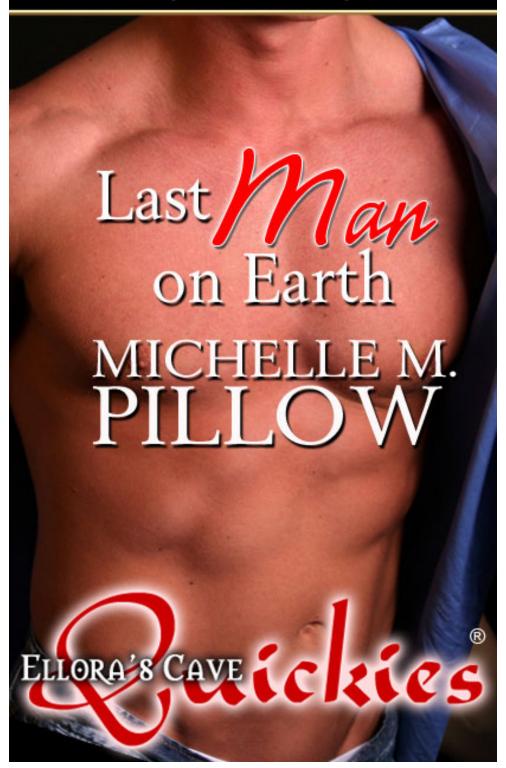
# Ellora's Cave Presents



#### Last Man on Earth

Michelle M. Pillow

Dr. Micco Hagan has been charged with pairing up the last of Earth's survivors based on genetics for optimal survival of the species. He can't resist the opportunity to be with his dream girl, Rena Gates. Though she rejected him before the Earth ended, he hopes now she'll find a soft spot for him.

In the time before, Rena thought Micco had only come on to her to win a bet. She never expected them to be rescued together, or to be eventually partnered. Unable to resist following orders, she discovers they have a lot more going for them than DNA matching. The sex is explosive, but can it eventually grow into love?

#### An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



Last Man on Earth

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## LAST MAN ON EARTH

Michelle M. Pillow

#### **Chapter One**

US Underwater Base 654-D, Atlantic Ocean 2172 A.D.

I wouldn't sleep with you if you were the last man on Earth, Dr. Hagan!

Rena frowned. That's what she'd said to Micco Hagan the day he'd propositioned her in that Houston bar all those years ago. She'd been there speaking at the marine biologist convention. He'd been rude, arrogant, a little drunk and had only done it in order to win a bet with his friend. The day seemed so long ago now, as if in a dream.

All those years ago.

The thought struck her and she had to pause in her task to think. It had only been three years, but it felt much longer. Oh how things had changed. Who could have known that in their effort to help the ailing environment, scientists would have caused one of the most catastrophic events to hit the earth since the great Ice Age.

Weather control. Now a dark joke, it had once been the promising answer to years of planetary abuse. But they should never have played God. For the first few months it had been great, perfect. Then, as it always does, nature came back to claim its rightful place as ruler. The earth became total chaos. Millions died in erratic weather patterns, some freezing, some sizzling and even more drowning. The few who could be saved were moved under the cover of night to keep the rest of the Earth's un-save-able population from finding out. They were taken to secret military bases to live until the damage that had been done righted itself. That's how Dr. Rena Gates found herself one of the very few survivors, sunk deep into the ocean's depth in what they ironically started calling the lost city of Atlantis.

I wouldn't sleep with you if you were the last man on Earth.

How ironic that those offhand words would now come back to haunt her. Micco Hagan *was* one of the last men on Earth and, according to the very official order she'd just received from the man in charge, she would definitely be expected to sleep with him. General Davies had military control over the base. He was a fair man, one who did right, and they could have gotten much worse. However, Davies did rule his underwater domain with only a few objectives in mind.

Directive One. Preserve the human race, a sense of humanity, civility and a long history.

Directive Two. Preserve the military base and maintain order.

Directive Three. Most importantly, survive at all costs.

That was the missive. Survival. What was free will when they had an obligation to continue the human race? Those who had found some sort of love out of necessity had been allowed to marry in the very beginning, but those who hadn't after a couple of years underwater were now being forced to join according to their bloodlines—a very cold, scientific process. Micco was in charge of the database, of testing genetics and comparing them, of recording all births to ensure the future wasn't hereditarily tainted.

She crushed the marriage order in her hand and her frown deepened. If Micco was in charge then he signed off on their match. She had a hard time believing there was no other suitable candidate on the godforsaken sunken city. Out of two-thousand thirty-six people surely there was another match to be made. Or had he gone mad? Was this some sort of joke?

I wouldn't sleep with you if you were the last man on Earth.

"Damn it!" She threw the paper at the metal wall of her bunk and growled. A few of her roommates glanced at her and laughed.

"Who'd you get? Sam the man with a plan?" Darcy chuckled, tossing her red curls as she crossed over to pick up the paper. Like everyone, she wore a t-shirt and loose cotton pants. Today she went for a combination of black and green. Of course, black and green were their only options. She uncrumpled the letter. "Holy crap!"

"What?" Ginger and Lucy asked in unison.

"Hagan! You get to sleep with dark, sexy, descended-from-warrior-gods Hagan!" Darcy exclaimed, inciting a round of jealous gasps and semi-hateful glares in Rena's direction. "Every woman I know has tried to get into his pants."

"Seriously, if you don't want him, I'll trade you," Lucy said. "I got some mechanic from the underside. I barely know him except that we've had mandatory gym time together like twice and I think he had brown hair."

The room full of military cots seemed to close in on her more than usual. The city felt like the inside of a submarine, but was more spherical in design and stacked five levels tall.

"I got a fisherman from the pit," Ginger added. The pit was the pressurized room in the bottom center of the city used to catch their meat supply. "He's cute enough but can you imagine what he's going to smell like at the end of a shift? Rena, girl, you got the freakin' jackpot. Hagan is smart. Sexy."

"Sexy," Lucy repeated.

"Freakin' hot," Ginger said.

"Seriously, I want to trade," Lucy insisted.

"You can't trade. It's all genetic matching," Darcy stated, ruining the catlike smile that had begun to form on Lucy's mouth. "Apparently, I'm genetically matched to that strange guy who talks to himself. You know, the one they're always asking to leave the mechanics area because he takes supplies without authorization."

"Do you mean Dr. Van – Dr. Von...?" Lucy asked.

"Von Sibenthal," Darcy said.

"He's not, ah, all that, um, bad," Lucy said, trying to sound positive.

