw Rick off. He paused and considered. "Well, it's simple really. As I said, I graduate in two days. I'm planning a military career. Officers have a certain standard expected of them. A family, for one. I think it's time to plan for the family I need to support me while I serve my country."

Lisa's disappointment mounted. "Very poetic. So you want to marry me because you need a wife to keep up appearances?"

"No, of course not!" Rick seemed furious now. "What the hell are you trying to do? Ruin our entire night? I just asked you to marry me, for crying out loud! I thought you'd be happy!"

"I think you want a wife to keep your bed warm at home. The military will give you ample opportunity to cheat on shore leave." She shook her head and held her hand out like a traffic cop to dismiss his objections. "Kind of like the situation we have now, except we're not married."

"I bought you a diamond ring, for chrissake! What more do you want from me? I don't understand."

"I want you to promise you'll be faithful. That you'll put our marriage above all else. That your family will come first."

Rick took her hands. "Anything you say, baby. Whatever you want. Just say you'll marry me." He leaned forward to nuzzle her neck and laid a kiss there. His hand roamed her breasts, dropped down to her lap and rested between her thighs. He

pushed her legs apart and rubbed her slit beneath her shorts. Despite her efforts to stay in control, her nipples tightened and her stomach clenched.

Rick knew her too well not to notice her arousal. He stood, pulled off his belt and threw it on the carpet. With one quick motion he unzipped his pants and released his hard, wide cock. Lisa admired the patch of curly light hair surrounding his rod while it jumped and strained, and found her interest piqued despite her better judgment. He did have a beautiful dick, just as strong-willed and demanding as the rest of him.

Maybe a goodbye fuck and orgasms number four and five weren't such a bad idea. She could do whatever she wanted. Make her own decisions. She was playing the whore today, right?

* * * * *

Antonio sat at the bar of the Tongue and Cheek and watched the exotic dancers with Tomas. "This place sure has changed since the last time we were here. It used to be a college hangout."

Tomas snickered. "This place is called the Tongue and Cheek for a reason, bro. The military guys go wild in here."

"Yeah, I can see why." Two topless dancers with incredible, enormous breasts and thongs so small the fronts were attached to the backs with only wisps of string, danced close in a tight gyration, mirroring each other's movements. The blonde with the long, wavy hair stuck out her tongue and licked her bottom lip like a delicious ice cream cone. The brunette opened her mouth in a wide O and dragged her tongue around the circle, nice and slow. The men in the bar went wild, flashing one hundred-dollar bills and begging for lap dances.

Tomas raised his bills in the air and pointed to Antonio when the women turned toward the audience. "Poker winnings," he explained from the side of his mouth as he grinned at the dancers.

The blonde smiled at Tomas with her eyes half closed, caressed her breasts and pulled her nipples. When she stuck out her tongue at him and then licked her mouth, Tomas stood with his feet planted firmly in the rungs of the barstool and screamed, "Yes!" in acknowledgement.

"When she sticks her tongue out at you that means she's chosen you for a personal dance. We're seconds from heaven, bro."

Antonio chuffed and shook his head. "I don't know whether to arrest her or run for cover." He thought of Lisa and wondered if she'd show up tonight. If she did, they'd leave this place and find somewhere less...raunchy to go. But as the hours ticked past, his hope faded. For all he knew, she was in the sack with her boyfriend right now, having hot, heavy make-up sex.

Thoughts of Lisa's pearly folds made his mouth go dry with want. He sipped his beer and looked up just as the smooth, waxed-clean ass of the blonde dancer bent over

him. She thrust her butt high, circled the air to the right and to the left and then turned to look at him over her shoulder. The dancer grinned and winked. Beneath the makeup and the bright stage lights, it was clear she was young and likely a college student.

Despite himself, Antonio was mesmerized. He hadn't had sexual contact with a woman in a long time and today he'd struck gold. He shook his head again at the reminder of his dumb luck. This motion seemed to encourage the blonde, who reached back with both hands to rub and squeeze her butt cheeks until they were rosy and then spread them wide for him.

The tiny thread of the thong couldn't hide the entrance to the dancer's tight, pink anus. She slipped her third finger beneath the string to massage the hole and lowered her bottom through the wide stance of her legs to spread herself apart. Flashes of her moist, open pussy made Antonio think of Lisa again and his cock throbbed. Beside him, Tomas hooted and pulled out another bill.

The brunette joined the blonde at the edge of the bar and made eye contact with Tomas. His brother turned mute in an instant, his dark brown eyes moving downward over the dancer's chest. Though his younger brother was smaller boned and shorter than Antonio, his body was no less powerful. Tomas had always attracted women.

The brunette circled her nipples with her fingers and then pinched the hard tips tight, pulling them out as far as they would go. Beside him, Tomas groaned. He moved his face closer to the stripper as she bent down over her knees with thighs spread, breasts thrust toward Tomas's mouth. He licked his lips, his eyes openly savored her breasts and then roamed her mound, seeming to pray for the flash that would reveal the warm, open passage beneath.

Tomas scribbled his name and phone number on a napkin, wrapped the tip inside and stuffed it into her palm.

She smiled and squeezed the paper in acknowledgement. "I get off at one o'clock," she shouted over the pulsating music. "Wait, okay?" She dropped the papers into a tip jar.

Tomas covered his heart with his hand. "Nothing could take me away." He grinned at her with a smile so large his teeth gleamed. The dancer winked at him and rotated her shoulders while she lifted her breasts high and slapped the air with them in an imaginary pelting of Tomas' face. Tomas whined like an injured dog.

"She and I have been flirting for weeks. I come here just to see her. Finally, tonight's the night!" Tomas picked up his drink and toasted the brunette.

Antonio slapped his brother's back and then looked at his watch. Eleven o'clock. Lisa had been gone for hours. His heart sank as he realized she wasn't coming.

At least, not with him.

That smug asshole Rick Bennett raided Antonio's mind and he gritted his teeth. As the dancers flashed skin and testosterone filled the air, Antonio imagined Lisa astride Rick, riding him like a thoroughbred to pleasure herself. He saw her lick her lips while her chest heaved and her hips rocked in a hard rhythm over the length of Rick's cock.

Adrenaline pumped through Antonio's veins. He reached for his beer and squeezed the bottle until he thought it would shatter in his hand.

Tomas nudged him. "Pay attention, Harleyman, there's a third dancer joining the women. This should be great."

Antonio shrugged. Why not? He'd been stood up and shot down. Dumped.

Estela would never have done this to him.

He might as well enjoy the show.

A male dancer walked to center stage dressed in a sheer black thong. He had shoulder length brown hair, well-defined muscles and a huge erection.

He strutted toward the blonde and came up behind her, gripping her waist tight in his massive hands while he pressed his groin into the cleft of her ass.

The brunette came up behind the man, sandwiching him between the women, and braced her feet on the floor in a wide stance. The blonde leaned over at the waist and lifted her rear higher and tighter against the male.

A bass guitar and sounds of fast drumming thrummed through the loudspeakers and a strobe light flashed as the male dancer simulated fucking the blonde from behind while the brunette spanked his ass with each thrust. The men and women in the room cheered as their collective pulse reached a crescendo and the rhythm of the dancers swelled with the tempo of the music. The male pummeled himself against the blonde a final time and then threw his head back, gritted his teeth and tightened his legs until the muscles seemed to pop.

Whether or not the orgasm was real, Antonio couldn't tell. He wondered how long he could watch this erotic show without coming himself. He hung his head and felt, suddenly, like a defeated teenager. Antonio was horny as hell with no way to relieve the throb in his balls except by a hard, fast meeting with the always-available Ms. Rosy Palm.

The thought depressed him more than ever.

He checked his watch and glanced at the door. It was nearly midnight and still no Lisa. By now Rick was probably darting his tongue inside her slit again. A pain shot through Antonio's chest and his breathing labored with the image.

The lights pulsed and the music blared while the trio merged in an undulating snake dance. As they ground their bodies in unison, they lifted their arms as one unit. The music swelled and the heat in the room redoubled. The audience cried out pleas for release as the bass guitar vibrated in time with the gyrating dancers and the volume soared with the frenzy.

At last, the blonde broke away and skipped to the center of the stage to dance alone. The brunette and the male dancer ground their hips together a final time before separating too. The brunette jumped to a new spot on the floor, ran her hands over her breasts and along the length of her body and turned toward Tomas. She licked her fingers, thrust her hand down the front of her thong and began pumping her mound

against her fingertips. When Tomas stood in reply and clung to the edge of the bar, eyes wide, the dancer laughed and winked at him.

The male dancer found a group of women on the other side of the stage and rubbed his crotch for them with both hands as his hips thrust forward and back. The women screamed obscenities and cheered him on, urging him to remove his thong. Though they likely knew he couldn't do that without going to jail, they egged him on just the same. The dancer turned around and shook his muscled ass at the crowd. The women whistled and moaned. An auburn haired woman raised her t-shirt over her chest and flashed her breasts at him when he turned back to face them. The dancer grinned.

Antonio smiled. He thought of Lisa again.

"Show us your tits! Show us too!" a few men shouted. They lifted their beer bottles and drummed them against the bar in a rhythmic demand. Soon, other people joined in, pounding their tables or the edge of the bar with tumblers and bottles, urging the woman to bare her breasts for all. "Show us your tits! Show us your tits!" they screamed. Vibrations shook the room and the dancers moved faster with the commotion. Money flew onto the stage and large bills were stuffed into tip jars secured along the perimeter.

The auburn-haired woman stood up from her seat, downed her whiskey in one large gulp and turned to face the room. She curled her fists against her hips and took a bow, raising the level of anticipation another notch. The men went along with the game and hooted louder. "Show us, show us, show us," they chanted.

Finally, the redhead lifted the front of her tee and tucked it over the tops of her firm, apple shaped breasts. Groups of midshipmen chortled approval as she rubbed them tenderly. Men in suits and guys in t-shirts pleaded for more. A friend rose to join her, raising her top to display her perky nipples and full, cone-shaped breasts. The women laughed, covered themselves up and sat down again while the crowd applauded wildly. A man shouted, "Free drinks for the ladies!" and passed bills to the bartender.

As a third woman stood to bare all, the female dancers moved closer to Antonio and Tomas. The brunette stooped low to meet Tomas' eyes and licked her lips while she spread her thighs apart for him. The blonde reached the edge of the bar where Antonio sat and motioned for him to stand. He looked to his brother for cues, but Tomas only waved his hand and nodded for Antonio to follow the dancer's lead.

Antonio stood at the bar. The blonde sat down on the edge of the stage, scooted across the top the bar, raised her legs and draped her knees over Antonio's shoulders. The backs of her spike heeled shoes gripped his shoulder blades while she hitched her beaded pussy closer to his face and lifted her body off the floor in a backward push-up. Tomas bellowed his approval while the mob behind them roared. The blonde rotated her hips and thrust her crotch nearer Antonio's lips.

It was then Antonio heard the feminine voice behind him.

"Sorry I'm late," Lisa said near his ear.

Chapter Five

Antonio turned his head to acknowledge Lisa, but couldn't move or the dancer would fall. The blonde lifted her mound to skim his chin and Antonio smelled the primal musk of pussy, sweat and body heat. To his dismay, his cock rose in response, throbbing like an erratic pulse against the fly of his jeans. He prayed Lisa wouldn't notice.

Of course, she did.

"Nice package you've got there," she said, smirking. "Is it for me?"

Antonio winced and hoped Lisa would take pity on him. If she only knew how much of this erection was, in fact, for her, maybe he could make amends.

The dancer thrust her pelvis higher and rotated her spangled crotch against his face while the crowd at the bar cheered. Tomas raised his beer in a toast and whistled.

After a few more bumps and grinds, the blonde raised her legs to release her grip and scooted back onto the stage. She stood with her thighs spread wide and cupped the front of her thong with both hands to rub her mound. Men cheered. The dancer wiggled her hips while she dragged her hands over her stomach and across her breasts to massage them, watching the crowd as her fingers moved over her nipples. Finally, she looked up, blew Antonio a kiss and winked at Lisa.

"Over here!" A man down the bar, dressed in an expensive business suit, shouted for attention. He waved large bills in his hand. "I'm ready for you, darlin'," he yelled. The blonde laughed and sashayed toward the man, gathering his tip before rubbing her breasts together inches from his face.

"Let's get out of here," Antonio said. He signaled goodbye to Tomas, who could barely look away from the show and took her by the elbow to guide her through the crowd and outside to his Harley.

When they reached the street, the air felt cool and refreshing against Antonio's face. He breathed a sigh of relief and filled his lungs with clean, fresh midnight.

"*Dios*, that bar sure has changed over the years. I expected a college yuppie place." He rubbed his chin and noted he needed a shave. "Sorry you didn't get to meet Tomas."

Lisa grinned. "He was preoccupied. I think he and that brunette will be hooking up later."

Antonio wanted to ask, "And what about you, did you and Rick hook up tonight?" but knew he shouldn't. He had no hold on Lisa and no right to be possessive. Still, the idea of her going back to the Baller stuck in his craw.

He said, instead, "You look *muy bonita*."

Lisa had changed into white leather open-toed heels, a lavender flared mini-skirt and a tight white, sweetheart neck top. Around her throat lay a cluster of pink freshwater pearls on a gold chain. Matching earrings adorned her kissable ears. Her rose lip-gloss shone bright and fresh in the moonlight.

"After seeing Rick, I went back to my hotel to eat a light supper and shower. I even took a little nap before I changed. I needed time by myself to think."

"You were alone?" Antonio's stomach fluttered like a kid with a schoolyard crush and he wanted to bite his tongue for asking. What she did was none of his business.

They strolled closer to Antonio's Harley and Lisa linked her arm though his. The touch of her bare skin against his made his breath catch. Lisa was so lovely he wanted to sweep her into his arms and kiss her senseless.

"I have to tell you that I almost didn't make it back here tonight. And I came very close to sleeping with Ricky." Her face flushed with the admission. "After all, he's been my boyfriend for two years. And I only just found out about his cheating. Old feelings die hard, you know?"

Antonio thought of Estela and shook his head. "You don't need to explain." He shot her a side-glance and a small grin. "That is, of course, unless you really want to."

Lisa stopped on the sidewalk and touched her free hand to Antonio's wrist. "I want to." She leaned up and kissed him softly on the mouth. Her lips were warm and inviting, and Antonio instinctively deepened the kiss. He pulled her closer and wrapped his arms around her tight.

"I'm so glad to see you again," he whispered into her ear. "I looked for you all night."

Lisa leaned back and met his eyes. Her lips twitched and her green eyes twinkled. "Yeah, I noticed that. Especially when that dancer had her legs wrapped around your head."

Antonio laughed. "Okay, well, not just then. But all night before that. I finally gave up hope around midnight. And then, suddenly, you were there."

"I had a lot to think about." She broke from his arms and walked beside him again as they reached his motorcycle. She turned and rested her hips against the bike. "Ricky asked me to marry him."

Antonio's throat closed as pressure rose inside his chest. He couldn't breathe. Though he'd only just met Lisa, he knew they had something special. He wanted time to explore their potential as a couple. There was an innate goodness about her that shone through her outer beauty and sizzling sexuality. She had captivated him in a way no other woman had done before. He was willing to do whatever it took to win her heart, including relocation to Maryland when he finished at Quantico.

The realization stunned him.

Could he be falling in love?

He touched her face and traced the fullness of her mouth with his fingertips. At her news a single word issued from his throat. "No."

The urge to dissuade her, argue his case and stand between her and Rick Bennett overshadowed anything else he'd felt today. Still, he knew the decision was hers alone to make. He added only, "Though I can understand why he'd ask."

Lisa smiled. "That's sweet of you to say." She ran her palms along the length of his arms. "You know, for a cop, you're a pretty nice guy."

Antonio smiled, though his heart pounded. After tonight, he might never see Lisa again. "I told you I was one of the good guys."

She leaned against his chest and wrapped her arms around his waist. "I'm starting to believe that."

Antonio kissed the crown of her head. "I'd do anything for more time to prove it to you."

"You would?" Lisa looked up to meet his eyes. "I figured I was just an interesting distraction until you went away again." Her eyes crinkled with amusement. "You have to admit we met under unusual circumstances."

"It's a story we can never tell our grandchildren." His mother firmly believed that a similar cultural background provided the necessary foundation for a lasting relationship. He could almost hear his mother preach about the link between shared culture and successful marriage. She'd probably kill him when she found out Lisa wasn't Latino, yet he was sure Lisa could melt Pilar's heart.

Lisa studied him while she seemed to decide how to respond. Her hands tightened on his waist. "I told Rick, 'no.'"

Antonio blew out a breath. "You're not going to marry him?" He could hear the joy in his voice though he tried to control it.

Apparently, Lisa heard it too, because she released her grip and stepped back to spin a circle on the sidewalk with arms uplifted. Her skirt flared around her thighs like a little purple umbrella. The pivot brought her back to face him again. "When he showed me the diamond ring, all I could think of was you."

A rush of powerful relief coursed through Antonio's veins. He caught his breath and released it as a surge of adrenaline replaced his anxiety, making him feel invincible. He stepped forward and took Lisa by the waist, lifted her off her feet and spun her around again while he buried his face in her hair. The clean scent of shampoo seemed to sharpen his senses, drowning him in desire for this single, special woman.

"You're free to be mine now," he said as he put her down. He kissed her ear, ran his lips along the apple of her cheek and glided his tongue across the line of her jaw until he found her mouth. He covered her lips with deep, frantic kisses that she returned with equal vigor and clutched her body to his.

She panted against his neck. "Oh...by the way, I'm not wearing any...panties." Her voice sounded ragged and husky.

The impact of her words exploded through his brain and his cock lifted to action. He grabbed Lisa's hand and pressed it to his chest. "Feel that? You're giving me a heart attack." He lowered her hand and pressed her palm to his erection. "And a major dick attack."

"Let's go," she replied, giggling, "before someone calls a cop."

Antonio climbed on his Harley and Lisa straddled the back, her bare ass exposed in the halo glow of streetlamps in the rear view mirror. Antonio's rod throbbed in response. As the bike pulled away, her skirt lifted and billowed around her hips, flashing tanned skin and the curve of her haunches to the wind. She tucked the front of her mini under her legs.

The moon was high and full like the tide. Antonio's mood soared with the air on his face, the feel of his woman against his back and the promise of their future together. He wanted to make love to Lisa in this exact moment, but was content to drive along the bay and enjoy the feel of her body against his.

Santa Fe seemed farther away than ever. He thought of his mother, the buddies on the force he left behind and the exciting opportunities awaiting him with the FBI.

And now there was Lisa, rising to the center of it all.

Estela's face loomed before him on the horizon and then faded behind his eyes, seeming to blow a kiss of farewell against his lips with the gusting of the wind. "Sleep well, *mi amor*," he whispered to her as the moon shimmered over the water and a gentle breeze caressed his cheek.

