



**REGINA
CARLYSLE**

Smokin'
ACE

C a r n a l R e u n i o n s

Smokin' Ace

A Carnal Reunions Tale

By Regina Carlisle

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Smokin' Ace

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and occurrences are a product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, places or occurrences, is purely coincidental.

*For Leigh, Tiffany, and Jess, funner-than-fun ladies who continually make me
laugh!*

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Chapter One

To: Choe@ChloeWells.com

From: SikorskiK@WIndiU.edu

Hello to all of Gracie's Girls, class of 1999. Once again, thanks to all of you for the flowers and phone calls after my aunt Gracie's passing last winter. You all meant so much to her, and to me.

As I'm sure you all know, our tenth college reunion is coming up soon. Since I now have Gracie's big rambling house all to myself, I'd like to extend an invitation. If any of you are coming back for the reunion, you're more than welcome to stay here, in your old rooms. Gracie quit taking in college students several years back, so there's no one here but me, and I'd love to have some company while I'm getting the house ready to put on the market. So what do you say? One last time as roommates? It would be great to see all of you again.

Hugs,

Karen

* * * *

Chloe shifted the strap of her purse more firmly on her shoulder as she pushed the blue plastic cart across the supermarket parking lot. She hadn't shopped here since her college years and that was a long time ago. Still, some things never changed. Such was small town life, and considering she still lived in a fairly small town, she understood the dynamic. People were warm and friendly here, even though she was a stranger in these parts now. She'd just driven into town in her compact rental car, and was on her way to Karen's house to get the party started, when she decided to stop here. Showing up empty handed wasn't her style. It wasn't fair for Karen to have to furnish snacks so Chloe stocked up on chips, dips, peanuts and plenty of soft drinks.

She'd snapped up a couple nice bottles of wine too. What the hell! How often did the seven of them get together anyhow?

Smiling, she rolled the basket up to the trunk and popped the lid. She'd just reached for a couple of sacks when a large, warm hand settled on her elbow.

"Hey, sweetheart! Let me help."

Gasping, she jerked upright and found herself staring into a pair of sexy, chocolate brown, very familiar eyes. The paper sack dropped from nerveless fingers and her hands flew over her mouth. Delight sped through her system, heating her blood and making her heart race in a frantic pitty-pat.

Michael "Ace" Banner stood grinning oh-so-seductively, his white teeth flashing as the sunlight caught and held in his dark, closely cropped hair.

"Ace! Oh my God! Oh, honey!" Unable to stop the forward motion, she launched herself into his big strong arms and squealed like a middle-schooler when he swung her up high against his chest and buried his face in her hair. Lordy! They'd been such an item throughout college. "It's been ten years. Can you believe it?"

Ace laughed and set her back on her feet. Standing there looking like sex on a stick with those long, strong legs encased in worn denim sent sparks of memory zipping through her head. Tall, broad-shouldered and strong with lean muscle, he'd been her ideal of *hotness*, and when he wasn't traveling with the WIU's tennis team, they'd been together both on campus and off. In bed and out of it. In those days, love had held her in its soft grip and Ace had been the center of her world.

Yep. A long time ago.

He settled his hand on her shoulder and negligently massaged the spot, sending the other hand into the hair at his temple. Chloe noticed it was lightly flecked with gray.

Ace shook his head. "Hell yeah, I can believe it's ten years. Lately I've been feeling every one of those years, too."

She sent her gaze over him and tried not to drool. Oh yes, the years had been more than kind to Ace Banner. The worn black Grateful Dead tee shirt he wore molded to the muscular mounds of his chest, and his jeans were faded in the front, seeming to cup his cock like a pair of loving hands.

Um. Yum.

“Doesn’t look like it to me,” she managed as the wind caught her blonde hair and whipped it into her eyes. Shoving it back with restless fingers, she wondered what this man she’d once adored thought of the way she looked now. The years definitely hadn’t been quite so kind to her. But then it was as if he’d seen her fears or read her thoughts.

His smile faded a little as he reached out and settled his broad palm on her cheek. His eyes softened before his thumb traced the faint circles she wore beneath her eyes as a constant reminder of what she’d been through. She carried a few extra pounds, the remnants of motherhood and birth along with those damn circles, her reminder of death.

“Are you tired, honey?” He asked. “I read in the newsletter that you lost your husband a few years ago.”

It had been two years but her eyes burned. “Um. Yeah. Car wreck.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Thank you. Scott was a great guy. I miss him.”

Ace went very still, studying her intently. “Are you doing okay?”

Summoning her brightest smile, she drew a breath and nodded. “Yeah. Gotta tell you though, being a single mother is hard. Never realized until I had to do it myself.”

He smiled slowly then kicked it up a notch. “No shit? A kid?”

“Alyssa. She’s four.”

“Bet she’s as gorgeous as her mom. Please tell me she got your sunny blonde hair and blue eyes.”

“We’re a team.”

Ace laughed. “Bet you are.” Finally, he reached into her basket and began settling the sacks inside her trunk. “Are you planning to feed an army here?”

“Just about. Gracie’s girls are getting together at the house and hanging out for the next few days. Didn’t want to arrive empty handed.”

“You going to be at the Welcome cocktail party tonight?”

“The one at The Ambassador? Yes, a bunch of us are going together. You?”

“Yeah, Dakota Reece and I planned to meet up there.” Dakota had been the love of her friend, Lily Sutherland’s life. Oh, wow. This was going to be a hell of a reunion considering Lily would be with her tonight. Hm. Interesting.

Her insides fluttered like a million butterflies had set up residence. Oh yeah. She wasn't dumb. She totally *got* that Ace wanted more time with her. All those flittery, bubbly feelings just served as a brutal reminder that her current life was a series of one grueling day after another, with no time for anything that smacked of romance or passion. The notion of hooking up with Ace had her pussy practically twitching with expectation. Her panties dampened and, damn it, she wanted to whimper.

Her life was currently a sexual wasteland, and here stood Ace, looking like a tall drink of water to her poor thirsty self.

Lame. Okay, she had to say something. "Sounds like fun. Um, maybe I'll see you there."

Ace moved in, caging her against the open trunk of the car. His sexy smile was so hot she almost melted into a puddle at his feet. He stretched one arm high, settled his hand on the open door of the trunk and wrapped the other arm around her waist to pull her close. Her nipples pearly and tightened the instant they connected with the front of his tee shirt. His belly rubbed hers and she felt his erection press insistently against the juncture of her thighs. Ace's gaze settled on her lips and focused. "You can count on it. You know, I don't think there's a day in the past ten years that I haven't thought of you at least once."

"Just once?" She'd wanted to joke and lighten the mood but her question just sounded all whispery and faint. She cleared her throat. "Sorry. Dumb."