Rena pushed up and headed toward the door. "I'm going for a run before my shift."

"You just got back from a run," Darcy called behind her.

Rena ignored her.

I wouldn't sleep with you if you were the last man on Earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

I wouldn't sleep with you if you were the last man on Earth, Dr. Hagan!

Micco took a deep breath, not for the first time wondering if he'd made a mistake. The words still stung, even after everything that had happened. Whatever it was that put them on the same life rescue list, he couldn't help but think that maybe, just possibly, it was fate. Even now, even years after her rejection, he wanted her as badly as he had that night in Houston.

Rena had been so soft and sweet-looking back then with the deep brown eyes that made a man melt a little on the inside, and medium brown locks bleached by the sun to create blonde streaks. Now, after the health mandate, her body had hardened with toned muscles from her workouts, and the sunlight had faded from her hair to leave it a lush flow of darker waves. Like everyone on the base, there was a strain to her gaze, an aging that came from surviving so much tragedy.

He'd tried to talk to her, but she avoided him when she could, ignored him when he managed to get into the same room with her, and always looked at him as if she didn't remember. Oh, but he knew she remembered him. Once, five months ago, in an isolated corridor, he'd run into her. He hadn't been planning it, as he paced through the halls to get away from his roommates to think. The whole future matchmaking scheme had just been placed on his shoulders and he needed some time alone to process the full impact of what he was being asked to do. Not only did he have to marry people who potentially would not like to be married, he also had to reassign their living arrangements. As one of the head scientists on the base, he was to have one of the larger quarters for himself and his new bride—which wasn't saying much since it only afforded about two more square feet on each side.

"You," she'd said to him when he almost ran her down.

"Me?" he'd asked, trying to be playful and bring one of her smiles to her full lips.

In that moment, as she glared at him, he knew she remembered. He'd been an ass. He knew it. She knew it. Hell, the whole bar had known it. If he could take it back, he would. But none of that mattered now. Nothing from those days mattered now.

Mumbling, he returned his attention to the holographic screen floating above his desk and tried not to feel the fact that his cock was hard—again—from thinking about Rena. "Well, you might not sleep with me if I was the last man on Earth, but let's see if you sleep with me as your last option on Atlantis."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Join hands," General Davies ordered, standing above the crowd. He looked over the cramped dining hall from his place on top of a center table.

Rena stiffened as Micco's warm palm clasped hers. A chill worked over her, adding to the dizzy feeling she got whenever he was near. She tried to tell herself it was repulsion, but it was a lie. A big, fat, juicy lie. Just like that night in the bar, she wanted him. Desire raged like a fever through her blood, alighting her nerves with tingles and causing her thighs to tighten.

His tanned skin and defined features gave evidence of his Native American heritage. Like most men on the base, he wore his hair short, though somehow, on him, the haircut accentuated the dark, piercing depths of his eyes to the point she got nervous looking at him for too long.

Feeling jealous eyes on her, she turned her attention down to her boots. Micco was one of the handsomer men on the base with an animal magnetism and charismatic pull that left more than one lady weak in the knees. She'd heard whispers about him, latenight girl talk speculating about how good he'd taste and how good he'd be in bed.

"You're married," the general announced.

"Short and sweet." Micco chuckled next to her and she tried not to watch the way his mouth curled up at the corner. "Huh, Mrs. Hagan?"

Rena grimaced. It wasn't hard. The lust in her veins fueled her bad mood as she tried to deny it. "I have to go collect microscopic specimens. Don't expect me home."

"Ah," he gripped her hand harder before she could pull it away. He turned his attention to the general expectantly.

"You're all ordered back to your new quarters to discuss, talk, consummate the marriages, to procreate." The general sighed hard, muttering gruffly, "You all have leave to...just get it out of the way so we can all move forward with our lives. And remember, you're doing this in memory of all those who can't. It's up to us to secure humanity's future."

"Shall we?" Micco asked, his voice dipping.

"Our ancestors would be appalled by this," Rena said, unable to look at him.

"Some of our ancestors arranged marriages," he countered. "And our ancestors weren't in our position. I think we all want the same thing—the continuation of our people."

"If you say so."

"You could have filed a complaint. I didn't see any paperwork come across my desk seeking a change of -"

"What? You know as well as I nothing would have been done and I would have looked like I didn't care about the future of humanity. You know how things are around here. And who am I to complain when every other base city is implementing the same program? I know we're following a plan of action and that the work we do here, now, will be for the betterment of our species, but forgive me for not falling into your arms in celebration of my good fortune." Rena jerked from him, hurrying into the throng of newlyweds. Fear made her legs move faster. Why couldn't she have gotten the plain fisherman from the pits who smiled at her every morning when she went to collect her samples? Or the cook with the jagged scar on his cheek?

As she hit the metal corridor, she ran for her new room, following the narrow ropes of light that lined the ceiling and floor. Rena hoped he wouldn't follow, but inside she knew he would.

\* \* \* \* \*

Micco gave an easy smile that he didn't feel as he made his way through the crowd to follow his new wife. Luckily for him, not too many people paid attention to what was happening as they began slowly drifting from the dining hall to do as they were ordered.

Arriving at his quarters, he went inside and the smile dropped. Really it was two rooms—a tiny bathroom that reminded him of the old airplane compartments, and the main bedroom. Rena stood with her back to him near the bed, as far from the door as she could walk.

"This is some sort of revenge, isn't it?" She turned, shooting daggers in his direction with those brown eyes of hers.

"Revenge?" Absently he moved his hand over the scanner to shut the door. His body tensed with the knowledge of what they were expected to do, alone, in their shared room.

"For rejecting you before in Houston," she stated bluntly. "You're still mad that I dared to tell the great Dr. Hagan no. That's why I'm here, isn't it? You haven't gotten over losing that damned bet!"

"Bet?" He watched her cross her arms over her chest, well aware of how the motion pushed her breasts up and together. "What are you talking about?"

"Houston. You spilled a drink on my shirt and asked me if I'd like to come back to your room to get out of my wet clothing. I had to run to my room to change and was almost late for my speech because of that!"

She couldn't possibly still be that angry about his stupid come-on line. Hearing it, he wanted to blush in humiliation. Not one of his finer moments. She'd just been so damned cute and him so damned drunk and horny. "You say that like it matters now."

"Well..." As if realizing the conversation was a little absurd, she shrugged. "It mattered then and you really embarrassed me. I can only assume you plan to embarrass me some more with this—"

"I embarrassed you? You were the one yelling at me and denouncing my manhood in front of everyone within a fifty-mile radius."