Lisa watched the full moon as the Harley roared down the highway, awed by the beauty of the glittering sky. The Big and Little Dippers seemed to follow her along the road and the North Star twinkled brightly above, inviting her to make a wish. She closed her eyes and whisked her thoughts up, up to the inky black blanket above her, to the brilliant light promising hope.

She wouldn't marry Rick.

There it was.

The words had been said and, suddenly, she felt relief wash over her so great that her nerve ends tingled and her eyes filled with tears. Providence had intervened in the form of a hate-filled letter that had opened her eyes to the truth and saved her from the fate her mother had suffered at the hands of an arrogant, self-centered man.

Whether things would last with Antonio, Lisa wasn't sure, though she wanted to try. She had her career, an impressive financial portfolio, friends and a comfortable place to live. Having a man like Antonio beside her would enrich her life, not define it, though she could visualize his presence within her circle. The vision comforted her.

She reached out to blow a kiss to the North Star and thank the night for her leap of faith. Her wish, she knew, had been granted.

It had come in the form of contentment.

* * * * *

The brunette squealed again with delight as Tomas Alvarez pounded his stiff, sore cock into her. The dancer couldn't get enough—she seemed insatiable even after eight orgasms and begged him to plunge deeper.

She had propped herself up on her knees against a mound of pillows, with her heart-shaped ass straddling the edge of her king-sized bed, facing out and her lovely pussy open as wide as it would go. Tomas stood on the floor behind her, using his toes as a springboard to drive his sheathed cock into her. He fought back the urge to shoot his wad again at the sight of her small, silky hole and luscious, soft vulva. He had to admit she had the most delectable pussy he'd ever seen.

Despite his exhaustion, with sweat pouring from his face like a strained farmhand, he pounded on to please her while she pleased her clit with a rechargeable vibrator. She'd worn out his tongue an hour ago and his jaw ached. He'd licked and sucked her rather large, wide clit to her exact requirements and specifications and she had rewarded his efforts with ear-splitting crescendos and window-shattering howls five times. His scalp bled from her nails raking his hair roots. His neck burned with long fingernail slashes.

Still, she couldn't get enough of the tongue.

When his wore out she reached for the Lickity Slit in her nightstand. The battery operated, oversized artificial human tongue was a godsend for his throbbing neck and a downright competitor in the long-range cunnilingus race. Still, he was glad for the temporary reprieve. She whirled away to three more orgasms while he fucked her from behind.

Crystal Diamond—her real name to be sure—was squealing and panting for the ninth time in a way he'd come to recognize as her pre-orgasm chant. This buildup seemed especially good, since she'd added the prayers, "Oh God, Oh God, Oh Jesus, Oh Jesus," to the mix and turned up the speed on the Lickity Slit to maximum slide. The chorus of high resolution buzzing, her soprano shrieks and his rhythmic pumping filled the room as she reached the edge of the abyss when...

Sonofabitch! His cell phone rang.

He didn't want to answer it, but if his phone rang at three-thirty in the morning, it had to be an emergency. Maybe it was Antonio. Was he in trouble?

Tomas didn't miss a stroke as he pounded Crystal's pussy and reached for his cell phone on the nightstand. Still, the ringing disrupted the flow of her very explosive orgasm, by the looks of the cream shooting from her slit, because between grunts she shouted, "Whoever that cocksucker is, I'm gonna fucking kill him!"

Tomas flipped open the cell. "Yeah?"

At first, all he heard was heavy breathing and then a muffled choke. "She's gone, Tomas." The words were slurred and sounded thick with alcohol.

"Rick, is that you?" Tomas recognized the drunken voice, despite the halting syllables. The Baller was probably phoning from his dumpy apartment down the street from the pizza place. Rick had brought so many women there Tomas was surprised it hadn't been raided. He looked up at Crystal's luscious, moist anus and decided not to tell Rick about her.

As Crystal's climax wound down, he stilled his hips.

"Your fucking brother!" Rick growled into the receiver. "Your brother stole my girl! I have proof!" Tomas heard something rattle on the other end of the line. "You tell him for me he's dead, understand? I'll be looking for him. That shit-eating bastard is *mine*! Fucking wetbacks! You think you can steal our women?"

Rick disconnected. Tomas had barely digested his words when Crystal pulled his wilting erection from her pussy, rolled over on her back and grabbed his face with both hands. She thrust his mouth against her clit and spread her knees across two pillows.

"I was interrupted, dammit, Tomas! Now we have to start over." She prodded his scalp in a signal to get busy.

* * * * *

Antonio guided the Harley off the highway and into a stand of tall oaks at the edge of deep woods. Scrub pines and tulip trees mingled with their taller cousins, adding layers of cover between the low branches and fallen leaves. The moon shone bright above the shadows, seeming to guide the motorcycle safely into the light of a natural clearing.

"I want to make love to you for the first time outside." Antonio turned off the ignition, stepped off the bike, and took Lisa's hands. "The moon will be our witness," he whispered.

Her heart pounded and she realized she'd been holding her breath. Excitement coursed through her system. Her bare skin felt hot against the cool leather seat and her pussy opened as he helped her slide off the back of the motorcycle. She was wet, ready.

When he pulled her against him, she wasn't sure if it was his heartbeat or hers that thundered louder between them. All other sound inside the wood vanished. Antonio's body seemed larger and more substantial than before and his hot breath wafted like an entity against her neck. Lisa pressed herself tighter to his chest, reveling in his strength, feeling safe and protected in his arms.

The anticipation of their lovemaking charged the darkness with an almost tangible glow. She breathed in his scent and rubbed her face into his chest while his strong hands glided along the line of her back.

"I dreamed about this all day," Antonio said. He kissed the top of her head and squeezed her tighter against him.

"Me too." Lisa laid a kiss against his chest and rubbed her fingers across his biceps. She brought her hand to his waist and slid her palm beneath the hem of his t-shirt. His

abdomen clenched and his breath hitched as her hand traveled over the skin and muscles beneath. With slow, broad sweeps, she rubbed his tight, trim stomach and he shuddered beneath her touch. His erection strained the fly of his jeans, but she ignored the plea for now, choosing instead to reach up and massage his nipples. He moaned softly as she pinched them in turn and his heart pounded beneath her fingers.

She raised his t-shirt and licked his left nipple while she massaged his chest. Antonio pulled off his shirt, sliding it from his body in one smooth motion. He tossed the shirt onto a nearby branch.

Lisa looked up into Antonio's face. His gaze was intent as he cupped her cheeks. "I've never wanted a woman more." The admission seemed to seal their connection. "I'll do my best to please you. And I'll be safe. All right?"

Lisa nodded understanding. A thrill shot through her groin and down to her knees, making it hard to stay on her feet.

She sighed as he dragged his hands along the length of her back and reached under her miniskirt to clutch the cheeks of her bare ass. He groaned as he crushed the front of his jeans against the cloth of her skirt. His powerful erection pressed against her pelvis, and she winced with the exquisite burn. Tilting her hips slightly, she ground her hips against his. A tremor shot straight from her mound to the tips of her nipples, squeezing them into tight buds. She shivered, though the night was warm.

Antonio buried his face in her hair and reached with one hand to brush away the locks covering her neck. In response, she offered her exposed throat and sighed at the feel of his lips tasting the lines and hollows.

The fingers of his other hand played beneath her skirt, massaging the cleft between her cheeks and probing the tight entrance of her ass with a light, tentative touch. Lisa shivered at the intimate feel of his fingers teasing her ass as she allowed him to explore in a way she had never permitted another lover. He scooped her essence from the opening of her pussy and slid it over her anus, circling the slippery surface gently while his free hand reached for her breast. He kneaded it firmly and then, seeking skin, lifted her top.

Antonio's fingers worked in tandem. One hand stroked her taut nipple in the exact rhythm the other circled her ass. He lowered his mouth to hers and kissed her urgently, thrusting his tongue inside her mouth as his breathing deepened. She met his tongue and sucked it hard, yelping under her breath as his probing finger entered her anus to the first knuckle and vibrated softly against its inner walls. A thrill shot through her and her clit swelled with desire. Her breasts ached for his lips and teeth, but she tightened her grip on his back and arched her spine as his finger probed deeper, and then gently withdrew. He touched the rim of her opening with a single fingertip, gathering moisture, before easing into her again to the second knuckle. Very slowly and with care, he slid his finger in and out of her ass while he dropped his other hand beneath the front of her skirt.

Strong fingers found her dripping slit and thrust inside the opening of her pussy, finger-fucking her at a steady pace while his other hand worked her ass. Lisa's clit stiffened to the straining point until Antonio rested the pad of his thumb over the tender hood and pulled the sheath away to expose the quivering bud inside.

His fingers rode her openings in perfect syncopation while his thumb circled her engorged clitoris. Lisa gasped as his fingers worked their magic. She sagged under the weight of arousal and leaned into him while a surge of flickering heat licked her throbbing pussy. Another series of thrusts and the pressure of his rhythmic thumb brought a sudden, shattering orgasm that made cream gush from her passage and cinched the tips of her nipples.

She wailed.

It was the primal sound of a woman letting go without reservation as her climax took her away. She sailed into the sky, her body pulsing with inordinate pleasure, giving over to the rapture that sapped her strength and then instantly energized.

When her body relaxed and the spasms ebbed, Antonio removed his hands and kissed her lips. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him back with a passion that surged through her like a lightning bolt, threatening to lift her off her feet.

Lisa ran her hands along his naked chest and reached down to unhook the waistband of his jeans. He trembled beneath her touch while she pulled the closure free and released his hard cock. She wrapped her hand around his wide rod and squeezed. Her thumb played in the liquid pool at the head. Antonio growled deep in his throat and took her wrist, stopping her from stroking him further while he kicked off his boots and tossed away socks.

He reached for the t-shirt he'd hastily tossed on the tree branch and laid it on the ground like a small blanket, motioning for Lisa to sit. She complied, stretching her legs out beneath her miniskirt and over the dark tee.

The jeans slid easily over Antonio's hips. Lisa sat watching, enthralled, as he stood before her, naked, and then folded his denims into a long pillow for her head and back. Once his clothes were settled onto the makeshift bed, he faced her again, his phallus brushing the dark line of hair along his stomach, straining and pulsing as if calling to her.

She took the full length of him into her mouth, sucked his cock hard and rubbed his balls until he grabbed her hair to hold her still. His cock trembled inside her mouth and she could sense he fought for control as he stood in the silence, waiting for the urge to pass. After a moment, he pumped in and out of her mouth in a few long strokes and then released his grip on her hair while he pulled his rod free. Without a word, he touched his hands to her shoulders, guiding her to lie on the ground. Lisa lay back on the bed, hitched her skirt to her waist and spread her legs wide for him. Antonio fell to his knees at the edge of the t-shirt, his kneecaps brushing the curve of her ass as she reached to spread her pussy lips and reveal her stiff, pink clit.

He touched his tongue to his lips in response.

Instead of mounting her as she had expected, he lifted her hips with both hands and hoisted her pussy until it was level with his chest. Strong, able hands held her ass tightly as he lowered his face to her mound and licked her clit in small, fast circles.

Colors sprang from the darkness and sparkles of light flickered behind Lisa's eyes as pleasure overtook her. Antonio's tongue flashed at a steady pace as he slid it around and around, dipped it along her folds and then shoved its stiffened length into her passage. She cried out and gripped her own hips, writhing beneath his mouth as his tongue plunged inside her again and again before withdrawing to start over at the tip of her clit, tasting, teasing.

Orgasm surged, but Lisa suppressed her climax. No, not yet. He must have sensed how close she was to the edge because he released her then and rested her hips back on the ground. He reached into the pocket of his jeans behind her head and pulled something out. She heard the crackle of cellophane and lifted her wet pussy in response.

Silk-coated steel rammed into her in one hard plunge. Lisa gasped with both shock and pleasure at the magnificent feel of his long, thick cock. Antonio heaved himself higher over her, creating friction between the base of his rod at his pelvis bone and the underside of her erect clitoris. Lisa elevated her hips to meet his thrusts and yelped when his iron hands gripped her ass and lifted her higher so he could drive deeper into her. The vibrations between his hard cock and her trembling clit melded, gathering force and heat until Lisa could hold off no longer.

"Fuck me harder, I'm going to come," she rasped and Antonio responded by increasing the speed and the pressure. "Yes, *there!*" she shouted as bliss washed over her.

Antonio's cock rammed into her a final time and then quivered, straining as he shot his own hot juices, crying out her name, "Lisa!" beneath the stars.

Chapter Six

"If you could be anyone in the world or do anything else you wanted with your life, what would you choose?" Antonio asked as they lay side by side on the ground, watching a shooting star through the treetops.

Lisa didn't need to consider her answer. "To be me," she replied.

Antonio rolled toward her and traced the line of her jaw with his forefinger. He seemed surprised. "Not some movie star? The first female president? A famous singer?"

Lisa shrugged. "I realized as a teenager there was no point in wishing I was someone else. Nobody gets to have a perfect life. All you have to do is look around—you'll see proof everywhere." She tilted her head toward Antonio. "Famous women have too much stress. Many say they miss their old lives. Others battle drugs or alcohol or have worse blue problems than I do."

"Blue problems?"

"Trouble with men. Even the most gorgeous women in the world can't seem to find faithful husbands."

"Ah." Antonio skimmed his hand across the tops of her breasts and she shivered lightly at the touch. He leaned in to kiss her then, covering her breast with his palm, massaging, while their tongues touched. "But you are gorgeous," he said, breaking the kiss. "And I'm glad you don't want to be someone else. I like who you are. Exactly."

"And who am I, *exactly*?" Lisa rolled to face him and cupped his cheek in her hand.

"You're the woman I don't plan to lose." Antonio's eyes glistened in the semi-darkness.

Lisa's arms flushed with goose bumps. "You know, for a flatfoot, you sure know how to sweet-talk a girl."

"Well, I'm Latino, after all." His grin was sly. "Don't you *gringas* say that Latin men make good lovers?"

Lisa had to laugh then. "Don't get too far ahead of yourself, mister. We'll see if you're consistent."

It was Antonio's turn to smile. He covered his heart with his hand like a Boy Scout. "I promise to do my best."

"Yeah, we'll see."

"A skeptic?" Antonio kissed her again. "I mean what I say."

Lisa had heard promises before. Her heart seemed to slam shut suddenly and she pulled back. She needed to regain control of this situation. What had started as a game for revenge against one man had evolved into a full-blown affair with another.

With feelings attached.

Hers.

There was no way she could have multiple O's with a man she cared nothing about. She stared into Antonio's deep, dark eyes and felt her heart skip a beat as it fought to reopen the steel door she'd just hidden it behind.

Could she be falling for this guy?

Lisa changed the subject to get a little space between them. "What about you? Did you ever wish you had someone else's life?"

"All the time when I was a kid." Antonio raised his brows. "You act surprised."

"I guess I am. You seem so self-assured I assumed you were always a cocky bastard."

"Hmm. Cocky, yes. Bastard, no. I had a happy set of parents. At least, until my dad got sick."

Lisa had tried to rile him, but he hadn't gone for the bait. In fact, he'd taken her dig in stride and was still quite affable. He smiled at her across their makeshift bed, which, for some reason, annoyed her.

"I wanted to be a train conductor when I was a kid. They seemed so powerful in their uniforms, collecting tickets, always stern and shouting stations. I thought they were at least as tough as cops and probably made lots more money." His lips twitched with the recollection and he seemed embarrassed for an instant. "My dad never put me down, though. Never tried to convince me that conductors weren't law enforcement. He let me have my little fantasy."

Lisa felt bad now for being distant. They'd had great sex, and even though he'd had an orgasm and was probably tired, he was making actual conversation.

Maybe she'd better take a harder look at Antonio Alvarez.

She must have stared too hard because he stopped talking and stared back.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Are you laughing at my conductor worship?"

"Not at all. I think you'd make a wonderful conductor. Though you'd still be a man in uniform."

His eyes smoldered. "I'm not in uniform now, though. In fact, I'm still naked as a corn cob." He pressed her hand to the erection that grew, suddenly, inside her palm, hot and fat.

"Oh my gosh, again?" Lisa asked, feigning shock. Her pussy pulsed in response to the feel of his silky shaft.

"Will you do something for me?" He pulled her white, sweetheart neck top above her breasts and began suckling them in turn. The tips of her nipples turned to hard,

small pearls inside his warm mouth. She stroked his ready cock fast and heard him moan while he sucked harder. Her pussy moistened for him.

He pulled his mouth away and brought it to her ear. "Ever since you leaned over me on that sidewalk, I've wanted to take you from behind. I can't stop thinking about it."

Lisa nodded understanding and rolled over. She came up on her hands and knees and pulled her skirt up, thrust her bare ass high into the air and turned her head to watch him over her shoulder. Antonio seemed to absorb the sight of her in such a vulnerable position with almost tangible intensity, lids hooded and nostrils flared. His breathing deepened.

The cool, early morning breeze wafted over her cleft and cradled her labia. She shivered in anticipation of his hard cock inside her again. Her clit stiffened and pushed free of its soft, protective hood and her vulva opened, exposed and ready.

There was no waiting this time. A crackle of paper sounded, followed quickly by the satiny head of his sheathed cock probing her wet opening. He rubbed the tip around the edge of her passage and then thrust inside just enough to swallow the swollen head. He moaned and grabbed her hips to hold on, thrusting again once, twice, before pushing himself inside to the hilt. His pubic hair brushed the folds of her anus as he crashed against her with all his might, forcing his cock so deep in her pussy she thought they both would shatter from the effort.

He pulled out fast, then rammed inside her again, battering her walls with his solid girth. She pushed her palms tighter against the ground for support, fighting back in counter force to give him more leverage as he withdrew and slammed into her again.

"Your pussy is...so...sweet," he panted, fucking her faster now, seeming to give over to the steady rhythm he'd created. He reached between her legs to find her clit, rubbing it in hard, fast circles while he moved in and out of her pussy and squeezed one cheek of her ass. Her heat rose at the feel of his fingers vibrating across her stiff bud in tandem with the friction his cock created. A sudden, surprising rise to orgasm took her breath and she gasped in loud, quick bursts as pleasure washed over her.

She came with a gush in his hand. Her spirit rose above the early morning clearing, her climax so intense she could barely hear him behind her, pounding in and out in frantic rhythm until he held still inside her and shouted while he filled her up.

* * * * *

Lisa woke first, face down in a tangle of sheets, in Antonio's bed. The hotel room was dark, though a vertical ribbon of light peeked through the drapes across the room. A digital clock glowed the time—3:00 p.m.

Antonio slept on his back, snoring softly in the king position, both hands tucked beneath the crown of his head, elbows raised.

She crawled out of bed and tiptoed naked to the bathroom to pee. She found a bottle of mouthwash and swished it around her mouth to freshen her breath, then hopped into the hot shower. Be grateful for hotel shampoo and hair dryers, she thought, reveling in the spray that coated her body. The jets pounded her sore muscles and brush-burned skin. She smiled at the memories while she whisked soap across her wet, slippery breasts, rubbing their fullness between her fingers and washing her nipples clean.

