



take me there

GWENDOLYN CEASE

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Take Me There

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

TAKE ME THERE

Gwendolyn Cease

Dedication

To my sister, Judith, my best friend, my confidante.
My life would be truly boring without you in it.
Thank you for always being there for me.

To the real Lisa.
Without you, my character would truly have no voice. You're the best.

To Chris.
The greatest editor a writer could have.
Thank you so much for your patience and willingness to take a chance.

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Chapter One

Lisa Karrington lay on her bed staring up at the softly whirring ceiling fan. School was finally out for the summer. She sighed. The teachers were more excited than the kids, though no one showed it. Hell, if they could have, they would have shoved the buggers out of the way on a race to the parking lot. Yeah, not very dignified. She closed her eyes trying to figure out what to do on this first free day. Sleep? No. Cleaning? Not hardly. Yard work? Yeah — never gonna happen. Fun. It needed to be fun and relaxing.

Rolling over, she grabbed the phone, quickly punching in the number of her best friend Jacqueline Monroe, now Sinclair since she had married Caleb almost a year ago. The phone was picked up and Lisa recognised Caleb's voice. Dang, the man was seriously hot. Not that she would ever let him know that. He already teased her unmercifully about everything, she didn't need something else to add to the list.

"Hey Caleb, can I talk to Jack?"

"Hold on."

An instant later Jacqueline's voice came over the line. "Hey Lisa, what's going on?"

"Is Caleb mad at me or something? He didn't goof on me, tease me, or generally torment me."

"He's worried about his brother, Eli. You remember Eli, don't you? He was Caleb's best man at our wedding. Anyway, he's in the Marines and Caleb hasn't heard from him for nearly three weeks. He's run through his contacts and can't find anything out."

"I remember him." Lisa forced her voice to remain even. Shit, she remembered him all right. The biggest mistake in her litany of men disasters and that was saying something considering all the people she'd dated. They had met about a week before the wedding and from the moment they shook hands all her girl-mones had sat up and panted. He's the one, they said. She had fallen and fallen fast. Unfortunately, she thought he had too. He'd acted as if he'd thoroughly enjoyed spending time with her. They'd laughed and talked and he'd constantly touched her. Not pawing, but he'd thrown an arm around her as they'd walked or touched her hand as they'd spoken. Everything had been going great, until they went to bed. Or tried to. Lisa's face flushed with mortification at the memory of him losing an erection

almost as soon as she had touched him. Staggering out of bed, he'd told her to leave as he'd gone into the bathroom and shut the door. She'd never seen him again.

"Lisa? Are you listening to me?"

"I'm sorry." Lisa startled out of her morbid thoughts. "I was gone to La La Land. Do you need to get off the phone to leave it clear?"

"Yeah, since this is our first day free, why don't we meet at our favourite Starbucks and celebrate?"

"You're on. See you in a bit."

Lisa took a sip of her coffee and watched Jacqueline bring her own drink to the table. At one time, she used to settle for regular old coffee filled to the brim with cream to make it barely drinkable, then Jack had introduced her to the addiction. Each Monday on the way to school, they stopped at Starbucks to get a non-fat Venti Peppermint Mocha with light whip. She didn't know how she had survived without it in her life. At least she could depend on one perfect thing appearing in her life.

"What's going on?" Jack settled down at their regular table. "You sounded odd this morning. Did you actually go on a good date?"

"Fuck no, and I've decided I'm gonna stop, dude. I'm going on the wagon, as far as bad relationships are concerned. No more. I am not dating just because society tells me I have to. What do I care what anyone thinks? I'm special, I'm unique and I've been wasting it on losers. It's like wearing your very favourite brand new outfit to the grocery. It's just too good to waste on that crappy place. So no more. I'm not dating ever again. I'm over it." Lisa took a deep breath and stopped talking. Damn, she felt better.

"So this means you're finished with the whole Internet dating phase?"

"Yes, I've cancelled my subscription and I'm not accepting instant messages from anyone I don't know. Like I said, I'm finished with dating. Period."

Jack sipped at her drink. "What happened to finding your man? The man that's yours and yours alone?"

"He doesn't exist." Lisa shrugged.

"Wait, you're always telling me there's someone out there for everyone. In fact, you drummed it into me when I went on date after horrible date. Now you're saying your man doesn't exist?"

Yes, but he doesn't want me. "I don't think so. And really, I'm damn tired of looking. I've wasted so much time going out with guys I knew weren't right in the hopes that I'd find my guy. I'm done wasting time. Besides, I have more important things to do than look for some fantasy man."

"What are your plans?"

"I enjoy my summer as a freewheeling single woman." Lisa lounged back in the seat and took a sip of her drink. "And I start fixing my house up to sell. I've been talking about escaping from the neighbour from hell and moving someplace bigger. I'm finally going to get on it. I want to be ready to put the house on the market by July. I'd love to have a new house before we start school in August."

"Damn, you're energetic. Let me know when you need help. Anyway, since you're freewheeling do you want to come spend the night with me on Thursday night? Caleb is going out of town on business so we can have a girls' night in. We can do it up right – fun swirly drinks, good snacks, and maybe we can rent a movie."

"I'll bring the wine."

Lisa rolled up to Jacqueline's house at exactly five-thirty on Thursday. Blowing her horn, she climbed out and grabbed her overnight bag and pillow. A girl could go nowhere and be comfortable without her pillow. Jack opened the door already dressed in her jammies and waved. Lisa burst out laughing and did a small pirouette to show off her own jammie ensemble. They were two wild women ready to take on a night without men.

Later that evening Lisa lounged back on the sofa and sighed. Damn this was the life. Best friend, awesome drinks, and Lord of the Rings hunks littering the screen. They would be anything she wanted them to since it was all her imagination. Who could ask for more?

"This is fun," Jack said. Lisa glanced over to find her slumped down low with her eyes closed.

"Dude, you can't even see the movie."

"Oh, I thought my eyes were open." Jack opened her eyes and looked around.

"We gotta go to bed." Lisa grabbed their glasses and carried them to the kitchen. "It's almost one in the morning. We need sleep so we can be fresh and beautiful in the morning."

"Are we going somewhere?" Jack yelled, never moving from her spot on the couch.

"No, but your husband will be home tomorrow, and I'm so sure you'll want to be mobile and aware for him."

"You got that." Jack staggered up. "Damn, that man is hot. He fucks me awesome."

Both women paused then burst into laughter. "Don't tell him I told you." Jacqueline waved a hand around.

"What, that he fucks you? Dude, I knew that."

"Oh, okay." She shrugged. "Well then it's no big deal. That you know, not that he fucks me awesome. Sometimes my eyes roll so far back in my head I think I can see my brain."

"Damn."

"You know it."

"Okay, I'm going to bed." Lisa ambled towards her room. "See you in the morning, hooker."

"Love you." Jacqueline yelled after her.

Lisa opened the door to the room designated as her home away from home at Jack's house. The entry sat just to the left of the front door, which meant she could come in the house and head right to bed without bugging anyone. The room was cosy with a large queen sized bed and heavy curtains to keep out the morning light. That would be good since she so didn't want to get up until after lunchtime. She turned on the ceiling fan and climbed into bed under the sheet. Turning off the light, she fell asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow.

Lisa's eyes popped open in the darkness. She glanced towards the clock on the bedside table, it read three-thirty. What had woken her? She sat up and listened, finally detecting the sound of footsteps heading up the sidewalk. Someone was approaching the house. She knew it wasn't Caleb because he wouldn't be home until late afternoon, so who the hell was it? She contemplated calling the police. If it was Caleb home early he would shit a brick, but if it was a psycho serial killer...she picked up the phone as she heard whoever it was mount the front steps. Dialling quickly, she spoke low, giving all the pertinent

information. Once that was finished, she knew she couldn't sit and wait. That wasn't in her nature.

She eased from the bed, quickly looking for some kind of weapon. She knew they locked the front door and set the alarm, but a girl couldn't depend on that to keep someone out. Looking under the bed, she came up with a yardstick that must have somehow made it home from Jack's classroom. If it was one thing teachers did well, it was cart stuff back and forth for no apparent reason. She grabbed it and tiptoed to her door to listen. Quietly, she crouched to open the door and duck walk into the entry hall. She could hear whoever was out there fumbling with the door. In the distance, she thought she heard sirens. Okay, she could do this, she had to. Fuck, she was gonna have to try and kick someone's ass. Better to try than greet the cops dead in bed — so not attractive in anyone's book.

She stood and took her yardstick in a two-handed grip as if it were a sword. It was fairly thick wood, and she knew it would hurt the intruder, she just hoped it would take him down. Silently, the door opened, and she drew her weapon back in a batter's stance. As a figure stepped through the door, she swung with all her might. He must have known she was there, since he pivoted and caught the stick. As they fought, the alarm gave warnings to enter the code to deactivate it. Lisa cursed, trying to pull her pseudo-sword back, but he wrenched it from her grip and tossed it into the living room.

The forward motion of him relieving her of the weapon pulled her into his body and she drew her knee up with the intent of shoving his dick up into the roof of his mouth. In a blink, she was on the floor pinned beneath a heavy male body. She struggled frantically as the alarm started to wail, but he easily subdued her. Lisa laid breathing deeply from the struggle and hoped to hell the cops came charging in any minute.

"Are you my welcome home present, Lisa?"

The low growling voice hit the wet girly place on her body and she shivered. That voice, she knew that voice, it was the voice that tormented her in her dreams. The voice that promised hot dirty sex, but never quite delivered. Couldn't deliver? He wouldn't deliver ...

"Welcome home, Elijah. Long time no see," Lisa replied, forcing herself to relax. "Now get the fuck off me."

Lights flared, and Lisa found herself staring up into the very hard masculine face of her biggest mistake. What did you say to the man you turned off so much that he staggered to the bathroom to hide until you left?

"What the fuck is going on?" Jack yelled angrily. "Get off her before I blow your fucking head off."

Eli rolled off and Lisa finally saw her best friend holding a gun in an easy two-handed stance.

"Hey, sis, you wanna put the pea shooter away?" Eli smiled and slowly stood until he towered over Lisa.

"Where the hell have you been?" Jack yelled, stomping downstairs to deactivate the alarm. "And why were you mauling Lisa in the front hall? Elijah Sinclair, you're lucky I didn't put a bullet in you. Are you insane?"

"Which question do you want me to answer first?" He leaned over to grasp Lisa by her waist and easily set her on her feet.

Jack rolled her eyes and sighed. "Pick one."

"I can't tell you where I've been, it's classified. Lisa jumped me first so I thought I would return the favour. Yes, probably, but there's not much I can do about it."

Lisa watched the byplay between the two and tried not to stare at him. Elijah Sinclair was hot with a huge, capital H. His hard body, toned from the work he did in the military and not in a gym, was encased from head to toe in black. Since he and Caleb were brothers the two of them resembled one another, same short military haircut, chiselled features, and brown eyes. However, Eli was just a bit bigger and moodier than his brother. Damn it, she wondered what she ever saw in him other than the fact that he was male hotness personified. He didn't fit any qualifications of her dream man, laid back, able to laugh, and willing to step back and let her do what she needed. She had seen him and all her girl-mones had stood at attention. Not a mistake she would make again. Ever. With anyone.

"Well this has been fun." Lisa interrupted their conversation, as the police pulled up outside. "I called the cops. Sorry, thought you were a psycho killer."

"He's lucky you just called the cops," Jacqueline huffed. "Let me put the gun away and then deal with the police."

Lisa eyed Eli briefly and shook her head. "I'm going back to bed. Glad you're home and safe." Without a backward glance, she went into her room and shut the door. She heard Jack greet the cops and Lisa ran a hand through her hair in agitation. Okay, both of them were alive and not hacked up in any way. That definitely went into the positive category.