"I was wearing a white shirt," she exclaimed. "The chairman of my company saw me looking like I'd just finished participating in a wet t-shirt contest."

"Mmm." Micco gave a small moan and licked his lips. "I remember."

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Her arms tightened their hold and the tshirt pulled tighter to her breasts.

Micco gave a short laugh. "Because you're my wife and I'm—"

"Don't you dare finish that sentence. I don't want to hear about how you're looking to get me out of my wet clothes, or whatever line you've come up with since then."

"I was going to say I'm your husband." Micco clicked his tongue. "Such a dirty mind."

She tried to maintain her glare, but he saw the smile peeking through. "This is a useless conversation. Can't we just tell them we took care of business? That way I'll go back to work and—"

"That's insulting. We've been in here for only a few minutes." Micco closed the distance between them, trying not to be too obvious. "My lack of prowess would be all over the city." He inched closer. "Or perhaps it will be your lack of charms that they talk about." She wasn't moving away. That was a good sign. Her breathing deepened, as if calling him in. "Either way, there is no escaping the small-town gossip."

There is no escaping this room.

Rena swallowed nervously. She'd done all she could to avoid being this close to Micco. When he came into a room, she left. When he spoke, she did her best to get away. Now, as cream gathered in her sex and tingling erupted over her flesh, she knew why. Anger and disdain were no longer working.

Was it her imagination or was Micco beginning to tower over her? The room felt small and a wave of dizziness overcame her. The all-too masculine smell of him engulfed her senses, reminding her of how long she'd been without a sexual partner. When she'd first come on the base, she'd promised herself that she would not have sex with anyone in the city. Such things led to complications.

But that neglected part of her body suddenly demanded to be turned back on. She'd denied herself so much, some out of choice, much out of necessity. Her hand shook. How even to start? What if she had forgotten how? What if she wasn't any good?

Rena turned her eyes down and focused on his boots. His hand glanced over her arm, sliding up from her wrist to her elbow. Electricity shot across her body, heating her in all the right places.

"Hagan," she began, trying to think of something, anything reasonable to say.

"Just try it," he whispered. "If you don't enjoy it, I'll stop. I promise."

Rena lifted her head to ask, "Try what?" but the words never left her mouth. As soon as she parted her lips, he pressed his mouth to hers, kissing her gently. Firm, supple lips massaged hers, opening just enough that she could feel his breath caressing its way into her lungs as she inhaled.

She was thankful his hand was on her elbow, steadying her. Otherwise she would have dropped to her knees on the hard metal floor. Something whispered in the back of her mind to be strong, to not let him see how his touch affected her.

Before she realized what she was doing, she found herself kissing him back. A soft moan sounded from her throat, swallowed into his mouth as he deepened their embrace. It became hard to concentrate past the engaging movements of his tongue. She grabbed hold of his broad shoulders when the urge to touch him became unbearable.

Strong muscles flexed beneath her fingers as he reached for her hips, jerking her forward so that their bodies touched. The unmistakable length of his arousal pressed into her stomach, already hard. She gasped and he moved his kisses along her jaw to her throat. Micco groaned, rocking into her as he kept her pulled flush against his hips. The cotton of their pants offered little protection.

Micco dug his fingers under her shirt, untying the drawstring at her waist before thrusting his hands down to cup her ass. He massaged the cheeks hard, continuing to rock. She felt as if she knew him, even though they'd barely talked. As one of the head scientists and one of the cutest guys on base, rumors flew about him.

He licked her neck, nipping at the sensitive flesh he found there. She trembled, overwhelmed with sensations. Lust raged through her veins like never before. Maybe it was the finality of their situation, the stress of living underwater, the burning desire to feel something other than hopelessness and frustration. Or maybe the primal part of her psyche had finally awakened from its deep slumber—hungry, desperate, horny as hell.

He captured her mouth again and urged her back until she came up against a smooth, metal wall. The cold surface contrasted the heat of his body. He became more aggressive, keeping her trapped before him. The length of his perfectly carved body fitted along hers, strong and firm. His hips continued to grind, as if his cock couldn't wait to be free. Her drenched pussy answered the call and she found herself meeting his rhythm as they found satisfaction through their clothing.

He lifted her by her ass, his warm hands imprinting themselves into her flesh. Her legs parted, giving him better access to rub against her so hard it felt as if the clothes melted away. The turgid length of his cock thrust enthusiastically along her slit, sending jolts of pleasure over her with each pass.

Micco ground his hips fast and hard, simulating the sex act. His cock had become impossibly hard and the ample size of it turned her on more. The sheer mass would stretch her open and fill her to the brink. She clawed at his shoulders, gasping for breath. It felt too good. She couldn't stop, not even long enough to undress.

Rena's pussy dampened the material. Friction and heat tweaked her clit. She groaned into his kiss, lightheaded as she jerked her head away so she could breathe. His taste was on her mouth, his smell inside her head.

"Ah," she cried, feeling her orgasm close. Her pussy clenched. He held her thighs open, thrusting faster. His fingers pulled at her ass, parting the cheeks. She arched against the wall, hating her clothes.

"Argh," he growled, squeezing her ass hard. The fluid motion of his rocking became a ragged jerk and she knew he'd come inside his pants. Liquid heat surged between them.

It was too much stimulation. Rena came, her body exploding. Her mouth opened wide, but she was too overcome with pleasure to scream.

Micco dropped her legs. Rena fell forward against him. Panting, she tried to reason through what had happened. All the ways she had thought about living with Dr. Hagan, this scenario had not come to mind. She wasn't sure what to say to him.

"Is that long enough to save our dignity?" Rena meant it as a joke, but her delivery was off and it ended up sounding spiteful and hard.

"Of course," he answered, his tone low enough to match hers. "You have work to do. I should make myself available in case there are problems with the new arrangements. With a hundred new couples, I'm sure something will arise."

Micco turned his back on her, going to the trunk in the corner. He pulled out a fresh pair of pants. Rena turned her back while he changed. When she heard the door open, she finally let loose the breath she'd been holding.

"What just happened?" she whispered, peering at the closed door. Somehow, she was even more nervous about living with him now. Hurrying to her trunk that sat right next to his, she pulled it open and quickly changed her clothes. Rena rolled their discarded pants inside her t-shirt and tucked it under her arm. It wasn't technically her

laundry day, but hopefully with all the weddings going on, the room would be clear and she'd be able to sneak in.

### **Chapter Two**

"I thought I would see if you wanted to go to lunch," Micco's voice interrupted her shaky concentration.