"I'll tell you what's dumb." Ace moved close enough that she could feel his breath slide warmly across her cheek. "What's dumb is that I took off the way I did, thinking that somewhere along the way, I'd find home. I went on the pro tennis tour thinking I'd travel the world and maybe somewhere, I'd find my place and someone who gave a shit about me. Talk about dumb. I'd been holding home in my arms for the past four years and never realized it until I looked up one day and you were married to someone else."

Chloe lost her ability to breathe. Lust and love, and a crazy kind of terror caught her up.

His eyes went soft and heavy lidded as he lowered his head and took her lips, softly at first, and then with a hunger she hadn't experienced in years. His tongue swept along her bottom lip then sank deep into the depths of her mouth for a full tasting, and God help her, she returned his kiss with unexpected fervor that had her practically panting. His hand tightened and she drank the rough sound he made. Finally, he pulled back. His breathing was sharp and ragged.

“There’s not a dumb bone in your body, sweetheart. Matter of fact, right now I believe we’re thinking very much alike.”

He stepped back and closed the lid on the truck with a snap of finality before dragging his thumb along the length of her tingling, swollen bottom lip. “See you tonight, Chloe.”

The din of voices in the main ballroom of The Ambassador Hotel, the crowd, the music...none of it prevented her from feeling Ace’s eyes on her. For roughly the past hour, he’d stood across the room nursing a beer as he talked to Dakota Reece and a couple of other guys. Nervously, she smoothed her hands down the sides of her midnight blue Bliss Harper cocktail dress. Bliss was another of Gracie’s Girls who had her own line of clothing. It seemed only right to Chloe that she splurge on the hot little number. Earlier, Lily had assured her that she looked good enough to eat. Hm. Considering the way Ace kissed her in the parking lot, she didn’t think that was a problem.

But was she ready for a steamy little fling?

Was she ready for a man like Ace?

A shiver of awareness shook her as she recalled the way he’d brought her poor, tired body to screaming, aching life in the parking lot hours earlier.

The boy she’d known ten years ago was a man now, and one who knew what he wanted. Looked like he wanted her. But why? Thinking over what she knew of Ace Banner’s life, he’d traveled the world, first as a tennis player and then as a photographer well known for his dazzling sports photos. All the major magazines and new service agencies used his work. How was a small town nobody like her supposed to compete with the glamorous, exotic women he’d surely had spread out beneath him in bed?

With hands that shook, Chloe grabbed a cocktail napkin and a small plate, and picked around at the festive finger foods. It was a heck of a spread for sure, but she had no clue why she was there. Nerves had descended and any bit of earlier hunger evaporated as she felt Ace watching her. Then suddenly he was there. His hand settled at the dip of her lower back. A pair of warm lips settled near her ear for a soft kiss. Sensation raced over her neck and breasts at the feel of his breath on her skin.

“Ace!”

“Hey beautiful.” He flashed her a wicked grin. His hand stroked her gently before he stepped back to look at her. “Been waiting all night for a chance to talk to you. Figured I’d better make my move before these other single guys get any ideas.”

He handed his empty bottle to a passing waiter, grabbed another long-necked beer for himself and a glass of sparkling white wine for her.

“This okay?” he asked, holding the flute up for her inspection. “I assume you still don’t like beer much.”

She smiled. “The wine is fine. Thanks. Are you hungry?”

Next to her, he went quiet and she glanced up to see he’d gone perfectly still as his gaze took her in from top to toe. “You might say that.”

Chloe’s mouth went dry as she busied herself filling a small plate with shrimp and other goodies from the buffet, and then she followed his lead as they wound their way through the crowd of partiers to a small corner table that was thankfully unoccupied. Anxiety skipped through her belly and she struggled mightily to hide it. She was a woman who’d faced down bickering four year-olds or distraught clients with the ease of a Zen Master. She was tough.

Yeah, right.

With a mental eye-roll, she set down the plate and allowed Ace to pull out her chair. Rather than take a place across the small table from her, he sat next to her, so close she could feel the warmth of his rock hard thigh pressing against hers. He leaned close and settled his arm along the back of her chair.

Another song began to play and Chloe nervously glanced toward the dance floor, instantly spotting a number of her friends dancing. No one seemed at all uncomfortable meeting up with people they hadn’t seen in years. Maybe it was just her. The last time she’d danced had been when she and Scott had celebrated her birthday just before the accident. A long time ago.

“What are you thinking?” Ace leaned close and whispered the words against her ear, sending a rush of pleasure over her skin.

She shook her head and sighed, unprepared to share her memories of Scott. That had been *their* time. What she might share with Ace over the next few days would be something entirely new. With sudden insight, she realized that things were unresolved with this man who sat watching her as if he wanted to eat her with a spoon. If he wanted to dig into this a little deeper, then so be it. She was sick to death of being lonely and having nothing that was just hers.

She was tired of finding satisfaction in memories and a little motivation from her handy bedside helper.

“Nothing really.” Summoning her courage, she looked him straight in the eye. “You?”

Ace settled back to study her. “Mainly I’m thinking about how gorgeous you look.”

Chloe laughed. “What? This old thing?” Letting her laughter fade into a smile, she ran her hands over the silky dark blue fabric covering her thighs. “It is pretty isn’t it? Bliss designed it, and so I splurged a little. Most accountants-slash-moms-slash-small town girls don’t find many occasions to get all dressed up. I couldn’t wait to slip into it.”

Ace went still then reached up to snag a long curl. He wound it lazily around his finger, his hot gaze focused on her lips. “And I’d sure as hell like to slip you out of it.”

Her breath caught at his words, but then she realized this was Ace she was talking with. He’d always been a straightforward man. What you saw was what you got with him. Maybe that’s why their relationship had always worked. She was a much more careful person and prone to hide away in that protective little shell she’d built. Bottom line was, Ace had always made her laugh. If he thought you were wrong, he said so. If you looked pretty, he said it. She’d always loved that about him.

She flashed him a smile, dredging up her inner wanton. She wouldn’t see most of these people again after tonight. It was a freeing thing. Teasing him, she grabbed the knot of his tie, pulled him close. She pressed her lips to his chin and looked him straight in the eye. “You’re moving awfully fast, especially since you haven’t seen me for ten years.”

“Feels like yesterday to me, Chloe.”

“In case I haven’t said it, Ace, you are looking awfully good too. You’re even sexier now than you were then, and that’s saying a lot.”

A flash of heat simmered in his eyes along with a bit of surprise. She’d never been a forward person, and that naughty little imp dancing in her mind was tickled pink that she was stepping so neatly out of her comfort zone. It was about time.

Just then, she made the decision.

If she were ever going to have a hot, down and dirty affair, who better to do it with than Ace Banner, the man she’d never been able to completely forget? She’d return home in a few days but at least she’d go with the knowledge that she could feel something again.

Maybe it was time to make a memory or two.