"Here, let me do that." Antonio stepped into the shower and came up behind her, pressing the front of his body against her back. Dark, silky hair brushed the curve of her butt. He took the soap away and worked it into a frothy lather. "I love touching your breasts. They are so beautiful. They make my cock hard."

Lisa felt his phallus rise against the base of her spine at the cleft of her ass. He pressed tight against her and shifted his hips in a slow, easy rhythm. He moaned while his hands roamed her body, washing her skin clean as he pleased himself against her.

Antonio dropped the soap and rinsed his hands, letting the cascade fall over Lisa's limbs to rinse the suds away. The fingers of one hand found her slit and probed inside, opening her labia to stimulate her clitoris, while his other hand kneaded her breasts. Lisa's body reacted at once, surging with pleasure beneath the tempo of his touch. She relaxed against his body and closed her eyes.

One finger slid inside her, curving over the base of her clit, across the silky entrance to her vagina and slid out again. A second finger joined the first in smooth up and down strokes. Antonio's hand never faltered as his fingers played over her clit, taking her arousal higher, sliding over the slippery surface as her pussy trickled juice across his hand. Lisa's body stiffened and she lifted her hips as her climax grew near.

Instead of increasing the pace and bringing her to release, Antonio took his hands away. Lisa cried out in protest, but her cries of want soon turned to shouts of joy as Antonio turned her around, stooped down and buried his tongue inside her.

Hot water cascaded along Antonio's back while his tongue lapped her clit. He stuck his tongue out farther and licked her quivering nub with precise, steady jabs until Lisa's body trembled. Her knees grew weak and she thought she would fall from the sheer pleasure his tongue created. He gripped her knees to hold her upright and quickened the pace, licking her hard and fast in full circles with the width of his tongue.

The explosion between her legs nearly sent her reeling. She held on tight to Antonio's shoulders as thunderbolts sent shockwaves over her body, blinding her with bursts of light. Even as she came in his mouth, his tongue never wavered, licking her through the pulses of orgasm to the finish, when her clit became so sensitive she nearly screamed.

He stopped then and stood up to lean against her, thrusting his shaft between her thighs. His long cock bulged and swelled and the soft tip caressed her wet center, probing.

"Condom?" She breathed the word, placing her hand on his chest as if to stop him.

"No need," he panted. "I won't enter you." He rubbed the length of his cock against her most tender flesh, squeezing the tops of her thighs around his girth to create friction. Gripping her legs closed, Antonio began to move, pumping his shaft along her cunt. Lisa wrapped her arms tightly around his waist and kneaded his ass, rocking him harder against her until she felt the hot rush of his semen shoot against her soft curls. Antonio shuddered in her arms and slowly relaxed his hold. He kissed the curve of her shoulder and whispered endearments in Spanish.

They bathed one another with sweet smelling soap and rinsed, kissing beneath the warm shower before getting out to dry off.

"I'm starving," Lisa said, wrapping one towel around her body and another around her hair before brushing her teeth. She swirled minty mouthwash and ran her tongue across her gums, feeling fresh at last. "Famished."

"And ravished," Antonio said, smiling toothpaste. A red toothbrush that matched his plaid boxers poked from his mouth.

"And satisfied," Lisa added while he rinsed. She slapped his butt lightly as he dried his face with a hand towel.

Antonio's hand shot out and gripped her spanking arm, pulling her close. Turning fast, he brought his mouth to hers and covered her lips with a deep, rich kiss that seemed to suck the breath from her lungs. Lisa broke away, feeling her face flush. She took a gulp of air, resigned herself to wanting him and went back for more. She returned his kiss with a depth of feeling she had never shared with anyone.

The intimacy shook her. She pulled away feeling suddenly flustered, wondering for the first time if what she and Antonio had found was real.

Could this relationship last?

What she had at first considered a fun adventure was no longer a game. She looked into Antonio's eyes and felt a stab of fear at the thought of never seeing him again. Panic reared, but she fought it back, dueling with her pride to keep her vulnerability in check.

As if reading her mind, he touched her face and kissed the end of her nose. "Will you answer my emails if I write to you from Quantico? Will you take my phone calls?"

Relief swept over her and she wrapped herself in Antonio's arms. "Of course I will. Every day."

* * * * *

Antonio finished shaving just as room service arrived with coffee, fried eggs, bacon, toast, muffins, orange juice and jam, even though it was dinnertime. Lisa ate with abandon, downing two eggs with a side of hash browns before slathering a blueberry muffin with butter. "I want the corn muffin too," she said between bites, ravenous after umpteen orgasms. She must have burned five thousand calories on sex alone.

Antonio drank his coffee black and ate with as much relish as she. He grinned at her across the small table. "Save me the banana nut muffin. I need my strength."

Lisa laughed out loud, feeling freer to relax and be herself with Antonio than she ever expected. She could do this with women—eat like a horse wearing no makeup with her leg draped across the arm of a chair. But having a lover for a friend, with no sense of pretext, was an unexpected pleasure. She took another bite of her muffin and licked her lips.

Antonio's eyes closed to mere slits and he sucked his teeth. "When you lick your lips, you know what that does to me." He touched himself through his boxers. "Your mouth drives me crazy."

Lisa swallowed her bite of blueberry muffin. "Give me a minute to finish eating, will you? I'm starving and every square inch of my body still carries your imprint."

Antonio reached for more food and laughed. "You're right. We should take a break. I'll just sit here and remember what's under your towel." His eyes glistened with promise and his grin became knowing.

"Mmm, should I open it for you, just to refresh your memory from forty-five minutes ago?"

"Absolutely."

She pulled the tab free at the top of her towel and let the end drop. The curve of her hip and the side of one breast were unveiled. Antonio's gaze locked on her pussy, waiting for the other side of the terry cloth to fall away. Her legs were open, and she could almost hear his breath catch as he waited for her to spread her sex with her fingertips to expose her clit and moist opening. She would let his stare linger over her silky depths for as long as he liked. Maybe she would masturbate to orgasm for him.

Lisa reached to pull the other end of the towel free when a knock came at the door.

"Fuck!" Antonio shouted. He stood and grabbed the front of his boxers, trying to tame his erection.

Lisa tucked her towel in again and looked toward the door. "Who could that be?"

"Probably Tomas. Or maybe room service came back for the dirty dishes. I'll answer it." He slapped his cock again to deflate the hard-on. The motion seemed to work this time. Almost.

Antonio looked out the peephole. "It's my brother," he said over his shoulder. He unlocked the dead bolt and opened the door.

Tomas stepped into the room and said a shy "hello" to Lisa. "Sorry to barge in like this." He nodded to Antonio. "I didn't know you had company. But I gotta talk to you. It's important." His eyes darted to Lisa again, and the hairs prickled along the length of her arms. Something was wrong.

Tomas looked a wreck. He was unshaven, sweaty and still wore the same clothes he'd had on the night before, only now they were dirty and rumpled. Long, raw

scratches covered his neck and arms. He looked like he'd mud wrestled a rosebush and lost.

"Jesus Christ, what happened to you?" Antonio said, ignoring Tomas' greeting. "You look like some homeless guy." He pointed to the bathroom. "Shower, shave. Use my stuff. Have a cup of coffee. Then you can tell me what's going on."

Tomas looked over at Lisa. "Is that okay with you? I hope you don't mind."

Lisa didn't. She shook her head. "Not at all. We'll wait." She lifted a cranberry muffin. "Want something to eat?"

Tomas grinned and patted his stomach. "Sure, I'm starving. I'll have that with the coffee. Be right back." He marched off to the bathroom. Antonio crossed the room to his duffle bag for some clean clothes. He handed them through the door to Tomas.

Antonio came back to the table. "I wonder what that's all about." He nodded toward the bathroom. "He looks like hell."

"Maybe he's been on an adventure, like his older brother."

"Is that what we're having, an adventure?"

Lisa drew closer and leaned up to kiss him. Her heart skittered at the feel of his firm mouth and hot, sweet breath. "What would you call it?" she whispered against his mouth.

Antonio kissed her again and traced the length of her arm with his fingers. "How about falling in love?"

Chapter Seven

Before she had the chance to respond to his “falling in love” comment, he kissed her hard. Their eyes locked as they parted and she opened her mouth to speak just as Tomas shouted through the bathroom door.

“Hey, bro! Come ‘ere, will you?”

Antonio scowled and shrugged his shoulders. “Brothers. What can you do?”

“Right,” Lisa replied. “It’s okay.” She released her grip on Antonio and he stepped away. Seconds later, she heard him mutter, “Deodorant’s inside the black shaving kit. Under the lotion.”

He came back to her. “Sorry.”

Lisa shook her head. “I understand. But can I borrow a t-shirt or something? I feel funny sitting here in two towels with your brother in the room.”

“Sure.” Antonio found a clean t-shirt and handed it over.

She unwrapped her hair and shook it free, running her fingers through the length to detangle it. Antonio’s eyes devoured her when she dropped the towel draping her body and pulled on his shirt. It covered her only to the tops of her thighs. “Uh-oh. Remember I didn’t wear any underwear?”

Antonio grinned. “Suits me. But I don’t like sharing my girlfriend, even with my own brother. I’ll get you some boxers.” He tossed a pair to her and she pulled them on.

“Girlfriend? Hmm, interesting,” she said, as she went to her purse to take out a wide-tooth comb. Her hair was nearly dry as she ran the teeth through it and, once finished, flipped the long strands over her shoulders.

Tomas exited the bathroom just as Antonio replied, “Why not?”

“Why not what?” Tomas asked, crossing to the food table and sitting down. He reached for the cranberry muffin and some cold bacon and poured himself coffee after wiping out Antonio’s cup.

“Call her my girlfriend.” Antonio turned toward his brother. “We’ve only known each other twenty-eight hours, but that’s long enough for me to know what I want.”

Lisa joined Tomas at the table. Antonio went to the bedside and dragged an armchair across the carpet to sit next to Lisa.

“I know what you mean. I’ve got a new girl too. Her name is Crystal.”

Lisa smirked. “The dancer from the club?”

Tomas smiled back. “Oh yeah. That’s her. She’s a wild one. Totally crazy, but I dig her in a big way.”

"Is she the one who mauled you? You look like an accident victim," Antonio said. "You graduate tomorrow, nutbag."

"Yeah and I'm never gonna forget this time in my life. Ever. That woman used me up like I've never been used before. She's a siren, man, just like the sailors talk about. She lures you with her beauty and her song, and then crashes you against the rocks." He took a sip of coffee and sighed with obvious satisfaction. "What a way to go." He looked at Antonio and grinned.

"You're as whacko she is, little brother. But good luck with that."

"You're the one who needs luck, man, not me. The Baller is gunning for you and he's out for blood. You'd better watch your back. That's what I came here to tell you."

"Who's The Baller?" Lisa looked from one man to the other. From their panicked expressions, she could tell Tomas had just let something slip.

Tomas looked to Antonio, a silent question written on his face that asked, "Doesn't she know?"

Apparently Antonio decided not to bail him out. His mouth curved in a sly grin. "Yeah, Tomas. Who's this Baller guy and what does he want with me?"

Tomas looked at Lisa, bit into his cranberry muffin, and chewed with calculated precision.

Lisa huffed. "Okay, you guys, cut the crap. Give."

Antonio shrugged a shoulder. "It's about Rick."

"It's just a nickname for your old boyfriend, that's all," Tomas added quickly. "Sailors and marines use them all the time. My buddies call me 'Chico'. It's bigoted and I'm not even Puerto Rican, but who the fuck cares? It doesn't mean anything. It's just a thing we do."

"But Rick's name just happens to be The Baller." It wasn't a question. By the chagrin on their faces, Lisa could tell they knew why.

He'd earned it.

Heat burned her cheeks. "So his cheating was worse than I thought. In other words, Rick is a complete and total pig. A man-whore."

Antonio squeezed her forearm. "There was no point in you knowing. No reason to hurt you further."

Hot tears sprang to Lisa's eyes, though she fought them off. Her stomach lurched. When she considered all the times Rick had touched her, made love to her...

Her skin crawled. Thank God she'd always insisted he use condoms. Who knew how many other women he'd been with, how far his betrayals went?

Lisa stood and stared down at Antonio. "So, now Rick's angry with you because of me?"

Antonio got to his feet. Tomas set his food down and stood too.

Tomas spoke first. "He called during the night. Drunk. Told me to tell Antonio he was a dead man. That he'd be looking for him."

Lisa shouted, "That egotistical bastard! Who does he think he is? He doesn't own me!" She slammed her chair sideways and stomped around it. "He thinks he can do whatever he wants and then hold *me* accountable?" She pointed to Antonio. "Or you?" Fury raged within her. "He can rot in hell for all I care. It's lucky I found out who he was before I made the biggest mistake of my life."

Tomas looked guilt-ridden. "I'm sorry. I wish I hadn't said what I did."

Lisa shook her head. "This isn't your fault, Tomas. Rick had no right to call you. To get you involved. This is between me and him."

She met Antonio's eyes. "And this has nothing to do with you and me, either. I wouldn't have married Rick even if we hadn't met. I came here to break up with him, remember?"

"Smart move," Tomas replied. He seemed relieved. He glanced at the door as if anxious to make a quick exit, but turned instead to his brother. "Just the same, watch out for this guy."

"Thanks, man." Antonio reached out and slapped his brother on the shoulder. "I appreciate the warning. Don't worry. I can take care of myself. And Lisa too."

Lisa thrust her hands on her hips. "I'm perfectly capable of handling myself with Rick. I don't need you to do that for me."

Antonio's face flushed. "I'm sure you can. I just meant..."

"I know what you meant, Mr. Law Enforcement."

Tomas walked toward the door. He turned again to Antonio before opening the handle to leave. "I'm heading back to campus to change into my uniform. I'll give these clothes back later." His eyebrows rose in question. "Are we still on for tonight? Mama will arrive from the airport in a couple hours. Are we still taking her to dinner? Getting her settled in her hotel? I rented a car."

Antonio nodded. "Sure." He inclined his head toward Lisa and met her eyes. "I hope you'll come with us." His urge to be with her outweighed the private tongue-lashing he expected would come later from his mother. He could almost see Mama's eyes spark and those little double lines form between her eyebrows as she frowned and rolled the word *gringa* through clenched teeth.

He glanced again at Lisa and his heart thudded. As a cop he'd faced violent drug dealers, fast-running burglars, cold-blooded murderers, gang leaders, muggers, homeless drunks and angry prostitutes.

He was a grown man. He could handle a woman who'd had to stand on a stool to scold him since he was thirteen years old.

Even a little spitfire like Pilar Alvarez.

He hoped.

As it turned out, his inevitable locking of horns with Mama would wait. Lisa turned down his invitation to join them.

"I need some rest and would like some time alone." And this was Tomas' night, she thought. "I hope you understand." Lisa was sure his mother would want to enjoy the company of her sons in private. Welcome as Lisa might be, she didn't have the right to deny Mrs. Alvarez a family celebration with Tomas and Antonio before they both went away.

"I think I'll go back to my hotel." She turned from Antonio, but not before seeing the flicker of disappointment in his eyes. Her refusal seemed to hurt him. Could she really be more to him than a casual fling? The idea made her shiver inside.

Lisa lifted her hand in a silent goodbye to Tomas. "Maybe I'll come to the ceremony tomorrow," she said, turning back to smile at Antonio, hoping to appease him. "I still have Rick's invitation."

Tomas grinned. "*Bueno*. See you then." He nodded to his brother. "I'll be back with Mama to pick you up for dinner. I'll call your cell when we're on our way." He opened the door and stepped through.

Antonio moved back to Lisa and took her in his arms. "I do want you to come to the graduation. And you *are* invited tonight. Mama and Tomas would enjoy your company." His lips curved in a satiric grin. "Though not nearly as much as I have."

Lisa tapped his butt. "Is that all you think about?"

"No. But when I'm near you, my blood gets hot. I can't help myself. You have a heady effect on me." He ran his fingers through her hair and massaged her scalp.

Warm contentment rippled through her at his gentle touch. She pushed away sour memories of Rick and focused on the man embracing her, relaxing her body against his. Antonio seemed strong and sensible, considerate and caring.

A man of his word. He was no Rick, she was sure.

The realization swept over her that she might have found the right man at last. And by accident. She smiled to herself against Antonio's shoulder as he stroked her hair.

Wasn't life funny?

A tapping sound startled her from her reverie. She thought she heard the words, "forgot something", and, breaking free from Antonio's arms, strode across the room to open the door.

Antonio shouted, "No!" and rushed up behind her just as she unlatched the deadbolt.

The crash as the door swung back nearly knocked Lisa off her feet.

Rick Bennett slammed into Lisa and forced his way into the room. She fought for balance and watched with horror as Rick stormed toward Antonio with fists raised. A thick set of brass knuckles covered the span of one hand. His face was red and his eyes bulged with fury. "Keep away from my girl!" he screamed, spittle flying from his

twisted mouth. Antonio seemed to keep his cool, eyeing the other man as Rick charged toward him. Rick swung, missed and reared up again, raising his arm to deliver a left cross.

Antonio dodged the blows and then moved in fast, rushing Rick until he was nearly on top of him. Rick stepped back, startled by the force of Antonio's frontal assault. Antonio parried and then took two fast steps behind Rick, hooking his elbow around the midshipman's throat while he drove his knee into the soft crease behind Rick's kneecap, dropping him to the ground. Antonio shoved Rick to the floor on his face, pinning him with his knees against the small of his back while Rick squirmed, seething with rage.

"Get the fuck off me," Rick spat, struggling in Antonio's grip.

"Stay still or I'll knock you out cold." Antonio grabbed Rick by the forelock and jerked his face off the carpet. Rick gasped and his brows furrowed with obvious pain. Antonio leaned down to meet him eye-to-eye. "Get what I'm saying, asshole?"

Rick deflated like a popped balloon and relaxed against the floor.

Antonio frisked him, pulling a switchblade from Rick's back pocket. "Planning to use this for something?" He tossed the knife across the floor. Lisa came forward to retrieve the weapon and then stepped away quickly.

"Now what were you planning to do with that, eh, shitbag? Cut me? Hurt Lisa? Are you looking to go to jail? Think you'll get her back that way?"

Lisa threw the knife into the trashcan and rushed toward Rick. "Are you crazy?" She looked at Antonio. "Should I call the police?"

Antonio pulled Rick's head up off the floor by the hair. Rick winced and his face contorted with pain. Antonio pulled the brass knuckles off Rick's hand.

"What do you think, fuckface? Should she call the heat? Or are you leaving?"

Rick's neck seemed to stretch as far backward as it could go in Antonio's grasp. "Leaving." His voice rasped.

"Good idea," Antonio replied. "Now apologize to the lady." He twisted Rick's face around and held it in Lisa's direction.

"Sorry." The word was defiant, angry.

"Mmm, doesn't sound convincing enough to me, phlegm wad." He banged Rick's forehead hard on the floor. A cry of pain and outrage followed. "You have a lot to apologize to this woman for. But I guess you can't help being a total waste."