Rena had managed to avoid her new husband for a couple of days. It was hard. She thought about him constantly. Every shadow appeared to be his figure looming in the distance, ready to confront her. The truth was Rena was a coward. She was too embarrassed to face him, too confused, too unsure of what she would do.

"Oh?" She met his dark eyes and her heartbeat quickened. Her nerves remembered all too well the feel of his body.

When she didn't answer, Micco asked, "What are you working on?"

"Oh." Rena glanced at her microscope. Motioning to it, she stepped aside to let him look. "We've been endeavoring to understand the role of viruses in deep ocean ecosystems. Research is still in its infancy, but we are trying to understand all we can about the ocean, as we might be down here a long time."

Light from the microscope reflected off his mouth only to fade against his cheek. "It must be very enlightening, for you to spend so much time in your lab."

The words "instead of in your new home with me" remained unspoken between them.

"Being in charge here, I guess I got used to working the long hours. In the bunks I had so many roommates that I found it easier to sleep during the day when they were gone."

"That's why you were running that night we met in the hall?" His eyes met hers before turning back to the eyepiece.

She chuckled. "Yes. Darcy and Ginger snore."

"Hm. I thought perhaps you were avoiding me." He stood straight and slid his finger along the pristine table. Like all things in the lab, she kept it immaculately clean.

"No," she lied.

"Then I can expect you home tonight?"

Was that a challenge? She swallowed. A whole night alone with him? She almost missed the annoyance of roommates. At least then she would be safe from herself.

"Of course," she answered.

"And lunch now?" He gestured toward the door.

"I should finish up what I'm doing. Some of the samples don't survive long." She grabbed a clipboard and began checking boxes. "Besides, I have one of the techs bringing me something to eat."

Micco tapped the table twice. "I'll see you tonight, then."

"Tonight," Rena repeated, continuing to check random boxes without reading to be sure they were the right ones. When he left, she pulled the paper and crumpled it. With a loud sigh, she said, "Yeah. Tonight."

\* \* \* \* \*

Micco cursed himself for a fool, not for the first time since his wedding. How could he blame Rena for not coming to him? He'd acted like some horny teenager, dry-humping his prom date against the wall in some stolen moment. The shame was almost too much to bear.

Micco had to make it up to her. The passion had been there. He'd felt it in her kiss, in her touch, in her moan. He had to show her he could be a better lover.

Pacing the length of his home, he glanced at the wall where the digital clock flashed the time. It was getting late. He wondered what was keeping her. Should he go after her? Had she lost herself in work? Had she decided not to come?

Before he could come to a conclusion, the door opened. Rena appeared, her wet hair slicked back from her head. Her eyes went to the table where he'd set out dinner for

them. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize you had made plans. I was behind logging some workout hours and I went for an extra long run."

"It's fine. I didn't see you at the evening meal, so I thought I'd have something ready." What he didn't say was that he'd waited through the meal shift for the opportunity to approach her.

"Thanks. Should we sit?" She made her way to the small table. The meal wasn't anything special—at least not anymore. Deep sea fish could only be prepared so many ways, and when you lived on an underwater military base it was pretty clear what was on the menu. "I know it's petty, but I would give anything for a hamburger and fries. It's been so long I can barely remember what they taste like."

Micco nodded in agreement, thankful to have something to talk about. "For me it's pizza. I never thought I'd say it, but I didn't eat enough pizza."

"Mm, chicken fried steak." She took a bite of fish, chewing slowly.

"Pasta."

"Tacos."

He groaned. "This is torture. We should stop."

"I wonder if those living on the surface bases wish they had seafood," Rena mused thoughtfully. "Did you have family?"

"A brother," Micco answered. "And an unofficial tribal family—the Anigatogewi. They're all gone now. One of the heat waves."

"Ah-ni-ga...?" she tried to repeat.

"Anigatogewi." He chuckled. "It means the Wild Potato Clan. We are—were—the protectors of the earth. I think they'd find it fitting to know I was here. What about you?"

"I had a big family—cousins, sisters, parents, aunts and uncles. I was always gone working. I thought they'd always be there. Sometimes I like to pretend they're still out there, but I just can't get to a phone right now to call them."

"Well." He lifted his glass of water. "We now have each other. That's something, isn't it? For better or worse."

"Yes, it means something." She nodded, her tone soft. "It's funny how things change after the world ends."

This wasn't the conversation he'd planned on having over dinner. Most of the people on the base avoided this topic, mainly because it was too painful.

"I'm sorry. I hate looking at the past for too long. Can we talk about something else?" she asked, as if reading his thoughts. "How are the other couples doing? Anyone boycott your office yet?"

"A few," he chuckled. When she looked at him with clear eyes, actually seeing him, he felt something he hadn't in a long time—hope and happiness. "Eighteen couples inquired about divorce. Sixteen couples have officially put in for marital reassignment. And one couple flat out said their religious beliefs don't acknowledge the base's marital ceremony."

"I suppose it's to be expected when you match people by their genes and not their hearts. You can't blame them." She finished eating and set down her fork.

"It's the most logical solution to our predicament." Some of the hope in him died, replaced by worry.

"I know, and as a scientist I agree." Rena took a drink of water. "As a woman, I guess I just think there should be something more."

"I should take these plates back to the—" Micco stood, intent on leaving her alone. When he chose her for his bride, he hadn't done it to hurt her.

Rena's hand on his wrist stopped him. "Hagan...Micco, I'm not delusional. I realize the old world is gone. I don't expect you to love me." Her breath caught as she let him go. "I don't even know if romantic love exists anymore, but I walked into the dining hall and I took your hand. I don't plan on ending this marriage."

He wasn't sure what to say to her. She wouldn't leave him. That was something.

I don't expect you to love me.

Rena wasn't sure what reaction she'd expected to that comment, but she was disappointed when he made no comment at all. Inside she trembled. Without thought, she grabbed the sides of his face, noting the texture of his whisker-stubbled jaw. She pulled him to her kiss, pressing her lips against his.

His hand slid over her hip as he returned her kiss. His tongue swiped between her lips. Electric fire shot through her. He moaned, a low, throaty sound of pleasure. This time his tongue swept deeper, the kiss becoming more passionate.

Rena ran her fingers into his hair. Desire rippled through her until she became mindless to anything else. Her body remembered all too well the feel of release and wanted to feel it again. She became more aggressive, gripping tightly as she pressed her body against his. The solid form of his muscles molded against her. Her pussy became wet and ready. Her breasts tingled to be touched. Her lungs burned for air. Her heart hammered erratically in her chest.