Chapter Two

Ace watched the expression on her face change and felt his heart speed up to a frantic pace. Damn, but she was pretty. Always had been, but now there was a maturity about her, the evidence of heartbreak mixed with strength on her face. She was a delicate woman, soft and sweet, possessed of an inner calm that soothed him, but it was readily apparent she'd been through a lot. Hell, she was still going through it. A single mom raising a daughter, and a wife who'd lost a man she obviously cared for.

The flash of bitter regret he felt caught him off guard. If he'd played his cards right, he would've been the man who'd built a home with her and begun raising a family.

"You are my biggest regret, Chloe." Ace caught her hand and lifted it to press his mouth to her fingers.

A quick frown puckered her brow. "What do you mean?"

Releasing her hand, he sent his fingers into her hair to cup her head. "I never should've let you go."

Her pansy blue eyes widened incrementally then lowered to zero in on his lips. Lust zipped straight to his cock. Arousal rolled through his belly as his erection pressed painfully against the cotton of his briefs. He was hers, all hers, if she wanted him. Ace traced her high, delicate cheekbones with his thumbs. "I've called myself every kind of dumbass for the past ten years."

Chloe leaned close, the scent of her light perfume filling his head. Her lips grazed his teasingly. "Life's too damn short for regrets. Haven't you figured that out yet? Still, I figure you have a lot to make up for, big guy. Why don't we start now, hm? Penance maybe? Penance for leaving me behind instead of taking me with you. What do you say, Ace? How about I show you what you've been missing?"

He might've been a fool once before but no longer. No longer was he a wet behind the ears pup. Right now, the sweetest dream of his life was looking up at him with a sexy eat-me-up

smile and he was going to take advantage. Ace grinned at her and stood to take her hand. Not caring about the crowd that seethed around them, he drew her up and wrapped her in his arms. “Yeah, how about it?”

Settling his hand at the tender dip of her back, he pulled her close and pressed his lips lightly to hers. Her breasts settled seductively against the front of his shirt, making his fingers practically itch to palm the firm mounds. She was lush and curvy and more woman than he’d ever held in his arms before.

She was perfect. At least, perfect for him. She always had been.

“Let’s go,” he whispered against the shell of her ear. He grabbed up a beaded black bag that was too small to hold a damn toothpick and pressed it into her hands. As he propelled her toward the perimeter of the crowd, she tossed him a quick frantic look over her shoulder. “Second thoughts?” he taunted with a grin.

Her curls bounced as she shook her head and firmed her rounded chin. “Uh-uh.”

Ace laughed. “Good girl.”

He led her from the crowded ballroom, relieved to find the hallway leading to the elevators abandoned. With lust riding him hard, he pressed the elevator button, delighted again when the doors slid soundlessly open. Ace hurried her inside, hit number 10, and the instant the car began to move, he pressed her against a mirrored wall and took her mouth.

Hunger ripped through his belly as he plunged his tongue into the warm sweetness of her mouth and sent his hands on a slow tour of her lush curves. Unable to resist a second longer, he filled his hands with Chloe’s full breasts. Her nipples, hard and delicately puckered, pressed his palms. With aching tenderness, he pulled and plucked them before scraping his thumbnail over them to tease her further.

Chloe made a soft little sound and jerked away from the kiss, panting softly. “Wait! We can’t.”

Ace settled his mouth on her jaw and spoke against it. “Why the hell not?”

“I’m an accountant for God’s sake,” she gasped. “We’re the most boring people on the planet. We’re in an elevator, for cryin’ out loud.”

He had to laugh. He released her breasts and sent his hands under the silky fabric of her dress, snagged her behind the knee with his forearm to lift her leg high and open. “Ah, but I love a practical woman. Warms my heart. Makes me hot. Didn’t you know that about me?”

“You’re bad. Bad. Bad. Bad.”

Ace nipped her throat. His other hand reached down to find the flesh of her belly. “Uh-uh, honey, I’m good and it’s about time I refreshed your memory.”

“Sassy man.”

“Ah babe, you’re killin’ me. Men aren’t sassy.” He plunged his fingers into the front of her itty-bitty panties. Her pussy was soaked and Ace groaned in response as he dragged his fingers over melting layers of heaven on earth. Finding her clit hard and swollen, he took it between his fingers to gently tease. “Oh, hell. Okay, I’ll be sassy if you want me to be. I’ll be anything you damn well want. Anything.”

“Ace.”

As he teased and plucked her swollen clit, she writhed against the wall of the elevator. “We’re almost there.”

“Yeah, oh God.”

“No, I mean, we’re almost at my floor,” he whispered. “No time, no time. Come for me, sweetheart. Come now.”

He flicked her clit with his thumb and felt the rain of her passion dampen his hand. Sweat beaded his brow but he didn’t give a shit. He wanted to feel her come, hard and fast.

Chloe went still against him. Ace increased the pressure and when her mouth opened on a gasping breath, he kissed her, drinking her cries as she came apart in his arms.

With a little ding, the door slid open. Ace lifted Chloe in his arms and carried her down the dimly lit corridor. God, he loved the way she burrowed into him, wrapping her arms around his neck. Her breath played over his ear and he swore roundly. If he didn’t get inside her soon, he thought he’d die. He was ready to blast off like a rocket and, oh hell yes, he wanted to be inside her when he came. When they reached his door, he reluctantly set her on her feet and reached into the breast pocket of his sport coat for his key. His hands were shaking and he hoped like hell she wouldn’t notice.

Cool air swept from the room the second the door was open and he wasted little time ushering her inside.

Ace watched Chloe shiver. She wasn’t the kind of woman to easily jump into bed with just anyone and her nerves were unmistakable. He wasn’t vain enough to imagine she was still

shivering from the orgasm he'd just given her. Hoping to head things off at the pass, he took the elegant black evening bag from her hand and tossed it onto a small table.

“Look at me, honey.”

Chloe turned and mustered up a heartbreaking smile. “There’s been no one since Scott,” she said simply. Tears swam her in eyes. Emotion threatened to bring him to his knees.

He went to her and settled a hand at the side of her neck. “He loved you, didn’t he?”

“Uh-huh.” Her voice broke over the response and his mouth went dry.

“Then he would want you to be happy. He’d want you to have a life.”

“Yeah. He would.”

“Why don’t you start it tonight? With me?”

She laughed softly, a little breathlessly, and Ace felt his heart turn over. “A good plan. Why don’t you come closer?”

Ace didn’t need to be asked twice. Giving his tie a yank, he shrugged out of his jacket and tossed it, along with the tie, on a chair then reached for her. With unerring accuracy, he reached behind her to find the back fastening of her dress. He unzipped it, drew the miniscule sleeves over her shoulders and sent the garment down where it landed in a puddle around her ankles. Bending down he lifted one foot then the other, tossed the dress aside and then went to work on her heels.

