



*Scarlet Rose*

<sup>a</sup>  
**Taste** **OF**  
*revenge*

Karen Erickson



# A Taste Of Revenge

by

Karen Erickson

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A Taste Of Revenge

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## **Dedication**

To my posse—you all know who you are!



Like a bad car accident, Samantha Ellis couldn't turn away, couldn't stop looking at what was happening right before her eyes.

Her fiancé with his tongue thrust down the throat of a too skinny, too blonde floozy. The floozy's hand rested on her fiancé's crotch, stroking him to what looked like a decent erection. Right there in the middle of Samantha's *favorite* restaurant. Fate couldn't have handed her a crueler blow.

They were so wrapped up in each other, they didn't even notice when she cleared her throat or tapped her fingers on the back wall of the booth where they sat.

Finally, Tommy broke away from the blonde monster's lips and turned. His pale blue gaze met Samantha's, and his eyes widened. A surprised yelp squeaked past his lips, and he pushed the bimbo away from him with such force, she bumped against the back of the booth with a muttered, "Ow."

"Sam! What are you doing here?"

Samantha glared at the man she'd planned to marry. The jerk had been chiding her about her weight for months now, encouraging her to go on a drastic diet so she would look beautiful for *him* on their wedding day.

"Funny, I should be asking you the same thing." Her calm voice dripped ice with every word she spoke. The icy coolness hid the hot rage that whirled deep inside, making her want to scream in fury, tear Tommy's wispy, dark blonde hair out strand by strand, and pummel her fists on his chest.

After being with the man for three years, the last thing she expected to see was him wrapped around a cheap blonde, fondling her in the middle of a restaurant.

A month before the wedding, too.

When she realized she stood in a daze, she shook her head to clear the unpleasant thoughts. The busty woman had draped herself across Tommy again, who tried to extract himself from her but was not doing a very good

job. Samantha compared herself to the woman, so blonde to her own boring brown hair. A slinky dress accentuated every bit of the bimbo's curvy figure, and compared to Samantha's average build concealed by conservative work attire of black pants, pink cashmere twin set and a strand of pearls for crap's sake, Samantha felt like a dutiful *Stepford Wife*. Is that what Tommy really wanted? A flashy woman to show off on his arm?

The floozy smirked. In an instant, the hussy's pretty features turned ugly as she donned a nasty expression. She must have thought she'd just bagged the biggest pearl in the oyster.

Tugging at the engagement ring on her finger, Samantha pulled it off and threw the two carat rock. The ring bounced off the table, landed on the floor, and like a greedy bitch, the blonde went on the hunt.

"Sam, wait a minute." Tommy slid from the booth.

She turned and made her way to the nearest exit. Head held high, nose in the air, Samantha refused to look back.

What a jerk, what a bastard, what an asshole.

"It's over, Tommy," she called over her shoulder as she pushed open the front door.

"Lana doesn't mean anything to me," he insisted, close on her heels. "We just met and she threw herself at me, honest."

Tommy grabbed her arm.

Skidding to a halt in her heels, she turned and glared at his hand until he dropped it and held both out in front of him. "We're supposed to get married in four weeks, Sam. Come on, relax."

"Did you...fuck her?" Her mouth puckered as if she just sucked on a lemon. She *never* said the word fuck, not ever.

Tommy's eyes widened, his mouth dropped open in shock for the barest second before it snapped shut. Eyes turned to slits as his entire expression went blank. All of it reeked of guilt, giving her the answer she needed without saying a word.

"Never mind." Samantha started toward the parking lot.

He still followed, a pleading tone creeping into his



voice. "Sam, really, you're overreacting. I panicked, I got scared. I guess I wanted to sow one last wild oat."

"Oh, please." Samantha whirled. "I bet if I hadn't caught you tonight, you would've never told me. We would've just gone on our merry way with the wedding plans, me none the wiser. Who knows how many women you would've cheated with before you got caught?"

"Hey, that's not fair..."

"None of this is fair," she exclaimed.

Rage took control, and she couldn't help herself. She shoved him, pushing his shoulders as hard as she could. The move surprised him, and he stumbled back a couple of steps.

Tommy regained his footing, wiped the back of his hand across his mouth then rested his hands on his hips. "You can't accuse me of things I didn't do."

More than a few people were in the parking lot, or hanging out in front of the restaurant. Not that she cared. "Nice way to ignore what the issue really is, isn't it Tommy?"

"You wanna break this off?" He took a step toward her, his stance menacing, his face stern. "Go ahead, tell me it's over. Cancel this charade of a wedding, this sham of a relationship. You don't pay attention to me anyway. That's why I had to seek it from someone else. Someone who actually likes sex, a real woman who knows how to satisfy a man."