Climbing back into bed, Lisa's thoughts raced about this newest development. Jacqueline had no idea something had happened between her friend and brother-in-law. Truthfully, Lisa preferred to keep it that way. The most mortifying event of her life was not something she wished to share with anyone. No amount of pep talk or coffee could or would make it better. She could pat herself on the back on how cool she'd handled herself during the fiasco of their most recent encounter. But she really didn't want to take the chance of spending any more time than she had to with him. She simply wished her body understood that. Just being under him those brief moments made her wet and needy. Thankfully, he hadn't leapt up and run to the restroom to throw up.

She pulled the sheet up and settled more comfortably in the spacious bed. She would just ignore him, she told herself. She figured he would certainly want the same thing. Her face burned with shame, hell she hoped he did. Lisa didn't think she could take spending tons of time with him.

Elijah Sinclair stood under the hot pounding water of the shower and relaxed for the first time in twenty years. He had no war torn country to drop into, no mission to complete, nothing. All he had to do was recuperate and slip back into civilian life. At one point, he imagined he would die before he retired. As he had gotten older, he realised he would die if he didn't retire. That sobering thought was driven home like a sledgehammer the year before during the mission that had gone sour from the get go. Luck was the only thing that allowed him to walk away. The injuries sustained on the mission bordered on life threatening, but somehow he'd survived. Caleb's wedding a short time later made him finally understand that he didn't want to just survive. Surviving was not living. Caleb had told him that repeatedly, and it had begun to play in Eli's brain like a mantra.

He turned off the shower and grabbed a towel to briskly dry off. The thought of the wedding brought other memories to the surface, memories that embarrassed Eli as nothing else had. He owed Lisa Karrington a huge apology. The week he'd spent here before the

wedding was a blur of incredible pain and meds to manage it. But he remembered spending time with the woman—flirting, touching her. What a jerk. Then he'd compounded the disaster by inviting her back to his hotel room. He knew he never should have attempted sex with her, but being drugged to the gills due to his injuries had taken away what little common sense he might have possessed.

In truth, Lisa wasn't his type of woman. Eli could admit she was beautiful with thick brown hair streaked with blonde, large blue-green eyes, and curves. But he preferred his women more submissive than Lisa could or would ever be. Eli was a dominant in and out of the bedroom. He wanted to be the one to call the shots in every part of his life, and that included his women. He only had to listen to Lisa one time to realise she would never be submissive to anyone. She cursed like a marine, was bossy to the extreme, and her mouth was like a machine gun shooting out insults that could drop a person in his or her tracks. In the past year, Caleb had kept him up on everything going on and mentioned Lisa quite frequently. It was unavoidable since she and Jack were best friends, though. Eli didn't understand the relationship. The two of them didn't seem to have anything in common. However, he knew that opposites often attracted for some people. But never for him. He was nearly forty and knew what he wanted and how he wanted it.

Eli fell into bed, promising himself that the first thing he would do is clear the air with Lisa. He didn't want her to get the wrong idea or imagine there might be a relationship between them. Once that was cleared up, he could settle into a nice quiet life without any interference or upheaval.

* * * *

Lisa sat curled in a chair at the large kitchen table sipping her coffee. The drink wasn't close to the nirvana of Starbucks, but a girl had to take what she could get. She thought briefly about fixing something to eat, but was just too damn comfortable to think about getting up. Absently, she brushed her too long bangs out of her eyes. She needed an appointment for a haircut. All the rest of her hair was swept up in a ponytail, her normal summer hairdo, but the bangs were getting irritating.

Glancing around, she froze to find Eli standing in the kitchen doorway watching her. How long had he been there? She hadn't even heard him approach.

"Morning." His deep growl hit her low, and again she involuntarily shivered. How could he keep doing this to her?

"Morning, did you sleep well?"

"Actually, I did." He ambled into the kitchen wearing jeans and nothing else. He was a magnificent animal – all hard muscle under lightly tanned skin. Scars were scattered across his shoulders, back and lower stomach, but instead of detracting, it only enhanced his total maleness. Lisa blinked, forcing herself to look away. *He's good to look at, she told herself, that's what it is. None of your past men looked this good, and that's why he fascinates you so much.*

"I'm glad we're alone since I wanted to talk to you." Eli poured himself some coffee and sat across from her.

"If this is about last year you don't need to say anything." Lisa shook her head, not really wanting to get into a sex discussion this early in the morning.

"I want to explain and get some things straight."

She could tell by the set of his jaw that he wasn't going to let this drop. "What is there to explain or straighten out? We went back to your room to have sex and for whatever reason you...I...it just didn't happen. Then you threw me out. I think that's pretty straight forward."

His jaw tightened, but his voice remained calm as he spoke. "I'd been seriously injured right before I came back and was on a variety of pain meds so I could attend the wedding. What happened was extremely poor judgement on my part. I never should have started something when I was in that state. If I had been in control, like I should have, I never would have approached you to begin with."

Lisa nodded as he spoke. Thinking back, she knew he had been moving slowly, but didn't connect that to an injury. "I appreciate you talking to me about this especially since I suppose it's a bit embarrassing. Let's just put this behind us and move forward."

He blinked. "Lisa, I'm sure you are a wonderful woman, but I have no interest in starting a relationship with you. You're not my type. I'm sorry if this might upset you –"

Lisa slowly put down her cup. If he meant to wound he did a great job. Obviously, it hadn't been just the one night he was talking about, but the whole week. She blinked rapidly to ensure the tears stayed away. "Why would you think I'd want a relationship with you? I

don't know anything about you, other than you're never around, and you couldn't perform. I doubt that's a good foundation to build anything on." Harsh, but damn it, right now she didn't feel kind. She wanted to hurt him as he hurt her. Childish in the extreme, she would agree, but didn't care.

"If you would quit interrupting me, I could finally finish what I'm trying to say." His voice dropped to a whisper level and gut instinct told Lisa she should just let it go, but couldn't.

"Partner, you're not saying anything I want to hear. The only way we're connected is through my best friend, that's it. I was trying to be kind to you, to let you know that I would put the whole unfortunately incident behind us. Then, whenever we meet, which hopefully won't be very often, we could at least be civil. Now, you can just go fuck yourself."

Lisa stood and began to leave the kitchen when Eli exploded from his chair. She was sure she heard him mutter something before he grabbed her and slammed his mouth down onto hers. She forced her arms between them and tried to push him off, but he grabbed her by the ass and hauled her up against his straining erection. Leaning her against the wall, Eli thrust his tongue into her mouth as he pulled her legs around his hips and began to rub his jeans clad cock into the dampening cleft between her legs.

She wrapped around him tighter as she rolled and thrust her hips against him. The rational part of her mind screamed to slap his face and leave. He had said she wasn't his type and didn't want a relationship. Why the hell was his tongue in her mouth then? The slutty part though screamed to stay and ride this puppy out to the end. Lisa could feel the orgasm beginning to build and adjusted her hips until she could grind her clit against the seam that ran over Eli's cock. Okay, so today, the slutty part won.

He broke the kiss to run his teeth and tongue down to her neck. The feel of him biting her made her see stars as pleasure and pain moved together as one. She needed more—more stimulation. She was almost there. She could feel it, but couldn't make herself go over. Grabbing his hand, she shoved it up her jammie top to clasp around her breast as she tilted her head back to give him greater access to her neck.

Eli's roughened fingers smoothed and plumped her breast, swirling circles around her erect nipple. Taking the nipple between his fingers, he pinched the delicate point as he bit

into her neck. Her orgasm boiled up and over. She buried her face into his neck to muffle the moans as she trembled in his arms.

"Lisa."

Jacqueline's voice froze the couple and Lisa began to push and shove against Eli's huge body. She had to get away from him; she didn't want Jack to walk in on them. He allowed her feet to touch the floor, but he did not release her. Lisa looked up to realise just how tall he was against her insubstantial height.

"Lisa? Are you up?"

"I'm having coffee," Lisa replied, shrugging out of Eli's hold and moving out into the living room.

"Cool. I'll be down in a minute."

Lisa turned to go to her room when Eli grabbed her arm. His erection was obvious and her mouth watered at the thought, but there was no fucking way. As he'd said, he didn't want a relationship with her, and she really didn't want a damn thing to do with him right now.

"What?" Lisa glanced at his hand on her arm then at him.

"We're not done." His low voice reverberated through her body, but she shook it off.

"Yes, we are. Like you said, I'm not your type and you don't want a relationship with me. I don't know what the hell that demonstration in the kitchen was. But we're finished. Leave me alone."

"We aren't even close to finished," he murmured as Jacqueline entered the kitchen.

Lisa engaged her friend in conversation all the while aware of Eli watching her as if she were a tasty mouse and he a hungry cat. She knew deep in her gut she had to stay away from him. He was bad for her. She didn't know what kind of game he was playing, but whatever it was, she couldn't afford to play. She wouldn't play. Because, in the end, she was the one who would end up hurt.

To force her attention away from him, she talked to Jack about her plans for the house. What she wanted to get completed before it could go on the market. The two friends put their heads together and came up with two lists. The first were the necessary things that had to be finished and the second were the jobs that would be nice to finish, but not necessary.

"Oh, before I forget." Jack jumped up to pull a card off the refrigerator. "This is the realtor we used to find the house. Caleb liked her and you know how picky he is. "

Lisa smiled. "Thank you." She clutched the card in her hand. "I'm heading in to get cleaned up and then head out. I have some errands to run."

Ignoring Eli, Lisa hugged Jack and quickly exited the kitchen. As soon as she closed her bedroom door she sat on the bed and put her head in her hands. Ignore him? Who the fuck was she kidding? Just thinking about him made her wet and her mouth water. This whole situation was stupid. It was really unfair, he wasn't supposed to affect her this way. One more reason she had to stay away from him. He'd totally shattered her self-control and, if she had nothing else, she had control over herself and her life.

Lisa grabbed her bag and went into the bathroom connected to her room. She was going to take a shower, wash her hair, and put Elijah Sinclair where he needed to be, in the past. He'd told her in no uncertain terms she wasn't his type of woman. Boy, he didn't pull punches, did he? But it was fine. She knew where they stood, and she could get on with her life. Like she'd told Jack, she had a lot of stuff she needed to do and Eli wasn't one of them.

Eli stood beneath the cold spray of the shower and tried to will away the Lisa-inspired hard on. How did she do it to him? He'd already figured out she wasn't his type, but apparently, his body didn't understand. He didn't know what it was. She wasn't the most gorgeous woman he'd ever dated or even the one with the hottest body. He closed his eyes and leant against the wall. He had to be logical since logic had always saved his ass in the past. He was home for good. He was safe for the first time in years. That had to be it, she was the first available female and it had been long months since he'd been laid. Once he started seeing someone on a regular basis the need to fuck her would go away. Feeling satisfied with his reasoning, he finished his shower and shoved all thoughts of Lisa Karrington from his head.

Chapter Two

Lisa opened the door to laughter and loud music. Any other time she would be in her element, but a welcome home party for Eli Sinclair wasn't something to get thrilled about. She couldn't bow out since Jack would demand to know why. When did Lisa Karrington skip a party? But she wouldn't stay long. The less time she spent in Eli's presence the better. If she could work it right, she would never have to lay an eye on him.

She moved through the crowd to find her best friend, waving and speaking briefly to the people she knew. Most of them were new faces and she figured they were either Eli's friends or Caleb's so she contented herself with smiling and nodding as she continued through the house. Right now, all she wanted was to find Jack and grab some wine--not necessarily in that order. Between starting the repairs on her house and not sleeping well, her normal semi-pleasant attitude was going right down the drain. In fact, she was fairly testy and all out of patience as she pushed through the crowd barring her way to the kitchen.

She finally shoved her way in and found Jacqueline talking with Caleb as he filled glasses with ice. The two of them looked happily content and Lisa smiled as she headed towards them.

"Hey hooker." Lisa greeted her friend with a hug. She punched Caleb in the shoulder as he handed her a glass of wine.