Once he was standing again, he looked his fill at the vision she presented. “Lordy woman! Your body ought to be outlawed,” he whispered. His breath caught and held. Gone was the shy awkwardness. Gone was any hint of a woman unsure of how to go about this whole relationship and sex kind of thing.

Black lace covered the mounds of her breasts, allowing him only a teasing glimpse of her pale flesh and the lacy little scrap of fabric that passed for panties made his mouth water for a taste of the secrets they hid. “You are beautiful.”

Ace didn’t want nerves to interfere with his plans. He moved in to stake his claim, cupping her breasts, kneading them lightly. His thumbs swept her hard nipples then scratched lightly. Chloe’s head dropped back on a whimpering sound. Replacing his thumbs with his teeth, he raked them over the distended tips, knowing the abrasion of the lace would feel delicious against her nipples. Finally he opened his mouth over her, sucking through the fabric. He filled his hands with her luscious ass.

A thong!

Damn but he loved those things!

Her flesh was firm and warm, making Ace's cock pulse. He moved in closer to kiss her with barely restrained hunger and pressed his erection to her hot little pussy. Kneading her ass, he moved his finger through the shadowy cleft then lower to prod her opening. "You're so sweet and wet, Chloe. I love how drenched you are."

His touch must've flipped a switch inside of her because her arms went around him, one leg lifted to settle around his hip. Slowly, he dipped one finger and then two deep into her pussy. Her little cry of pleasure threatened to send him careening.

"Gotta take the edge off, darlin'," he breathed against her neck. "Later, slow. Now, fast."

"Yes. Fast is good. I like fast."

With her quick acquiescence, Ace snagged the top of her thong then pulled it down and off her body. The lacy little bra went next. Hunger tore through his belly as he latched onto a hard pink nipple and sucked it. His fingers found her center, loving the way her cream coated them. Chloe's hands went into his hair and Ace thought he'd lose it then and there. Releasing her nipple, he reached for the bedding and yanked it down, hoping like hell he didn't come off like some kind of wild man.

Yeah, wild man.

That was exactly how he felt right now.

Expectation, hope and lust all mixed together, bursting through him as he gathered Chloe up and laid her on the bed. She looked like a virgin sacrifice spread out, pale and naked, on the sheets blinking up at him.

"Wanted to take my time, honey. I really did," he said as he tore at the buttons on his shirt and flung it aside. When he reached for his belt and the zipper of his slacks, Chloe surprised him by sitting up.

"Wait! Let me."

Ace drew in a sharp breath the moment she stroked her fingers over his sides and down his belly. His balls drew up tight against his body. And then she unfastened, unzipped and anticipation caused her heart to race in his chest. Breath choppy, billowing from his lungs, Ace closed his eyes when her mouth met his flesh. Her tongue swept out, her teeth nipped.

Damn!

No longer willing to wait another second to claim her, he stepped back and bared himself to the skin. His aching cock rose high and hard. He imagined Chloe's mouth on him, swallowing him whole, when suddenly she held it in her firm grasp and settled her damp lips against his throbbing cock.

"You're so hot, Ace. Even more gorgeous that you were before." Her voice whispered over his cock and he fought to stifle a groan as sensation zipped wicked fingers over every hard inch.

Ace sucked in a breath, sinking his fingers into her soft curls. Her tongue swept his shaft, tasting him, and he suddenly wondered if he'd ever felt anything so good in his entire sorry life. He watched her mouth work him, felt her fingers reach around to dig into his ass to pull him closer. Pleasure threatened to send him to his knees. When she tenderly cupped his balls he gave up all pretense of composure.

"Enough!"

Fisting his hands in her hair, he drew her head back. Her lips were swollen and moist-looking, her eyes dazed with pleasure. "Let me finish you, Ace. Please."

"You're killin' me, honey." He shook his head, pressing her back against the sheets. "Your turn."

"Ace!"

"I'm gonna eat you, Chloe. I've always loved the way you taste."

She'd waited two long years for a man to touch her with love and desire, and by God he was that man. It was time sweet little Chloe began to live again. Him, too, for that matter. He was damn sick of waiting for his life to really begin. He wanted her now. Fast, hard, deep. Hell! Any way he could get her.

Reaching down he parted her thighs and lifted her knees over his shoulders. He bent his lips to her pussy, and using his thumbs, parted her labia to expose her completely to his gaze. Chloe's delicate pink folds were shiny with moisture and unable to resist, he swept his tongue over her soft flesh.

Chloe gasped and the sound spurred him forward as he ate her pussy with determined licks and nibbles. Stiffening his tongue, he stabbed it deep and repeatedly into her clenching channel before finally taking her swollen clit into his mouth to suck gently. He squeezed the

cheeks of her ass, pulling her closer and then dipped his fingers into her pussy, loving the way her vaginal walls pulsed around them.

The soft, little sounds Chloe made nearly drove him nuts.

Finally, he felt her body go still. She tightened. Carefully crooking the fingers buried deep in her pussy, he lightly rubbed the sensitive spot behind her pubic bone and Chloe cried out. He sucked her clit harder and her cry rose a decibel as she came against his lips and tongue.

Ace rose up, snagged a condom from the top of his bedside table and tore the wrapper open. Keeping eye contact with the dazed love of his life, he gritted his teeth as he rolled the condom on, protecting them both.

“I’m crazy about you, Chloe. Do you know that?”

He didn’t give her time to respond but looped his arms beneath her knees and plunged deep and hard.

Heaven!

Dear God, it was heaven and it was good to know He actually answered prayers sometimes.

“You’re so tight, sweetheart. Damn! I could fucking fuck you all day and never stop. Got that? I’d never stop.”

“Don’t,” she whispered. “Don’t ever stop.”

“Not deep enough.” He moved incrementally, feeling her tighten around him. “Hell, yes. That’s better.”

“Ace? Ace!”

The taut sound of her voice alerted him, as did the way her body milked his cock. Plunging harder, ramming deeper, he fucked her until she stilled, stiffened, and flew apart with a ragged cry. It was too much. Pleasure raced from the heels of his feet, settled in the base of his spine and ran teasing fingers over his balls. His cock seized as he came, pulsing hard and strong into the fragile latex barrier.

With a sigh, he rolled to her side and gathered her close against his body. Replete, more than satisfied, he settled his lips on her forehead and let himself fall deeper into love than he’d ever been before.

Chapter Three

Steam curled from the oversized tub in Ace's room. Leaning back against his sturdy chest, Chloe felt suddenly different and new, as if all possibilities were open to her again. For the first time since, Scott's death she whole, complete.

Ace smoothed warm water over her arms, chasing the drops with his hands. He pressed a kiss to her shoulder, then her neck, the touch of his breath sending sensation down the length of her arms.

"You're amazing," he whispered. His hands moved to cup her damp breasts. Lightly, he thumbed her nipples, stroking them to throbbing life. Lust curled low in her belly to settle in her core. She was deliciously sore but obviously not so much that she wouldn't welcome another long, slow fucking from the man she'd never been able to forget. "I think I knew even ten years ago that you were special. You're even more so now."