"I hate you," Sam whispered, tears springing in her eyes.

She didn't want to cry, didn't want to be the one who hurt. Would give anything to hurt him instead, fling words like weapons toward him, just like he did to her.

He flinched, and his mouth drew into a snarl. "I don't like you much either, bitch."

"Is everything all right here?"

Startled by the deep voice behind her, Samantha turned. Only a few feet away, clad in an elegant suit with arms crossed over his impressive chest, stood a man, obviously riding to her rescue. He glared at Tommy over the top of her head, and she heard his feet shuffle, as if backing up a few steps.

"Nothing wrong here, bro," Tommy insisted. "Just a

little lovers' spat."

The man approached Samantha and reached out to touch her arm with gentle fingers. One look into his warm brown eyes, and her heart started to beat faster. Her entire body tingled at his touch.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

She nodded, tried to speak but discovered her voice had left her.

The stranger turned to Tommy. "You should go."

"Gladly," Tommy spat out.

The click of heels on pavement sounded in Samantha's ears, and she spun around to find Lana watching them. Her gaze wandered over the man who stood in a protective stance in front of Samantha, something akin to interest sparkling in her overly made up eyes.

Tommy went to Lana's side, grabbing her by the arm. He turned to glare one last time. "Let's go, sexy."

"Okay, baby," Lana said in a simpering voice.

Anger bubbled inside Samantha as she watched the two of them walk away. It wasn't that she wanted Tommy, but the idea of being made a fool of threatened to overtake her. Damn it, she never got angry, always kept herself under control in all situations. She prided herself on her control. But this time, this moment— "Fuck you, Tommy Lawrence, and your cheap little slut!"

She stood rooted to the spot, shock paralyzing her. Tommy looked like he wanted to slap her, Lana only laughed, an ugly grating sound that made Sam wince.

"Did it feel good to get that out?" Amusement threaded the stranger's deep voice, and she glanced up and saw the hint of sparkle in his brown eyes.

Just like that, all the anger she'd felt at finding Tommy cheating on her evaporated. All she could see, all she could think about was this handsome man, watching her with heated eyes, making her shiver with delight.

She smiled. "Yes, yes it did." His brow furrowed, and he cocked his head to the side. "Samantha Ellis? Is that you?"

She stood straighter and studied him with as much concentration as he seemed to study her. How did this gorgeous, sexy man know her name? And how could she

ever forget *this* man? “Do I know you?”

He smiled a flash of brilliant white in the darkness of the night. “I thought it was you, but I wasn’t sure at first. You probably don’t remember me. Donovan Carter?”

The name sounded familiar, though she couldn’t really place his face.

“We went to high school together.” He shook his head.

Something about the way he cocked his head had faint memories slipping into her mind. “You were in band with me, weren’t you?”

He nodded with a killer grin. “Yeah, I hated band.”

“Me, too.” A giggle escaped her. “I finally dropped out after my sophomore year. I couldn’t stand that stupid flute.”

“I always thought you played well.”

She had made sure anything she did, she did well. At least she tried to. She had displayed a single-minded focus with everything. When she was sixteen, though, she wanted to be cool. Playing the first chair flute in band, in her teenage mind, was definitely not cool. The fact that he even remembered her in the first place touched her, made her feel like maybe she wasn’t as much of a loser as she thought she’d been. “I forget what instrument you played, sorry.”

“Saxophone.” Donovan rolled his eyes. “Couldn’t stand the thing. My dad thought I was going to be some sort of jazz great, something *he* always wanted to do. It didn’t happen.”

High school days were all coming back now.

Donovan Carter. So very tall and so very skinny, too skinny back then. His hair had been shaggy, wavy and a little wild. He’d worn thick glasses that he always pushed up his nose, and had a reputation as being a bit of a nerd. A little too smart, a little too quiet, and very shy. Quite similar to how she had been in school.

Her gaze wandered over him, taking in his broad shoulders, the masculine planes of his face. He certainly didn’t look like a nerd now. Oh, no, he’d grown into that six foot plus frame and filled out quite nicely. The glasses were long gone, his dark brown eyes with the fringe of thick black lashes downright sexy. No more shaggy hair

either. The cut was neat and stylish, with just enough waviness on top that her fingers itched to run through it, feel it curl around them.

*Hmm.* She'd just been dumped by her no good, cheating fiancé and she was already thinking about running her fingers through Donovan's hair, amongst other things. How good would it feel just to cut loose and throw herself at this man. So very tempting...

"So what do you do now, Donovan, since you didn't turn into the jazz great your father wanted you to be?"