Antonio hoisted Rick up by his ear and his waistband. He forced Rick on his feet and to the door, shoving him across the room with quick, shuffled steps.

"She's with me now, buddy. Understand? Lisa's through with you. Don't bother her again." Antonio nodded to Lisa to open the door.

She yanked the door open and stepped close to Rick as Antonio prepared to push him into the hallway. "I'm not coming back. Call your other women." She hoped her voice sounded steadier than she felt.

Rick twisted his face around to meet Lisa's and winced beneath Antonio's grip. "You were the only one who mattered. Too bad your pussy's been dirtied. I wouldn't piss on you now."

Antonio pulled Rick's ear, hard and kneed him in the tailbone. "Watch what you say to my lady. Now get out." He thrust Rick outside, slammed the door behind him and bolted the latch.

"This isn't over!" Rick shouted from the other side. He banged his palm once against the panel. Lisa stepped to the peephole and watched as Rick shook his fist at the closed door and then strode down the hall.

Antonio turned and reached for her. "Are you all right?"

Lisa rushed into Antonio's arms. She trembled so badly she could hardly feel her legs. Her stomach churned. "I need to sit." She wasn't used to violence, though she assumed Antonio saw it often. "I never thought Rick would try to hurt me. Or you." She made her way to the club chair with Antonio's arm around her shoulder and sat down.

Antonio scoffed. "There's a lot you didn't know about him. Not your fault." He gently brushed strands of stray hair from her forehead. "What can you expect from a guy who treats women the way he does? He thought he was in complete control of your relationship. You blindsided him when you told him to get lost. He didn't think you had that right."

"He had brass knuckles! A knife!"

"Probably just for show. He's a coward. More interested in stroking his ego than anything else."

Lisa smirked. "Guess you screwed that up. And in your bare feet and boxers, no less."

Antonio laughed as he glanced down at himself. "Yeah, well, he's had things his way long enough." He looked up and touched her chin. "How about a drink to calm your nerves?" He went to the nightstand cluttered with his cell phone, an open box of condoms, a sealed bag of Fritos and a new fifth of bourbon. He picked up the bottle.

"No tequila?" She offered a tight smile though her stomach turned somersaults.

"That's racial profiling," he quipped. "I'm reporting you to the politically correct authorities." Antonio shook his head. "As a matter of fact, I prefer whiskey." He found a clean glass on the food table, opened the bottle and poured her a shot. He handed hers over and poured one for himself. "To us." Antonio raised his glass and downed his drink.

Lisa eyed him. "I didn't think confrontation would rattle you."

Antonio met her gaze. "You're right. It didn't. I'm celebrating." He grinned and waited for her to sip.

The amber liquid burned her throat as it went down, but warmed her stomach and spread calm through her veins. Lisa's muscles relaxed and her fingers stopped trembling. "Ah that is good. Thanks."

Antonio set down his glass. "You don't have to go, you know. If you won't come to dinner, stay here. Keep the door locked and don't answer it, though I doubt Rick will be back. Tomas and I won't be late."

Lisa considered. "All my stuff is at my hotel. I need it. And I want a hot bath, some wine and a romance novel." She smiled and reached out for him. "Just for a while."

He came to her and knelt in front of her chair, wrapping his arms around her waist and pulling her to the edge of the seat. Lisa opened her legs to fit him between her thighs, drawing him closer. She leaned her head on his shoulder while he stroked her back.

"I still have more than an hour before Tomas and my mother arrive," he whispered against her neck. His hot breath sent tingles along her skin as he kissed a path to her ear and traced the soft edge with his tongue. Teeth nibbled her earlobe. The quiet rhythm of his breathing and the sounds of his kisses caused her nipples to constrict and her abdomen to clench with want.

"Hmm," she murmured. She turned to kiss the side of his face and dragged her mouth across his cheek. Her heart pounded as their lips met and their tongues touched. Their breaths merged as Lisa moaned against Antonio's mouth. His hands traveled down her spine and under her t-shirt, exploring. She leaned back to let him pull it off, rendering her naked to the waist.

Antonio glanced at their matching boxer shorts and grunted with apparent pleasure as his gaze lingered on hers. "What a turn-on you are." He leaned forward and thrust his face between her breasts, nuzzling them against his cheeks while he cupped them in his hands.

Lisa's mound throbbed as his fingers squeezed her pink-tipped nipples. A jolt of desire shot through her, though the violent scene earlier with Rick had tempered her mood. Despite attempts to brush worries about Rick away and enjoy Antonio, she glanced at the door.

Antonio sensed her anxiety and brought his face back to hers. He kissed her softly on the mouth. "Why don't we just hold each other for a while?" When she nodded, he took her hand and led her to his bed.

They lay down on their sides, heads resting on their pillows, facing one another. Antonio slid one arm beneath Lisa's neck and massaged her shoulder with his fingertips. His opposite arm lay across her waist.

Lisa mirrored Antonio's position, staring into his dark eyes while she held him. The kindness she found there soothed her frazzled nerves. He cared for her, she was certain. But would he love her some day? Hope welled inside her as she envisioned a future together.

He kissed the tip of her nose. "When I finish training and come to visit you, what will we do?"

"Beside this?" She smiled and traced his biceps.

He returned her smile. "Lots of this. And what else? Tell me what you do when you're not working."

"My roommate, Katie, and I share a three bedroom, two-story saltbox on an acre of land by the bay. I love our house. We keep crab pots and a clam rake. Three times a week, I bait the traps and bring in the catch during the next low tide. Once a week or so, I dig for clams." Lisa met his eyes. "I know you like shrimp. Do you like other kinds of seafood?"

"Love it. Do you cook?"

"Sure."

"Will you cook for me? I'll clean the catch."

Lisa kissed his lips. "Of course. And then we can go country dancing."

Antonio chuckled softly. "Do they have a bull riding machine at the club? I can do that. Can't dance the two-step for beans, though. You'll have to teach me."

"I can ride and dance." She traced the swell of his lips with a fingertip. "You think those exotic dancers at the Tongue and Cheek are hot? Honey, you ain't seen this country girl move around the floor yet." She winked at him and then licked her lips in a parody of the blonde on stage.

Antonio groaned. "You're doing that thing with your mouth again." The tip of his erection poked her thigh.

"And you're hard again." She reached into the front of his boxers and wrapped her hand around his stiff, pulsing rod. Her thumb glided across the smooth, satiny head and circled the wide rim. Antonio's breath caught as she slid her thumb down the underside and flicked it across the bulging blue veins. She moved up again to play in the ridge where the silky head met the strong shaft and her mouth went dry at the exquisite feel. She moistened her lips in response.

"You do that so good," he moaned as she stroked the full length of him and massaged his balls.

Lisa pulled at his briefs. "Take them off," she whispered. Lisa lifted her hand to free him and he complied.

Antonio tossed his boxers to the floor. "Now you," he said, tugging her waistband.

Lisa threw the underwear aside and came back to face him. Their chests touched, their bare hips met and a bolt of electricity seemed to strike the room. Invisible sparks flew as Lisa grabbed Antonio's face between her hands and kissed him hard on the mouth.

His response to her aggression was instantaneous. Antonio kissed her back with equal force and thrust his tongue into her mouth as he wrapped his arms around her tightly. Lisa licked his tongue in return, and took the length in her mouth to suck it

gently before withdrawing and kissing his lips again. She moaned as Antonio's hand reached between her legs and opened her slit.

Her pussy was hot.

She could feel the heat radiate against her thighs as he probed her opening and released her moisture. Lisa shivered as his fingers dragged her nectar along her vulva to the tip of her clit, and then pushed away the hood to expose the stiff, triangular bud. He circled her clit again and again, and she shivered at the promise of climax.

But not too soon.

She reached to stimulate his balls and wrapped them inside her palms, rubbing them gently while he slid two fingers inside her. Lisa could feel her cheeks flush, and her breathing quickened as her arousal increased with the pace of his fingers. He moved them in and out of her slick passage, gliding them along the base of her clit with each thrust, driving her closer to the edge of bliss.

With one hand between her legs, the other reached for her breast and touched her erect nipple. Lisa's body arched in reply, seeking more. Antonio finger-fucked her harder then and pinched her nipple before lowering his face to her chest and taking the tip in his mouth. He worked her breast with his lips and fingers while the other hand rubbed her clit faster.

Lisa took his throbbing cock in both hands and lifted the taut skin to the tip and then down again. His cock stretched and quivered in response to her stroking. She slowed the pace to keep him from coming—she wasn't ready to finish him yet—and rotated her hips in time with his quickening fingers. Spots formed behind her eyes and she knew she had drawn closer to the edge as her body heat raised another notch.

Antonio's hand slid along the base of her clit to her opening and then moved behind her anus to cup her ass. In one smooth motion he tapped Lisa's buttocks to signal her to straddle him while he pulled away and flipped onto his back. Antonio lay in the center of the bed, waiting.

His cock was magnificent.

His erection reached full staff and stretched toward the ceiling. The dark hair on his legs blended into the deep thatch surrounding his sac. Lisa dragged one hand along his muscled thigh to the patch of hair, and traced the length of his phallus, admiring its strength as it quivered beneath her touch. She continued her travel along the dark line of his navel to his stomach and rubbed the tight muscles of his chest.

She hoisted herself to her knees and knelt beside him, massaging his chest with the palms of her hands, enjoying the feel of varying textures from pearly, to wiry to smooth as her fingertips glided over nipples, hair and skin. Antonio groaned and sighed.

The scent of sex filled the room and Lisa breathed it in, savoring the heat they created. She separated her legs then and sat astride him, watching herself rub her stiff, throbbing clit against the base of his cock in tight circles and finding a thick vein that

traced the surface of her clit in a perfect arc. Antonio moaned and she gasped as she rubbed herself against him faster, taking her one step closer to the edge of orgasm.

Lisa slowed and drew away, waiting for the waves that threatened to break between her thighs to subside. When the sensations passed, she leaned forward again to massage Antonio's chest.

He covered her hands with his and linked their fingers. "Sit on my face," he said, his voice thick with lust as he pulled her forward. Lisa straddled his neck and shoulders, supporting herself against the headboard while she lifted her pussy to his mouth.

He tasted her then, licking her exposed, rigid clit in long strokes with his extended tongue. Lisa cried out with pleasure as his tongue played over her sensitive tip and then slid to the root, vibrating fast. She released one hand from the headboard and brought it to her pussy lips, stretching her moist folds open wider, looking down to watch as his tongue flicked over her clit again and again.

The sight of his mouth and tongue licking her pussy created an instant high. Perspiration formed along her upper lip and across her forehead as she struggled to fight back the climax that promised to shatter her. "Not yet," she murmured, watching her clit move beneath Antonio's tongue. He flicked it again and then touched the tip in a series of staccato jabs that sent an almost painful pleasure surging through her. She couldn't take her eyes off her pussy or his mouth, and yet she knew she must or she would come.

Holding back this long had been a supreme effort. Lisa couldn't wait much longer. Sweat gathered beneath her arms and under her breasts. Her skin felt feverish.

She leaned toward the nightstand, grabbed a condom from the container and tore the packet open.

Lisa moved away from Antonio and sat beside him again, laying a kiss on his abdomen before unrolling the condom over his thick, long cock. When it was sheathed, she rubbed his balls lovingly and then straddled him with widespread legs.

She lifted her ass and pussy high over him and took his cock in her hand. She rubbed the head around the rim of her channel, sat down on it slowly and sucked him into her an inch at a time until her pussy had swallowed his cock whole.

Antonio shouted with obvious pleasure as she began to move.

Lisa thrust her hips forward and her shoulders back while she rode him hard. Her hair skimmed the curves of her ass as her head swayed, tickling her bare skin. Antonio reached out to link fingers and pressed his palms tight against hers to provide leverage.

The throbbing between her legs reached a crescendo as she pounded herself against him, fucking his cock with all her strength, rocking the length of his rod against her stiff bud over and over, up and down, until she could hold back no more. The tidal wave washed over her and pulled her under, drowning her as the scent of her juices filled the air.

Lisa's wails swelled as she cried out, failing to bite back the intimate sounds that vibrated against the walls and windows. Her back arched and her muscles tightened while the throes of orgasm engulfed her, erasing all other sensations and sounds except her lover's shouts as his cock pulsed inside her while she finished her pleasure ride.

Lisa's body relaxed at last and she slumped forward, resting her face against the soft mat of hair on Antonio's chest while her fingers let his go. In the quiet evening twilight, she dozed.

A cell phone rang a short time later, awakening her. She nudged Antonio. "Phone," she whispered. Her voice cracked inside her parched throat.

Antonio reached for his phone on the nightstand. She could hear Tomas' voice through the receiver. "Hey, bro, we're running a little late. Mama's flight was delayed half an hour. We'll be there in about forty-five minutes to pick you up. Mama's getting ready now."

"No problem," Antonio replied, clearing his throat.

Tomas chuckled into the phone. "I didn't think it would be, man. She still there?"

"Uh yeah. I'm taking Lisa back to her hotel in a few minutes."

"Cool. See you soon. Oh, and Antonio?"

"Yeah?"

"Mama says she has a little surprise for us."

Chapter Eight

Pilar Alvarez held her head high and linked arms with her sons as they entered the restaurant. Antonio had never seen his mother look more vibrant or beautiful. Her dark eyes sparkled, her caramel skin glowed and her smile seemed to come from deep within her soul. She clutched her sons' arms like a queen with her escorts as they followed the maitre d' to their reserved table.

Antonio held a chair for his mother while she swept filmy yards of floral print beneath her thighs and sat down beside him. To her right, Tomas ordered wine. He moved her glass closer and the condiments farther away to give her more space.

Pilar sighed with obvious contentment and looked around the elegant room. She touched rose-colored nails that matched her lipstick to her naturally curly, raven hair in a vain attempt to smooth the waves, as she had done since Antonio could remember.

Antonio smiled at her unconscious gesture, which had failed to tame the wild tresses that grew as long and full as pictures showed her at seventeen, when she had first given birth. At forty-two, Pilar was trim and bubbly as ever, seemingly at ease with both herself and her sons. Antonio took her hand and squeezed it gently. His mother beamed.

"I'm so proud of you both," she said, returning the squeeze and then letting go. "Your father would be too. I wish Miguel had lived to see this." She turned toward Tomas. "My baby graduates tomorrow. An officer. It doesn't seem possible that you're twenty-two and will soon sail away somewhere. I hope you'll be happy, Tomas."

She tilted her head toward Antonio and grinned. "The FBI is a long way from the railroad, eh, Antonio? I know you'll do fine there. You do everything well. I wonder where they'll send you?"

"I've been wondering about that too. Tomas and I worry about leaving you alone. Tomas will be at sea for at least six months. I don't know where I'll be assigned after training. But when I get settled, maybe you can move nearby."

Pilar shook her head. "Santa Fe's my home. And it's never a good idea for a mother to follow her children. It's time for me to let you go, though I admit it's hard." She patted Antonio's arm. "But I won't be alone, so stop worrying, okay?" Pilar's eyes glistened with a mysterious quality that piqued Antonio's interest.

The wine steward poured a sample of Riesling for Tomas' approval. Tomas nodded his acceptance of the bottle and the waiter served the group. When he left the table, Pilar lifted her glass to offer a toast. "May the world be kind to my sons. And may my sons make their way in the world," she said in Spanish. They clinked their goblets and drank. Pilar leaned over to kiss Tomas on the cheek and then offered another to Antonio.

"What did you mean when you said you won't be alone?" Antonio asked. By the sparkle in his mother's eyes he had a sneaking feeling a dam was about to burst. As their waiter approached the table with menus, he waved him away.

Pilar grimaced. "I didn't want to discuss my news when this was supposed to be your night, Tomas' night. But I don't see how I can stand keeping the secret any longer and I don't know when we'll see each other again." She sipped her wine and looked at them over the edge of her goblet. When she set down the glass, her eyes shone with excitement. "I guess we all have something to celebrate." She rubbed her hands together, fingertips pointed up, as if to warm them or offer a prayer.

"Do you remember James MacFarland?"

Antonio and Tomas had met the man a few times. He was a tall, burly, divorced businessman who owned a mansion on some of Santa Fe's most impressive real estate. After MacFarland's divorce he hired Pilar to run errands and manage his large household. Antonio got the distinct feeling that, eventually, his mother managed other things for Mac as well. He suppressed a smile while she continued.

"I've been a widow a long time. I never believed a woman should remarry while she had children still living at home. Unless the situation is extraordinary, men don't accept other men's children very well. Even though I had lovers when you were younger, I never wanted to subject you to the inevitable problems of bringing a stranger into the house. I kept my romances private."

Antonio was stunned. He had never been aware of his mother's perspective on stepfathers and she had rarely admitted to affairs. The fact that she had denied herself the chance to remarry on her sons' account touched him deeply. He reached out to squeeze Pilar's shoulder.

"But now, you are both grown and gone. Mac and I have fallen in love. Last night, he asked me to marry him."

"A *gringo*, Mama?" Antonio widened his eyes and threw up his hands in mock disapproval. "You were always so adamant about us marrying within our culture." He fought the urge to laugh out loud and hug her with relief. Images of Lisa flickered through his mind.

Pilar blushed crimson but held his gaze. "Well, I guess I've changed my thinking with the more diverse times. I was too young when I married the first time to look beyond my family's circle." She shrugged.

"Just like that?" Antonio looked from his mother, to Tomas, and back again. "You mean I worried about my future wife's bloodlines for nothing?" His tone teased, but he felt like he'd been pardoned, like an innocent man on death row. As an age-old expectation vanished, an enormous weight lifted from his shoulders. He and Lisa were free.

"Guess so," Tomas chimed in with a self-satisfied smirk. "I wasn't worried in the least about my new *gringa*. I knew Mama would understand." Antonio knew that Tomas was full of shit, but Tomas expected him to play along. Tomas was more afraid

of their mother than he was. "My girls just need to be hot in any language." Tomas chuckled and reached over to hug his mother. Antonio leaned across his chair and kissed her cheek.

Pilar ignored her sons' exchange as she reached for her pocketbook. "I wanted to show you the ring before I started to wear it. I wanted your blessings." She giggled like a teenager as she opened her purse and pulled out a satin box.

The three-carat solitaire nearly blinded Antonio, even under the soft restaurant lights. The fine-cut, perfect diamond glittered white beneath the candlelight as Pilar lifted it from the case and slid it over her ring finger.

She held her left hand up to the light, admiring. Her eyes took on that impish sparkle again. "Guess the wait was worth it in the long run. And I was wrong about denying love between two people...of any background."

"We need champagne!" Antonio said, signaling the waiter again. "I hope you and Mac will be happy, Mama." He hugged her quickly and looked over at Tomas. "We eat lobster tonight, *hermano*."

Tomas laughed and agreed. "My flush at poker can pay for both the lobster and champagne. Order away." He tapped his mother's shoulder. "Good for you, Mama. I'm glad you won't have to work so hard anymore. And that you found someone to love you."