"Hm. Time for revelations, I see." Chloe rolled her head against him, loving the feel of his strong chest muscles against her back. She looked up at him. "Can you answer a question, Ace?"

"Yeah."

"If I was so special to you back then, why did you break things off and leave me? I was crazy about you. Madly in love, and then, suddenly it was over and you were gone."

Ace shook his head then dropped it back to rest on the back of the tub. Drops of water clung to his thick, dark lashes. "You knew where I came from, Chloe. You were the poster girl for the all-American family and I came from poor white trash."

She gasped. "Don't say that."

"It's true and you know it." Ace laughed bitterly. "My ability to play tennis and the scholarship that came with it was the only reason on God's green earth I could've gone to college in the first place." He opened eyes that were swimming with emotion. "I never quite

thought I was good enough. Hell, I don't know. Maybe I thought that if I joined the pro tour I'd become some kind of star and I'd finally deserve you."

"I can't believe you thought that."

"Looking back, I can't believe it either." He pressed a kiss to her forehead. "I was young and made the wrong choice. And then I was injured and hell, I knew my career was over. It was going nowhere anyway. Bottom line, I never was good enough."

"Oh yes you were!"

Ace laughed and Chloe heard the genuine humor in his voice. "That's what I love about you. No one is more loyal." He cupped her face, his laughter fading until only a slight smile remained. "Sweetie, I was good but never great. I'm okay with that. I have no regrets about that part of my life. My education was paid for, I saw a lot of the world and discovered something I was truly good at."

"Your pictures?"

"Yeah. I was injured so often that many times, I'd run around with my camera shooting pictures of the truly great players." He shrugged. "I love it. I happen to make a pretty good living at it now."

Chloe stretched up and pressed a kiss to his lips. "I don't think I've had a chance to tell you how proud I am of you. You've made a good life for yourself. How do you like living in California?"

"I love it. Have you ever been to San Francisco?"

She shook her head. "I've seen pictures. It looks beautiful."

"Would you come out to visit? You could bring, Alyssa. She'd love it."

Hope and fear mingled inside her. Chloe caught her breath. Sincerity filled his dark eyes. Oh God! She was falling in love with Ace all over again. But could it work after all these years apart?

"What do you see happening here, Ace? A future for us?" Her heartbeat sped up and she turned in his arms. She kneeled in the water between his legs, terrified to believe her dreams could come true. Lordy, he was gorgeous. Long, lean and ripped with muscle, and she knew she could spend the rest of her life looking at this man. His cock rose up beneath the water and Ace's eyes went dark with lust.

"Don't you?"

“Yeah,” she breathed, reaching out and filling her hands with his erection. Ace moaned low and she smiled as she drew her hands over his length. “Maybe we should double check our compatibility though. What do you think?”

Minutes later, they laughingly dried each other, touching and stroking until, passion riding them hard, they raced naked back to the bedroom. Ace grabbed her up and swung her through the air until she squealed. Finally, they fell together on the rumpled sheets, a mass of entangled limbs, until Ace loomed over her, grinning.

“Wait a minute, big guy,” she said, giving him a little shove. Once he was on his back, she grinned down at him. “You aren’t going to call *all* the shots in this relationship.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it. This is a partnership all the way.”

“Keep that in mind,” she said, practically purring as she straddled his torso. Her damp pussy pressed down on his hard cock, making her catch her breath as pleasure flashed through her center to curl low in her belly. Rocking her body, writhing over him, she closed her eyes. “Touch my nipples. They ache.”

He took her nipples, squeezing them lightly, rolling them. Finally he came up on his elbows and took one in his mouth to suck.

“Yes, Ace. That feels so good,” she breathed. “Harder. Yeah, like that.”

Passion spurring her movements, she drew her pussy over him repeatedly until she couldn’t stand the torment a moment longer. Gasping for breath, she was surprised when Ace moved her from his body and stacked the pillows against the headboard. He sat back against them and brought her close again. Positioning her legs on either side of his body, he raised and bent his knees as she slowly impaled herself on his cock.

Pleasure spiked sharply as she lifted then lowered over him. Every nerve ending sat up and screamed as he used his heels to lift himself and meet each downward stroke. Nothing had ever felt more right, and then Ace bent his head to take her nipple. Using his teeth and tongue, sucking hard, he increased her pleasure to astronomical heights. Tingles cruised along her scalp and her nipples tightened against Ace’s tongue.

Chloe drew her hands over the warm strength of his broad shoulders and over his neck, before sinking her fingers into his dark hair. The thick strands curled damply around her fingers and she buried her face there, holding him close as he fucked her, sucked her, brought her to heights she’d never felt before, not even with Scott.

And then all thoughts of her old love flew from her mind as her new love increased the speed of his thrusts. She met every pumping stroke, rotating on his cock until each pass brushed her swollen clit. Again and again, they moved in perfect point and counterpoint, until finally, Ace reached between them to lightly pitch that tormented bundle of nerves. Crying out, lost in an orgasm that sent light and color swimming through her brain, Chloe clung to him.

Ace released her nipple then took her mouth. He cried out too as they spun out of control. Together.

A week later, back home in Texas, she sat curled at the end of the couch with the phone pressed to her ear. She'd been chatting with Lily for the past thirty minutes. Once they'd reconnected again at the reunion, they'd parted with hugs and laughter, each promising to stay in touch. So they had.

Chloe picked at the frayed hem of her cutoffs and sighed. "Yeah, I'll tell you the minute I hear from him. I've talked with him a couple of times since the reunion, but honestly Lily, I just don't know. Maybe he'll change his mind about the whole relationship thing."

"Never," Lily answered on the other end of the line. "He loves you, sweets. I know it."

Chloe laughed. "You have to say that. You're my best friend."

"Yeah, well, your best friend would never lie to you either."

Once she was off the phone, she looked down at the floor where Alyssa was busily stacking odd shaped, multi-colored blocks. "What'cha buildin', cookie?"

Her four year old looked up and frowned. Her white blonde curls were tangled and needed a good brushing. "A castle. Can't you tell?"

She cocked her head and considered the project. "Oh yeah. I see it now! That's cool, sweet pea. Now listen, why don't you get all this stuff picked up. Grandma is going to be here in two shakes."

"Think Grandma and Grandpa will give me some iiiice cream? Or popcooorrrn?" Alyssa drew her words out dramatically and widened her big blue eyes. Yep. A diva in training.

Laughing, she stood and helped her daughter load the blocks into a plastic shopping cart. "Knowing your Grandpa, you'll have both," she said, mentally rolling her eyes. Her folks spoiled their only grandchild like crazy.

"Will they let me watch movies all night long?"

“Uh-uh, doll. Not a chance, and don’t even suggest it.”