"I actually own this restaurant." He pointed over his shoulder, his eyes never leaving her face. A proud smile relaxed his tense features, his lips softening. A very nice mouth that almost didn't fit his strong masculine features. Those lips were a little too full and an awful lot tempting.

"This is one of my favorite places to eat." She frowned. "Well, it used to be."

"What happened? Get bad service? Food wasn't what you expected?"

Samantha shook her head. "No, it's just-I found Tommy in there with that bimbo just now. I was picking up something to go because I had to work from home tonight and when I went to use the bathroom I saw him sitting there..."

She shuddered, not really wanting to recount that moment. Of course, she couldn't help but remember the skanky blonde wrapped around Tommy, her hand on his crotch, his tongue in her mouth.

The thought occurred to her again, how perfect it would be to screw Donovan Carter's brains out, to show Tommy the jackass that she didn't need him. Hadn't she recently read an article about revenge sex in the latest issue of *Cosmo*?

"I'm sorry." He reached out, patted her on the shoulder, his fingers lingering a moment before his hand dropped to his side. The heat of his touch remained, hot and comforting even through the fabric of her sweater. "That asshole doesn't deserve you."

His words, his touch startled her from her very wicked thoughts. He was a nice guy. She shouldn't use him to get back at her lousy ex fiancé. That wasn't her

style. "We were supposed to be married in a month."

"You should be glad you found out before you actually married the guy."

She straightened her shoulders, her gaze meeting his. He had beautiful eyes, warm and sweet. She bet he would never cheat on his girlfriend. Did he even have a girlfriend? "You're right. I *am* glad I found out before I married him."

Though calling all of her friends and family and telling them the wedding was off would not be easy. They would be so disappointed. Not to mention the money her father would lose in deposits.

What a mess.

"I can't believe he would do that to a woman like you."

The words were said in such a soft tone, Samantha was almost convinced she hadn't hear them. The warmth in his gaze though, and the curve of his lips indicated that yes, indeed he did speak. Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment.

"You don't have to say that to make me feel better, Donovan."

He shook his head, picked up her hand and offered a reassuring squeeze. "I don't say things I don't mean. I always knew you would go places, be successful. You know, I had a major crush on you back then."

"You did?" She couldn't help it, her voice squeaked.

He'd had a crush on her? No one had a crush on her back in high school. She'd lusted after the normal hot jocks that every other girl wanted back then, but they never paid attention to her. No one did. She didn't come into her own and start dating guys until she went to college. She was what her mother called a late bloomer.

More than anything she hated being called a late bloomer. It made her feel so...lame.

Donovan nodded, still holding her hand. "Oh, yeah. Our freshman and sophomore years in band, I'd stare at you from across the room, trying to think of a way to ask you out."

"No wonder you didn't turn into a jazz great," she breathed.

He chuckled. "You're probably right. You don't know

how disappointed I was when you dropped out of band. We never had a class together besides that one.”

“Why didn’t you ever talk to me?”

“I did, sometimes, but I said stupid stuff. You made me too nervous.” He smiled, making Samantha’s stomach flutter. “You still make me a little nervous.”

“I do?” She squeaked again, darn it. She didn’t think she made *anyone* nervous. Unless they were getting caught with their hand in the cookie jar, or, ahem, their tongue down the throat of a floozy.

Samantha really needed to push all thoughts of Tommy Lawrence out of her head.

“You want to go back inside, have dinner with me? It’s on the house.” He said the last part with a sexy little smile, and she suddenly wasn’t hungry for dinner anymore.

This had to be a good sign, that she had such wicked thoughts about a man mere minutes after she broke up with Tommy. A sign that her ill-fated marriage was never meant to be. “I did forget to pick up my take out...”

“It’s probably cold by now, but I’ll take care of it, don’t worry. Have dinner with me, Samantha. Please?”

She liked the way he called her Samantha versus her nickname, Sam. *Everybody* called her Sam. The shortened name made her feel like a guy sometimes, though she knew that wasn’t what they meant. Still, the way he said her name, the way his gaze roamed over her body, Donovan made her feel very feminine.

Shivers of excitement coursed through her body.

“All right.” She nodded. “Dinner sounds lovely.”

He smiled with relief, and she wondered if he thought she might turn him down. *As if.*

“Great.” Donovan offered his hand. “Let’s go inside.”

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Samantha loved Italian food, and Luna Trattoria had one of the best menus in the city. Besides the wonderful food, her favorite thing about the restaurant was the intimate atmosphere. Decorated in a Tuscan theme, the colors were earthy, the lighting dim but warm, and a three-tiered fountain bubbled in the center of the dining area. Cozy booths lined the walls and larger tables filled the floor, welcoming both large parties and couples.