Antonio patted his wallet. "Dinner's on me, kid brother. I'm a working man, after all."

Pilar just laughed. "Boys, boys. Neither of you pays tonight." She reached into her purse again and pulled out an American Express card. "Mac gave this to me. Dinner is on *him*."

Tomas hooted and lifted his wineglass for another toast. "Well, in that case, Mama, tell Mac we said, 'welcome to the family.'"

An hour later they were finishing their meal when Antonio told his mother about Lisa. "I met someone, Mama. Her name is Lisa."

Pilar looked up from her lobster tail, put down her fork and smiled. The baby-fine lines around her eyes crinkled with pleasure. "I wondered when you'd be ready to fall in love again. Does she know you want at least three *niños* and one big, hairy dog? And that you have a mama who plans to visit often?"

Antonio shook his head. "Not yet. Only Estela knew those things, Ma." A pang struck his chest.

Pilar's tone turned solemn. "Estela was a wonderful woman and all I could have hoped for in a daughter. I'm sorry for her death, Antonio, but it's time to let her go." She leaned close and closed her eyes as she whispered, "I prayed that she would not make my grandchildren motherless one day." Her voice lowered again, so faint her next words were a like a shallow breath. "Please don't make me that afraid again."

Antonio gripped his mother's hand. He had no idea she'd felt that way about Estela being a cop. She'd never said a word, either, about Estela's drive to make detective. Estela was Hispanic, smart and loving. All that Antonio thought his mother required.

Tonight, apparently, was a night of revelations.

"It's normal for a young man like you to look ahead." She patted his hand. "Tell me about Lisa. I can already tell by her name that she's not Latino." Pilar pursed her lips. "But I guess I cannot hold you to old rules any longer, can I?" She smiled and the light in her eyes made her look twenty-five again.

Antonio kissed the back of her wrist. "You'll probably meet her tomorrow at Tomas' graduation ceremony. I'm hoping you'll be as crazy about her as I am." He eyed his mother's engagement ring and couldn't help but envision it on Lisa's hand. "It's too soon to know for sure, but I think she might be *the one*."

Pilar touched Antonio's arm. "Your instincts have always been good and your taste in women is impeccable."

"How could it not be? I have you for a role model."

Pilar squeezed his forearm and laughed. "Still a Latin charmer like your father, I see." She turned to Tomas. "And what about you, *querido*? Any special woman in your life?"

Tomas glanced at Antonio. "My taste isn't the same as Tony's, but I did meet a girl last night. Her name is Crystal. I'll see her later after we drive you to your hotel. Tonight's her night off."

"Oh." Pilar leaned back while the waiter cleared their plates. "And what does Crystal do?"

"Uh...she's in the entertainment business. She's really good at what she does and she's beautiful too. I like her. I invited her to my graduation." The proud look on Tomas' face apparently wasn't lost on his mother.

She touched Tomas' cheek. "That is wonderful, *hijo*. Good for you."

She glanced at Antonio and nodded toward the scratches on Tomas' neck. "Watch out for your brother," she hissed while Tomas ordered a round of desserts.

* * * * *

Lisa poured herself a glass of white zinfandel and put the corked bottle back into the little hotel refrigerator. She sipped the cold, smooth wine and smacked her lips as she crossed the room to pull a romance novel from her suitcase and toss it on the bed. She fluffed the starched, white pillows and went to the closet for extras, forming a comfy bed rest. After a nice, hot bath she looked forward to losing herself in her book.

She drank the wine and frowned when her cell phone rang. Rick's number appeared on the call screen. Lisa had ignored his voice mail messages all day. She sighed and decided to answer. "May as well get this over with," she muttered.

"You're there," Rick said, sounding surprised. "I've been trying to reach you for hours."

"I don't know why. There's nothing left to say. I don't want to marry you. It's over."

"You don't have to marry me. Just don't break up with me, okay? I don't want to lose you, Lisa."

"It's too late."

"You're the only woman I've ever loved, baby. Please come back." Rick's voice cracked.

"You don't know the first thing about love. It's bad enough to have an affair when you're committed to someone else. But your kind of calculated, relentless cheating borders on the pathological." She thought of Antonio's analysis of Rick and knew he'd been right. "Tell your other girlfriend I said thanks for the heads-up. If she hadn't opened my eyes, I would have come to town to watch you graduate rather than to leave you. Maybe if you'd offered an engagement ring before I got that letter, I'd have said yes. God help me."

Rick groaned.

Goose bumps formed along Lisa's arms when she realized how close she'd come to ruining her life. What if they'd had children? She recalled her mother's life of humiliation and rejection. Lisa shuddered.

"I can change." Rick's voice was petulant.

Lisa laughed. "You've got to be kidding. You expect me to believe that? Only a sucker would buy that line, Rick. You are what you are. The Baller."

Rick's voice turned hard. "Don't talk to me like that. And don't use that name. I don't like it."

"And I don't like being made a fool of."

"You think I liked getting tossed out of that bastard's room today? I tried to fight for you. Who's the fool now, huh?"

Lisa decided not to rub salt in the wound. Though she was furious with Rick and no longer loved him, there was no point in being cruel. "No one, okay? It didn't work out between us. Let's just move on."

"You moved on fast enough," Rick grumbled. "Fucking that guy right under my nose." A loud thud sounded in the background. Lisa guessed that Rick had slammed his fist against a wall.

She couldn't deny his accusation. She'd fallen hard and fast for Antonio. Had she ever really loved Rick? Lisa had cried for days when she'd learned of his betrayals, but when the crying was done, rage had set in. When the anger finally subsided, she'd felt a calm awareness of what she must do and set out, determined, to Annapolis.

"I don't like being dumped," he growled. Rick's voice had taken an ominous turn that sent shivers along Lisa's spine. Still, she wouldn't let him bully her.

"And I didn't like finding out that my boyfriend is a man-whore. So we're even."

"Who's the slut now?" he raged. "Spreading your legs for Alvarez. And during my graduation! You've ruined the best day of my life, bitch!" There was another loud crack as Rick pounded something.

The conversation had obviously veered out of control. Lisa decided to end it before things got worse. "Good luck tomorrow, Rick. I mean that. And I hope you do well in the Navy."

"So, that's it?" His voice was incredulous. "You're done with me, so I'm just supposed to accept that as if I have no say in the matter?" His tone dropped an octave. "I think I do. I have a lot to say about us. We break up if and when *I* say we do. Not before."

Lisa sighed. "Get used to the concept, then. Get it in your head. We're over. I don't want to see you anymore. I won't see you again. Now goodbye!"

"You have until tomorrow morning to change your mind or I'll take action I guarantee you won't like."

Lisa's palms broke out in a sweat and the inside of her mouth felt like it was stuffed with cotton balls. She clutched the phone harder and forced the words, "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Just what I said. Get your skanky ass back to me tomorrow and stand by my side at graduation or you'll wish you had."

"Fuck you." Her hands were shaking badly now, and her throat burned with fury and fear, but she would die before she let Rick know that. "I don't answer to you. Thank God I learned the truth when I did! I can't imagine staying with a lowlife like you another day!"

"Lowlife?" Stunned silence punctuated the word. The sound of Rick's rough breathing preceded a low growl that sent shivers of dread along her skin. "Have it your way, baby." He disconnected.

Lisa sat on the edge of the bed and tossed the phone aside. Her body shook from head to toe. She reached for her wine, downed it in one gulp and then made her way to the mini-bar's fridge and poured a fresh glass. Sipped. Lisa's nerves calmed a little.

She stripped off her clothes and made her way to the bathroom for a hot soak. She set her wineglass on the counter and poured scented bath foam into the tub, swishing the liquid around and watching bubbles form as steam filled the room. She placed her glass of wine on the floor within reach and stepped into the warm water.

"Ahh." The heat was an instant tranquilizer. She lay back in the tub and let the hot water penetrate her muscles. Her fingers reached for her wine and she drank gratefully as the liquor warmed her stomach. Within minutes, Rick's venomous words faded, and she dismissed his threats as childish and unreasonable.

Nothing had changed. She and Rick were finished and she had met someone new. End of story. Lisa smiled to herself as she thought of Antonio and relived their

lovemaking. Correction. Their hot sex turned lovemaking by the end of the day. That was the most unexpected pleasure of all.

She drank more wine and wondered what Antonio was doing. Probably finishing dessert with his mom and Tomas. Lisa wondered if he'd told his mother about her.

Lisa set down her glass and unwrapped a bar of her personal moisturizing soap. As she washed, her slippery fingers massaged the smooth surface of her skin, easing away the anxiety from her phone call with Rick.

Her breasts skimmed the surface of the warm water and her nipples constricted into long, hard peaks. She filled her hands with bubbles and washed the full, soft orbs, smiling to herself with the memory of the pleasure this act had brought her lover when they had showered together.

The effects of the wine and the hot bath drained the last of the tension from Lisa's body. She leaned her head against the back of the tub and luxuriated in the solitude, the tips of her fingers tracing the tight areola of one nipple absently, while she thought again about Antonio. She wondered what his life would be like when he changed careers, where he would live and whether or not she would fit into his plans. Lisa sighed. She hoped so.

She ran her hand along the inside of her right thigh and brushed the tight curls of her sex with her fingers. A thrill jolted through her as she remembered Antonio's warm, stiffened tongue licking her there, probing the soft pink folds and thrusting inside to tongue fuck her. She touched the growth of silky hair and rubbed her fingertips through it. She longed for his mouth to suck her clit again.

Lisa leaned forward and lifted the lever that released the water from the tub. She watched as the bubbles swirled down the drain, then stood and closed the shower curtain. She turned on the warm water and showered off, rinsing before washing her hair.

When her long strands were squeaky clean, she reached for her shave gel and razor and removed the hair from her pussy and ass. Then she laid aside the razor and smiled as she looked down to see her skin beneath the freshly clipped patch. She touched the cleft that protected the soft flesh inside and enjoyed the feel of her exposed lips as she expected Antonio would. She imagined his pleasure when he saw her shaved mound, his cock stiff with anticipation as his fingers prepared her opening to receive him. She would be wet with excitement, her clit swollen and ready for climax as he thrust inside her.

Tomorrow she would have him again.

Lisa shut off the water and stepped from the shower, reaching for a towel. Once dry, she slipped into a cotton teddy with matching panties, wrapped her hair and turned out the bathroom light as she made her way across the room to the bed. Her romance novel waited. She tucked herself among the pillows, leaned back and opened the pages of her book.

* * * * *

Antonio said "good night" to his mother and brother at the door of his hotel and walked to his room. His body ached and all he wanted right now was a stiff drink, a hot shower and a warm bed where he could dream about Lisa.

He stripped off his clothes and threw them in a heap on the chair next to the tiny dinette table, then poured himself three fingers of bourbon, gulping a mouthful before setting the glass down and striding to the bathroom.

Hot water steamed the mirror before he had the shower curtain pulled back. Antonio stepped into the tub. The pulsating head of the shower massage kneaded his taut shoulders.

"Ahh, that feels good." He rotated his neck as the jets pounded his tired muscles. He reached for the shampoo and lathered his scalp, recalling the scent of Lisa's long brown hair when it was freshly washed. He smiled as he rinsed, sure he could smell flowers in the bath.

More thoughts of Lisa drifted through his mind as he grabbed the soap and crossed it over his chest. Antonio recalled the feel of her full, slick breasts he traced her tight, smooth skin inside the shower.

Memories of her trembling clit as she came in his mouth made his cock twinge and rise. His shaft stared up at him, near purple and pulsing. He thought he'd be too tired to go again after the frequent erections and vigorous sex he'd been having. He touched the head of his cock and chuckled.

Apparently not.

A surge of desire shot through him as he imagined Lisa in the shower with him, caressing the hair on his chest and running her hands along his abdomen to the thatch of hair at his crotch. In his mind it was her hand that encircled his cock and stroked it slowly from the base to the tip and then down again.

Firmly entrenched in his fantasy, Antonio imagined Lisa rubbing the thick, swollen head as drops of warm liquid washed away in the water spray. The opposite hand cupped his balls and rubbed them quickly while the other pumped his dick. Lisa's face loomed while he watched her jerk him off, increasing the speed as she gripped his rod, pummeling his shaft over and over, up and down. She licked her lips in anticipation, running the length of her tongue over her full, soft bottom lip, leaving it wet and ready for his cock.

At the memory of her incredible mouth wrapped around his phallus, the veins swelled to near bursting as his length stretched and strained. Heat rose inside him like the smoldering swell of an active volcano, ready to spew. Lisa's hand worked his shaft while she whispered, "I want to suck your dick," and rubbed her pink nipples against his chest as she gripped his rod harder and pumped faster.

His body heat soared when the lava erupted, leaving him weak-kneed, as earth-shattering waves of orgasm rolled over him. Unable to hold back, Antonio cried out. He

screamed her name, "Lisa!" as his seed shot over his hand and washed away with the fading sound of his voice.

Chapter Nine

The sun shone high above the crowd gathering along the parade route. Couples held hands, children fidgeted beside their parents, babies cried and grandmothers beamed while an enormous American flag flew over the throng. The bandleader signaled commencement of the graduation ceremonies and drums pounded a welcoming rhythm. Scores of midshipmen in full dress uniform stood in razor sharp rows behind the band, eyes fixed to the front, chins raised, shoulders squared.

"Look for Tomas," Pilar said to Antonio beside her. Lisa squeezed Antonio's hand on his other side to indicate she'd heard. She scanned the graduates.

A brunette maybe two years younger than Lisa came up behind Antonio and tapped him on the shoulder. "Remember me?"

Antonio turned and offered a quick, uncertain smile.

Pilar eyed the woman with a skilled once-over that barely registered. Her head tilted with curiosity.

Lisa smiled at Pilar's simple, but thorough, examination, recognizing the older woman's body language from half an hour ago when she had arrived. Lisa supposed she'd passed some initial test, as Pilar had been warm and friendly since.

"Tomas invited me to come." She pulled out an invitation and presented it to Antonio as if he needed proof. "I'm Crystal." She looked from one to the other and smiled shyly.

Without the false eyelashes, glitter foundation, bright red lipstick—and *with* clothes, Lisa hadn't recognized the exotic dancer right away. By the flicker of doubt on Antonio's face, Lisa suspected he hadn't recalled her, either.

Crystal wore a periwinkle blue cotton dress with a tiny floral print of yellow daisies and navy blue butterflies without a hint of cleavage and a hemline cut to only inches above her knees. Her clean skin gleamed. She wore pale pink lip-gloss and blush, small gold earrings and a matching gold pin on her shoulder.

"We met the other night." Her face colored with the reminder.

Antonio's eyes flew open. To his credit, he recovered quickly. "Of course!" He slapped his forehead with the heel of his hand. "You're Tomas' new girlfriend." He turned to Pilar. "Mama, this is the woman Tomas told you about."

Crystal's eyes brightened and her smile broadened. She extended a hand to Pilar. "You're just as beautiful as Tomas described."

Pilar laughed with obvious pleasure at the compliment. "And you are clearly Tomas' girl. A flatterer, just like him." She rapped Antonio gently on the shoulder. "You too." Pilar winked at Lisa. "I'm sure you already know what a charmer he is."

"I do." Lisa looked up at Antonio and her heart pounded as he met her gaze. His dark eyes sparkled with promise and longing. Lisa had thought of little else but him since last night and hoped he'd thought of her.

"It's easy to tell a woman how you feel when you're speaking from the heart," Antonio whispered. He lifted his hand to Lisa's shoulder and her skin burned beneath the cloth of her sleeve as he massaged her shoulder gently. He slid his hand down her arm, recapturing her hand and linking his fingers with hers as horns sounded the opening bars of *The Star Spangled Banner*.

"Come stand next to me," Pilar said to Crystal when the anthem ended, reaching out to her and making room at the end of their little line. Crystal stepped up beside her.

All eyes turned to the parade as the midshipmen marched. Cymbals clashed and flags waved as families cheered. Visitors scanned the rows of graduates with their hands shielding their eyes from the sun, searching for loved ones. Balloons filled the air.

"There he is!" Crystal shouted. She jumped up and down and pointed. "One, two, three in. Fourth row."

"It is Tomas!" Pilar cried. She waved and shouted her son's name. He couldn't break ranks and look at them, but Lisa joined in too, shouting his name anyway.

The atmosphere filled with familial pride and patriotic fervor as the sailors saluted in unison and the crowd roared approval. The music swelled.

Antonio traced Lisa's thumb with his and then drew large circles where her thumb met the soft, fleshy pad of her palm. To make it clear the movement was intentional he raked her open hand with the edge of his thumbnail once, twice, three times.

Lisa's focus shifted from the parade to the shivers rippling across her chest and cinching her nipples. She glanced at Antonio beside her and he smiled back, his eyes half closed and nostrils flared. His thumb worked wider circles over the skin above her wrist and her abdomen fluttered.

He traced the outline of her hand with the side of his nails and dipped between each finger in turn, traveling along the sensitive skin in a gentle climb of hills and valleys. Lisa stifled a moan.

His hand moved again to the underside of her wrist and dragged long trails upward, and then down again, before moving around to flick the back of her hand. Lisa turned her palm against his, thinking he wanted to reconnect, but his nails scraped it away lightly, teasing. He moved to the tender underside of her forearm and swept upward to the crease in her elbow where his touch lingered.

All sound disappeared as Antonio's fingers played inside the delicate bend of her arm and along her biceps. Her nipples had turned to hard peaks and her mound throbbed. Lisa moved closer to Antonio and brushed his hip with hers. At the feel of him, her panties dampened. She tried to focus on the parade again, but Antonio's roaming hand stopped her. As he traced the soft skin beneath her arm, the back of his hand rubbed the side of her breast. Her nipples tingled, longing for more.

Antonio leaned over and whispered into her ear, "I want you." The feel of his breath against her hair sent a shockwave of desire through her and she closed her eyes. She licked her lips and swallowed, hoping to moisten her dry throat.

"Don't do that. Dear God, don't lick your mouth," he rasped. "I'm so hard I think I'll shatter."

Lisa's lids fluttered as she turned her face toward him. Antonio's mouth grazed her cheek before he moved away, standing tall again to watch the parade. He took her hand and pressed the back quickly against his erection before letting go and returning her arm to her side.

The heat between Lisa's thighs surged at the exquisite feel of him. She wished the people around them would vanish so that Antonio could lift her sundress and reach inside her panties. She could almost feel his strong fingers sliding across her clitoris and probing her wet opening, thrusting inside her while he rocked her to orgasm. She shivered with the fantasy and resisted the urge to touch or look at him again until her arousal subsided. Focusing on the parade helped.

Seeing Rick's face was like a douse of cold water.

Lisa sucked in a breath. She worried for an instant that Rick might see her, but remembered the midshipmen were at attention. The graduates would never turn their eyes toward the crowd.