"You sure are a pretty little thing." He winked at her.

"Yeah, and you're an asshole, but you gave me a drink so I'll let it pass this time."

"How are you doing, Lisa?" Caleb gave her a quick hug.

"Good, I met with the realtor you suggested and really liked her. So, she's the lucky duck who'll sell my house and help me find a new one."

"How's the house going? When will you need help?" Jack asked.

"Slow, I looked at the list we made trying to decide what area to hit first. I'm thinking, I'll probably start in the master bath and the kitchen since they need the most help."

"Let me know if you need anything." Caleb nudged her.

"I will, but I want to try to do some of it on my own, with your lovely wife's assistance of course."

Jack smiled. "We can go out tomorrow if you want? Caleb and Eli already have plans to work in the backyard clearing out brush. And as much as I would love to sit around and watch them sweat I think shopping would be more fun."

"Sounds great." Lisa paused as a burst of laughter came from the living room. "Your house is a bit crowded."

"Shit, don't I know it," Caleb agreed. "But since Eli's finally home for good I wanted to let everyone know and celebrate."

"So he's not being redeployed?"

"No, he finally retired, which is something I've been telling him to do for a while. He has his twenty years so he needs to take the retirement and relax."

Lisa nodded, changing the subject back to the shopping trip she and Jack were taking the next day. The last thing she wanted to do was talk about Eli all night long. She hadn't set eyes on him since the incident in the kitchen and she wanted to keep it that way. What did you say to a man you'd basically used as a vibrator? Thanks? Yeah, she didn't think that would go over real well so it was probably best to dodge him as long as possible.

Lisa spent the evening talking to all the people she knew and studiously avoiding any room that happened to contain Eli. The few times she did see him it was a passing glance through the crowd, so she was fairly certain he didn't even know she was there. Hell, she knew he didn't know, since a cute blonde hung on his arm the entire evening. Not that she kept tabs or anything. But if that girl was his type, yeah she definitely wasn't. Lisa tamped down the small bit of hurt and chose to ignore him. The man was handsome, but nothing spectacular. She repeated this mantra to herself most of the night, but it still did no good. All her girl parts were incredibly aware any time he so much as entered or exited the room.

Finally, tired of the whole ordeal and fighting a headache Lisa went in search of Jacqueline and Caleb to say her good night. She just needed to sleep, that was all. Obviously, the house work and lounging was getting to her. It was the only explanation she would allow herself, since Eli was off limits. Permanently. He had told her in no certain terms he wasn't interested in her. And he apparently had a girlfriend. End of story. And she certainly wasn't interested in him. He was a humourless, Neanderthal jerk with the sexual prowess of a slug.

Lisa shoved her way through the crowd and out the door. The party had spilled into the yard and there she found her friend talking to the person she had been avoiding all night long. The gods were clearly not happy with her for some reason, since she would have to speak to him now. Taking a deep breath, she stepped up and gave Jack a hug, while ignoring Eli without really looking like she was. The manoeuvre was a bit difficult, but she was an expert at it being a teacher and all. Hell, she had to do it at least once a week to ensure she wasn't caught in a yearlong discussion with a chatty parent or co-worker.

"You leaving?" Jack hugged her back.

"Yeah, I'm tired and kind of have a headache. Besides, I want to get some things done before we meet tomorrow. What time?"

"How about we have lunch? Say about eleven-thirty at Los Nopales?"

"Sounds great to me."

"Call me when you get home."

"Yes, mom." Lisa laughed and headed in the direction of her car. Upon approaching, she realised that four other cars were crammed in behind her own. Unless the car could fly it wasn't going anywhere fast.

Lisa turned and found Jacqueline hurrying over to her. "Caleb just told me your car was behind a bunch of others. Unfortunately, the drivers are some of the ones that needed a designated driver to get home. He wasn't aware of it until after they had already left. But he did say he found you a ride."

"Great, where's my chauffer?" She looked around as the sound of a powerful engine pulled up to the kerb. Both women turned to find a huge black Harley with Eli sitting calmly holding out a helmet.

Lisa schooled her features into a calm smile, but inside cursed a blue streak. She had done so well staying away from him and now she would be straddling him for the long ride home. The gods were punishing her for sure. It had to be, since she couldn't escape him no matter which way she turned.

"Are you coming?" Eli asked in that low growl that starred in all her favourite dreams. God, it was as if he had a script and was saying things to torment her.

"Yes I am. Thanks for the ride. See you tomorrow, Jack, since you're obviously picking me up now."

"I'll be at your house at eleven. After our errands, I'll bring you back here for the car. Maybe if we stay out long enough, Caleb will have fixed dinner for us."

Lisa accepted the helmet and gave a wave as she pulled it down over her head. The faceplate shielded her expression so she could drop the smile as she swung onto the bike behind the man she most wanted to avoid. Yep, this was going to be one long assed ride.

Eli pulled away from the kerb still not understanding why he was giving Lisa a ride home. It certainly wasn't because he was a nice guy. He was many things, but nice certainly wasn't one of them. Maybe it was because she'd worked so hard to ignore him all night long. At first, he didn't notice, since he'd no idea she'd arrived. However, once he'd seen her, he noticed any time he'd wandered into her vicinity she vacated the area, it began to piss him off. Okay it didn't just piss him off it excited him too, which pissed him off even more. He went into hunter mode and began to stalk her as if she were his prey, he couldn't help it. Yeah, okay he could, but he didn't want to and that pissed him off most of all. He kept reminding himself that this woman was not his type, but it just didn't seem to matter. He'd even invited a woman one of his friends had introduced him to. She was cute, blonde, submissive as hell and way into him. She'd even let him know he was welcome to go home with her. But none of that mattered. As soon as he'd found out Lisa needed a ride home, he'd instantly volunteered. He traded sex for spending time with a woman he preferred to avoid. What an idiot. He needed his damn head examined.

He eased the big bike into a curve. Lisa tightened her arms around him and leaned with him. The feel of her body pressed so tightly against his instantly gave him a hard on. Of course, it did. Along with the blonde, there had been a good number of single women at the party, but the only one that intrigued him was the one he knew he really didn't want. What a total clusterfuck. Once he got her home, he would drop her off and be on his way. The blonde had said she'd wait for him at Caleb's. There was no reason to spend any more time on Lisa than he had. With that decision made, he settled into the ride and tried to enjoy it while ignoring the woman wrapped so snugly around him.

Lisa tried to keep herself as far from Eli as she could, but he was just so big and solid she couldn't. She liked the feel of leaning on him as they rode into the evening. He handled

the Harley with confidence, and that was a huge turn on in her book. The feel of all his muscles shifting and moving as they rode caused her nipples to pebble, and she hoped he didn't notice. The feel of him stretched between her thighs made her wet and wanting. Fuck, another night with Big Daddy, her friendly neighbourhood vibrator. It just wasn't fair that the one man who turned her on was the one who didn't want her. But, maybe that was the key. She wanted him because she couldn't have him. Could her brain and hormones be that convoluted? Hell, if so it was a good thing she'd given up on men. She didn't have the time or energy to sit around and attempt to figure it out.

Soon they pulled into her driveway and Lisa swung off and handed Eli the helmet she'd been wearing. The sun had sunk low enough that it pulled shadows across the lawn. Once again, she had forgotten to leave a light on.

"What's with the guy next door?" Eli asked.

"He's my little peeper. He constantly looks at me when I'm outside. He used to try and talk to me anytime I left the house. I wondered why he was always outside when I was. Then I figured out he was watching for me. Now he contents himself with just observing me, like I'm a bird or something."

"Has he tried anything?" Eli's voice became serious.

"No, but his chatting and visits stopped once Caleb had a talk with him. Now he just stares. He seems pretty harmless, but then I guess people said that about Jeffrey Dahmer, too." She shrugged and ran a hand through her hair. "Once I move, I won't have to worry about him anymore."

Eli once again gazed over at the house, noticing someone was peeking out a window. He shut off the Harley's engine and dismounted. "I'll walk you up."

Lisa laughed and shook her head. "You don't need to."

"Whether I need to or not isn't the point. I'm going to walk you to your door. So don't argue."

"I don't argue," Lisa returned quickly.

"Baby, you'd argue with a rock if you could."

Lisa rolled her eyes as she moved towards her front porch with Eli close behind. As she began to open the door, she was struck again by just how large he was next to her. She barely came up to his chest. Her mind wondered if he was large everywhere?

Lisa quickly shut that down. Who cared? He could have a dick the size of Montana, but she'd never see it. Unless he planned on posing nude sometime soon. If he didn't have any job prospects that might be something he should consider.

She stepped in and let out a sigh of contentment as she kicked her shoes off. She couldn't wait to change into her jammies and settle in with a glass of wine. Okay, first she and her friendly B.O.B. needed to have a session since she was still jazzed up over the motorcycle ride.

"This is nice."

Lisa turned to find Eli studying her haven. She wasn't sure how she felt about him being inside the "inner sanctum" as Caleb always called it. She rarely invited men into her space, preferring to meet them elsewhere. Her home was her sanctuary and nothing else revealed who she was and what she believed in than her home. Jack always said if a man was ever invited to stay the night two times in a row, he had to be the one. Even Brian, her ex-boyfriend, had never made it past her door to stay. Lisa just didn't like having men cluttering her place up. If she fucked them in her space, she wanted them up and gone, so she could relax. Actually, if possible, she would prefer they do it somewhere else so she could just get up and leave when she wanted. Caleb always told her that was very much a male way of thinking, but Lisa just shrugged it off. Hell, she already knew she was manlier than most guys, so why shouldn't she get up and move on. It wasn't as if the sex was so amazing she couldn't move or wanted to stay around for round two. Mostly it was bam and over within no time flat. Better to go home and shower so she could get comfy. What was the problem with that?

"Thanks. It's okay, but needs some work done." Lisa faced him with the door standing open.

Smoothly, he eased past her and into the living room. Her shoulders tensed as she wondered what the hell was going on. It wasn't like the two of them had anything to visit about. Shit, he didn't even like her.

"Do I make you nervous?" he asked.

Lisa gently shut the door, though she wanted to slam it. Hard. She didn't know what game he was playing, but she really wasn't in the mood. "No. Why? Should you?"

He moved around her space picking up knick-knacks to check them out, then placing them gently back where they had been. "You tell me. You spent the whole evening avoiding me."

"I didn't." She hoped her lie wouldn't show on her face.

"What do you call leaving the room every time I entered it?"

"Fine, you're right, I did spend the evening avoiding you," Lisa plunged in, figuring honesty was always the best policy. Truly, if people didn't want to know the truth, they shouldn't ask. "Eli, we pretty much established you and I have nothing to talk about. As you so succinctly put it, you aren't interested in a relationship with me because I'm not your type. So why bother?"

"So, if I'm hearing you right since we don't want to engage in a sexual relationship we shouldn't even try to be friendly. Is that correct?" He tucked his hands into the pockets of his jeans and cocked a hip. The motion pulled the fabric tight so it perfectly outlined his cock. For some unfathomable reason, she could feel her mouth beginning to water. Hells bells, what was wrong with her? Why did he do this to her? How could he do this to her? She must be a glutton for punishment, lusting after a man who didn't want her. Maybe she needed to see a shrink? Maybe she should just knock her head against the floor? It would probably be more effective.

"If you want to put it that way, fine. Yes, that's exactly right." Lisa ran a hand through her hair wishing the pointless conversation was over. "I figured you'd be good with it."

"Now why would you think that?"

She rolled her eyes. "Gosh, let's think. Our encounters thus far have been sad attempts at sex where you locked yourself in the bathroom to get away from me, and I basically used you like a vibrator. Oh and let's not forget you so politely telling me you are not interested in a relationship with me. Damn, you're right that *is* a solid foundation for a friendship."