Now that she knew Donovan owned the restaurant, she saw it in a whole new light. She couldn't help but wonder what kind of man he really was, what made him tick. The intimacy of Luna Trattoria, the superb service offered by the wait staff, the moderate prices and delicious food-every decision was Donovan's. She certainly had to respect him as a businessman, as well as a man with wonderful taste.

As he led her toward a table, she took the opportunity to admire his backside. He'd rid himself of his suit jacket when they entered the restaurant so she had a clear view of his ass. And what a nice ass it was. The custom tailored cut of his trousers only accentuated his long legs, his muscular thighs and of course, his firm butt.

Tommy had no butt. His pants always hung off him and made him look...butt-less. He'd called working out a "waste of time." And then he'd pat his naturally flat belly and pop another Cheeto in his mouth.

Why did she stay with him so long? Had she thought she didn't deserve better? Well, she could say for certain she deserved better than Tommy.

Determined to push her thoughts of her now ex out of her mind, she slid into the small booth Donovan chose in the corner of the restaurant. Once she settled, he slid in beside her. A lover's table, Samantha thought, heat flushing her cheeks, and she busied herself with the menu.

The back of the booth was tall, wrapping them in a moss green velvet embrace. The table was so small, their knees bumped as they shifted. The warmth from his body reached her, tempting her to slide closer to absorb his heat, but she held herself in check.

"This is the best seat in the house."

She glanced at him, noticed the way the candlelight from the table flickered over his face, casting him in shadows. The dim light made him look a little mysterious, even more handsome, and definitely sexy. "Why is this the best seat in the house?"

Donovan glanced around, checking the other tables before his gaze settled on hers. "We've got a terrific view of the lake behind us, the acoustics send the sound of the fountain right over here and no one can really see us,

though we can see them.” He smiled, and the sight stalled the breath in her throat. “I’ve caught more than one couple being rather, um, intimate in this booth.”

Her mouth dropped open. “You have?”

“Yeah. One couple I had to ask to leave because another customer saw them, but for the most part, I leave them alone.”

“What were they doing?” She couldn’t help herself, she had to ask. Just the thought of doing something so illicit in a booth at a restaurant turned her on. Especially when she thought of doing something illicit with Donovan.

Donovan had a certain appeal that her ex didn’t, made her want to do all sorts of naughty things to his body. Maybe it was his sensuous mouth, or the sexy gleam in his eyes. Maybe it was the gallant way he treated her, the sweet way he admitted his teenage feelings for her.

Whatever he had, she knew she wanted more.

He shrugged, looking mildly embarrassed. “Mostly kissing, though I did see a man undressing his date once; he was taking off her top. The couple I had to kick out, well, they were having sex.”

“In this booth?” She glanced around, trying to figure out the logistics. She pushed at the table a little, saw that it moved. If they shoved the table out a few inches and Samantha straddled Donovan, they could definitely have sex in this booth.

Okay. She needed to stop, right now. This was so not like her, thinking up ways to have sex with a man she barely knew. Well, she knew him from high school, but she didn’t really *know* him and certainly not enough to have sex with him.

A hot make out session in the booth with a very sexy man didn’t sound half bad, though. That article in *Cosmo* did say revenge sex was the best medicine to help cure a broken heart.

Funny though, the thought of having sex with Donovan didn’t feel like revenge. The sweet way he treated her, sharing his past crush on her when they were kids made her feel warm and fuzzy inside. Not vengeful at all.

“Yeah, in this booth.”

As he watched her, his eyes grew even darker, and



she wished she could just lean over and kiss him. Touch her lips to that sensual mouth and see if it was as soft as it appeared. "Wow. How...shocking."

Donovan cleared his throat and looked away, perusing the menu. "I don't even know why I'm bothering to look at this. Would you mind if I ordered for us?"

She shut her menu. "Of course I wouldn't mind. You are, after all, the owner. I'm sure you know what the best dishes are."

The meal he ordered for them didn't disappoint. The main dish was penne pasta with a light red sauce, tossed with shrimp, pancetta and red peppers, then baked with a sprinkling of three different cheeses on top. Grilled vegetables and homemade garlic bread accompanied the meal, along with a crisp California white wine. The flavors exploded on her tongue with each bite, making Samantha literally moan with ecstasy.

"Why haven't I ordered this dish before? It's like a little taste of heaven."

His gaze remained on her, following every movement of her mouth, right down to her tongue dabbing at the corner of her lips. She wondered if watching her eat turned him on. His breathing increased, and when their eyes met, there was no mistaking the arousal in his gaze. Hmm. Having him watch her eat certainly turned *her* on. "It's our best kept secret."