She looked at Antonio, wondering if he had seen Rick too. He didn't return her glance, but his jawline pulsed beneath his ear. He wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her closer to his side. Lisa leaned her head against his shoulder and rubbed her temple against his shirt, breathing in his cologne. A sudden, overwhelming ache enveloped her, leaving her knees weak with dread at the realization that Antonio would be leaving soon. Tomorrow he'd be on his way to Quantico and she would be alone.

A stab of misery shot through her at the thought of their separation. Lisa touched the small of his back and pressed her fingertips against the muscles there. Tears welled, but she fought them off, reminding herself that Antonio would return. This would not be goodbye.

"I'll never forget these days with you," he said softly in her ear, clearly sensing her mood. She nodded her head against his chest and pressed harder, as if trying to leave her imprint.

At this precise moment she knew that she loved him.

A lump formed in her throat. She couldn't speak, and so she rested her temple against his chest and closed her eyes.

* * * * *

"I'll look for Tomas. You three wait here, okay? No point in all of us wandering around and losing each other. I'll bring Tomas to you."

"Thank you, Antonio," Pilar replied. "We'll wait in the shade of this oak tree." She moved closer to the designated spot and waited for Lisa and Crystal to follow. Antonio waved at their tiny circle as he walked away. Pilar smiled and Lisa waved back as he merged into the crowd in search of his brother.

His shoulder brushed another man's as he squeezed past a group of midshipmen laughing and talking with a set of parents. Antonio scanned their faces, looking for Tomas, and then stepped away, craning his head for signs of him on the other side of the lawn. He decided to call Tomas' cell and set up a meeting place.

"Well, well, looky who's here," a deep voice drawled. "And since my girl isn't with you, I guess she dumped you too, eh?"

Antonio turned to find Rick Bennett directly in his path. "Move away." Antonio tried to walk around him, but Rick blocked his exit. Four midshipmen formed a ring of support behind Bennett, arms crossed, their stares threatening.

"Don't be like that, Alvarez," Rick said. "I'm just making conversation." His eyes glinted with a malevolent glow. He bared his teeth as he patted his pants pocket. A dull rattle sounded against Rick's leg. "I've been looking for you."

"What do you want, Bennett?"

"I wanted my girl back, but...on second thought, I don't like sloppy seconds. That's your thing." Rick leaned toward Antonio and whispered, "She any good for you?"

Antonio balled his fists and struggled to control his rage while Rick laughed. Antonio tried to sidestep Rick, but Rick's friends moved forward, building a wall of resistance.

"All's fair in love and war." Rick patted his pocket again. "Remember that, Alvarez. It's human nature." Rick reached into his pocket and pulled out a tiny black square. He shook the box. "This made for some very interesting entertainment." His nose came within inches of Antonio's and his harsh whisper rushed sour breath across Antonio's face. "Lisa never masturbated for me. Not once. How the fuck did you get her to do that?"

Antonio could feel his face blanch, but fought off all expression as he considered his next move. He could fight for the videocassette, but Military Police were stationed all around the campus. If a fight broke out, the MPs would confiscate the video. The contents would be leaked within hours. Antonio would do anything to protect Lisa from that humiliation. He didn't care what happened to him.

"Got your attention, now, don't I?" Rick smiled widely, but there was no humor in his eyes. "She dropped this at my apartment. It must have fallen from her purse. She didn't notice because her legs were spread at the time and I was sucking her tits." He shook his head and licked his teeth. "I'm going to miss those." His eyes gleamed with fury and he pointed a finger at Antonio's face. "She was going to be my wife."

"And now you want to hurt her?" Antonio wanted to kill him where he stood. "Be a man, Bennett. Give me the tape. I'll destroy it."

Rick hooted. "This is my insurance policy, faggot. You don't get it back. At least, not until I'm sure you're gone. For good. I may not have Lisa, but you sure as hell won't have her, either." He rattled the video again in his hand. "Try me. Test me. I'll make copies for every midshipman on campus. Lisa will become a cult favorite." Rick pointed toward the road. "Leave town. Now. If you don't, I'll make sure Lisa becomes an overnight sensation."

"How do I know that's the only copy?" Antonio was buying time, trying to think what to do. His heart hammered inside his chest.

"This cassette is a unique size. I haven't had time to transfer the original film onto disk. But I will. Count on it."

Antonio eyed the men surrounding him. They probably didn't want to attract the MPs any more than he did. Antonio decided to call Rick's bluff.

"Give me the videotape and I'll leave town right now. Lisa will think I ran out on her. I'll keep going and you'll never see me again."

Rick chuckled. "You think I'm crazy? No way am I giving you this tape."

It was Antonio's turn to get into Rick's face. He gritted his teeth. "If you don't, I'll report you to the military for pimping. The Navy doesn't like their men taking cash for sexual referrals."

Rick's face turned brick red. "Who says that?" His eyes shifted from right to left. "That's a lie."

"God help you if you ever get captured by the enemy, Bennett. You can't lie for shit. And I can prove you're a pimp." Antonio relaxed his stance. "So you see, asshole, we're at an impasse. You want me to leave town and I want the tape. How do we work this out?"

Rick glanced at his friends and his eyes shifted with uncertainty. He turned back to Antonio, seeming to catch his second wind and tapped the tape against Antonio's chest. "It's only your word against mine."

"I'm a cop. My word means something. And I'll get proof."

"By the time you do, Lisa's name will be a household word. And her pussy will be spread across the Internet. Literally." Rick punched the air with his index finger. "Go. Get out of here. Now. Those are my terms."

"Even if I leave, you can't stop me from turning you in and ruining your military career. Think of all the money you'll lose, Bennett." Antonio had Rick's attention now. "Tell you what we'll do." He waved Rick's entourage away. "First, call off the goon squad. There's no need for them. We can settle this right here, right now."

Rick considered. Finally, he turned and signaled for his friends to leave. They asked for unspoken confirmation, one by one, and Rick nodded agreement. The other midshipmen ambled away.

Antonio pulled his cell phone from his pocket. "Here's the plan. We'll call Tomas and ask him to meet you tomorrow morning. You name the place and time. Give Tomas

the tape. If you agree, I'll walk away right now. You can even call me a cab. Lisa will never know what happened. She'll think I took off without saying goodbye and she'll hate me. Just like you want."

Antonio watched while Rick weighed his options. He could tell Rick worried about possible charges being filed against him. Still, his smug smile said he thought he had the upper hand.

"You'll leave right now?" Rick gloated.

Antonio understood that the deal was sealed and he stifled a sigh of relief. "As soon as we talk with Tomas." He handed Rick his cell. "Dial the call yourself."

Rick went to speed dial and hit the button. He placed the call on speakerphone.

Tomas answered in two rings. "Hey, bro, I was just about to call and meet you. Did Crystal show up?"

"Tomas, this is Rick."

"Rick? What are you doing on Tony's phone?"

"Making him a deal. Meet me tomorrow morning at ten o'clock at the pizza shop near my apartment. I'll tell you about it then." He lowered his tone an octave. "Be there, Tomas, or someone will get hurt."

"Is Antonio all right?" Tomas's voice rose in alarm.

Antonio shouted into the phone Rick held. "Do it, Tomas. Okay? Rick has something to give you. A videocassette. I'm calling a cab and leaving town. Understand? Say goodbye to Lisa for me."

Rick stepped back, cupping the phone tight in his big hands. "I'll see you in the morning, Tomas."

"Ten o'clock. You'll give me a tape."

"Right. In the meantime, you won't talk with your brother again. I'm taking his cell. I'll give his phone back to you when I bring the tape. And don't discuss our conversation with anyone or the deal is off. If I get a hysterical call from Lisa, I won't show up tomorrow. If I don't bring the tape, there will be trouble."

Tomas kept his voice cool and Antonio sighed with relief. "No need to worry," he said. "I don't want any problems."

"Good." Rick disconnected the call, turned off Antonio's cell and slipped the phone into his pocket.

"I guess this means you won't be calling me a taxi." Antonio gazed down the long stretch of road surrounding the campus. The nearest town loomed a mile away.

"Right, Sherlock. Good luck finding a phone booth." His laugh was loud and full of bravado as he watched Antonio walk away.

* * * * *

"What do you mean, Antonio's gone?" Pilar's voice sounded shrill and strained. "How could he have left without saying goodbye to me? To Lisa?" Pilar looked from one to the other with her arms raised in question.

"He asked me to tell you for him, Mama. Orders came and he had to leave town. Antonio knew you'd understand."

Lisa went numb from her head to her toes and broke out in a cold sweat. Her stomach rumbled and coiled into knots. She leaned against the oak tree for strength and took deep, cleansing breaths. They didn't help. She burst into tears of rage and shame.

Crystal wrapped an arm around Lisa's shoulder and guided her away from the tree. "You'll be all right. Women always make it somehow."

Lisa met Crystal's eyes. "He left me." Her voice sounded flat and far away.

Crystal shrugged her shoulders. "Men always leave in the end, don't they? I'm not surprised by that anymore." She squeezed Lisa's arm. "I'm really sorry, though."

Crystal glanced at Tomas, who stared back with obvious unease. Pilar seemed pained and embarrassed. When Tomas refused to make eye contact with Lisa, her fear redoubled.

"But we fell in love!" Lisa shouted at Tomas. Her heart skittered inside her chest and her breathing labored. Antonio's words, *I'll never forget these days with you*, sounded, suddenly, like "goodbye." How could she have been so stupid? So easily taken in? Hadn't Antonio's own mother called him a charmer?

Lisa eyed Tomas and scowled. Cut from the same cloth. Men in uniform *were* all the same. She'd known it from the start but had ignored her own instinct.

She'd gone and fallen in love.

"I have to go." She rifled through her purse for a tissue and blew her nose.

"No, please!" Pilar stepped forward and put her hand on Lisa's shoulder. "Come with us to dinner before my flight. We'd love to have you."

Lisa forced a smile. "My heart isn't in it. And, to be honest, my stomach isn't either. Sorry. I just want to go back to my hotel. I'll call a cab." She fumbled through her straw handbag for her cell.

"Stop." Tomas touched her hand. "At least let us drive you back to your hotel. No need for you to take a cab."

Lisa hesitated. There was no point in being rude to Tomas on his Graduation Day. No need to hurt Pilar Alvarez, either. Neither of them had done anything wrong. Lisa nodded. "All right. Thank you."

The group walked to Tomas' rental car. Pilar sat up front with her son as Crystal and Lisa climbed in the back. While the others chatted, Lisa stared out the window.

Something about the contents of her purse nibbled at her mind. She hadn't used it since the night before last and it had been sitting in her room until today. As the car drew closer to her hotel, Lisa rummaged through keys, cosmetics, pictures and the infamous letter that had destroyed her illusions of Rick. Something was missing.

But what?

Lisa remembered the bouncer at Pirate's Inn and the videotape he'd handed her. *See me the next time you come in*, he'd said with a leer. She'd tucked the tape in her handbag and dodged out the door.

Panic rose from her chest and her heart pounded so hard she was sure Crystal could hear it. Lisa dumped the contents of her purse in her lap and began to sort, as if one more search would finally conjure the cassette.

Gone.

She had to accept that the tape had vanished.

Just like Antonio.

Chapter Ten

"What your brother did really sucks," Crystal said as they closed the door to her apartment. Crystal tossed her purse on a chair and kicked off her shoes before heading to the tiny kitchen. She opened the refrigerator door and pulled out a cold can of soda. "Want one?"

Tomas nodded.

Crystal handed him a Coke and popped the top on hers. She took a long drink and burped quietly into her other hand. "I didn't say anything in front of your mother because I wanted to make a good impression. But your brother is an asshole for what he did to Lisa. She loves him, you know."

"Yeah." Tomas wished he could talk to Crystal about what happened, but he didn't understand the situation himself. Something told him he was supposed to figure out how else to help his brother, but the way hadn't come to him yet. And where was Antonio's Harley? No way would he take a cab and leave the bike behind. And what was on this mystery tape?

"Are you a big jerk too?" Crystal's ice blue eyes stared right through him and Tomas flinched. For the first time, he saw vulnerability in her that hadn't been there before. He put down his can of soda and reached for her.

"I hope not." He traced the line of her jaw with one finger and touched her chin. He took the can of soda from her hand and set it next to his. "Thanks for coming to my graduation today. It meant a lot to me having you there."

"It did?" Crystal's eyes sparkled and her soft, sweet lips twitched with pleasure.

"I liked being with you." Tomas searched her face. Crystal looked prettier with her skin scrubbed and wearing only a little bit of makeup. He kissed her lips lightly. "My mother liked you too, I could tell."

Crystal seemed unconvinced. "You think so? Bet she'd change her mind if she knew what my job was."

"I think she's already guessed."

"You do?" Crystal punched his arm. "How?"

"I told her you were in the entertainment business."

Crystal laughed. "Adult entertainment, hon. There's a big difference." She stepped back and unzipped her dress. She pulled it free from her body and threw it on the couch. "Wanna have sex now?" Her lavender lace bra and matching panties left little to the imagination and Tomas responded with automatic interest.

"I have a better idea." Tomas took her back into his arms and kissed her neck gently.

Crystal leaned backward and searched his eyes. "What do you mean?"

"Let's make love, instead." He kissed her lips tenderly and ran his fingertips along the curve of her back.

She shivered beneath his touch and rested her head against his shoulder. "You want to make love to me?" Her voice sounded muffled against his shirt.

Tomas whispered in her hair. "Of course I do." He kissed the crown of her head. "You shared the most important day of my life. You cared enough to come." He could feel her head nod agreement against his body. "And you looked so pretty in your blue dress. I was proud of you."

"You were?" Crystal looked up at him and the relief he saw in her eyes made his insides grow tight.

"Absolutely. You're beautiful and sweet. I'm glad you're my girl."

"I like having you as my best guy too." She brushed her hand over his chest. "But caring about you is going to be a problem for me. I'm not good at waiting around for a guy. You'll be going away soon. If I fall for you, I might get my heart broken. I can't risk that..."

Tomas filled in the unspoken word, *again*, in his head.

"Look what just happened to Lisa."

"I won't be gone forever. We can write to each other until I get back. And I'll call whenever I can. Who knows, I might get stationed here. We can make this work if we want to." He grazed her cheek with his lips. "And I want to."

Crystal wrapped her arms around him and pressed her body against his. "I'll think about it, okay?"

"Okay." Tomas glided his palm over the length of her forearm. "But I still want to make love with you."

Crystal nodded silent agreement.

They walked arm in arm to the bedroom. Crystal lit candles and turned out the lights. The room flickered with a soft, white glow, like a thousand fireflies hovering around them. She played soft music and daubed her throat with perfume before lying across the bed in her lavender lace, waiting for him.

Tomas freshened his breath and placed condoms on the night table. He undressed slowly, watching Crystal stare at him as he unbuttoned his shirt and slid it from his shoulders.

"You have nice arms. Strong," Crystal murmured. "And a fabulous chest. I like those well-defined muscles." She chuckled. "I guess I was too preoccupied to tell you that before." Her eyes met his and her expression turned serious. She spoke again, barely above a whisper. "You have a great body, Tomas."

Tomas unzipped his pants and tossed away the rest of his clothes and shoes, except for his undershorts. He climbed onto the bed and lay next to Crystal.

He outlined her facial features with the pad of his forefinger, trying to memorize every curve, every line and hollow, by both touch and sight. His eyes met hers and held them, drawing her closer. Tomas' chest tightened with the intensity of her stare and he realized for the first time that she had touched him deeply. What had started as a throwaway affair had changed into something more. He wanted to know this woman from the inside out. Every instinct he had told him the real Crystal was worth discovering.

"Do you ever think about having kids?" Tomas touched her abdomen and circled her bellybutton.

Crystal flushed. "Well, yeah. Course. Someday. Maybe when I meet the right guy." She winked at him knowingly and punched his shoulder. "And after I get my Master's Degree. I'm finished with school for the summer."

"You're in college?" Tomas tried to hide his surprise, but was too late.

"Did you think I wanted to be a stripper the rest of my life?" Crystal laughed. "I'm only a part-time dancer. Tips pay my tuition. Along with student loans." She gestured around the room. "Do you think I'd sublet a dump like this if I wasn't in school?" She shook her head. "In my real life I study the weather. I want to be a meteorologist. Maybe become a reporter on TV someday."

Tomas barked out a laugh. "I knew there was something special about you!" He couldn't hide his relief. "That's great."

"Something you can tell your mom about, right?" She touched his face and smirked.

"I won't lie to you. Yeah."

Crystal laughed. "I guessed so."

"Are you going to tell me your real name now? Since we're going steady, I mean?"

"I've become your steady girlfriend in all of five minutes?"

"I work fast. And, after all, this is my Graduation Day." He chuckled under the chin. "So, what is it? Your name, I mean."

"It really is Crystal. My last name isn't Diamond, though."

Tomas chuckled. "I think I figured that part out. I hope it's not Ball."

"No, silly. It's Miller."

"Wow. That was easy. Crystal Miller. From where?"

"Here. I grew up in Annapolis. Now I work here summers and holidays."

Tomas kissed her mouth. "Why exotic dancing?" he said after breaking the kiss. "You're fantastic at it, by the way."

"Is this where you get to analyze me? Figure out if I was sexually abused as a child? Am on drugs? Have a mother in prison?"

"Well? Any of those true? I just wondered how a sexy meteorologist becomes a dancer."

Crystal leaned forward and massaged one of his nipples while she sucked the other. She looked up into his face. "In case you haven't noticed, I have an incredible sex drive. I love having orgasms, and for whatever reason, I have them faster and easier than most women. I think about sex a lot. Being a dancer just feels good." She traced a line between his nipple and his navel with her tongue and laid a kiss on his stomach. "And being both sexy and educated will get me on television." She squeezed his erection beneath his under shorts and his dick throbbed. "Think you can handle all that?"

"I don't see why not." The monogamy issue was going to be tricky for her, though. He'd have to think about how they'd work that out. "Are you up for writing to me? Sticking with me 'til I get back?"

Crystal rested her head on his abdomen. "I'd like that, yeah. I'll do my best."

Tomas stroked her hair. "Good, then it's settled."

Her fingers tugged the elastic waistband of his boxers and pulled them past his hips. The length of his cock sprang forward. Crystal shoved his underwear down past his knees and he kicked them to the floor. His balls ached, and the head of his dick pointed directly at Crystal's face, as if begging her to suck it.

She wrapped her hand around his shaft and talked into the opening at the tip as if his cock were a microphone. "Good evening, viewers," she said, stifling a chuckle. "Our heat index shows that tonight will be *hot*. Smoldering." She lapped the smooth, wide head with the flat of her tongue and Tomas groaned.

"You'll need to stay in bed to enjoy the soaring temperatures." The tip of her tongue licked his rod from the back of the head, along the thick vein running the length of the underside and all the way to the bottom. She flicked the hollow between the base of his cock and his sac and stayed there, rubbing her tongue against his root until his cock trembled. One hand squeezed and massaged his balls and then traveled behind them to play along the soft line leading to his anus. When she touched him there, Tomas cried out.