Eli narrowed his eyes and opened his mouth to speak, but Lisa held up a hand. "I can't see where else we can take this scintillating conversation. Thanks so much for the ride home, but you need to leave now. I want to take a shower, have a nice meeting with my vibrator that gets me off every single time and head to bed."

Before Lisa could approach the door to usher her guest out, Eli had his hands around her waist and his lips pressed to her own. He thrust his tongue aggressively into her mouth

and Lisa sucked on it, causing him to moan. The wants of shower and vibrator disappeared as Eli pulled her shirt open, popping off buttons. She let it drop to the floor as he went to work on her bra, which soon followed the shirt and buttons.

Soon his teeth and tongue were engaged in licking and sucking her breasts, and a brief *what the fuck* thought rushed through her head. She didn't even like this man and here he was practically making her come by just touching her breasts. Was she this desperate? Or had she already fallen and hit her head? Maybe this was some sort of wacked out dream? Drug induced coma?

"Quit thinking," he whispered as he licked and sucked up her neck to take her lips again in a punishing kiss. "Take the rest of your fucking clothes off before I rip them off."

Eli pushed her away from him as he began pulling his shirt and pants off. The wild look in his eyes and his aggressive posture should have been a turn off, but now, with this man her need ramped up even higher. She didn't even think, just shoved her shorts and panties off and fell back on her favourite chaise lounge as she watched him approach. God, he was beautiful with rippling muscles and a thick cock that jutted forcefully out towards her. She licked her lips wanting nothing more than to wrap her lips around him and suck until he came. Eli somehow read her mind as he took himself in hand and stroked hard.

"Next time you'll suck my dick, but now I have to fuck you."

He crouched in front of her and parted her legs with his shoulders. Lisa kept herself propped up on her elbows as she watched him approach. She still couldn't believe Elijah Sinclair was once again ready to fuck her. If he left her hanging like he had the last time there would be no one that could save him. She would kill him until he was dead, then kick his ass and kill him again.

"What a pretty little pussy." He leant forward until she could feel his hot breath against her flesh. Moisture gushed out as he leant forward and licked her from anus to clit. "Next time I'm going to eat you up, but not now. I can't wait."

He ripped open a condom and quickly sheathed himself. Lisa idly wondered where he got something that fit what he was packing. Was she really going to do this? He'd ripped her heart out once and stomped on it with his rejection a year ago. Now here she was, setting herself up for pain once again. This one time, she told herself. She'd have sex with him one

time and get him out of her system. He'd be like any other guy, then she could move on. The tiny voice in her head said *yeah right*, but she chose to ignore it.

"Watch, while I fuck you." He pinned her gaze with his own as he pushed her legs wider and slowly began to sink his cock into her body. The intrusion was a dance between pleasure and pain as he pulled her legs wide with his arms and snugged his hips close. With one twisting move, she could feel his cock kiss the top of her vagina, but before she could get used to the intrusion, he pulled out and pushed home again. Lisa let her arms give out and fell back as he put a knee on the chaise and began to work his enormous cock in and out of her body.

Lisa shoved her hips up to meet his downward push and pleasure streaked through her. Gods he was huge, but for the first time she could feel an orgasm build just from sex alone. Normally it took total clit action on her part, but with Eli, she didn't need it since he was hitting every single nerve ending she had.

"Yeah, that's it, baby, ride my cock. Fuck you're tight." He closed his eyes briefly and gritted his teeth. "It's been too long, and your pussy is so sweet. You hug me like a fucking glove. I'm gonna eat you up, baby. I'll lie down and you can just sit right down on my face. I'll fuck you good with my tongue. Then I'll mount you from behind and fuck you into the floor."

No man had ever said the things to her that this man did. She'd had lovers before who tried the whole dirty talk thing, but it usually pissed her off enough that she told them to shut the fuck up. This man, though, he knew what to say and how to say it. Just hearing his voice made her shiver, and she wanted to give him pleasure in return. Wrapping her arms around his neck and she pulled him down to run her tongue delicately over his lips. He pushed his arms up higher, pulling her legs even wider as he leaned in to thrust his tongue into her mouth.

He kissed as if he were trying to pull every bit of her taste into his mouth. He ran his tongue over her teeth and tangled it with her tongue as he continued to power his cock in and out of her tight sheath. Lisa could do nothing more than hold on as an orgasm began to build from the base of her spine. Eli shifted his position just a bit and hit a spot so deep inside her vagina that she saw stars. She struggled to grind against him to keep the pressure on that spot as she sobbed out a breath.

"Come for me, baby," he whispered against her neck. "Yeah, come on my cock." He ran his tongue down her throat and bit into her shoulder. Lisa about lost her breath as the orgasm rushed over her and she stiffened in his arms. She raked her fingers down his back and gasped as he thrust once more and yelled her name. He collapsed on top of her, both of them panting as if they had run a five-mile race. He slowly released her legs and she wrapped them around his waist, not wanting him to pull away from her yet. She couldn't even begin to look at her actions since her brain was scrambled and all she could manage to do was lay under him with her eyes closed.

Slowly, he pulled his body from her own and stood. She opened her eyes to watch his incredible ass leave the living room. She heard the bathroom door in the hallway open and water run. She closed her eyes and let the languid feeling of really good sex settle around her. Damn, he had been worth it. She ignored the fact that she shouldn't like him and he didn't like her. None of that mattered right now in the light of the phenomenal sex. It wasn't as if they were starting some deep relationship. Hell, they had fucked, plain and simple. If he wanted to do it again Lisa was certainly not going to turn him away. The voice reminded her, she was going to get hurt if she kept at this. But she refused to listen. He'd already hurt her, she wouldn't let it happen again. This was sex, nothing more.

She watched Eli re-enter the room and lean over her. He pulled her legs apart and gently wiped her with the warm washcloth he had with him. No man, not even the ones who claimed to care about her, had done anything like that after sex before. Hell when had she let them? She never stayed, wanting nothing more than to go home. But now she was home and the man currently touching her was someone she hadn't pictured being with. Not when he'd tossed her out so abruptly the year before.

"I didn't hurt you, did I?" Eli asked.

"Hell no." Lisa gave a small smile. "Why would you think you did?"

"I'm a big guy, and it's been a while." He answered her smile with one of his own. "There wasn't a lot of foreplay and I was rougher than I normally would be on a first time partner."

Lisa rolled to her side and studied the man squatting beside her. Damn, he had an amazing body. She reached out to gently run a finger over the head of his penis. "Believe me there are no complaints."

He took a deep breath as she took him in hand and slowly caressed up and down his length. "Baby, you're playing with fire. If you want me to leave, you'd better stop now."

She paused for a moment. Did she want him to leave? Her head said, *hell yes, kick him out*. But gut level, she wanted him again. Wanted to feel what he did to her one more time. *Just tonight*, she told herself. That's it. As long as she reminded herself it was sex, nothing more, nothing less.

"Now who mentioned you leaving? Unless you were planning to?" She leaned over to run her tongue over the mushroom shaped head as if it were her favourite ice cream cone. He twined his fingers through her hair as she slid down to take him deeper into her mouth.

"That's enough." He pulled her head away and she looked up to meet his eyes. "Where's your bedroom because as nice as this little couch was, a bed would be much more comfortable."

Lisa rolled to her feet and he swept her into his arms to plaster his lips to her own. She wrapped her legs around his waist so she could rub herself against his already hard cock. Just the touch of him against her clit sent a shiver through her body and she writhed against him to keep the contact going.

He pulled his lips away. "Where's the bedroom?"

"Down the hall and to the left," she mumbled as she turned to licking and biting down his neck.

He shoved open her door and tossed her on the unmade bed. She'd been in a hurry that morning and hadn't had time or energy to straighten up. Now, with the feel of her favourite sheet set against her skin, she was glad for the laziness. He tossed two condoms on the bed then crawled up to join her. "We're gonna have to make these last. Unless you have more?"

She opened a drawer in her bedside table to pull out an unopened box and hand it to him. He ripped it open and added three more condoms to the two already on the bed.

"Damn, you're pretty ambitious."

"I told you, it's been a while." He gave her a swift kiss and a wink. Before she could come up with a reply, he pulled her legs apart. "Don't move."

"What are you doing?" She leaned up to watch him.

"I told you I was going to eat this pussy all up." He leaned over and thrust his tongue as deeply into her vagina as he could. Lisa arched and fell back as a wash of sensations crashed through her body. She hooked her legs over his shoulders and reached down to pull his face more firmly into her aching centre. Without looking up, he grabbed her hands and pinned them to her side. She fought against his grip until he looked up to spear her with his gaze. She could plainly see her own moisture on his face, and that turned her on even more.

"I told you not to move." His voice was low and commanding. He leaned up until her hands were above her head. "Grab onto the headboard and don't let go."

"And what if I don't want to?" Lisa asked, keeping her gaze locked on his.

"Then I'll find something to tie them with and I'll spank you for not following orders."

He slid his hand down until he ran it between her legs and then plunged two fingers deep inside. Lisa gasped as she pulled her legs farther apart as two fingers became three. She was full, but nothing like his dick, which stretched her oh, so good.

"Your cunt is so wet. Do you like the idea of being spanked? I bet you do." He moved his other hand down to pop her lightly on the bottom.

She gripped onto the headboard and moved against the fingers that were rubbing sensuously inside of her.

"You like that, baby, don't you? You can't deny it since you're gushing." He pulled his fingers out of her body and stuck them into his mouth to suck them clean. "Now don't move." He settled back between her legs and delicately swirled his tongue around her clit.

Lisa jumped, but held onto the headboard as he had told her to. Normally, if her partner had given her an order she would have told him where to go and just what to do with himself when he got there. However, Eli skewed everything out of balance. Shit, if she were honest, her whole life right now was bizarre so why not do what he said? She was going to get pleasure from it judging from the enthusiasm he put into satisfying her. Why shouldn't she enjoy it? What would it hurt?

Lisa squirmed as Eli used teeth and tongue on her. She bounced between wanting him to hurry and never stopping. The more he touched her clit the closer she climbed to a mind

numbing orgasm. She clutched the headboard as if it were a lifeline while all she could do was pant and moan. Eli worked her body with a single minded intensity that she found exciting, if not a little scary.

Just as she was ready to close the deal on her orgasm, he sat up. She gasped, but still kept her hands firmly planted where he wanted them. Eli captured her gaze as he grabbed a condom and rolled it on. Lisa shook her damp bangs out of her face and wished he would hurry. She was so close, she hurt with the need to come.

“Are you ready for me?”

She nodded, not sure she could even speak at this point. Taking his cock in hand, he swirled it gently against her swollen clit. Lisa jumped, gasping, as streaks of painful pleasure radiated through her body. She pulled her legs up almost to her chest and pushed them open as wide as she could. He hesitated as sweat rolled down his face, but still he teased her.

“Please,” she whispered, unable to stop herself.

His eyes widened and nostrils flared. “Are you begging baby? Tell me what you want?”

Lisa heard the eagerness in his voice. Could the begging really get to him that much? She wondered what it would get her. “Please, Elijah, please. Please fuck me.”

All teasing gone, he leaned in and buried his cock deep into her body. Lisa gasped at the intrusion, but wrapped her legs around his waist as he began to ride her hard. He leant over her body and shoved both his hands under her back. In this position, he not only had total control, but he could also lick and suck her breasts. Lisa whimpered as he worried at her nipples with his lips and tongue. All she could do was hang on as she felt herself climb towards another orgasm.

Eli reached between them and gently pinched her clit. Lisa choked out a scream as she stiffened and pleasure raced through her body. He shoved once, twice more, and he shuddered in her arms as he came. The two of them slumped together, hot and sweaty, but unable to move. She finally unwrapped her hands from the headboard and put them around him. Lisa relaxed, her body going soft and pliable under his weight. It was nice just to lay covered by a large male body. Lisa yawned, knowing they should move, but not really wanting him to.