Just then the doorbell rang and they both looked up. “That’s Grandmaaaaa,” Alyssa cried running for the door.

Chloe smiled and dumped a half dozen more blocks into the cart then looked up at the sound of a masculine voice. Frozen in the act of pushing her hair out of her eyes, she saw Ace standing on the other side of the screen grinning at her daughter. “You must be Alyssa,” he said.

“Hi. I’m not s’posed to talk to strangers.”

“Good idea, munchkin.” He looked up and gave her a sexy grin. “I figured she’d be the spitting image of her beautiful mom. I was right. Hi, Chloe.”

Her mouth went dry at the sight of him, but she finally gathered her wits enough to invite him in. Just looking at the man made her brains fly right out of her head.

Once he was seated and introductions had been made, she watched him chat it up with her talkative daughter. It was actually fun watching them interact because, damn it, if she ever chose a man, it would have to be someone who was suitable for *both* of them. She and Alyssa were a package deal, after all. But as she watched the two of them together, she realized she had nothing to worry about when it came to her daughter. Alyssa didn’t really remember her dad. She’d been too young when they’d lost him. She was open and cheerful and accepting of people, and she’d obviously taken to Ace, who was busy pulling a quarter right out of her ear, much to her daughter’s fascination. Alyssa’s giggles mingled with his heavy masculine laughter and Chloe thought she’d melt into a big happy puddle on the floor.

Roughly thirty minutes later, her mom had picked up Alyssa along with her bright red *Hello Kitty* suitcase and they’d headed out the door for the pre-arranged sleepover. Chloe closed the door behind them and leaned against it to look at Ace.

“You were a hit with my daughter,” she whispered.

Ace stood and held his arms out to his sides. “Hey, what’s not to love?”

And wasn’t that just the plain truth?

Emotion wrapped around her heart and squeezed tight. A pulse pounded in her throat as she swallowed. “So, um, what are you-?”

“Doing here?” He stalked toward her and pressed her to the front door. “I missed you. When I realized that I couldn’t get through fifteen seconds without thinking of you, I knew I had to hop a plane.”

His mouth found hers. His kiss was full of passion, hunger, and homecoming. She loved him so much in that moment that tears burned behind her eyes. Clinging to him, she wrapped her arms around his back, noting the way the muscles bunched beneath the touch of her hands. His tongue swept deep and she returned his kiss with an abandon she'd only ever felt with him.

Ace wore faded jeans, and his hard cock pulsing behind the fly caught her immediate attention when he pressed himself to her front. Slowly, he rocked all that luscious hardness against her pussy and the feel of it was so delicious, it dragged a low moan from her throat. As he dry fucked her against the door, Ace settled his lips against her ear. "I couldn't. Stay. Away. God help me! You were with me in my heart every second, Chloe."

"Ace!" she whispered. "Oh, honey."

He bent his knees as he rocked against her again giving her more over-the-top friction. Her knees felt like jelly and it was a miracle her legs could hold her upright. Then suddenly, standing wasn't an issue as he lifted her up and looked around the room. Dark eyes filled with lust and hunger, searched every doorway. "Where is it?"

She didn't have to be told he wanted to find the closest bed. "Through that door and to the right," she gasped. Clinging like an eel, she held on, her legs wrapped around his waist, her pussy pressed tight against his belly. He carried her until she smelled the scent of lavender that permeated her bedroom. She'd shared this room with Scott, but that had been a million years ago and she was ready to live again.

Then before she could draw another breath, she was flat on her back on the bed gazing up into his hard, hungry eyes. He cursed low, a muscle flexing in his jaw, as he concentrated on unsnapping and unzipping her shorts. In a flash, he had them off.

"This is what I want. The sweetest pussy on the planet." He traced her slit with a long finger. Her panties were so wet it was hardly a barrier to his touch. Bending low, he sucked her distended clit through the silky fabric and her back bowed as sensation raced through her center. Ace pushed her tee shirt up, baring her belly, and splayed his hands across it. Odd how pale she was when compared to his darkness. And then his teeth scraped her clit delicately and all thought fled her brain.

Finally, he dragged the tiny panties down her legs and reached for her tee shirt. When she was naked and displayed for him, he whistled low. "Damn, I'm lucky."

"Bout to get luckier," she gasped.

With a groan, Ace kicked out of his shoes and jeans and pulled his polo shirt over his head. Chloe's mouth watered at the sight of all that lean muscle and rangy strength. He bent to pluck a condom from the pocket of his jeans and without another word, rolled it on. He went still, his eyes dark and teeming with some unnamed emotion. Lust practically rolled from his body to hers. Chloe shivered.

Ace leaned forward and came toward her on the bed. Chloe panted and shook, but managed to scoot backward until she was supine in the middle of the bed. Grinning at her, Ace snagged a couple pillows, flipped her over and shoved them beneath her belly until her ass was basically up in the air and very much on display.

"Um, not very dignified," she managed.

Behind her, Ace laughed darkly. "Fuck dignified. I love your ass."

She opened her mouth on a retort but it died on her tongue when his big hands settled on her butt. The slow massage began simply enough but then his mouth joined in the play. Awareness rolled through her pussy and she was suddenly drenched from the force of her passion. Her inner thighs grew wet. Ace drew her legs apart and sent his fingers over her slippery flesh. "Ace! Take me, Ace! Please!"

"Shhh. You're so wet. Let me touch you. Give me a minute."

He opened his mouth over her pussy from behind as his hands continued to play over her the base of her spine and her ass. When he stiffened his tongue and buried it deep in her vagina, Chloe whimpered, helplessly backing up against his mouth, needing more. Ace thumbed her clit as he fucked her with his tongue. It was too much. She felt vulnerable, completely at his mercy.

And she wanted more.

When he drew her clit into his mouth to suck, she came with a shudder. Shockingly, she went over the edge once more and when a low sound broke from her throat, she felt the broad head of his cock breach her. Sliding deep and hard, he filled her up. Quivering vaginal muscles clasped him and Ace's answering groan shook her. She could spend the rest of her life giving pleasure to this man.

Grabbing her hips, Ace yanked her up and pounded his cock deep, then deeper. His fingers gripped her flesh with punishing force but she didn't care. Everything he did felt like heaven to her.

"So long," she whispered. "So long I've waited for you. Ace."

The words hovered in the air then Ace went still. She sensed him gathering then he began to thrust harder, faster, pistoning into her with brutal force. Ace moaned low as he came and Chloe danced along that razor sharp edge until she followed him with a cry of her own.

Moments later, they lay together beneath the covers, cuddled together as if the last ten years had never separated them. Darkness settled, coating the room in shadow. Chloe buried her nose in the crisp hair of his chest and breathed him in. “So you missed me, huh?” she teased.

Ace snorted and drew her close. “Jeez! You figured that out, did you?”

“Mm. I might be a dull-as-dirt accountant but I’m pretty smart.”