Micco grabbed her hips and pulled her against his cock. He stepped forward, walking her backward toward the bed. Her hip hit against her chair and she pushed it out of the way.

He pulled her shirt up over her head and arms, tossing it aside, before doing the same with her sports bra. Instantly, he stroked her flesh, cupping her breasts in his palms. His hands were warm, circling and exploring the tender globes. His lips trailed along her neck, licking and biting their way downward. He thumbed her nipples into hard peaks before capturing them with his lips. Rena gasped as he sucked them deep into his mouth.

His hands traveled over her sides, up her back, down to push both her pants and panties from her hips. The cotton material slithered to the floor, pooling around her feet. His touch became hungry and urgent, as if he wanted to touch her everywhere at once.

Rena tugged at his shirt, trying to pull it off him. When he moved to help her, she stumbled back and fell onto the bed. She kicked off her boots and untangled her feet from her pants.

Eagerly, she watched Micco undress. He threw his shirt aside, revealing a perfectly sculpted chest. Her eyes followed his hands to his waist as he jerked his pants free to unveil a thick erection. The anticipation was almost too much. Her pussy ached to be filled, to have his stiff cock pounding into her, stretching her wide as she knew he would.

Rena clamped her legs together as her pussy released a torrent of cream. Micco crawled over her. Bracing his weight on his hands, he ran the back of his fingers down the center of her chest, tickling a path to her sex. He parted her wet folds, gently circling her clit with his finger.

The first brush of his body against hers caused an intense shiver along her flesh. She wound her hand behind his neck and pulled him down. He shifted his hips and his cock fit next to her pussy.

"Micco," she whispered, needing to feel him inside her.

He kissed her neck, running his tongue over her pulse. She parted her legs, opening herself up to him. The overhead lights didn't hide a single moment.

Rena scratched her nails down his back. He drew the tip of his cock along her sex before finding entrance. He eased himself in, working back and forth, in and out, going deeper with each pass, stretching her to fit him. Finally, he thrust deep.

Her body was trapped beneath his. He propelled his hips forward, taking her hard and he quickened his pace. She grabbed his ass, urging him on. Tension built in her hips, driving her to the brink of perfect madness. It felt too good, too right. Her pussy clenched, the muscles tightening as she climaxed. Pleasure radiated from where they were joined, flowing over her entire length, filling her with warmth and intense satisfaction. Her vision blurred and it felt as if her heart nearly exploded from her chest.

Micco groaned, not stopping as he rode the trembling wave. He came, jerking inside her before holding still. An eternity passed in mere seconds, punctuated by their harsh breathing.

Rena had never felt such pleasure. He pulled from her, slowly, before falling to her side. Micco lay beside her, gloriously naked and unashamed. His member was still partially erect, as if it would rise with little provocation.

"I should have handled asking you out better in Houston." Micco kept his attention on the ceiling. "I don't remember making a bet, but if I did it was only to give myself the courage to talk to you."

"It's silly for me to hold a grudge about it. Everyone here is just looking for a connection to the past. Since you're here, that became mine." She turned her back to him and took a deep breath. "We should think more of the future. That is why we survived, isn't it?"

Survival. The word filled Micco's head. He wanted more to their life than survival. Every day they worked for it, every task specifically meant for it. Was it so wrong to want more when he came home?

He glanced at her naked form, letting his gaze follow the fine line of her back. When she didn't turn to him, he pushed out of bed and crossed the room to turn out the lights. In such complete darkness it was impossible to see, not that navigating the chamber was hard.

His naked legs brushed against hers as he crawled into bed. Tentatively, he touched her hip, turning her around. He studied the darkness, trying to see her face. It was no use. She remained in shadow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rena felt Micco's weight on the bed next to her as they lay in darkness. The smell of him filled her senses, stirring her tempered desire. She found herself wanting him again. Images flashed through her mind—old porno movies, scenes from the romance novels she read in college before turning to more "scientific" pursuits.

She licked her lips, emboldened by the darkness. If she reached for him would his cock be hard? Or would she have to manipulate it to full power? She listened closely, hearing his even breath.

"Hagan?" she whispered. He didn't answer and she realized he slept.

His cock would be sated and soft. She slowly rolled up, careful not to wake him just yet. Her hand brushed his hip as she got her bearings. She wet her lips, inching her mouth toward his dick. Heat radiated off him, urging her closer. She wanted to taste her pussy on his cock. She wanted to suck him to full arousal, to feel him grow between her lips and come in her mouth.

She hesitated, the scientific part of her brain trying to launch logical arguments. But this time her body wouldn't listen. Micco's passion for her was undeniable. He liked her, he liked fucking her.

Her mouth missed his cock, hitting his hip and she instantly slid her parted lips to the flaccid shaft, drawing them along its length. She drew the tip between her teeth, sucking the mushroomed head. Micco sighed in his sleep, shifting beneath her.

Rena angled her body, positioning her knees beside one hip and her hands beside the other. The shaft stirred in her mouth, growing, and she brought it deeper. He tasted so good, smelled even better. She worked her mouth up and down in excitement. Micco's hips shifted, as he made a weak noise.

"Ah," he jerked, as if coming to full awareness. His movements changed from sleepy stirrings to full thrusts.

His hands delved into her hair, pushing her down. His cock thickened to full potency and she couldn't fit him all in, so she brought a hand to grab the root, splaying her fingers over his balls.

"Fuck me!" he exclaimed in surprise, the words more of a stunned affirmation than a command. "Ah fuck."

Rena moaned, letting him hear how much she liked it. She sucked harder. His hand ran down her side to rest on her ass. He squeezed the cheek hard before giving it a light smack. Her pussy jerked in approval and she gasped around his cock. She cupped his balls, letting her finger hit the sensitive flesh just behind them.

"Oh yeah, suck me, don't stop," Micco urged, flexing his hips. He spanked her again, slightly harder and more fully across her ass. Rena cried out as the vibrations hit the bottom curve of her cheeks near her pussy.

She'd never been so turned on her in life. His sexual energy wrapped around her—from his potent, masculine smell to the intense heat of his body. Her breasts swayed, the nipples aching for an attention they wouldn't get. Shifting her weight, she let go of his balls and placed a hand against his stomach. Her fingers followed the trail of hair up, across his stomach to his chest and back down again. His skin was as smooth as silk and as hard as marble.

She felt him tense. His cock twitched in her mouth. He came, the salty taste of his release filling her mouth. She swallowed his cum, drinking every last drop.