Eli pulled away from her with a groan as he finally got up. She watched him go into the bathroom to dispose of the condom and heard water run. She closed her eyes and began to softly drift towards sleep. She kept telling herself she needed to move and clean up, but she was just too comfy. At the first touch of a wet cloth on her body, Lisa opened her eyes to find Eli leaning over her. She lay while he gently wiped her down, liking the feel of his touch. He disappeared into the bathroom again and Lisa imagined he would get dressed and be on his way. She wasn't sure what to think about that. Hell, she wasn't sure what to think of anything right now. Her brain was like mush and her thoughts sluggish. In the morning, she could think in the morning. Now she wanted to sleep.

Lisa startled as the bed dipped and Eli climbed in beside her. The two of them looked at one another as he leant forward and pressed a soft kiss to her lips. Without saying a word, he lay down behind her and pulled her into the curve of his body. Lisa knew, with a blinding certainty, she was going to end up hurt. But right now, she refused to dwell on it. There would be time enough in the morning for regrets.

Chapter Three

Lisa slowly opened one eye to the shrill sound of the alarm clock. Blearily, she sat up and ran a hand through her hair trying to get her bearings. She felt like she had been run over by a bus about two or three times. She reached over and slapped at the offending piece of electronics until the wailing stopped. The clock read ten-fifteen and for the life of her, she just couldn't figure out why the hell she would have it set on a Saturday morning.

A piece of paper towards the bottom of the bed caught her attention and she picked it up. Bold handwriting scrawled across the page and she blinked rapidly. Last night had not been a dream. She and Eli Sinclair had actually gotten naked together. Okay, more than just naked, they had fucked each other seven ways to Sunday. She couldn't even begin to count the number of orgasms, she just knew it was way more than anyone else had given her.

She looked back down at the note and read: *Good morning. I set the alarm since Jacqueline is coming to pick you up at eleven. I had to leave early to meet Caleb and didn't want to wake you. See you later, E.*

Lisa fell back unsure of how to feel. He hadn't awakened her when he left, but he'd left a note. He'd even set the alarm clock since he knew she wouldn't have thought of it. Once again, the thought that none of the men she'd been involved with had taken care of her popped into her head. She couldn't think like that. It was sex, plain and simple. He'd already told her she wasn't his type. Yeah, okay, he'd set the alarm and left a note. Big deal. It wasn't as if it meant anything. He was just being courteous. That's it. End of story.

Lisa tossed the note aside and climbed out of bed. She didn't have time to sit around and analyse the events from the evening before. Jack would be around to pick her up; she checked the clock, shit, in twenty minutes. She rushed into the bathroom to take a quick shower to wash the scent of hot sex from her body. Damn, they had gone through the condoms. She looked into the trash while she was drying her hair and could see at least five of them. Had he really used that many? Hell, no wonder she was pleasantly sore. She hadn't had sex like that in...never.

She tossed on clothes and grabbed her shoes and purse as she hurried out. As she hit the front door, a horn sounded from the driveway. She looked out and waved to Jack waiting in the car, right on time as usual. She locked the door and put the night of great sex behind her. It wasn't like it would happen again. The two of them had scratched an itch. Nothing more, nothing less. He'd more than made up for the poor showing of the first attempt, and they could both go on their way – satisfied. Just because her stomach fell a bit from the thought didn't matter. They didn't even like each other very much. He was too dominant and aggressive, and she was sure he would want someone submissive and totally passive. Yeah, like anyone would describe her that way. They just didn't suit.

She hurried out to join Jack in the car, promising herself that she wouldn't think about him again. She had fucked him, but nothing was going to come of it. Hell, he probably wouldn't want to see her again, no matter what the note said. He had stated in no uncertain terms that he didn't want a relationship with her. A small stab of pain hit her at the thought, but there wasn't anything she could do about it. One thing she learned long ago, you couldn't make someone like you no matter how much you liked him.

"What's going on?" Lisa greeted her friend.

"You tell me," Jack replied as she pulled away.

"Well, since we last saw each other, I slept and took a shower and here I am."

Jack stopped at a light and turned to face her. "Is that it?"

"What do you mean?" Lisa kept her face perfectly blank or tried too.

"Hmmm, gosh, let's think. Eli took you home last night and didn't come rolling in until early this morning. I'm sure he was trying to be quiet, but I just happened to be up using the bathroom when I saw him. He had that loose hip gait that Caleb gets after –"

"He fucks you awesome?"

Jack laughed. "Yep, exactly. Damn, I thought you'd forgotten about that."

"Hell no, I didn't forget. Please, I didn't have that much to drink."

"Great, and quit trying to change the subject. So, what happened?"

Lisa sat silently for a moment trying to figure out what to say. What the hell, it wasn't as if she and Eli weren't consenting adults. "Well, he brought me home and we got to talking and one thing led to another..."

"And?"

"We had sex. No big deal." Lisa shrugged.

"Well, I saw him when he came home, and I'm looking at you now. I can probably guess the sex was a way bigger deal than you're saying."

"What do you mean? How do I look?"

"Dude, you look like you've been way well fucked."

Lisa laughed. "Okay it was good. We both came away satisfied. But it's nothing more than that."

"Why do you keep saying that?" Jack turned into the mall and found a parking space. "I mean if you like each other, why not see where it'll go? Obviously, you have chemistry. He's certainly better than the losers you found online."

Lisa rolled her eyes. "Do we have to keep bringing them up? Jeez Louise, it's not like Caleb will ever let me live it down."

"Of course he won't. He feels it's his brotherly duty."

"He's not my brother."

"Yeah, well he thinks since you don't have one, you need one. So he's taken over that position."

"Great, that's all I need."

"So back to you and Eli."

"There's no me and Eli."

"But why not? If you like each other what's the big deal?"

"I didn't say we liked each other. I said we had sex. It's not that big of a deal."

"If it's really not that big of a deal, why do you have to keep saying it's not?"

Lisa glanced over at her best friend who was watching her intently. "Eli is like Caleb, very dominant and aggressive. I'm not looking for someone like that. What Eli and I did was great, but I'm not looking for a long-term commitment with him. Besides, I don't think I'm his type."

"Why not? What did he say? Did he hurt your feelings?"

Lisa looked over to find Jack watching her, an icy expression on her face. Just as Lisa was protective of her best friend, Jack returned the favour. If someone picked on one of them then they had to face the both. Junior high, but hey, that's how they rolled.

Lisa smiled. "Dude, throttle down. I was with him and the whole ordering me around wasn't something I'd want to do all the time." *Yeah, right*, the voice in her head whispered. *As if you'd complain if he demanded that you take your clothes off so he could eat you out. Riiiiight.*

"If you're sure he didn't hurt you." Jack watched her carefully.

"I'm positive. It was good, but over. Let's go spend some money." Lisa climbed out of the car, and the two women headed to the mall. She felt a prick of discomfort for not sharing with Jack. The two of them told each other everything, but Lisa didn't think she could share this. There was no way to express in words how his rejection of her as a possible girlfriend felt. She liked him, but he didn't want her. Not in that way. So basically, she was good enough to fuck but not date. She pulled a deep breath in and held it for a minute. Slowly, she released it. She did this a few more times to calm herself down. She was done with him, had to be, because she didn't want to be somebody's fuck buddy. With that thought firmly in mind, she pulled out her shopping list and began to make plans for her future.

Eli wiped his sweat soaked face with his equally sweat soaked shirt. He had been helping Caleb clear a tangle of vines and small trees since early morning, and he was exhausted. He understood why it had to be done since it would almost double the size of the small backyard, but didn't understand why it had to be today. He would have truly preferred to wake Lisa with slow morning sex before she had to run off to shop. Instead, here he was dirty as hell and feeling pissed off. The dirty he understood, but the pissed off was confusing. He didn't even know where to start.

He grabbed a small axe and went back to work. He knew part of the anger had to do with having sex with Lisa the night before. No matter what his head said, his body just wouldn't listen. He knew they weren't suitable. He'd already thought it all out and concluded that he needed a woman who was softer and more pliant. One who would unquestionably allow him to dominate the relationship in and out of the bedroom. However, his body just wouldn't listen. Every time he came within spitting distance of Lisa Karrington, all he could think about was bending her over the nearest surface and fucking her until they both passed out. How did it make sense? It didn't, and therein lay the problem, which led to him being pissed off.

"Let's take a break."

Caleb's voice broke into his thoughts and he readily tossed down the axe and pulled off his gloves. He followed his brother into the open part of the backyard and quickly stripped off his shirt so the two of them could hose off. For fifty cents, he'd strip the rest of his clothes off, but figured Caleb and Jack's neighbours would probably complain. If they didn't Caleb would and he didn't feel like being ragged on until he was forced to punch him. He loved his brother, but the guy could push his buttons faster than anyone else.

Caleb handed him bottled water and he thirstily guzzled down one and started on another. It felt good to be out in the open without the worry of someone sniping him from a distance or the pressures of completing a mission. But he still hadn't figured out what he wanted to do now he was retired. He couldn't see himself sitting in an office strangled in a shirt and tie. However, he didn't want to do mindless grunt work either. In either case, he wanted to be his own boss. He had been running missions for so long he doubted he could take orders from anyone. Right now, he wanted to spend a weekend fucking Lisa out of his system, but doubted seriously anyone would pay him for that. So not an option.

"Where were you last night?"

Eli turned to find his brother watching him. Truth or lie? He loved his brother, but he also knew that since Lisa was Jack's best friend he was a bit protective of her. "I decided to take a ride and get away from things for a while." Okay, not exactly a lie, but not the flat out truth either. He should have known his brother wouldn't leave well enough alone.

"You were out riding until four in the morning?" Eli burst out laughing. "That might have worked on mom and dad, but not on me. Who was she?"

"What?"

"Come on, Eli, I could tell right away when I saw you this morning. What's the big deal?"

"She's just someone I met. It's no big deal."

Caleb stared at him for long minutes and if not for the million dollars of training he had, he probably would have squirmed under the inspection. It was ridiculous, but he wanted to keep what he and Lisa did private, for her sake as well as his.

"Don't hurt her." Caleb finally spoke. "Lisa may act all tough, but deep down she's sensitive and feels very deeply about things."

Well, hell. He thought about calling him crazy and swearing it wasn't her. But really what was the point? They were both adults. So, Eli settled for nodding. "I don't plan to hurt her. We're single adults and the sex was good. That's all. I doubt I'll be seeing her again, but you never can tell."

Caleb watched him a moment more and finally changed the subject. Eli was glad when he started talking about the yard and what else they had to do. Hell, he wasn't even sure what this thing with Lisa was. He'd barely gotten his head wrapped around the fact that they'd fucked numerous times so talking about it wasn't something he was planning on doing. Now fucking her again, yeah that might be in the plan, but he'd have to wait and see. Probably not since they had gone at it all night long, but who knew? Odder things had happened.

Lisa and Jack entered the house to find Eli and Caleb sprawled in the living room staring at the television. A dog barked out a song on the screen while a human, probably the owner, danced badly. Lisa eyed the men closely and concluded neither one of them had open eyes. She motioned to Jack who carefully leant over to take the remote from Caleb's hand. At the first tug on it, Caleb shifted quickly and pulled Jack over the back of the couch and into his lap. In an instant, Eli was on his feet in a fighting stance. The muscles rippled and bulged in his arms and Lisa knew she had never seen anything so sexy in her life.

He relaxed somewhat when he saw there was no threat, but still held an air of expectation. Caleb on the other hand, adjusted his wife until she straddled his lap and began to bestow on her long slow open-mouthed kisses. Jack sank against his chest and wrapped her arms around his neck. Lisa knew right then it was time to make a strategic exit. She moved towards the front door, but before she could reach for it, Eli stepped forward to pull it open.

"I think this is our cue to leave," he murmured softly.

"Ya think?"