"It's like sex on a plate." She licked her lower lip, her voice dropping to a husky whisper.

He smiled. A slow, lethal grin. She couldn't help but wonder, yet again, if he had anyone special in his life. If he didn't, it was a crime. He was a catch and a half. "I've never heard our food described quite like that before."

"Well, it's true, and you can quote me if you want. Just give me credit." She smiled, feeling flirtatious. And why not? She had no one to answer to anymore, she was a free woman. "You're not married or have a girlfriend or anything like that, right?"

"No." He shook his head. "I'm single."

She breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness."

Donovan smiled, grabbing a small menu that rested on their table. "Did you save room for dessert?"

Their waiter showed up and took their plates from

them, but Samantha barely noticed. Her gaze was glued to Donovan, watching him as he smiled politely at the waiter. He turned his head, his eyes locking with hers and she pursed her lips, wondered what it would feel like to have his mouth pressed to hers. His gaze dipped, concentrating on her mouth, and his Adam's apple bobbed when he swallowed.

She knew then he wanted her.

"No, I'm not hungry for *dessert*." She left no question as to what, or who, she was hungry for. Her three glasses of wine were finally taking effect.

The wine and the unbearably sexy man beside her.

"All right." He set the dessert menu down and turned to the waiter who had just cleared the last plate from their table. "We won't be needing your service any longer. Thanks."

*Perfect.* She slid closer to him, trailed her fingers along the fine cloth of his shirt that covered his forearm. Wishing she was touching bare skin. "Very intimate don't you think?"

His eyes narrowed when her fingers snuck up to trace the angled line of his jaw. The faintest edge of stubble scraped her skin, and she imagined those slightly rough cheeks rubbing against hers. Brushing against the inside of her thighs. She wanted to touch him more, wanted to touch him everywhere.

His fingers wrapped around her wrist, stilling their movement. "Is it the booth?"

"What?" His question confused her already hazy mind.

Donovan glanced around. "I'm wondering if it's the booth that makes people do...crazy things here."

Samantha tugged, and he released her wrist. Her hand fluttered over his mouth, her index finger tracing the sensuous curve of his lower lip. "I don't know. All I know is all of a sudden I can't keep my hands off of you."

He studied her, his deep brown eyes searching her face, his soft lips parted. Deciding the hell with it, she gave in to the temptation and leaned in close, pressing a brief kiss to his mouth.

Liquid fire coursed through her veins, as if a dormant fire had roared to life out of no where deep within her

body. Electricity sparked between them the second their lips touched, a heat ignited, sweeping through her limbs, straight to her core. His large hands came up to cradle the back of her head, and she opened her mouth to his searching tongue. She gripped the fabric at the front of his shirt as their tongues met, teeth nipped. They drank from each other, oblivious to anything else.

"Maybe we could take this somewhere a little less...public?" Samantha suggested in between kisses.

Donovan licked a path up her neck, making her shiver with need. "I have a private office in the back."

His hand smoothed a path over her skirt, over her stomach to rest just beneath her breast. Her breath lodged in her throat, waiting for him to touch her where she wanted it most. She lifted her gaze to his face, startled at the look of unadulterated lust in his dark eyes. His were heavy with desire for her. She leaned in close, ready for another kiss, and then his hand closed over her breast, his thumb brushing against her distended nipple.

"Maybe we should go check it out." His hand moved to the hem of her sweater set, slipping beneath the smooth fabric to trace a path along the lacy edge of her bra.

"I'd love to see it," she practically purred, nibbling on her lower lip as his hand slipped beneath the cup of her bra, his thumb moving back and forth across her nipple. His touch played havoc with her mind, and she'd never felt so decadent, so free to do whatever she wanted.

And she wanted to *do* Donovan Carter.

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Donovan's office was small and sparsely decorated. A giant u-shaped desk took up an entire wall, and a small couch rested against the opposite side of the room. The couch looked plenty comfortable for what she had in mind.

"I can't believe this is happening," Donovan said as she slipped off her cardigan.

"What?" She draped the sweater over the back of a chair and turned to face him. The look in his eyes took her breath away, made her want to strip off all of her clothes and throw herself at him. Rub her naked body against his and see what he would do next.

"You and me alone together. This is like my teenage

fantasy come to life.”

That she knew of, she’d never been anyone’s teenage fantasy. The thought of him dreaming about her, fantasizing about her, masturbating to thoughts of her, all of it turned her on.

It *really* turned her on.

“Well we’re all grown up now, Donovan.”