“Are you smart enough to know that I love you, Chloe?”

Chloe went still for a moment before finding the courage to look Ace in the eyes. Surely her wildest dreams weren’t coming true? Were they? Sincere brown eyes gazed back at her. His smile was meltingly gentle. “Do you love me, Chloe? Even half as much as I love you?”

“Oh, oh, honey,” she gasped as joy rose up to swallow her whole. She kissed him, loving the way his arms went around her to hold her close. “I love you.”

“Think you could take a leave from that exciting accounting job of yours to travel the world with me while I take my pictures, Chloe? You and Alyssa?”

“What?”

His arms tightened and he rolled with her until he hovered over her. “She won’t be in school for a couple of years. We could travel around as a family. See the world.” He went quiet and she noted the first hint of nervousness swim in his eyes. “I mean, if you want to, of course. If not, I’ll just make sure and come home to you when my work is done.”

Tenderness swamped her. She smiled. “I don’t think that’ll be necessary. Although my job handling people’s taxes is just a cooler than heck job, I think traveling the world sounds much more interesting.”

“Marry me? We can live on the coast or here. As long as I’m with you.”

She paused, loving the moment, loving him. She smiled and reached out to drag her finger along his lip. “Yes. Oh, yes, Ace. Welcome home, honey.”

About the Author

Regina, a multi-published author, lives in West Texas with her husband of more years than she can count and is the mom of a grown son and an almost-grown daughter, both of whom are the coolest people she knows. A former newspaper journalist and editor, she has been actively writing romantic fiction for over sixteen years and loves the notion of hanging out in her jammies with no make-up all day long while she spins her stories. When she's not penning naughty erotic tales, she is chatting it up with friends, watching sappy romantic comedies, or curling up with a good book.

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*Are you in the mood for another Carnal Reunion?
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IOU by Paris Brandon

The morning after her final exams, Bliss Harper woke up in her own bed wearing only her underwear. She's never remembered how she got there or why she found an I.O.U. tucked into her panties for one night of "Bad Boy Sex," signed by her favorite pizza delivery guy, Nick Santucci. But she had a ten-year plan that didn't include any more bad decisions and handsome men. But all work and no play make for a dull life and she's headed to her ten-year college reunion with every intention of collecting on a debt that's long overdue.

Ten years ago, bad boy Nick hadn't usually looked twice at shy, thrift-store fashion reject Bliss Harper. He just hadn't been able to avoid it when she'd started doing a tabletop, drunken striptease at a frat party the police were raiding. These days Nick's not delivering pizza, he's delivering deals and he's headed to his ten-year college reunion determined to negotiate one night into many with the woman who holds the marker on his heart.

G-Spot by Taylor Tryst

Lily Sutherland. No, Detective Lily Sutherland, a title she worked her ass off to earn, has returned to Heartwood Indiana for her ten-year college reunion. An ex-Lady Hawk, and a star athlete on the volleyball team, Lily used her competitive edge to win on the court. She dove into the male dominated world of law enforcement where she once again rocked the foundation and shot up the ranks to homicide detective in record time. As far as Lily is concerned, she's just one of the boys until she reunites with Dakota Reese, the love of her life.

Special Agent Dakota Reese has always been too smart for his own damn good. Specializing in serial cases, Dakota attends his college reunion at Western Indiana University for what he believes will be a reprieve, only to discover that his life just became much harder...literally, when he see's Lily Sutherland at the grand old Victorian down the street. Dakota and Lily had split amicably ten years prior, each of them marrying for all of the right reasons. Unfortunately, they married someone else, and were now both divorced. There's a natural animosity between the cops and the feeb's, but can Lily put their differences aside long enough for her 'G Man' to find her g spot and rock her world, forever?

Prisoner of the Heart by Anny Cook:

When Rebecca Iversen graduated from college, she headed home with nothing on her mind but wedding plans. Less than a month later her plans were in ruins when she discovered she was pregnant the same week her fiancé was arrested for selling drugs. Anxious to provide legitimacy for her child, she married Tom while he was still in jail. Years later, Becky finally divorced him, resolved to make a peaceful life for her children and herself.

When the reunion invitation from Karen arrived in her e-mail, her Aunt Mary urged her to take the time to enjoy a little adult time at the reunion.

Young Joe Harris lived across the street from the old Victorian where Becky lived during college. He spent those years secretly yearning for the “older woman”. Now that Becky is back and single, Joe plans to do everything in his power to convince her that he’s exactly the man she needs.

Nailed by Cindy Spencer Pape

When shy scientist Karen Sikorski meets up with her college crush, Warner Beckett, sparks fly, but she knows the handsome contractor would never fall for a plain nerd like her. Warner, though, has other ideas. Smart, voluptuous Karen is everything he's ever wanted in a woman, and this time around, he's enough of a grown up to appreciate it. Now all he has to do is convince the lady he really does want her--in every way possible.

First and Ten by Fran Lee

What Fran Jamison and Jack Gerrard have in common, you could balance on the head of a pin. And to make things worse, Jack blew his chances to hell back in High School with the BBW.

Neither goes to their 10th college reunion expecting sparks to fly, but when they collide in the airport, painful old memories quickly evaporate to make way for two people desperately needing to scratch 12-year-old itches.

Jack royally blew it when he let other people's opinions stop him from pursuing the 5'11" bombshell so many years back, and by the time he realized he was a jackass and tried to apologize, a traumatized and hurt Fran had shredded his ego in public, leaving him to lick his wounds and move on.

She thought she would hate him on sight. She didn't. She thought she could walk away. She couldn't. She certainly didn't expect to find herself making out like a madwoman on the hood of a borrowed car in the airport parking ramp. But she did expect one thing...she was not going to walk away again. Not when he was so damn good at scratching those itches...

Training Randi by Tessie Bradford

Miranda Ellson graduated from college with a degree in design in one hand and a ticket to London in the other. Ten years, five job changes and three boring, unfulfilling relationships later she's back at WIU to re-connect with old friends, enjoy the campus activities and take a break from...oh who the hell is she kidding?

Jeff Briggs, former college neighbor and best bud, now successful gym owner, lives in town. He's the only guy she has ever known who could set her panties on fire by simply walking into a room and Randi is sick and tired of only hooking up with him in her dreams. This may be her only chance to discover exactly what kind of personal training he has to offer.

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Handcuffs and Lace

Resplendence Publishing's Erotic Romance Line of Law Enforcement Themed Stories

***What the Cuff?* By Celia Kyle**

God really should have reconsidered making werewolves. That, or Lyssa needed to get better taste in men and stay away from those with wandering eyes—and other things. Drunk as a wolf, she stumbles to her best friend's house to sleep off her whiskey induced haze and wakes to...*cuffs?*

Caleb sees his chance and takes it. His buddies on the force ribbed him but good for buying silver plated cuffs. But with a werewolf in his bed, the woman he's yearned for since they were teens, he wasn't taking any chances. Lyssa was his. She just didn't know it yet.