Micco gasped for breath as his limbs fell weakly onto the bed. At first, when he awoke to the intense pleasure on his cock, he'd thought he was dreaming again. He almost reached down to take care of the problem himself until the reality of warm lips finally broke through his hazy brain.

Rena purred like sexual temptress as she finally let his cock free from her delightful mouth. "Mm. Delicious."

He was too stunned to answer. Never had he thought something like this would happen between them—her waking him with a blowjob, her very proper mouth initiating such an intimate act. Sure, he'd hoped, even fantasized, but to have it happen...

Micco groaned. "Had I known an apology would have worked so well, I would have given it to you years ago."

"I hope you don't mind," Rena said. There was a huskiness to her voice that he hadn't heard before. "I couldn't seem to stop myself."

He cleared his throat. "No, of course not. Anytime you want to, ah..."

"Suck your cock?" she offered.

"Yeah, anytime you want to suck my cock, by all means." He gave a light laugh.

"And what if..." she paused, sliding a leg over his chest. He wished he could see her in the dark, but it was impossible. All he could do was listen and feel. She straddled his chest and leaned over. He realized she sat backward on him, facing his feet. She slid her pussy up toward his mouth. "What if I wanted you fuck me with your mouth?"

Rena kissed his stomach. The smell of her cunt filled him as she backed up, hooking her knees under his armpits. Micco unthreaded his arms, moaning as he realized what she wanted. He grabbed her hips, jerking her pussy to his mouth. He kissed her deeply, licking and biting before fucking her with his tongue.

Rena bit his stomach and dug her nails into his thighs. She circled her hips, grinding against his face. He didn't care if she smothered him. What better way to go? He felt his cock shift, as if coming awake from its last release to see what was happening.

Her clit rubbed his whiskered chin and she cried out in pleasure. A flood of cream rewarded his mouth as she came. Weakly, she fell forward, her parted thighs by his cheeks. He let her catch her breath, but the second he felt it slow, he said, "I want to fuck you."

Her hand slid to his cock, as if gauging his interest. It was half erect. She stroked it a few times before sliding off him. "How do you want me?"

He groaned, finding it nearly impossible to answer that question. He wanted her so many different ways.

"Any way you want it," she urged, her words tinged with excitement. "I'm yours to command."

Finally, he said, "Get on your hands and knees. I'm going to ride you."

The bed shifted and he rolled up, blindly searching for her. He touched her thigh. She'd obeyed.

Micco placed himself behind her. He cupped her pussy, testing its wetness with his probing fingers. He stroked her, pressing up against her sweet spot. "I want to ride you hard."

"Yes," she gasped in approval, encouraging him to go on. "Ride me hard. I want you to."

"I want pound my cock inside you."

"Yes, pound me. Do it." She wiggled and pressed back into his hand. Cream wet his fingers.

"I want to cram your pussy so full you can't walk tomorrow." He withdrew his hand and smacked her hip.

"Yes, yes!" she cried.

His cock ached. He wouldn't have thought it possible after coming twice already, but this woman tempted him like no other had. He drew himself to her pussy, wetting himself along her slit before he took aim.

"Give it to me, Micco!" she ordered.

He smacked her hip again before grabbing hold. He slammed his hips against her ass, filling her completely. She gasped and arched. Micco didn't slow as he fucked her hard, pounding into her in a fast, beating rhythm. He leaned forward to cup her breasts, using them to urge her forward and back on his cock. He pinched her nipples.

"Give it to me," she cried louder. "That's it. Punish me. Spank me. Make me yours."

The naughty demands nearly made him lose control. Never would he have thought Rena would say such things. But who was he to deny her? He let go of her breasts and spanked her hard. She cried out for more and he did it again. "Is that it?" he asked, grunting at the effort it took to keep up the wild pace. "Are you a bad girl?"

"Yes!" Rena panted. "Don't stop."

Micco rammed hard, not sure how much longer he could hold back.

"Ah!" She stiffened, her muscles clamping down on him as she came. Micco fought his release, not wanting to stop for fear he'd wake up and find it was all some torturous dream. He didn't move, gasping for air as he managed to stave off ejaculation.

When she would have fallen forward, he held her hips fast. "I'm not done."

"But...?" She pushed up in surprise. "You didn't...?"

"You said I could have it any way I wanted." He pulled out of her pussy and drew his wet cock up the cleft of her ass. He pushed insistently forward into the soft cheeks until his cock head met the tight rosette buried there. She stiffened. "I want this."

She made a weak noise. "But, I haven't... Uh, I mean, no one ever..."

"Mm, good." The thought of being the first nearly made him lose it all over the backs of her thighs. "Virgin territory. Don't worry. I'll break you open slowly."

She again made a weak noise, but he didn't stop, couldn't stop, not unless she ordered him to.

"Relax," he soothed, prying her open. The tip of his cock dipped past the tight barrier. He groaned at the almost painful grip. "Let me in. Oh baby, that's it." He slid slowly deeper. Her harsh breath echoed around them, mingling with his. "Mm, this feels so good, so tight." He withdrew, keeping his progress agonizingly slow. "I can't believe no one has ever taken you here. Your ass is so sweet, so firm. I've wanted to fuck it from the first moment I saw you." He pushed deeper. Halfway there. "I can't believe I'm...ah!"

He came, his cock jerking as he spilled his seed into her ass. He'd only managed to fit himself halfway in but it was more squeezing than his body could handle. He jerked several times, as wave after wave of cum jetted out of him. With a loud cry he pulled out of her, shaking as he fell back on the bed. His heart pounded hard and he couldn't catch his breath.

Rena couldn't speak as Micco's large cock stretched her anus. She'd never felt anything like it. As pleasure started to build, he came. Her orgasm followed, a sweet, new rush of sensations. He fell back on the bed. Maybe anal sex was more for the man than the woman. She'd come three times and could hardly find room to complain. Rena stretched next to him with a tired yawn.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't hold back," he said.

Punish me. Spank me. Make me yours.

Rena blushed, realizing what she'd said. She'd never acted like that in bed before. Thankful he couldn't see her face in the dark, she tried to think of something, anything, to say.

"Are you disappointed?" he asked, almost shyly.

"Not at all," she answered, just as soft. "Are you?"

He laughed, tiredly slapping her hip. "Hardly. I've never been so fulfilled."

### **Chapter Three**

Days lingered on like never before and work became tedious. Rena could think of little more than ending her day and getting home and into the bed of her virile husband.