“I’ll say.” His sensual mouth curved in a mouth watering smile.

She walked the few steps toward him, pressed her hands against his chest. The heat from his skin seeped into her palms, making her even hotter. “I want you to know that I don’t do—things like this.”

He watched her, his hands coming round to smooth up and down her back. “I don’t either.”

“And I’m not using you to console myself over my breakup.” At least, that’s what she told herself.

“Sure.” He nodded, though he didn’t sound like he believed her. But he must not have cared either.

Samantha didn’t know if that made her feel good or really cheap.

“For once I want to follow my instincts and do something I *want* to do versus what I’m *supposed* to do.” She meant that, too.

“I’m a big fan of following instincts,” he said just before his lips touched hers.

Just like that, his mouth consumed her, turning her blood fiery hot as it pumped through her veins. His hands slid down to cup her buttocks, pressing her against his erection, and she ground against him. Her sex was slick with want, her nipples hard little points brushing against the confines of her bra.

Amazing how quickly his touch consumed her, made her want more, all of him. They’d only been together for an hour or two, and already she couldn’t imagine turning this man away, not being able to sample him at least once. Though she wanted more, much more than a one night sampling. No man she had been with, and there really hadn’t been many, ever made her feel the way Donovan did.

His fingers inched beneath her top, skimming up to fiddle with the back clasp of her bra. “You’re wearing too

many clothes," he murmured against her mouth

"So are you." She yanked his shirt out of his pants, her fingers flying as she undid the buttons to reveal his warm smooth chest.

They undressed each other hurriedly, their mouths never leaving each other's as Donovan led her towards the couch. She fell back on the cushions, propping herself into the corner. Wickedly naked, Samantha ran her hands down her sides to rest at her hips, spreading her legs a bit to give him a peek.

He groaned, his knee resting between her legs as his gaze traveled over her body. "This couch isn't that comfortable."

"I'm okay." He thrust against her, propping himself on his hands above her and Samantha knew she would be okay anywhere as long as she had Donovan on top of her, his erection pressing urgently between her thighs.

"Yeah, but you're not six foot five on a short couch." He grimaced, trying to adjust himself and she couldn't help but giggle.

"We could go somewhere else, but I don't want to wait to fuck you," she whispered, surprised once again by her sudden urge to spout a word she'd never used before tonight.

But the primal look on his face was worth every word. Besides, it was true. She was desperate to have him inside her, thrusting deep. She wanted to feel his hands all over her body-his mouth, his tongue. She wanted it all and she wanted it *now*.

Before she thought too hard and chickened out.

He slithered down her body, his mouth burning a trail over her skin. He licked and nibbled her neck, rained kisses all over her chest, paid special attention to her breasts. His mouth and tongue eased the ache inside when he sucked on her hardened nipples, but only temporarily. She grew anxious, shifting against him, spreading her legs more to accommodate him, wanting him to take the hint. She couldn't breathe, couldn't think, could only focus on the heat building deep within her, consuming her.

He picked up on her signals, his hand moving to tease the curls covering her mound. A single finger dipped

inside, testing her, and she moaned at the tentative contact.

"You're so wet."

"Hmm, because I'm ready for you." Oh, yes she definitely was, ready to beg him for anything.

Donovan slid his finger further, gliding over her delicate folds, circling her clitoris. She gasped at the contact, closed her eyes and bit down on her lip. Her stomach clenched, tingles running down her spine, spreading through her sex, and already she could feel her orgasm start to build.

The delicious weight of his body, his warm masculine scent invaded her senses, made her dizzy with need. His fingers, so sure as they searched her depths, circled her clit, drew her closer to climax with ease. A monumental record for her, that was for sure.

He removed his hand and she grunted in protest. He got up off of the couch, and she cried out his name. "Where are you going?"

Donovan smiled and bent to retrieve his wallet from his pants crumpled on the floor. "We need a condom."

Samantha admired his naked body, his smooth assured movements. So comfortable in his skin, she found his confidence sexy. Refreshing. She'd never been comfortable parading around naked. Always afraid she wasn't thin enough, busty enough, perfect enough. Tommy had constantly berated her for her enjoyment of eating, telling her she could stand to lose a few pounds.

Yet again, she pushed thoughts of Tommy aside and concentrated on the man in front of her. The man with a giant, now covered erection. Goodness, the man was huge.

He settled himself above her, the look in his eyes hot, intent. She wrapped her arms around his broad shoulders, spread her legs wide and he eased inside her.

Samantha arched and closed her eyes for a moment, her body still, taking him all in. He filled her to perfection, his cock throbbing, buried so deep, and she opened her eyes.