***Ticket Me More* by Tia Fanning**

Hailed by the bridal flower world as an artistic genius, Meli works long nights making bouquets for women lucky enough to find love, while she herself lives a life of solitude. She yearns to share her heart and body with someone other than Bob, her *Battery Operated Boyfriend*, but acute shyness keeps her from engaging the "living" world.

However, Meli's quiet and predictable existence takes an unexpected turn when she is pulled over and ticketed by the most gorgeous cop she has ever encountered—Officer Michael Johnson. Though he doesn't seem to notice her as anything more than a traffic violation, Meli makes plans to overcome her timid nature and seize the police officer's attention...using any speed necessary.

***Handcuffs and Lies* by Bronwyn Green**

Sometimes promises to friends are the hardest to keep. Undercover police officer, Michael Tanner, promised his dying partner that he'd take care of the man's little sister. Trouble is, after

her brother's death, Doctor Tori Spinelli wants nothing to do with Michael—or any other cop for that matter.

Tori has always fought against overprotective men and deception. Forced into protective custody with Michael, she's now faced with both in the same package. Despite their differences, Tori falls in love with him, but how can she trust a man who lies for a living?

***Search Me Baby, One More Time* by Melinda Barron**

Wren Thornberry's life isn't going according to plan. She let her father talk her out of marrying Bryan Stockard, the man she loves, and moved halfway around the world. Now she's back home in Texas, babysitting her grandmother while grandma and her boy-toy work through their list of sexual exploits, making themselves the talk of the town.

But what Wren doesn't know is that things in her hometown are about to heat up even more, and it will have nothing to do with her grandmother. It seems that Bryan Stockard is still around, he wants to get back into Wren's life—by any means necessary, and now he has just the tools to do it: A police uniform, handcuffs, and the authority to make Wren *assume the position*.

***Cuff Me Lacy* by Demi Alex**

Three months is way too long to wait for some simple, low-down, straight forward sex. It's not like Officer Chrissie Hansen is asking for prince charming to offer her the love of a lifetime. All she wants is a good orgasm that she doesn't have to work for alone.

At least with "The Bull" she knows what to expect. But when Patrick MacKlick returns to her life and tempts her with new options, she discovers that lace can imprison a heart better than handcuffs can.

***Going Commando* by Catherine Chernow**

Bounty hunter Shyra Lawrence listens to her favorite radio station one morning where the DJ's are discussing "going commando" —*a.k.a* wearing no undies. Captivated by their conversation, she decides to shed her panties in favor of the freedom that wearing no underwear brings.

Enthusiastic, Shyra sends an email to her best friend, Donna, detailing the delights of panty-freedom, but unbeknownst to Shyra, she's hit the send key...to the wrong email addy!

When Derek Grayson opens his emails that morning, he discovers that his #1 employee and top

bounty hunter has sent him an erotic, enticing message about going commando. Derek has always been polite, professional, and so damned attracted to Shyra that it's almost painful. Working day in and day out with voluptuous woman has sent Derek's hormones into overdrive on more than one occasion.

Now, Shyra's shed her panties and Derek's got all he can do to contain his lust when she announces that she's... GOING COMMANDO.

Also available from Resplendence Publishing

***Scorcher* by Celia Kyle**

Phoebe's a salamander with a problem. Fire is her element, her very best friend, and the core of her nature. But she can't control it worth a darn. One decent temper tantrum and *poof!* Fire galore. Good thing she lives in the desert with nary a tree in sight. Well, there are a few bushes and such. And her house. And a few cacti...sorta. At least until she'd gotten mad over getting stuck by one of the darned things...

Brant lives by fire and dies by fire. Literally. As Fire Chief, it's his job to stamp out fires in Winthrop, making sure residents of the small town in the back woods of Arizona don't have to worry about fire taking their businesses and homes. As a phoenix, he has the ability to sense fires the moment they start. It's a handy talent that keeps the residents safe. Except for his girlfriend, who seems to be able to blow up just about everything, including the stove.

***Red: A Seduction Tale* by Maddie James**

Garnet Boudreaux is going home. Not back to her nice little apartment in New York City, but to her childhood home in the bayou. She doesn't want to go, and isn't certain what will be waiting for her when she arrives. But standing there in the voodoo shop on Bourbon Street, in the middle of one helluva party, she's told by Madame Madeleine Dupuis that she has no choice. She presses two pouches into Garnet's hands, wraps a red cape around her, and tells her she must go—and go now—to see to her grandmother.

Max LeBlanc spies the lovely redhead across the street and knows in a heartbeat that she is the one. A rougarou always knows when he's met his mate. Some may call him a lycanthrope, a werewolf if you will, but in Cajun bayou lands, he's known simply as *The Rougarou*. He'd waited several hundred years for this moment, and for her. There is nothing left for him to do but mark her and claim her as his mate. Soon.

***Oriana and the Three Werebears* by Tia Fanning**

Oriana Ricci has taken over the family business—flying cargo and rich tourists around Alaska's barely inhabited Kodiak Archipelago. When her plane malfunctions and she's forced to make an

emergency landing, she finds herself stranded in the middle of a National Wildlife Refuge. With no civilization for miles and no hope of rescue, she thinks all is lost...

Until she stumbles upon the entrance to an underground bunker.

Jack, Jordan, and Jonathan McMathan own and operate a secret intelligence firm contracted by the US Government. Hidden away in an old Cold War spy station located the middle of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, the brothers are not only able to do their top secret jobs safely without fear of discovery, but are better to protect their other, more personal secret: they have the ability to shift into Kodiak bears.

Like a fairy tale gone bad, the brothers return home to find their lunch tasted—or eaten, their computer chairs adjusted—or broken, and a beautiful blonde sleeping in one of their beds. This situation poses a big problem for the brothers...

Their location is now compromised. But more importantly, what are they to do with the lady?

***Extinction* by Carol Lynne**

Professor of Environmental Science/Wildlife studies at UNLV, Jack McBain has spent his adult life trying to track a legend overheard during his youth. Born and raised in the Canadian Province of Newfoundland, Jack remembers his grandparents telling stories of a race of people eradicated by European settlers in 1829. According to the legend, the Beothuk people didn't die out as first thought, but were transformed into wolf shifters.

When Newfoundland wolves began to appear in great numbers, the European settlers began killing them under the guise of population control. In 1910, the last of the Newfoundland wolves was shot, making them one of the few extinct species of wolves in the world.

Following spotty leads, Jack begins to track what he believes are Beothuk/Newfoundland shifter wolves. His search leads him to the Lake Mead National Recreational Area outside of Las Vegas. There, on Spirit Mountain, he finally comes face to face with not only the shifter he's been looking for, but the man of his dreams he didn't know he needed.

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