Husband. The idea still seemed strange. As did the knowledge that she had a man waiting for her at home. Well, he'd be home later, after work.

Looking into the microscope for the fifth time, she studied the new specimen for a moment and then leaned over to record her findings. By the time she lifted her pen, she'd forgotten what she was going to write.

"I see you're not cursing your luck anymore," Darcy laughed halfheartedly, walking into the lab. "I swear the entire city is having sex but me."

Rena blushed. She couldn't help it.

"Don't tell me," Darcy continued, sidling up to her. She peeked into the microscope and whispered, "He's hung like a stallion and fucks like a Greek god."

Rena's blush deepened.

"I really hate you right now," Darcy said.

Rena frowned, suddenly concerned. "Is something wrong? Is Dr. Von Sibenthal that bad?"

"Never mind," Darcy said. "It doesn't matter."

"If your husband is mean to you, I can get Micco to change your marital assignment. Last I heard there were twenty-six couples officially applying for reassignment. Oh, and one who claims they're not married because of religious beliefs."

"Yeah, that last one would be my darling husband," Darcy answered. "Apparently, my hair color is a bad omen and I make funny noises when I sleep. Between us, I think

he's just gone a little crazy on this base. He sleeps in the bathroom and I'm pretty sure he has some kind of strange romance going with the shower stall."

"Oh, Darcy, I'm sure—"

A loud blaring sounded, jolting them from their conversation. Rena jerked, accidently knocking her hand into the microscope. The specimen tray slid onto the floor, but the equipment remained bolted down. Rena gasped, rubbing her sore hand as she looked around her laboratory. The room pitched to the side at a sharp angle. The sound of breaking glass and falling implements rang out seconds before people began to scream. The overhead lights flashed red. Rena slid into Darcy, unable to get a good foothold on the smooth metal floor. They slammed into the wall.

"We're sinking," Darcy said, gasping for breath. Tears came to her eyes. "This is it."

"Stay here and lock down the lab. I have to get to the pit. It's my turn on safety rotation." Rena rolled against the wall toward the door. She held onto the doorframe as she slid into the hall. "Something's wrong. If we stay on our side we'll lose pressure. I need to get to the pit."

Pressing her hands along the wall, she braced herself as she walked. She tried to listen past the frantic beat of her heart, tried not to let fearful thoughts race through her head. Looking behind her, she hoped Micco was all right. She wanted more than anything to check on him.

Micco. Strange how in such a short time things seemed to matter so much more. She had a reason to live, to fight.

She quickened her pace, feeling a cold breeze whispering over her, smelling of salt. Seeing a man from the pit coming up the hall in the opposite direction, she asked, "Peter, what's happening?"

"We're taking on water," Peter answered. His hair dripped and his clothes were wet. "Protocol Twelve." Then turning to look back, he yelled, "Come on, Jack! We have to get to the top!"

Peter pushed over her as he passed. Cold water dripped on her arms. Jack was right behind him, saying as he moved by, "Stay out of 4A. It's underwater."

Rena nodded, continuing down.

\* \* \* \* \*

Micco knew he should head straight down to the pit. Reports had come into his lab that someone had tampered with one of the pressure control units. After locking down his section and his people, he ran the best he could up the sharp incline of the hall toward Rena's side of the base. This way he'd pass by her lab on his way down.

His heart hammered in his chest. Rena's name had flashed up on his screen as the alert went out. It was her three-month shift on safety patrol. Out of all the months when something could happen, why on her shift? She'd be the first one down there on the front lines—putting out fires, jumping into the black ocean depths, whatever was required. They all knew the stakes. They all knew they'd have to be ready to sacrifice themselves for the whole, should it come to that.

"Rena!" He pulled around the hall toward her lab, running along the wall. Reaching the door, he yelled again, "Rena!"

"You missed her," Darcy answered, pointing the direction that would take him down. "She left me here to lock up."

"Damn it," he swore, rushing after her.

\* \* \* \* \*

The base shifted, leveling out. Rena stopped moving. Water rushed over her boots, wetting her calves. Deep sea fish skittered past her, their ugly bodies flopping against the metal. She shivered, the cotton material not offering much protection against subzero temperatures. Her heart pounded. Even though she was terrified, she surged forward into the water. Something brushed by her ankle, but she couldn't see what it was.

"Don't bite me, don't bite me," she chanted softly, thinking of the sharp-teeth sea creatures they pulled from the depths. She forced her legs to move. The water rose to her upper thighs.

"Valve seven shut!" someone yelled.

"Valve seven," Gregory acknowledged. He stood on a platform just out of the water, coordinating their efforts.

"Valve six shut!"

"Valve six," Gregory repeated.

"Dr. Gates here!" Rena yelled. A violent shiver ran over her spine. Water flooded the lower level, lapping up against the walls. Mentally she measured where the pit would be in the room, not wanting to accidently fall through the bottom of the city into oblivion.

"Valve five jammed!"

"Gates, five," Gregory yelled.

Rena obeyed, her arms flinging as she pushed her way to help.

\* \* \* \* \*

Micco's heart skipped a beat as he reached the pit. The base swayed back and forth, making it hard to stand in the waist-deep water. Lights flickered.

"Hold on!" a man yelled to his right.

"Man under!" a female screamed to his left.

Micco headed left, scanning the room for Rena.

Finding a woman frantically swimming in the water, he dove in and began feeling around. Freezing water stung every inch of flesh. His hand hit hair and he pulled, dragging the downed man by the head. The water was much deeper when he surfaced and he had a hard time staying afloat.

The woman surfaced with a gasp. Micco pulled the drowned man up. She swam for them. "Careful, jellyfish."

"Take him up," Micco ordered. "I'll stay."

"Valve five," she said, before hooking her arm to help the unconscious man. "It's been tampered with. We can't stop the water."

Micco swam for valve five. A loud gasp sounded as someone surfaced. Instantly he saw Rena's face. Her brown hair was slicked back.

"Rena!" Micco went for her. "Get out of here."

"Can't," she gasped for breath. "I have to get the valve—"

"We need breathers," he said.

"They're damaged. Someone smashed them." Rena's eyes looked into his.

"Go up!" Micco ordered. "I'll get the valve."

She actually glared at him when he made a move to reach for her. Her lips were unnaturally blue from the cold. "I will not abandon...duty."

Before he could stop her, she went under. Micco cursed, swimming after her. Lights flashed beneath the surface. As Rena went toward them, a man pushed away and swam for the surface. She grabbed a crowbar wedged in the grates and started to pull. Not knowing what they were doing, Micco lent his strength to the task. His lungs began to burn and it became hard to feel his fingers.