Donovan watched her with the same kind of dazed fascination that she felt. "You feel—unbelievable." He started to move within her.

She closed her eyes on a hiss, unable to respond. The

intensity of his gaze, the solemn tone behind his words almost scared her. Too fast, too much for her to handle, considering the night she was having. This started out as revenge sex. So why did it feel like so much more?

They moved in tandem, Samantha wrapping her legs around his, allowing him to go even deeper. He groaned, arched into her, and she opened her eyes to watch him. His jaw clenched tight, his eyes closed, sweat beading his forehead. He looked like he was holding back, displaying a tight rein of control, and she reached up to touch his cheek.

He opened his eyes and smiled. She realized then she didn't want this to be a one time thing. She wanted more.

"Ah, Samantha, you feel so fucking good." Donovan shifted, moving deep inside her, then withdrawing almost all the way until the head of his cock teased her entry.

She clawed at his back, whimpering, begging for more without saying a word and he thrust forward, as deep as he could go.

"I'm close, Donovan. Go faster," she encouraged.

He pumped within her, the sound of skin slapping against skin filling the room, the scent of sex all around them. His motions were quick, his face strained and then he stilled for a moment, shouting her name as shudders overtook his body. His cock pulsed inside of her. She shattered at the force of his orgasm, her own making her limbs quake, her pussy throb. Their moans and gasps mingled as their bodies shuddered with the power of their mutual climax.

Samantha clutched him, their sweat-sticky bodies slippery. She didn't want to let go. Didn't want this magical moment to end.

She didn't want to think about the dreaded reality of tomorrow.

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The next morning, Samantha called in sick. She wasn't ready to face her coworkers, not ready to face the day to day routine. She'd gotten home late the night before—well, really earlier this morning. Her body still felt worn and deliciously used from the vigorous bout of lovemaking she'd shared with Donovan.

They'd never exchanged phone numbers when she'd

left, didn't even discuss getting together again. It was as if there was an unspoken rule that what they had just shared would never happen again.

Definitely not what she wanted, but she didn't know quite how to ask for what she desired. So she'd given him a kiss on the cheek and left.

Her cell phone had lit up all morning, her voicemail out of control. All of the calls had been from Tommy, begging and pleading to see her then yelling and demanding that he see her. She ignored all calls. There was no reason to see or talk to him again. The engagement was over. The wedding would be called off this week. She could care less if she never saw his face again.

When the doorbell rang later that afternoon, her entire body filled with dread. Samantha could hope it was Donovan on her doorstep. A tiny voice inside her head told her that was wishful thinking. She knew who would be waiting for her the minute she opened the door.

Deciding she'd better get the confrontation over with, she swung the door open to find Tommy standing there, his expression angry.

"Why won't you take my calls?"

She sighed, immediately turned off by his tone. "I told you it was over, Tommy. Please stop calling me and coming over."

"It's not over, Sam. I don't want it to be over. Can't you forgive me? I was angry last night and defensive. I felt like an ass because you caught me, and I acted out. Once I got home, I couldn't sleep because I kept thinking about how much I hurt you."

The tiniest flicker of guilt made her cross her arms in front of her. She refused to feel bad for what happened between her and Donovan last night. Because what took place in his office had been much more than sex.

"You should have thought about that before you cheated on me." Samantha glanced down at her feet, didn't want to see the expression on Tommy's face. She was too upset he had the nerve to show up at her place to even look at him. "What happened last night couldn't have come at a better time, if you ask me. It really cleared things up for me, helped me realize that this marriage



would never have worked. And for that, I'm thankful."

Tommy shook his head, and she recognized the determined look in his eyes. He wasn't about to give up without a fight. "I don't agree, Sam. We belong together. We've been together for so long I don't know how to function without you."

"That's just being too comfortable, using me as a crutch. You'll get over me real fast, trust me." She tried to close the door, but he stopped her, slapping his hand against the cool metal.

"I don't want to get over you yet, Sam. I love you. I want you to be my wife." He pulled her engagement ring from his jeans pocket and grabbed her hand. "I want you to wear my ring again. We can work this out, I swear. I'll go to couples therapy, I'll report in to you every ten minutes. I'll do whatever it takes to make this work."

She didn't want him to act this way, preferred his anger rather than his begging and pleading. "I don't know what to say."

Tommy slipped the ring on her finger and then squeezed her hand. "Just say you love me, Sam, and that you're willing to make this work. That's all I ask."

"Tommy, you know I'll always love you, but..."