Crystal got on her knees then and licked him inch by inch from his balls to the base of his cock, along his shaft and back to the wide head. Her soft lips poised above the silky top and opened over it, taking him in gently. She circled the rim with her tongue as she sucked the tip and Tomas's heart pounded with the thrill.

His cock strained inside her mouth as if stretching to plunge deeper. Crystal read his need and complied, taking all of him in until the head touched the back of her throat. She cupped his ass with her hands and squeezed his butt cheeks while she slid his cock in and out of her mouth.

She seemed to gauge exactly how long she could suck his cock before he would come, gradually decreasing the rhythm and pressure until she kissed the head in a silent finish. Tomas stifled a plea and waited.

Crystal slid off her panties and pulled Tomas to a sitting position. She sat between his knees, facing him, wrapped her legs around his hips and held his waist.

Tomas kissed her then. Her sweet mouth felt soft and welcoming and full of life as she kissed him back. Her mouth opened to accommodate his probing tongue and she parried with gentle thrusts and flicks before withdrawing to kiss his lips again. His hands roamed her breasts, squeezing her hard nipples beneath the lace bra and kneading the fullness between his palms while their kisses deepened.

The head of his cock pressed against her labia and Tomas moved forward, sliding the round tip into her slit to rub the tender, pink vulva and stimulate her clit. Crystal shifted slightly to welcome the prodding and arched her back to bring her mound closer. Her grip on his waist tightened as she moved her hips in time with his, increasing the tempo.

Tomas looked down and watched as she spread her folds and glided the full length of him along her swollen bud to the opening of her pussy. "Do it now," she panted. She bucked along the length of his near bursting shaft until he paused to unwrap a condom and slide it over his erection.

He entered her with a swift, hard thrust and pressed up inside her until her pussy swallowed the base of his cock. Tomas wrapped his arms around her and held her while she rested her head against his shoulder and rocked against him, sliding her pussy in long thrusts over his rod while he pushed back in counterforce. He groaned then, issuing sounds like some lost primitive language. Crystal moaned and murmured while her hips flew over his length.

She dug her fingertips into his back while she thrust in a series of small, hard jabs, shuddered and held on.

Tomas met her thrusts and his orgasm struck like a knockout punch, spinning him into the void.

They lay down and held each other for a long time. Tomas listened to the sound of Crystal's soft, quiet breathing against his shoulder. He dozed, and when he stirred again, she awoke and laid a trail of kisses along his neck.

His voice sounded like a bag of rusty nails rattling around his throat, but he didn't care. "We're going to do this again the old-fashioned way, darlin'. Missionary style, with me on top. And when we're done I want to sleep holding you."

Crystal nodded against his scratched and battered neck. "Sounds nice."

"How 'bout we go out to breakfast in the morning? I have to meet my roommate Rick at ten and take care of something. Come with me. You can wait in the car. Later, I'll visit you at work, okay?"

"All right." She nuzzled his ear. "I'll wear my best thong and do a special dance just for you."

* * * * *

Tomas leaned against the brick wall inside the mouth of the dim alleyway and scanned the pizza shop across the street. He looked at his watch. Nine thirty. Tomas

liked being early. He could scope out the neighborhood and keep an eye on Rick before he had to show himself.

He touched his shirt pocket for a cigarette and remembered he quit months ago. Tomas scowled. It was times like this when a man needed a smoke for something to do. He watched and waited and checked the time again. Nine thirty-five. The pizza parlor wouldn't open 'til eleven and the street was quiet. Most of the midshipmen were away on leave until their orders came through. Tourists shopped on boutique side streets, not here, and local cars were few.

Good.

He dialed his cell and spoke quietly. "I'm waiting. I know I'm early, but I wanted to get the lay of the land. You have fifteen minutes. Come in through the back." He listened for a reply and closed the phone before sliding it into his pocket.

A van came to a stop in front of the pizza place. Three people sat inside. Tomas craned his neck to watch, suspicious that Rick had an ambush planned. But when the passenger door opened, a kid got out and trotted to the Free Visitor's Guide bin on the sidewalk. He filled the newspaper box with fresh copies of the journal, closed the lid and ran back to the van. The truck pulled away and Tomas was alone again. He waited.

He heard the scuffle of shoes on the sidewalk before he saw Rick saunter toward the corner near the restaurant. Rick was wearing civilian clothes and his hands were inside the pockets of his jeans. Tomas frowned. He might be armed. He'd have to be extra careful.

Tomas checked his watch. Nine fifty. He kept his eyes on Rick as the other man paced up and down the curb. No one joined him or spoke from some hidden doorway. Rick wasn't making eye contact with anything other than the street, looking out into the distance. He made no phone calls.

Okay. Rick was alone.

Show time.

Tomas waited until Rick's back was turned and then stepped from the shadows and onto the sidewalk opposite the pizza joint. He took three quick steps away from the mouth of the alley. "Hey," he called over to Rick.

Rick looked up and over one shoulder. He turned and frowned. "I didn't hear you coming."

"Got the tape?" Tomas asked.

Rick nodded.

"Let me see it."

"Why don't you come over here and get it?"

"Just show it to me," Tomas insisted. "Lisa is broken-hearted just the way you wanted her. I'm here like I said I would. Now show me the tape."

Rick shook his head in apparent disgust and pulled a small, black square from the back pocket of his jeans. He held it up in the air. "Satisfied?"

"How do I know that's the original? That you kept your end of the bargain?"

Rick blanched at the veiled accusation. "I'm an officer, just like you, Tomas. A man of my word. You know that."

Tomas fought back a laugh. He would have snickered, except Rick seemed dead serious.

"Anyway, all I wanted was to break them up. Cause them to lose momentum. The tape was just my insurance policy." He scratched an ear. "And come on, how was I really going to make hundreds of copies overnight?"

That's exactly what Tomas had wondered. But even a half-dozen copies would have been bad news for Lisa.

Tomas pulled a fifty from his wallet and waved the bill. "How about one copy?"

"What?" Rick stared at the cash with his brow furrowed, but his expression registered interest.

"Your apartment is right down the street. How about making one copy? For my personal use. Antonio will never know." Tomas chuckled and lowered his voice an octave. "You know what a perve I am, man. I want to watch after I give back the original."

Rick nodded and snorted. "You always did like the pussy." His voice turned hard. "But it's Lisa's pussy on that tape, butt fuck. Primo snatch."

Tomas waved the money again and ignored the insult. "Not even for fifty bucks? C'mon, Rick. Just one copy." He pulled out another bill. "How about seventy? She's not your girl anymore. Or Antonio's, either. What do you care?"

Rick seemed to consider. "Make it a hundred and I'll do it. But you'd better not copy it for distribution without cutting me in." He rubbed his chin. "Just you. Right?"

"No one else will ever know." Tomas held out the cash.

Rick's eyes slid over the money, flickered from side to side along the street, and then back to Tomas, apparently convinced. Finally, he crossed the blacktop between them and reached out.

When Rick lifted his hand to take the bills, Tomas grabbed him by the wrist, yanked him forward and pulled him into the alley. He hooked his foot around Rick's ankle and dropped him to the ground.

Rick hit the pavement with a loud thud. "Humph!" The air popped from his lungs and his head swung forward and cracked hard on the concrete. Rick must have bitten his lip when he fell, because blood gushed from his mouth.

Antonio stepped from the shadows.

Rick's eyes bugged in confusion as he rolled onto his back and tried to sit up. He wiped his bloody mouth with the back of one hand. "Motherfuck! You were supposed to be gone. We had a deal." He groaned low and gritted his teeth.

"What's that?" Antonio's eyes glinted with hard rage above him. "Take the shit out of your mouth, Bennett. I can't understand a word you say." Antonio stood over Rick

and lifted him by the front of his shirt. He swung his fists in a series of hard one-two punches, square in Rick's face. Blood spattered and the sound of bone crunching beneath Antonio's hands filled the air. Rick screamed in agony. The videotape rolled to the ground as Rick put his hands up and tried to protect his face.

"All's fair in love and war. It's human nature. You said so yourself, remember?" Antonio grabbed the tape and then kicked Rick hard in the ribs. Rick cried out. "Did you really think I'd betray Lisa? Run like a coward?" He snatched Tomas' money off the ground, handed it to his brother and stuffed the tape in his back pocket. Rick supported his heavy body with his arms and tried again to stand.

Antonio rammed the ball of his foot against Rick's side and shoved him again to the concrete. He kicked him in the kidney. Rick screamed. Silence ticked by until tiny sobs of defeat issued from his throat.

Tomas yanked Rick's head backward by the hair until his mouth opened and frisked Rick's pockets, sure he had a weapon. There was nothing there except Antonio's cell phone. He handed it to his older brother.

Antonio jammed the phone into another pocket. "Stay away from Lisa." He brushed dust from his jeans and t-shirt, nodded to Tomas and jogged toward the rear exit of the alley. Before Rick could heave himself to a standing position, Tomas kicked him hard in the thigh. "That's for calling me a wetback." He rushed from the alley to the sidewalk, trotted down the street and jumped into the passenger seat of a waiting car.

"Get it?" Crystal had the engine running.

Tomas nodded. "The only copy." He leaned over and kissed Crystal's cheek. "We did good."

"That's a relief." Crystal put the car in drive and sped away.

Tomas looked in the side view mirror. No Rick. A stab of conscience showed Rick stumbling home, red with blood. Tomas glanced at the blood spatters on his clothes and shoes. Adrenaline shot through his system like a locomotive and his stomach lurched. He took deep, controlled breaths, trying to hold on against the nausea as he reached in the glove compartment to search for napkins. He found a small pile left from yesterday's fast food stop and wiped his mouth. The sound of fractured bones rang through his ears. He closed his eyes and breathed deeper with the napkins pressed against his lips. Cold sweat formed across his brow as he struggled to regain control.

"I love all this excitement," Crystal cooed, oblivious to his aftershock while she pressed the accelerator harder. "It makes me so hot." She reached across the passenger seat, laid her hand on Tomas's crotch and found the head of his cock beneath his pants. Her index finger traced lazy circles around the tip while she held the wheel with her other hand.

"Come closer," she said.

Dear God, no. Tomas shifted uncomfortably in his seat, his erection yielding to her despite the knot in his stomach. His heart pounded in his ears. Crystal reached over and pulled at the snap on his pants.

"Keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel. I'll do it," Tomas croaked after the nausea passed. He stuffed the napkins into the seat cushions, pulled his fly open and released his dick. Jesus, he was hard as rock. All this excitement had somehow gotten to him too.

"I can drive one-handed." Crystal clenched his rod inside her palm. "I'm ambidextrous." She stroked his cock while she turned the next corner and Tomas felt his semen rise. Too fast, oh no, he was going to come all over the car. He leaned back in the seat and relaxed his hips. He couldn't help himself— she was jerking him off hard and fast now.

His groan of surprise at the impact of the quick, powerful orgasm lifted him almost to his feet. Tomas hollered and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, Crystal was milking his cock slow and easy, his semen dripping down the side of her hand.

"Ooh," she said. "Aren't we the eager rabbit today?" Crystal pulled into the lot of her apartment building and parked. She wiped her hand on the wadded up napkins crushed between the seats. "Zip up and let's hurry inside. I'm horny as hell now." She watched as Tomas stuffed his dick back into his pants. "Told you I can multi-task." She grinned.

"I have all afternoon until I go to work." She leaned over and licked his earlobe. "Want me to call one of the dancers for a threesome?" She said the word "threesome" like a soft purr. Her eyes gleamed with a manic desire Tomas was getting to know all too well. "Wouldn't you like that? Having two women? Or watching another guy fuck me from behind? He could do you too. I know how much you like being sucked off."

Tomas shook his head. At the rate Crystal was using his body, six months at sea was starting to sound...not so bad.

"I don't want to share you right now." That creative excuse had to be iron-fucking-clad.

Crystal scrunched up her nose. "You're so adorable! How sweet." She kissed his cheek. "Well, since you put it that way, fine."

She'd gone for it. Tomas raised his eyes to the heavens in silent praise.

"I don't think I can wait until we get inside though. At least suck my nipples a minute." She climbed on his lap and unbuttoned her blouse. Her enormous breasts tumbled out, nipples hard and ready for his mouth. Tomas's mood improved at the sight of her exquisite body. Thoughts of Rick vanished as he nuzzled her breasts against his face.

"Did I ever tell you these puppies are real?" She stroked herself lovingly. "All the women in our family have big breasts. You should see my sister, Dottie." She lowered her voice again to a conspiratorial whisper. "My friend Starr's are fake, though. So are

most of the other dancers'. I think Starr's boobs are gorgeous, anyhow, don't you? I love them."

Tomas nodded. He spent big money each week to enjoy the sight of all those magnificent breasts. He couldn't disagree about the blonde who danced with Crystal. "Yours are the most beautiful, though. I can't get enough of them." He rubbed the soft orbs between his palms and leaned over to take one in his mouth.

Crystal moaned and shimmied closer. "Ah lick them too." She traced her cleavage with her fingertips while he kneaded the fullness and worked his tongue over the tips.

"I want to come. I want to come right *now*. Don't stop."

Tomas moved his mouth over her areola hungrily, but kept one eye out the window. "Aren't you worried someone will see us?" His words sounded garbled as a nipple and a large end of breast wrestled his tongue.

"I could care less." Crystal unzipped the front of her jeans and slid two fingers inside her panties. She opened her thighs wider on his lap and shifted her hips. "Suck them." She heaved her breasts forward. Her fingers worked her clit furiously while he licked and pulled.

She pressed down a final time, stiffened and threw her head back. Her brown hair touched the center of her shoulder blades as her head swayed. Her hips ground against his lap while her orgasm rocked her body. Crystal shouted inside the car, her cries bouncing off the windows until the spasms eased.

Thirty seconds was all it took.

Crystal smiled and sighed as she pulled her fingers free. "Ah that's better." She kissed his face and held it between her hands. "See what you do to me?"

Tomas kissed her back, took her palm and pressed it against the bulge in his crotch. "And see what happens to me when I'm near you?"

"Ohh we need to take care of this right away."

Tomas's cock throbbed. "Let's go inside."

He reached to open the door while Crystal closed the bottom button of her blouse. An older man stood by the car window, watching, with a half-smile on his face.

Crystal waved. "Hello, Mr. Taylor." Her huge breasts bounced with the motion. She turned back to Tomas and continued buttoning her top. "Don't worry about him, he's a good customer of the bar. He's seen me naked a hundred times."

Chapter Eleven

Lisa turned the page of her romance novel and burst into tears again. Why did love always turn out right in books, but not in real life? She reached for a tissue and blew her red, swollen nose. She'd been alternately crying and stomping around her hotel room in a rage for the past twenty-four hours. It was unthinkable to travel in this condition and she didn't want her roommate to know about her disastrous fling. One more night and Katie would be away on a business trip. Two break-ups in as many days were just too humiliating for Lisa to explain.

She went to the refrigerator and reached for a fresh bottle of wine. She and the grape had become good friends since Antonio left.

Bastard.

The prick hadn't even called.

She gulped a mouthful of white zinfandel and reached for her cell. Lisa stared at the phone, fighting with herself over whether or not to call him. What if he answered? She shook her head. She'd tell him off good and proper, that's what she'd do.

Emboldened by the wine, her fingers acted on their own accord and dialed his saved number. Lisa listened to Antonio's cell go straight to voice mail and winced. The sound of his deep, sexy voice shot arrows through her heart. She hung up and started crying again, wanting to kick herself for giving in and calling him after he'd dumped her. Hadn't she any pride left at all?

She sipped her wine and went back to her book. Her novel was the only thing that had kept her from going out of her mind these last hours.

When she could concentrate.

She laid the book down on the bed again and wondered what Antonio was doing. No matter how important his trip to Virginia was—he could have found five minutes to call her. The fact that he hadn't proved he didn't care.

He had run away.

When she recalled all of the shameless, passionate sex she'd had with him, her tears dried and her fury returned. She'd given him everything and he'd laughed at her. He'd probably even taken the videotape of them in the restaurant.

A cheap souvenir.

That described how she felt about herself, exactly.

She poured another glass of wine and her eyelids fluttered. Her body tingled and her tongue grew thick inside her mouth. Lisa chuckled. She was probably a little drunk.

The room had gone a bit fuzzy when she heard a bell ring. Lisa looked around, taking seconds to realize the noise belonged to her cell phone, and that she had a call.

Lisa answered and her heart leaped to her throat. "Hello?" She wanted to hear Antonio's voice.

"Hi, Lisa. It's Crystal."

Lisa's heart sank.

"Tomas asked me to tell you that everything will be all right."

Hope soothed Lisa's raw nerves. "Do you know why Antonio left? I've been a wreck."

"Something to do with a videotape. I really don't know any details."

Lisa's breath caught in her throat. "Where is it? I lost it."

"Tomas said not to worry. It's all taken care of. Look, I have to go to work now. Come by the bar tonight for a drink with us. You'll feel better about things."

Lisa recalled all the naked women and rowdy men and declined without a second thought. "I'm ordering room service and turning in early. I'm leaving before breakfast."

"Oh. Are you sure? I think you should come."

"You said not to worry. As of this moment, I'm erasing both the videotape and men from my mind." She snapped her fingers. "Gone."

Crystal laughed. "You'll go on record as the first woman alive to succeed at that challenge."

"I'll let you know how it goes." Lisa hung up and returned to her romance novel. She wondered how men and women ever got together when men, clearly, were such pains in the ass.

* * * * *

Lisa unpacked her suitcase and threw her dirty clothes into the wicker laundry basket. The filmy red tank top she wore her first day in Annapolis landed on top of the pile. She picked it up and rubbed the cotton between her fingers, remembering how small the garment had looked inside Antonio's large hands.

She brought the fabric to her nose and inhaled his unique, musky scent. The smell of his skin clung to faint traces of hers, causing instant tears. Angry with herself for giving in to this ridiculous sentiment, she threw the tank top back into the basket and smashed down the lid.

Over. End of affair.

Men had casual encounters all the time. Why shouldn't she enjoy one? She'd had the best sex of her life with a handsome stranger. No need to wish for more. Lisa had returned to her world and Antonio had moved on in his.

Her roommate, Katie, was out of town on a job, so Lisa popped a country CD in the CD player and cranked up the sound. A sultry voice filtered through the bedroom

while Lisa dropped makeup onto her vanity table and brought toiletries to the bathroom. She turned on the faucets, running the water to get it hot.

Lisa stripped and then wrapped her long hair in a towel to keep it dry. She stepped inside the shower and closed the curtain. Hot water pounded her tired muscles, nudging tension from her neck and shoulders while steam filled the room. As she scrubbed her skin with rose scented soap, bubbles swirled around her toes. She kicked them away, pretending to wash bits and pieces of her days with Antonio down the drain with them. A whirlpool of memories disappeared.

Best to let him go.

After toweling her body dry until it was glossy pink, she untied her hair. Long strands tumbled down her back. She lifted its weight with her fingers, detangling stray ends, and then walked naked to her vanity table for her brush. She watched herself in the mirror while she smoothed her long mane. Hadn't Antonio loved to stroke her hair? She recalled the electric charge of his touch as he tucked a stray lock behind her ear and goose bumps crawled along her arms.