Rena braced her feet and pulled. Suddenly, the grate gave, the metal shutters closing. The base pitched. The crowbar sliced through the water to the floor. Rena's body was flung back. Her arms flailed and her head hit a metal cabinet. Bubbles filtered past her lips.

Help came from the surface, going toward the valve. Micco grabbed his wife, pulling her behind him. His gut tightened. She wasn't swimming. He should have dragged her out of the water and made her go to safety.

Hold on, baby, hold on.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Come on, Rena. Look at me, baby."

Rena blinked heavily, hearing Micco's voice through a fog. The last thing she remembered was being underwater. Cool lips met hers and she automatically kissed the familiar press of her husband's mouth. He instantly pulled back.

Rena coughed, tasting salt water on her tongue. Suddenly, she sat up. "Five."

"We got it," Micco soothed. "You did it."

She gingerly felt the back of her head, moaning softly. A chill ran over her. They were in the corridor, just beyond the water. Relief flooded her at his words. "What the hell happened? Who would deliberately try to sink us?"

"Dr. Von Sibenthal," Micco answered. "The lockdown alert said he'd sabotaged the pit. They caught him."

"Darcy's husband?"

Micco sighed. "Davies believed her psychological profile indicated she'd be the best to handle him. He ordered the match. They really thought her presence would reel him in and give him focus. No one thought he'd go this far. The man was always eccentric. I guess he finally just lost it."

"And you didn't tell Darcy?" Rena tried to push to her feet.

Micco frowned. "Of course we told her." He stood, reaching for her arm. "You should take it easy. You didn't swallow any water, but you hit your head pretty hard."

"I need to help," Rena said. "I'm on duty."

"You did plenty. Now the mechanics will have to fix the damage." He pulled her against him. I'm not a clinician. We should take you to get checked out. You might have a concussion."

"The infirmary will have cases much worse than mine. Aside from a headache and frozen limbs, I'm fine as long as I stay awake." Rena touched his chest, letting him walk

her through the corridor. Several mechanics rushed by, heading toward the pit with their tools.

"Let's go home." Micco swept her up into his arms.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rena smiled as Micco set her on the floor of their home. As she pulled at her wet shirt, she heard the splat of his clothing behind her as he undressed. She pushed her pants off her hips, glad to be rid of the wet clothes, but still cold.

Turning, naked, she instantly went to Micco. A light moan escaped her as she pressed her cool body to his. Their lips met in a passionate embrace.

"I was so worried," he whispered against her mouth. "I saw your name on the safety patrol list and—"

Rena kissed him harder, cutting off his words. The slight taste of salt stung her lips. Her hands ran up his strong arms. She rubbed her naked, damp body to his, trying to generate heat. It wasn't hard. Whenever she was near him, her temperature went up a few degrees. Her pussy ached, needing the familiar fit of his cock.

He grabbed her hand and led her to the shower. Warm water rained down on them, heating them more. There was little room to maneuver in the tight stall, but they managed to soap each other's bodies. They slid together. Rena turned, so his chest was to her back. He rocked his hips into her, letting her feel the full length of his arousal. She pressed her hand on the slick wall and he pushed her tight against it. His cock slid along her folds, not entering her as he rubbed himself along her wet slit. The firm skin of his shaft massaged her clit. She needed more.

The water rinsed the soap. With a groan, she reached back and pushed at his hip, urging him to get out of the shower. He obeyed. She shut off the water and went after him. Naked, wet and warm, she pressed against him. Her hair stuck to her neck and cheeks.

He turned her, pressing her up against the hard metal. His hands cupped her ass, lifting her. Within seconds he was inside her, thrusting up, hard and fast. She gasped, tearing her mouth from his. Her body bounced as he fucked her. His face burrowed along her neck and he bit her flesh lightly. Hot breath mingled with eager moans.

With a growl, he gripped her, holding her as he turned. Her legs wrapped his waist as her arms wrapped his neck. He walked her to the bed, her body still impaled on his. Laying her gently on the bed, he used the new position to thrust more fully within her. He braced his feet on the floor as her legs dangled over the side.

Micco lifted above her and she loved watching the strong ripple of muscles beneath his flesh. Her body began to tense. He pumped harder. They were so close. She gasped, biting her lip as tremors racked over her. She came, hard, her pussy clutching him. Micco climaxed soon after, spilling himself into her.

Breathing heavily, he crawled next to her on the bed. They adjusted their limbs as he burrowed next to her.

"I love you, Rena. I've been fascinated by you since the moment I saw you. Tonight when I saw you in the water, I thought..." Micco paused. "I thought I'd never get the chance to tell you."

Rena turned, smiling in wonder. "You love me?"

"Why do you think I matched us together?"

"Genetics?" Rena cupped his cheek, stroking gently. "Orders?"

"When I ran your sequence, I only checked it against one other sample," he said. "So technically I didn't lie. We were a genetic match."

Rena chuckled. "I liked you the first time I saw you. I thought you were cute and sexy and—"

His kisses stopped her momentarily.

"It was only because I was so embarrassed by what happened in the bar that I didn't talk to you. It was my connection to the past." She ran her fingertips over his lips.

Michelle M. Pillow

"But I don't want to look back. I want to look forward, to a day when we can walk off this boat, sit back and watch the next generation rebuild what we lost. I love you too, Micco."

He grinned. "So I guess you lied."

"Lied?"

His grin widened. "You would sleep with me if I was the last man on Earth."

"You almost were the last man on Earth." Then, looking around, she added, "Or would that be the last man under water?"

Micco kissed her, his hands running along her body. Rena forgot everything but her husband. In that moment, nothing else mattered. Together they would help rebuild the future.

"I love you," Micco whispered.

"And I you."

The End

#### **About the Author**

Michelle M Pillow has always had an active imagination. Ever since she can remember, she's had a strange fascination with anything supernatural—ghosts, magical powers and oh...vampires. What could be more alluring than being immortal, all-powerful and eternally beautiful? After discovering historical romance novels in high school, it was only natural that the supernatural and romance elements should someday meet in her wonderland of a brain. She's glad they did, for their children have been pouring onto the computer screen ever since.

She is married (madly in love) and has a wonderful family.

Michelle would love to hear from you and tries to answer her emails in a timely fashion. That is, if the current hero will let her go long enough to check the computer.

Michelle welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her <u>author bio page</u> at <u>www.ellorascave.com</u>.

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