Her voice trailed off at the sound of heavy footsteps on the walk. She glanced to her left, and her heart nearly stopped. Donovan stood there, a stunned expression on his face, a bouquet of vibrant flowers dangling from his hand. She wondered if he heard what she and Tommy just said. Dread filled her stomach, making her suddenly nauseous.

Tommy turned and sneered. "Well, if it isn't your knight in shining armor, ready to rescue you again? What's *he* doing here?"

Samantha withdrew her hand from Tommy's, her gaze meeting Donovan's. She shot him a pleading look, hoping he would understand, but his normally soft lips had thinned into a hard line. She turned to Tommy. "You need to leave."

"I'm not going anywhere," he said like the stubborn jackass he was.

Donovan threw the flowers to the ground. "Don't worry, I'm out of here." He turned and walked back

toward the complex parking lot.

Samantha started to go after him, but Tommy stopped her, grabbing her by the arm. "You're actually chasing after that dude?"

"Let go of me!"

"You don't even know him!"

"I know him well enough to understand he's a respectable gentleman who knows how to treat a woman versus a lazy, no good bastard like you!" She yanked her arm from his grip and hurried down the sidewalk, hoping to stop Donovan before he drove away.

Hell, she didn't know what kind of car he drove, and the complex she lived at was huge. Even in the middle of the day, the parking lot was packed with cars. Her eyes scanned the lot, looking for his tall form, and she finally spotted him behind the wheel of a black SUV driving toward the exit. She waved, but his expression was grim, his gaze pointed straight ahead. He didn't so much as look her way.

Samantha ran in between the parked cars out into the driveway, stopping right in the pathway of his speeding car. Tires squealed as he punched the brakes.

"Are you crazy?" He yelled at her through his half open window.

She stalked over to the driver's side, gripped the edge of the window. "Please don't leave. I need to talk to you."

"I believe," he spoke through clenched teeth and tight lips, "I heard enough back at your front door."

"What you heard and what was really being said are two different things."

Donovan glanced down at her hands clutching his window. "You're wearing his ring again. I think that says enough, don't you?"

She followed his gaze, saw the offending ring glinting on her finger and plucked it off in disgust, pocketing the rock in her jeans. She'd give it back to Tommy later. "He shoved it on my finger. I didn't agree to wear it. He wouldn't listen to me, just wanted to convince me that us being together is the right thing."

"And is it? I heard you say you love him, Samantha, but hey." He laughed bitterly, swiped a hand over his face in resignation. "Who am I to say anything? I was just a

revenge fuck. We barely know each other. I have no claim on you. I definitely don't have any business acting like a possessive boyfriend when we've only fucked once."

Samantha flinched at his harsh words but melted when she saw the raw emotion written all over his face. His jaw ticked, his mouth tight and his eyes wary as he watched her, waited for her to say something. "You weren't a revenge fuck, Donovan."

"So what? Are you trying to say last night meant something to you?"

"Yes. Didn't it mean anything to you?" Her skin tingled just thinking about all they'd shared, even though he was angry with her. Even though he was probably going to shut his window and hightail it out of there. She couldn't help the butterflies in her belly.

His eyes flared the tiniest bit. "That's beside the point."

"I don't think so. I knew what I experienced with you, I could've never experienced if I'd really been in love with Tommy. What we shared opened my eyes. *You* opened my eyes."

Donovan's expression softened. "Then why did you say you loved him?"

"I said that I would always love him, that's different. Like that distant cousin you have who's been a part of your life, but you never see him anymore. That's what I feel for Tommy. There are too many years we've shared for me not to feel that way at least a little bit. But I don't want *him*." Her voice broke, and for a second she was afraid she'd tear up. She didn't want to lose Donovan, didn't want him to leave her without at least giving her a chance.

"Who do you want?" His voice was soft, his gaze hopeful.

Samantha sniffed. "I want you, Donovan."

He smiled, and she felt like the brightest sun shone on her face, making her entire body warm. "I want you, too, Samantha. But we should take this slow, get to know each other, especially when you have a wedding to cancel."

"I have no problem with that."

Donovan leaned over, and Samantha stood on tiptoe.

Their lips met in the briefest kiss. A kiss she wished could go on and on.

“We need to get rid of your ex-fiancé,” he murmured.

Samantha sighed. “I’ll take care of him while you park your car.”

He settled against his seat. “You know, I was afraid you were just using me to get back at what he did to you.”

Her heart plummeted into her stomach for the briefest moment. “At first, I was. But Donovan, the connection between us is too intense for me to ignore. I would’ve come back for you eventually, once I got my life straightened out.”

“I’ll help you straighten out your life.”

Samantha smiled, leaned in for another kiss. “That’s what I’m counting on.”

It didn’t end up being revenge, but it sure was sweet.