Lisa closed her eyes and imagined him standing behind her now, leaning close, with his hands on her shoulders and his mouth caressing the soft curve of her neck. He would whisper Spanish words of sexual promise, his warm breath and hot kisses searing her skin. She would lean into him then and feel the hard power of his body as it begged hers to yield.

Didn't she swear to forget him just moments ago? Lisa opened her eyes and smiled at the phantom image despite herself. Her nipples hardened with thoughts of him and her skin flushed. Though she knew she would never see Antonio Alvarez again, part of him would always remain with her. Even when she freed herself from the emotional ties of their torrid affair, she would never forget his face or the way he had touched her.

She finished brushing her hair and reached for her body lotion. Lisa took her time smoothing on the rich, silky cream, gliding it along the length of her legs and then rubbing it onto her elbows. A light dusting of scented powder followed.

She decided to paint her nails and sat on her vanity stool, lifting one foot to rest on the tabletop while she colored her toes. She wiggled her crimson nails and admired the results before switching feet and starting again. While she waited for the polish to dry, she studied her face.

Lisa thought she looked older today. More mature. Wiser. She smiled knowingly. Setting herself free to enjoy a man without fear or reservation had done that for her. Despite the end of the affair, she liked the new woman who had emerged.

Her short, silk kimono hung in the closet. Lisa crossed the room, wrapped the thin red jacket around her nude body and tied the belt closed. She padded to the CD player to change the disk.

An engine rumble in the driveway startled her. Her roommate wasn't due back for another two days and no deliveries were expected. The engine revved again, louder this

time. The familiar sound brought heat to Lisa's cheeks. It couldn't be! Her heart raced and excitement fluttered inside her chest.

Lisa hurried down the steps to the living room window and pulled back the curtains to look.

Nothing.

Whoever it was had pulled all the way to the rear of the house and under the carport next to the garage. A natural barrier of rose-covered trellises, bushes and morning glories shielded the carport from view of the house or her next-door neighbor's windows. If she wanted to see who had arrived, she'd have to open the back door off the kitchen to the little wooden deck and the set of stairs leading down to the backyard.

Lisa crossed the house, walked through the kitchen and reached for the deadbolt on the back door. Her fingers trembled and then slipped over the lock as the motorcycle engine raced outside.

"Lisa!"

Her ears rang with the sound of his voice as he called out her name. She wiped her damp palms on her kimono and paused, resting her forehead against the door's single, cool windowpane before twisting the deadbolt free and turning the knob. She took a deep breath as the barrier between her and Antonio sprang open. Lisa descended the back wooden stairs slowly and stepped barefoot into the yard.

He sat casually on the leather seat of his bike, smiling like he hadn't deserted her without a word, without as much as a backward glance.

Lisa scowled in return.

His leather boots were the same, but today he wore black jeans and a tight white muscle tee beneath an open, blue button-down shirt that framed his muscled chest. Lisa's eyes lingered there, watching as his breathing lifted his nipples up and down beneath the thin stretch of cotton. His abdomen rippled as he readjusted his hips, leaned forward and turned off the engine. He met her eyes and rested his powerful arms across his knees as he watched her.

"Hi," he said.

His dark hair had tousled slightly in the wind, making him seem more vulnerable—which made slapping him across the face much easier to do. Without a word, Lisa stepped forward and brought her open palm hard across his cheek. Antonio's head snapped sideways with the impact and his eyes widened with shock.

"Why the hell did you do that?"

"What do you want?" Lisa demanded.

Antonio's face flushed and his lips tightened across his teeth. He seemed to hold his temper with calculated effort as he reached inside the storage compartment of his bike and pulled something out. "I brought you this."

Lisa looked down at the videotape. "Oh." Relief and a thousand questions filled her.

When she reached for the cassette, Antonio's other hand shot forward and circled her wrist. "I told you I'd be back. It took a little detective work to find your address, but that's my job, right?"

Lisa smacked his knuckles and shook her arm loose. "You disappeared without a word. Without so much as a phone call. I'm *pissed*, dammit!" Lisa jiggled the videotape. "And what are you doing with this?"

Antonio stared back at her through hooded eyes and slowly licked his lips. "I sure could use a cold glass of water." He ran his fingers through his wind-tossed hair and scratched the back of his neck.

Lisa sighed. He could look pathetic when he wanted to. "Jeez. Okay. Be right back."

She brought him ice water from the refrigerator in a tall glass. When he reached to take the cold tumbler from her hand, his fingertips brushed hers and their eyes met. Despite the chill, embers flared and sparks flew.

He took the glass and drank half the contents in a few thirsty gulps. "Thanks." He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, returned the glass and stepped off the bike. Lisa set the tumbler on the stone garden wall behind her.

When she turned around again, Antonio stepped forward. He leaned so close she could feel his body heat radiate from his skin, smell his damp, hot sweat and hear the deep, steady rush from his nose and mouth as he inhaled and exhaled. The hairs on the back of Lisa's arms prickled as her senses filled with him. Her heart pounded and her knees turned to jelly.

He cupped her ear with the palm of his hand. "Did you really think I'd leave you?"

The feel of his warm fingers against her face almost did her in. She closed her eyes to hide quick, unwelcome tears. Lisa stepped into Antonio's arms and rested her head against his chest. "What happened?"

He kissed the crown of her hair, held her tight and told her.

When he had finished, Lisa touched his cheek where she'd slapped him. "Sorry."

"Glad to hear it." He took her hand and brought her fingertips to his lips.

"I thought you left town."

"That's what I wanted Rick to think. After the graduation ceremony, I stored my bike in a parking garage until dark. I went to the beach to sleep. Our beach. I could still feel you there." A faint smile tugged the corners of his mouth. "I used a disposable cell to talk with Tomas. After we met Rick, I drove back to the beach and waited 'til I heard the coast was clear. Rick kept quiet about the meeting, like I figured he would."

"So you thought it was better to let me think you'd dumped me?" Lisa couldn't keep the annoyance from her voice.

He stroked the length of her hair. "I hoped you'd show up at the bar last night, but Crystal said you went to bed early. I stayed at her place with Tomas until this morning.

Her sofa's not too comfortable, by the way." He pressed her palm to his jaw. "At least I got a shower and shave."

Antonio's other hand traveled up her back, bringing fresh shivers. "Sorry I didn't call. It's better you didn't know what went on. And I figured you were mad at me. That's why I drove out here. I wanted to explain in person."

He ran his hand down the length of her spine. Her bare skin tingled beneath the friction of the thin, silk robe and her body trembled.

He buried his face in her hair. "After what happened to Estela, I guess I got overprotective. There was no time for hesitation or explanation when the whole thing went down. Events kind of snowballed after that."

Antonio grazed her temple with his lips. His mouth felt warm against her face. "I hoped you'd trust me. I wanted to do this my way, but I didn't mean to hurt you. "I'm sorry, *mi amor*."

"*Mi amor*?" Her voice shook. "I know what that means."

He lifted her face to his. "Then you know I've fallen in love with you." His mouth covered hers in a deep, sweet kiss. Lisa's breath seemed to evaporate. She kissed him back and captured his breath inside her chest, revived.

She touched her tongue to his and then drew it into her mouth to suck the end gently. Her lips met his in a long, passionate kiss as she wrapped her arms around him tighter.

Lisa broke away suddenly. "Hey, aren't you supposed to be in Virginia? What about Quantico?"

"I got permission to report tonight. I haven't missed anything important yet. The official program doesn't start until tomorrow morning. I'm still okay."

Lisa clung to him. "I'd hate to think I screwed up your life as a G-Man." She smiled against his shoulder.

Antonio shook his head. "I'm the one who messed up. I should have trusted you the same way I hoped you'd trust me. I should have called." He kissed Lisa again. This time his hands covered the curves of her ass while his lips touched hers. He rubbed the silk fabric beneath his fingers and then, slowly, lifted the hem of the kimono until the back gathered into his hands. Air wafted across Lisa's bare cheeks.

"You're not wearing anything under this robe." His breathing caught with the realization.

Lisa rubbed her cheek against Antonio's shoulder and lowered her voice to just above a hush. "I've just had a shower."

Antonio pressed his nose to her neck and nibbled the underside of her jaw. He scrunched the back of her kimono with one hand and stroked her ass with the other. Lisa's muscles tightened while he kneaded the curve.

"I remember the fantasy you whispered about in the restaurant." His voice grew husky and sounded deeper than usual. "The one that included both me *and* my Harley." He slid his fingers between the backs of her thighs to probe her slit.

"I remember." Lisa shivered as two fingers circled her opening, teasing, lubricating. Her nipples hardened. The silk kimono rippled over the sensitive ends, heightening her stimulation while Antonio's fingers readied her pussy for entry. Her clit stiffened as he played along her slick, tender flesh.

He pressed his hips hard against hers and his erection probed her pelvis bone through the thin layer of fabric. She lifted her hips and pushed back, grinding against him in a sudden need to feel him inside her.

He released her then, and in one quick motion, swept her up into his arms and carried her to the Harley. He laid her down along the thick leather seat as if it were a narrow bed. Her head rested against the padded mound between the handlebars as she reclined. She bent her knees over her hips and brought her feet together flat on the cool surface.

Lisa waited while Antonio stripped off his shirt and removed his muscle tee. He tossed them over an azalea bush and unhooked his jeans. He pulled down the zipper.

Antonio straddled the bike, facing her, keeping his feet on the ground for balance. Lisa held on to the handlebars, chest heaving with the thrill of anticipation as he lifted her feet one at a time and draped her knees across his thighs. Shifting forward, he reached out to untie the belt of her kimono, unwrapping the silk from her naked body like a gift package. The warm sun and the clean bay air tickled her skin. Goose bumps rippled across her breasts, stomach and arms. She trembled with eagerness and the thrill of lying exposed before him.

It seemed that his eyes burned through her. His gaze singed the soft skin of her inner thighs and warmed the pink folds that beckoned him. Heat gripped her abdomen and lashed over her chest. Fire surged over her breasts as he touched his mouth to the valley between them, kneading her fullness between his hands. She sighed with pleasure at his touch, her moans keeping time with his as his mouth found a nipple and sucked it between his lips.

She reached out to stroke his hair, reveling in the thick, coarse strands. A nibble at her breast caused her hands to flex in response and then grip his scalp like a kitten's paw. Her fingers played along his head and then moved on to trace his neck and shoulders.

He hoisted her bottom with his hands until her hips rested level with his chest. Lisa held on to the handlebars and draped her knees over Antonio's shoulders.

He lowered his mouth to her mound and licked the pink satin skin inside. When the tip of his tongue found the base of her rigid, swollen clit, Lisa cried out. He worked his tongue in small, fast circles around her pleasure center and then flicked it over the peak, dragging his mouth down again until Lisa's hips quivered in his hands. She

forced herself to hold back, fighting against the sparks flashing behind her eyes. She willed herself not to climax yet.

And then he tongue-fucked her.

The exquisite plunge of his tongue inside her made her gasp for breath. He thrust deeper and faster, stretching his tongue inside her, filling her up, before withdrawing again to flick the sensitive opening and circle it. His tongue played there, taunting, tasting and nudging in and out the entrance of her channel.

Push back inside! she wanted to scream, and just then, he did, jamming his tongue deep inside her. The warm, slick walls of her pussy couldn't get enough— she wanted him to never stop.

But of course, he did.

His tongue glided along her vulva and found her clit again, working it fast. Lisa's orgasm rose. Just as she reached the brink and held her breath, expecting the rolls of pleasure to sweep her away, Antonio withdrew. He kissed the smooth skin of her mound and lowered her hips to the seat of the Harley as she exhaled.

Stillness hung in the air before Lisa's next quick inhalation of breath broke the silence.

The motorcycle lurched as Antonio rammed his sheathed cock deep inside her. The tops of his thighs pounded against the slick curves of her ass, creating slapping sounds. Lisa held on and cried out, friction mounting as his shaft found her sweet spot. Lisa lifted her hips and pushed back while Antonio increased the pace. She plunged into bliss as her orgasm carried her away.

She could hear herself moan through Antonio's groans. His shouts wafted over her body, rose into the air and seemed to encircle her ardent cries. Their impassioned calls gathered strength, drifted over the lawn and vanished into the bay.

All went quiet, except the rhythmic sounds of their labored breathing.

Antonio closed his eyes and lowered his head to his chest. Lisa unwrapped her legs from Antonio's waist and rested her feet against the tops of his thighs. The rustle of birds in the bushes and the distant whoosh of water reminded her where she was— inside the recesses of her carport in the early afternoon.

Antonio looked up and smiled at her. Lisa smiled back. He withdrew from her body, removed the condom and stepped off the bike, extending his hand to help her up. She smoothed her hair while he adjusted his jeans and dumped the condom in the trashcan by the garage. Her kimono hung open. She made no attempt to close the robe, but stepped forward to press her bare skin to his. Her breasts crushed against his chest as she wrapped her arms around his neck. She laid kisses across his collarbone and rested the side of her face on his shoulder. A light breeze touched her cheek, bringing a sense of peace and contentment as she stood there. Seconds ticked by but neither one let go.

Squirrels skittered through an oak tree, breaking the silence.

"Come inside," Lisa whispered. She kissed his chest again and linked one hand with his. He followed her up the steps and through the back door into the kitchen. They trudged single file through the house and up the stairs to Lisa's bedroom.

"How much time do we have?" She nudged his boot with her bare toes in a signal to take them off. Antonio complied and tossed his socks beside them on the light gray carpet.

Lisa eased down the zipper of his jeans and yanked his pants over his hips. "Off."

Antonio dropped his denims to the floor and stepped out. Lisa slid the kimono from her shoulders. The silk robe coiled in a heap beside Antonio's dark jeans.

She pulled him to the queen-sized bed by his forearm. When they reached the edge of the mattress, Lisa laid horizontally across the floral comforter and spread her legs. Her hair fanned around her head like a mermaid. Antonio stood at the edge of the bed, watching, his gaze fixed on her slit. He didn't move and seemed hardly able to breathe. She opened her cunt and fingered her creamy center, stimulating her clit until it swelled again, taut and erect.

She lifted her hips and dragged her tongue across her bottom lip. "Do it again," she said.

Chapter Twelve

"I have to go soon." He hugged her from behind.

Lisa rolled over and snuggled against Antonio's shoulder. He smelled of stirred sweat and pungent juices. The combination sent a tingle through her to wake her up. "What time is it?"

"Three thirty. My brother will be here around five unless I call him and tell him not to come."

Lisa opened her eyes. "Why, what's going on?"

"I was hoping you'd do something for me."

"I thought I'd already done everything physically possible." She poked his ribs.

Antonio chuckled. "True. You have. But there's one more thing I want to ask you. Kind of a promise."

"Promise?" Lisa perked up. She had no idea what he was talking about, but now he'd intrigued her.

"Will you keep my Harley while I'm away? Only for six months—and I'll get weekends off sometimes so that we can be together. I'll rent a car or take the train."

Lisa sat up in bed. "You're kidding, right?"

He shook his head. "You can ride it too, if you want."

Lisa glanced out the window, a reflexive action; she knew she couldn't see the motorcycle from her room. "You want me to Harley-sit while you're at Quantico?"

Antonio nodded. "The keys are in my jeans pocket. I'll leave them on the kitchen table."

She understood he had sealed his pledge to come back to her.

Lisa touched his cheek. "We'll both be here. Safe."

Antonio reached up for her. He pulled Lisa close and kissed her cheek. "That's all I wanted to know."

* * * * *

They'd just finished showering and redressing when a car pulled in the driveway. A horn blared and a knock followed.

Lisa opened the front door to greet Tomas. Crystal stood behind him on the porch and waved. Like Lisa, she was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, though Crystal's tee had been cut short with pinking shears across the midriff and sliced down the front from the neck to the center of her large breasts. Her cleavage smiled like a computer emoticon.

"Come in. Want a soda or glass of water?"

Tomas shook his head. "I'm good. Thanks, though."

"Can I use your bathroom? I have to pee," Crystal said after squeezing Lisa in a hello hug.

Lisa pointed the way. Crystal moved off down the hallway, high heels clomping against the hardwood floor.

"Antonio told me what happened with the tape. And how you two got it back." Lisa touched Tomas's shoulder and then lowered her hand. "I can't imagine how my life would have changed if that tape had been distributed."

Tomas grimaced. His expression said he understood. "Glad I could help. I never liked The Baller anyway. He deserved everything he got."

Antonio came out of the kitchen and slapped his brother on the back. "Ready to go?"

Tomas nodded. He glanced from Antonio to Lisa. "Did you tell her?"

Lisa turned toward Antonio. "Tell me what?"

Antonio shrugged. "I paid a visit to the Military Police. That's the reason I didn't get here sooner."

Tomas rubbed his cheek and smiled. "Rick Bennett was brought in today for questioning. His pimping, blackmailing days are over."

Lisa felt a rush of adrenaline surge through her veins. Her voice squeaked. "You had him arrested?"

Antonio shook his head. "Not arrested. Questioned. We're just scaring the piss out of him. It's up to the MPs now – though I doubt he's the quality the Navy had in mind for their officers."

Relief, tinged with sadness, swept over her. For two years she had wasted her love on the wrong man. Lisa touched Antonio's forearm and dragged her fingers down to his hand.

She wondered if fate had made amends.

The sounds of Crystal's high heels announced her return from the powder room. She came up beside Tomas and wrapped her arm around his waist. "Buy me some ice cream on the way, okay?"

"Sure." Tomas gave her lips a quick peck. He turned back to Lisa. "I ship out in two weeks. When I get back, let's all get together."

"I'd like that. Send me a postcard from some exotic place." She stepped forward and hugged Tomas. "Be careful out there."

Crystal released Tomas and wrapped one arm around Lisa's shoulder. She whispered close to her ear. "We've got good guys, don't you think? Antonio talked about you the whole time he was with us."

Lisa looked from Antonio to Tomas and back again. Antonio's dark eyes flashed with apparent affection as he returned her stare.

Lisa smiled. "We've got the two best guys in uniform in the world." She bussed Crystal's cheek with an air kiss. "Keep in touch."

Tomas rapped Antonio's arm. "See you in the car." He took Crystal's hand and the pair disappeared out the front door.

Antonio swept Lisa into his arms and kissed her hard. "I'll call you tomorrow. And I'll send you a postcard soon too." He pinched her butt.

Lisa squealed and slapped his backside in response. "You'd better."

"I love you, Lisa. Don't forget that." His gaze seemed to touch her soul. Her body trembled as he hugged her for the last time and then let her go.

"I love you too, even if you are a cop."

"FBI, my sweet. And I can hardly wait to see you naked inside my trench coat. I'll consider that the best perk of the job."

About the Author

Adele Dubois is an award-winning, multi-published author and former newspaper and magazine columnist, feature writer and foreign correspondent published in the Caribbean, UK and USA.

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