Smiling slightly, he ushered her out the door and closed it behind them. Lisa started to dig in her purse for her car keys. For the first time in her life, she was at a loss for words. What did you say to a man you'd spent all night with, rolling around naked? Especially if he was someone she knew she'd never have a relationship with.

"Where are you headed?" His deep voice cut into her thoughts.

"Home." Lisa found her keys and looked up at him. "Jack helped me pick out paint colours and some other supplies, so I'm heading home to get started."

"What're you painting?" He paced her as they walked towards her vehicle.

"The bathroom off my bedroom and the kitchen. First, I need to patch some holes and do other maintenance junk before I get started."

"I'll give you a hand."

"You don't need to." Lisa opened her car door and tossed her purse in.

"I know I don't need to, but I'm going to." He held up a hand. "Whatever you're going to say don't, because I'm sure it'll just piss me off, and we'll get in an argument. Caleb and Jacqueline will obviously be busy for the rest of the evening, and I don't want to spend the time hiding in my room. So, I'll go with you."

Without waiting for a reply, he swung onto the Harley and started it with a roar. Lisa hesitated briefly before climbing into her car. Okay, so he wanted to help her. Great, let him. Who was she to turn down help? If he wanted to get paint on his clothes then it was no never mind to her. She started the car and backed out of the driveway trying to ignore the butterflies in her stomach. He was just a guy, no more, no less. She'd had sex with him. So what? It wasn't as if they had anything going beyond that.

Lisa rolled her eyes. Jack was right. She just kept harping on the fact that they had no relationship. But, it wasn't a real, true, long-lasting thing. Wasn't going to happen. So then, what was it? A relationship based on sex. No, a liaison. They were having a liaison, something brief and purely about sex. Damn good sex she had to admit. So why shouldn't they spend some time together? She should take advantage of him while she could, she reasoned. Besides, if he was handy and fucked her great, then her summer was set. If he pissed her off, she could just tell him to leave as she had done all the others. Easy peasy, as Jack always said.

Chapter Four

Eli stepped back wiping his hands as he viewed his handiwork. He and Lisa had taken down most of the fixtures in the bathroom, including a huge mirror, and patched every hole they could find. He really didn't want to look too closely at his motives for helping her. It would open up a whole bunch of things he knew he wasn't ready to deal with—including the thought that he was wrong about her. Shit, he hated to be wrong since he had spent his life trusting in his instincts. Now those very instincts had been wrong about the woman he was currently with...or were they? He decided to deal with the here and now and deal with the other stuff later.

"Looks good," Lisa commented as she began to clean up the supplies. "I appreciate you helping me."

Eli looked at her, but could find nothing but sincerity on her face. "Anytime, I actually enjoyed it. My dad could do just about anything, so I was always trying to help him. He thought his sons should know how to fix stuff so we wouldn't have to pay someone else to do it."

Lisa smiled. "Yeah, that's what Jack and I always thought, but we didn't have anyone to teach us. We bought books to teach ourselves."

"How'd that work for you?" He followed her into the kitchen.

"At the start we broke more than we fixed, but now we're not too bad. Jack, Caleb and I put the privacy fence up in my backyard."

Eli looked out the door at the small yard containing a profusion of flowers. A tall white fence encircled the yard ensuring anyone in the space would have complete privacy. "It looks good." He told her. "So why do you want to move?"

"I'm ready for a change and the house is too small." She pulled bottles of water out of the refrigerator and offered him one. She opened her own and took a sip. "The house has two bedrooms and baths, but the guest room is so small it's really a glorified closet. The living room is a nice size, but the kitchen as you can see is small."

Eli nodded at her assessment of the tiny kitchen with the even smaller table. There was no way he and Caleb could sit there much less anyone else. So if Lisa were to have company, they would either have to eat in the living room or outside. Not good for an area that has snow and cold weather about seven months out of the year.

"Where are you moving?"

"I'd love to live over near Jack and Cal, but the houses are a little pricey. I'm not sure, I haven't even looked."

"Have you thought of a fixer?"

Lisa laughed. "I know enough to be dangerous. There would be no way I could rehab a house. Small stuff, yeah I can do, but plumbing and dry wall, no don't think so. What about you? What are you going to do now you're home?"

"I haven't given it much thought, yet," Eli said, but then went on since his answer had sounded flip. "I know I don't want to sit at a desk job or drive a truck. Caleb wants me to join his security company, but I think I'd rather work for myself."

"I can't see you sitting at a desk or taking orders from anyone either. What do you like to do?"

"Right now, eat and sleep."

Lisa laughed. "Yeah me too. Do you think someone would pay us to do that?"

"Damn, I wish." Eli hesitated just a moment. "Do you want to go get something to eat? I haven't eaten since lunch and that was a long time ago."

"Sure, let me brush my hair and toss on my shoes and I'll be ready to go."

Eli wandered into the living room as Lisa ducked into her bedroom. He wasn't quite sure what had prompted the invite other than he was enjoying her company. She was easy to talk to and be around. Even though they'd spent the night having sex, she didn't act weird or possessive. They'd worked in comfortable silence with comments tossed here and there. He hated being around anyone who felt they had to talk incessantly. All that did was piss him off and, as Caleb had told him, he could get that way on his own—he didn't need anyone's help.

Lisa came out a few minutes later, ready to go. She'd changed her shirt and put her hair back in a ponytail, but beyond that hadn't done much else. Eli smiled. He got impatient waiting for someone to get ready. It was one thing if he'd asked a woman out on a date and

showed up early, but if they were just running out for a bite, no one needed to get decked out. Besides, he thought Lisa looked fine as she was.

"Ready?" he asked her.

"Yes, I am. I'm hungry. Where do you want to go?"

"Caleb pointed out a new Italian place to me when we were out the other day. He said it was good. How about there?"

Lisa laughed. "I know the exact place. The last time I was there, I didn't get to eat. I had to leave."

"Why do I have a feeling there's more to the story than that."

"There is."

"I'll drive and buy, but you have to tell me the story."

Lisa thought for a moment then shrugged. "Okay, I'm not a fool. I won't turn down a free meal."

Eli and Lisa left the house and headed to his bike. He handed her the helmet and climbed on. She swung on behind him and put her arms around his waist. He sat for a moment, enjoying the sensation of her body pressed to his own. Damn, he was getting hard as images of the previous night flashed through his head. If she was willing, he planned to improve on those images once they finished dinner. Sex with Lisa had been amazing, and he wanted the chance to do it again one more time.

Lisa leaned against Eli on the ride home. Dinner had been a thousand times better than it had with her date from hell. Eli had opened the door and pulled out a chair for her, something that no other man had ever done for her. He was funny and easy to talk to and, she was reminded why she had started falling for him a year ago.

Damn, what a fucking mess. It would be so easy to let herself take that huge tumble. But she couldn't. No matter his actions, he'd already told her she wasn't his type and he didn't want a relationship. And if he saw them turning into friends once they weren't having sex anymore, she didn't think she could do it. Lisa was aware enough to know she couldn't stand and watch him get seriously involved with someone. It would hurt too much. So, basically, she was screwed...and not in a good way.

Eli pulled into the driveway and Lisa saw her peeper looking out his window. She couldn't wait until she moved. It'd be nice to be somewhere that the neighbours didn't log her comings and goings. Lisa and Eli both climbed off the bike and headed towards the door. She liked that he hadn't stammered around asking if he could come in. But then she doubted Eli stammered around about anything. He was the type to step up and take charge.

Lisa entered the house, kicked off her shoes and headed to the kitchen. Eli followed her example, closing and locking the door behind them. In the kitchen, she rummaged in the refrigerator coming up with a bottle of wine and a few beers.

"Drink?" She showed Eli his options.

"Wine, please," he replied, staring up at her ceiling. "Why is there a hole?"

"Pot rack fell the first week I moved in. Apparently, the people I bought the house from used it for decoration since it wasn't anchored to anything. Jack and I tried to fix it, but as you can tell we just made it worse."

Eli smiled. "I'll fix it tomorrow. It won't take any time at all."

"Okay," Lisa said.

"Okay?" He looked surprised. "You're not going to argue?"

"Hell no, if you can fix it, then more power to you. I want this house ready to sell, so I'll take all the help I can get."

The two of them stood drinking wine companionably. *This is nice*, Lisa thought. Standing in her kitchen with a handsome man was one of her favourite fantasies. Okay, fucking a handsome man in her kitchen was the fantasy, but beggars couldn't be choosers. Actually, it wasn't even this kitchen she'd the fantasy about. It was always this huge area with wood floors and lots of cabinets. So not only was she lusting for a man, but a better kitchen.

Eli placed his glass on the counter, reached over, and took hers as well. He took her by the hand and pulled until her body pressed against his own. Every time she stood next to him she noticed just how large he was. Slowly, he leaned over and took her lips in a kiss. His tongue eased into her mouth and wrapped itself around hers in a caressing motion. Damn, he could kiss. If she wore socks, he would definitely have blown them off.

He pulled slightly away. "If you don't want this, tell me now, and I'll leave."

"I want it."

He smiled as he picked her up and moved out of the kitchen. Lisa looped her arms around his neck and continued the kiss he'd started. He tasted of wine and hot male, her very favourite dessert. Instead of the bedroom, she found herself in the hall bathroom. As he broke the kiss, he placed her on the counter, and began to remove his clothes. Lisa leaned back on her hands as he revealed his taut body. Damn, the man was built like a brick shithouse, and tonight he was her personal playground. If she'd been a lesser woman, she would have done a little dance and clapped her hands.

After undressing, Eli picked his clothes up and carefully folded them. Lisa reached to remove her shirt, but he stopped her. "Don't. I'll undress you."

Lisa subsided and decided to let him run the show. It wasn't something she usually did, but Eli certainly had pleased her before. Besides, the idea of a man pampering her actually excited her. Hell, maybe she would grow to like it. Fuck, if so, when she found Mr. Right he would have to either know how or learn. She'd never found men to be real open to suggestions in the bedroom though. Men had their habitual moves they stuck with, whether they worked or not.

Eli turned his attention to Lisa and began by pulling her hair out of the ponytail she had tossed it in. His touch was gentle as he began to comb the snarls out with his fingers. She closed her eyes enjoying the sensation of him rubbing her scalp. Maybe he could give scalp massages for a living, she idly thought, and if he did it in the nude, he'd make a fortune.

He helped her down off the counter and removed her clothes, making sure he touched her constantly. By the time he finished, she was wet and wanting to be fucked, now. Eli, though, apparently didn't want to be rushed, since he turned on the shower and adjusted it to the right temperature. Lisa leaned against him enjoying the feel of his naked body against hers. It was a novelty to be this close to a naked man and not have sex. Normally, once the clothes were gone the guy was ready to go, whether she was or not. Eli, though, seemed to enjoy not only the main event, but all the preliminaries that led up to it.

Eli took her hand and slowly pulled her into the shower after him. Turning, he put her under the spray and used his hands to make sure her hair was thoroughly wet. Once he was satisfied, he took up the shampoo, poured a generous dollop and gently washed her hair. Lisa leaned her head back and enjoyed the feel of his large hands massaging the product through her hair. Okay, maybe he could wash hair for a living, in the nude of course. She

knew she would go to him every day for the service. She also realised flocks of women would want the same thing and felt pissed even thinking about it. She didn't want to imagine him doing the same thing to someone else. He belonged to her...for right now, she amended. She certainly didn't want to share him.

He rinsed her hair and followed up with conditioner. Once he was finished with her hair, he opened the peach body wash. She almost quivered in anticipation as he squirted a liberal helping in his hands and rubbed them together to gather lather. Starting at her shoulders, he stroked his hands down her body, making sure he didn't miss an inch. He paid particular attention to her breasts and pussy, but not enough to bring her off, leaving her on the edge of orgasm. Once finished he rinsed her off and made her stand to one side while he quickly showered with an economy of motion. Shutting off the water, he climbed out to grab a towel and dry off.

Lisa climbed out to dry off too, but he stopped her. "I'm taking care of you." He removed the towel from her hands and carefully dried her off.

She stood still, allowing him to gently pat her dry. The experience was so surreal. She had read about men who actually did stuff like this, but that was in romance novels. Okay, wrong, Caleb did this for Jacqueline, but that was Caleb. Maybe this was where he'd learnt it. If so, Eli had done a very good job schooling his brother. Once she was dry, to Eli's satisfaction, he worked the tangles out of her hair until it lay slightly damp around her shoulders.

Picking up a bottle of the peach body lotion, he took her by the hand, and led her to the bedroom. He sat at the foot of the bed and motioned her to stand between his legs. His cock, even in repose, was big and she licked her lips longing to taste him.

He lightly pinched her leg. "Don't tease, baby. I already told you, I'm taking care of you. If you try and rush things, you'll be in trouble."

"Trouble?" Lisa wrinkled her brow. "What'll you do? Punish me?" The question was asked in jest, but the dark, hungry look that crossed his face caused her to pause. Would he? And if so, how and would she enjoy it?

"Would you like that? For me to punish you?" He squeezed peach scented lotion into his palm and rubbed his hands together. Slowly, he began to run his hand up her torso to cup her breasts and lightly pinch her nipples. He stood and moved to stand behind her and

ran his hands down her back. "Do you want me to spank you, baby?" he whispered in her ear and lightly nipped her neck. "I think you do. I think you want me to spank you before I fuck you hard."

Lisa quivered unsure of what to say. Her reaction to the threat of being spanked was to get even more wet than she already was. Could that be normal? She'd never even thought about something like that before. In fact, a previous boyfriend had talked about spanking her, and she told him if she laid a hand on her, she'd rip his dick off and shove it up his ass. Now, with Eli, the thought excited her in ways she didn't want to look at too closely.

Eli wrapped his arms around her from behind and slid a hand between her legs. "You're so wet, baby. Does the thought of a spanking turn you on?"

Lisa arched into his hand, not sure anymore what she wanted. This man pushed her buttons unlike anyone else. What he said, the things he did, were unknowns. She couldn't plan for anything since he always kept her off balance.

"What do you want?" he whispered.

"I want...I want...I don't know." Lisa shook her head.

"Trust me, Lisa, and I'll give you such pleasure." Eli turned her in his arms and took her lips in a soft kiss. She clung to him, loving his strength and how safe he made her feel. Thoughts and questions flew threw her head but she ruthlessly shut them out. It wasn't time for her to analyse anything. Right now, she just wanted to take whatever he wanted to give and enjoy. Soon, probably sooner than she wanted, their idyll would be over and he'd move on. She didn't want any regrets on her part about should haves and would haves.

As if sensing her acquiescence, he lay back on the bed, pulling her to straddle his chest. "Move up. I told you I wanted to taste you. Come here and sit that pretty pussy right on my face. I'm going to eat you up."

Lisa allowed him to guide her up until she knelt over his face. She felt awkward and weird, never having done anything like this before. He wrapped his hands around her waist and pulled her down until she could feel the first swipe of his tongue over her clit. She leant forward to grasp the headboard as she sat all the way down and she could feel his tongue swirl into her cunt. She gasped and tried to pull away, but Eli held her tightly as he began to suck and lick at her slit. His nose rubbed on her clit as he plunged his tongue into her pussy. Lisa hunched low to grind herself against his mouth, loving how deep he was able to get.

He hummed, and it vibrated through her body. Lisa loved having this powerful man between her legs pleasuring her. He rubbed his teeth against her clit and, before she could even think, an orgasm shot through her body, drawing a cry from her.

Lisa slumped over onto the bed and Eli followed still licking at her pussy. Impossibly, she could feel another orgasm build up and she grabbed onto the headboard and cried out as it ran like liquid fire through her veins. She unclenched her hands and pushed the hair out of her sweaty face. Eli knelt between her spread legs and she reached out to take his cock in hand. She rubbed her thumb over the thick head, spreading his precum around the sensitive knob. Eli pulled in a deep breath as he dropped his head back.

He grabbed her hand and forced it off his cock. "I told you, no touching. Everything is about your pleasure." He moved back and flipped her onto her face, forcing her up onto her knees, her ass in the air. "You've been a bad girl. Do you know what happens to bad girls?"

She shook her head as she braced her elbows on the bed to thrust her butt higher in the air. The whole encounter had taken on a surreal air, and she wanted to see where it led. Lisa had prided herself on always being in control, but this time she wasn't. It was almost freeing to have someone else in the driver seat. Everything Eli had done so far had given her enjoyment. She wanted to see where it all led.

He rubbed his hands up and down her cheeks. "Now baby girl, I'm gonna spank you. You've been such a bad girl. Do you want that? Do you want me to spank you?"

Lisa nodded, closing her eyes, unable to speak. The first swat was just that, a light tap against her right cheek. She caught her breath almost hoping he would be a bit rougher. She didn't know why, but in her gut, she felt she needed it. Was she sick? She didn't think so. She had always spouted off to Jack that anything two consensual adults did in the bedroom was good. So what if this wasn't the norm? Slowly, he increased not only in the frequency of swats, but in strength as well. Lisa spread her legs farther apart to give herself better balance and unconsciously leaned into his hand. There was pain, but also satisfaction. The confusion drove her to seek more, to understand how these two very different feelings could be so closely linked. And why she had chosen this man, before anyone else, to trust.

Lisa was panting when he stopped, pain and pleasure racing through her system until she was unsure which one dominated. He rubbed his hands over her burning cheeks, and she gasped at the sensitivity.

"Now, I'm going to fuck you." He bent down to whisper to her, as he opened a condom. He grasped her hips, and without hesitation slammed his cock deep into her body. She gave a shuddering moan as she once again was stretched by his invasion. She danced at the very edge of pain each time he thrust inside of her body, but she welcomed it. The slight discomfort added to the storm of sensations racing through her. The heat from her ass, bled into her cunt and she experienced a shuddering orgasm before she was even ready for it. She braced her hands on the bed and began to thrust back against him. The wet sounds of him fucking her were counterpoints to the slaps of flesh on flesh.

"Come on, baby girl, come for me," he growled out. "Your pussy is burning me alive. You're so fucking hot. I wish I wasn't wearing this condom. I want to feel you burning my dick as I shove deep into your body." He slid his fingers down and lightly pinched her clit. She choked back a scream as an orgasm, more powerful than anything she had ever experienced, slammed into her. He continued to piston his length into her quivering sheath as tears welled in her eyes from the full body orgasms that continued one after another. She gasped for breath as Eli thrust himself one more time deep into her body. He cried out signalling his own orgasm.

Lisa slumped to the bed with Eli laying over her. The two of them were sweaty and panting, Lisa had never felt better. Damn, the man could fuck, and she even liked the kink he added. She closed her eyes as he left the bed. A moment later, Eli rolled her to her back and set about slowly wiping her down with a cool washcloth. He kept saying he was going to take care of her, and damned if he didn't. She sighed in contentment.

She opened her eyes as Eli came out of the bathroom. His naked body looked good enough to eat and Lisa smiled at the idea. He watched her quietly, until Lisa patted the bed beside her. She didn't want to think about anything right now. She just knew it would be nice to have him lay beside her.

Eli slid in and kissed her softly, his lips rubbing against her own. "Are you okay?"

Lisa nodded. "Hell yeah, I'm just tired. How about you?"

He smiled and lay down, pulling her into his arms. "I'm excellent. Go to sleep baby, it's been a long day for both of us."

She snuggled down beside him and rested her head on his chest. He closed his arms around her and the beat of his heart and soft breathing lulled her to sleep.

Eli awoke in the night, wrapped tightly around a sleeping Lisa. They both smelled softly of peaches and sex, a scent that instantly gave him a hard on. The idea of spending the night with a woman was something he had never contemplated. He'd taken his date in, fucked her if she were willing, and left. End of story. He'd never wanted or needed the whole cuddling deal. He had to admit, with Lisa, things weren't the same. Lying with her, feeling her relaxed against his body, felt good. Shit, it felt more than good. So, what was it? What made this woman different from all the others?

He knew Lisa was certainly not like any other woman he'd spent time with. His usual women ran along the lines of naturally submissive, which is what he always looked for. They let him run the show, never questioning anything, knowing he would make the right decision. Eli was nothing if not brutally honest with himself, and could say, none of them had been someone he could see himself marrying.

He hadn't been worried about settling down; too involved with his job and the inherent danger it posed. Now, though, he had retired and was nearing forty. He didn't want to spend his time with a revolving door of women. He wanted one person in his life that he knew was his and his alone. Someone he trusted implicitly and would trust him.

He rolled his eyes. Shit, he sounded like a fucking Hallmark commercial. All someone needed was to cue the sappy music. Obviously, coming home affected him more than he'd realised. All he needed was some time and space and everything would be back to normal. He closed his eyes and forced his breathing to even out. The last thought before he slipped into sleep was that he hadn't even thought about getting up to leave.

Lisa rolled out of bed to the sounds of someone in her kitchen. She dug around until she found a sleep shirt, hoping it was Eli and not some psycho killer. Though, if it were a psycho killer, he would probably take one look at her hair and run away screaming. She quickly pulled said hair up in a clip and wandered into the kitchen.

Eli stood on a stepladder slathering some kind of compound on the ceiling. The hole, which had been there for a good number of years, was no longer visible. Maybe he could do fix-it stuff for a living. If he did it naked, he could probably retire within the year.

"Morning." He caught sight of her, as he was coming off the ladder.

"Hey, it looks good." She pointed towards her newly fixed ceiling.

"Once it dries and we paint it, no one will be able to tell it had a problem." He put the lid on the white goop and started cleaning up. Without thinking, she stepped up to him, grabbed the front of his t-shirt, and pulled him down for a kiss. He hesitated only a moment, maybe taken a bit by surprise, but opened his lips to her questing tongue. He slid his arms around her waist to lift her up, so they could be face to face. Lisa wrapped her arms around his neck, as her feet dangled off the floor.

She pulled back and smiled. "Good morning. Thank you for fixing my ceiling."

He returned the smile. "Good morning to you. You're very welcome."

"Are you hungry?"

"Depends on what you're offering." He nuzzled at her neck.

"I was going to fix you food, but if you'd rather have something else..." she trailed off with a shrug.

"Baby girl, I can think of a lot of things I'd rather have." He carried her into the bedroom and kicked the door shut.

Eli eased his Harley to a stop and waited his turn at the signal. The leisurely Sunday drive he'd taken usually settled him, but this one brought more confusion. Riding his bike gave him time to mull over things and come to decisions, but it hadn't happened. Lisa. The name sent a thrill through his body that hardened his cock instantly. The more time he spent with her the more he wanted, which was insane. How did two people go from disliking each other so intensely to fucking like rabbits every time they were within ten feet of one another? When had his judgement become so skewed that he misread not only the situation, but a person, so thoroughly.

He turned onto Caleb's street and his heart starting thumping hard when he saw Lisa's car in his brother's driveway. What was she doing here on a Sunday? He couldn't remember if Caleb had mentioned she was coming over. Hell, but when had he actually had a conversation with his brother over the past week or so? He'd spent most of his time with Lisa, rolling home early in the morning after Caleb had already left for work. Was she here looking for him? He told her he'd see her later, but hadn't really specified when that would be. Damn, was she one of those women who thought they should spend every waking

minute together now they were fucking? If that was the case, the day was going to be very uncomfortable.

He shut down the Harley and swung off the bike in one smooth motion. Tucking his helmet under his arm, he approached the house trying to figure out what to say and how to act. Fuck, this was ridiculous. This hesitant attitude was not how he reacted. He just needed to tell her she needed to give him space. He enjoyed the time they spent together, really enjoyed it, but was in no way interested in spending 24/7 with her.

Eli opened the door to laughter coming from the kitchen. He placed his helmet on the table by the door and made his way towards the sounds. He walked in as Caleb was placing wine glasses in front of Jacqueline and Lisa, who were perched on tall chairs at the large breakfast bar. The French doors leading to the screened deck were open and a pleasant breeze flowed through the room, fluttering the summer dresses both women wore.

"You sure are a pretty thing," his brother said in a country drawl, making an exaggerated wink in Lisa's direction.

Lisa laid her head on the countertop. "Stop. I told you I was done with that. I am no longer interested."

"Yeah, but the teasing will never stop," he replied. "That's what I'm here for, to remind you of the things you should never ever do."

"Great, a gigantic Jiminy Cricket, just what I need," Lisa said sarcastically.

Jack burst out laughing as Caleb finally noticed him standing in the doorway. "Hey, bro, good ride?"

"It was okay." Eli shrugged. "What's going on?"

"Nothing big, just getting ready to fix the ladies Sunday dinner."

At this announcement, Jack and Lisa both cheered and Caleb laughed. "As you can see they are most appreciative."

"Hell yeah," Lisa said. "We don't have to cook. All we have to do is sit back and eat. The perfect way to spend a Sunday."

"It would be," Jack replied. "If you came over every Sunday."

"Yeah, well, I don't want to intrude on your privacy every weekend. Every other is good."

"You haven't even been making it for that lately." Jack nudged her best friend.

"I told you, I've been busy trying to get the house ready. I want it on the market before school starts. I'd love to have it sold, but I'm not holding my breath."

Eli realised in that moment Lisa had been avoiding her best friend's house because of his presence. All of the conclusions he had come to once again were shit, pure and simple. This woman was so unlike any one he had ever met, but he was trying to shove her into one of those categories, and she wasn't going. For the first time, Eli decided to quit trying to dissect the hell out of everything and let it ride. He was in unknown territory so any experience he had from the past didn't apply.

"Are you eating with us?" Caleb asked him.

"Like Lisa said, if someone else is cooking I'm there." He sat next to her on one of the tall, armed, chairs at the large countertop. She smiled at him, but made no move to touch him in any way. Oddly, Eli felt stung that she didn't try. Fuck, what was wrong? First, he didn't want her acting as if they were a couple, and now he did. He was getting bad as some wimpy ass pussy not able to make up his mind.

Going with his gut, he caught Lisa's eye and slid a hand slowly up her dress and onto her naked thigh. She shivered visibly and placed her hand over his on the outside of the dress. He wasn't sure if she was stopping his exploration or just enjoyed his touch. He hoped it was the latter since he thoroughly enjoyed touching this woman.

Caleb opened the refrigerator and pulled out a dish containing chicken. "Baby, if you grab the rest of the stuff you can help me grill."

Jack jumped down from her chair and went around the counter to help her husband. "And why is it that you can make everything you say sound like a come on?"

He laughed. "With you it is. Come outside little girl, and I'll show you."

"We'll be back." Jack tossed the comment over her shoulder as she followed her husband outside.

Eli took that moment to lean in and nuzzle Lisa's neck. "Why didn't you tell me you were coming over today? I would have come to pick you up."

Lisa tilted her head to the side to give him better access. "I really didn't think about it. Jack called and reminded me that this is my Sunday to come to dinner, so here I am."

He turned in his seat to face her and took her lips in a kiss. She hesitated a brief moment before opening her mouth and allowing his tongue entrance. He deepened the kiss

and slid his hand farther up her skirt to tease her pussy through the panties she wore. She gasped into his mouth and eased her legs open so he could tuck a finger into the leg hole and lightly touch her clit. Lisa clutched her arms tighter around his neck as he yanked at the briefs she wore until they tore and he could plunge his fingers into her hot depths.

"Eli," Lisa gasped, grinding her pussy against his hand. "We can't. Caleb and Jack are right outside."

"Baby girl, we can since I'm sure they're doing the same thing outside." He paused long enough for the soft sounds of Jack's moans to filter into the kitchen. "Now put your legs over the arms of your chair so I can taste you."

Slowly, she placed her legs where he told her to, until she was spread before him in the sun-filled kitchen. He pushed her dress up to reveal her cunt, swollen and dripping, just waiting for him to take his fill. "What a pretty pussy," he murmured and leant forward to thrust his tongue as deeply into her as he could.

She choked back a cry and thrust her hips up as he clamped his hands around her waist to hold her into place.

She clutched at the arms as she gritted her teeth to stifle the moans he was used to hearing. But he would have none of that. He wanted her wild, here and now for him, damn who was listening.

Rising to his feet, he popped the snap of his jeans and shoved them down just enough to pull his cock out. "I'm gonna fuck you now, baby." He pulled a condom out of his wallet and put it on, never breaking eye contact with her. She shook her head, but made no effort to stop him or move away. He picked her up and put her on the edge of the counter. Pulling her legs around his hips, he leaned in until his cock kissed the entrance of her body. "Hold tight, baby girl."

She wrapped her arms around his neck as he plunged deep into her body in one thrust. Lisa writhed and moaned at the angle he had her, as he shoved into her body again and again. The tight walls of her sheath clenched and fluttered around him. He fought to keep the pounding rhythm, and deep plunges steady without going off. She felt so damn good around him, hot and tight, clutching at him as if she didn't want his cock to leave her body.

She shuddered and he knew he'd sent her into an orgasm, but he wasn't done. He wanted, no needed, her to come at least three times before he found his own satisfaction. He loved how she cried out and scratched his back as each orgasm drew her closer to the edge between pleasure and pain.

"Suck my finger, baby girl," he ordered as he placed his index finger in her mouth. She suckled as if she had his cock in her mouth, and he fought to keep his orgasm from coming. When she had thoroughly wet it, he reached down and pushed it deep into her anus. Lisa cried out, unable to help herself, as he rocked her back and forth between his cock in her pussy and the finger up her ass. He felt another orgasm push through her as sweat coated his flesh. "That's right, ride my cock and finger. Just wait baby girl, till I turn you over and fuck your ass. You'll love it," he whispered into her ear and she trembled, from the promise or his voice he wasn't sure. He didn't care, he knew it was only a matter of time before he took her to the next level. He needed to mark every spot on this woman's body as his own.

Eli shoved forward one last time to grind his cock into her body, and Lisa bucked against him as he let his body find its own satisfaction in her arms. Eli placed his forehead against Lisa's as the two of them attempted to catch their breath. Her sheath rippled around his cock as if she were still having mini-orgasms, and he kissed her gently on the lips.

"Are you okay?" he whispered.

She nodded. "Yeah, pretty good for almost being fucked to death."

"Did I hurt you?" He looked into her sleepy eyes.

"Hell no, but what a way to go." She laid her head on his shoulder.

He pulled from her body, which brought a small moan from her. "Let's get you upstairs, and I'll take care of you."

"Just use my bedroom." She draped her arms around him as he picked her up to carry her from the kitchen.

Following her directions, Eli walked them into the room next to the front door, kissing her the entire way. He decided right then that any previous thoughts or decisions he'd made about her in the past were gone. He didn't know what this thing was between them, but he wanted to explore it no matter where it took them. He just hoped she felt the same.

Chapter Five

Lisa sat in her newly painted kitchen admiring the job she had done. The must-do list was rapidly disappearing, now that Eli was helping her. In the last two weeks, they had finished the bathroom, painted the kitchen, replaced the scarred countertop and fixed the loose board on her front porch. He'd also helped her spruce up the landscaping in the front yard, so the realtor she hired could take pictures for the listing. All in all, she felt incredibly accomplished and ready to move.

She also hated to admit, the more time she spent with Elijah Sinclair, the more she liked him. She was getting sucked into a situation she knew would end up hurting her. She liked Eli far more than was good for both of them. In her head, Lisa knew she wasn't his type, but her heart and body didn't want to listen. God, the man did it for her. Just thinking about him made her wet and needy. In the past, sex was something she enjoyed but it didn't kill her if she went without. Now, if she and Eli missed a night fucking seven ways to Sunday, she and the vibrator had a standing date. However, they didn't often miss a night. In fact, last night was only the second time since they started sleeping together he hadn't been over. That was because he'd gone out of town with Caleb, who'd asked for his help installing a security system.

Lisa picked up the phone and dialled. As soon as Jack answered she announced, "Damn, my house looks good."

Jacqueline laughed. "I heard. So how much more do you think you have to do before you can sell?"

"The realtor's going to list it this weekend. I was wondering what you were doing today."

"Now that's a loaded question. What do you want to do?"

"My realtor keeps talking about staging the house so potential buyers can imagine themselves living here."

"Basically, she wants you to pack up your shit."

Lisa laughed. "Right on the first try. So, what do you say? I'll order sushi and we can have wine for lunch."

"Oh, hell yeah. I'm on my way."

Lisa opened her mouth to respond, but realised Jack was no longer there. If she'd known the affect of sushi and wine sooner, she could have certainly used Jack when she moved to a new classroom. Shaking her head, she hurried to change her clothes.

* * * *

"Where's the hole?" Jack stared up at the ceiling.

Lisa laughed. "It's gone. Eli fixed it. I don't know how, but he did."

Her friend raised her eyebrows. "Sooooo, what's going on with you two?"

Lisa pulled out the wine she had promised. How to answer that? She wasn't sure. Yeah, they were sleeping together, but what else could she say? She handed Jack a plate and began to open small containers holding the lunch she had ordered.

"Lisa?" Jack nudged her. "What's going on? When we talked before you acted like the sex was a one-time deal and no biggie. I know he's been spending the night and obviously helping you out."

She shrugged. "I had meant it to be a one-time thing. But then one thing led to another and...shit, I have no idea."

Jack watched her steadily. "I don't want you to get hurt. But, I know how you are, so you need to listen up." Jack paused and Lisa could almost see the gears turning in her mind. "You're so set on what you think you want, you might be missing out on something good."

"Jack, look —"

"I'm not done. So shush up and let me talk."

Lisa subsided, smiling as her friend used the "teacher voice" on her. The one guaranteed to freeze a kid at ten paces. "I'm shushed."

"You've constructed the ideal man in your head. I know you have, we've talked about it. Hell, I did the same thing. But what we imagine we want may not necessarily be what we need in our life. Caleb was nothing like the man I thought I would marry. But I love him so

much and he loves me. I cannot picture my life without him." Jack put her hand on Lisa's arm. "Just give some thought to what I've said."

"That's all well and good," Lisa said. "But even if I did decide that Eli is the man for me, I'm not the woman for him. He wants some submissive little girl he can order around, and that's not me. I'm not going to settle and playing some kind of role to snag a man."

"Keep an open mind," Jack said slowly. "You might think you know what Eli wants, but right now he's with you. He's not dating anyone else. You're it, sister, so maybe he's where you are. You know, thinking he knows what he wants, but it's not what he needs."

Lisa swallowed hard as tears bloomed. "Jack, I know what Eli wants and it's not me. He told me I wasn't what he wanted. He told me he didn't want a relationship with me."

"When was this?" Jack asked, disbelief on her face.

"When he first came home." Lisa wiped her eyes with her sleeve.

"So, before you two started sleeping together?"

She nodded. "But I did it anyway. I'm stupid. I did what I always said I wouldn't. Fall for a guy that doesn't want me. "

Jack laid a hand on her arm. "Lisa, stop and think. He's with you. He spends almost every moment with you. Are these the actions of a guy who doesn't want you? Like I said, keep an open mind and don't shut him out. Wait and see where this leads, okay?"

She took a deep breath. "Okay, yeah." But as she said it, she wasn't sure she believed it.

The two women finished lunch and worked steadily through the afternoon packing up anything they thought of as too personal. Throughout the activity, Lisa thought about what Jack had said. Could she be right? She had searched for "her man" for so long. She had built this image up in her head of who and what he would be. She did all the crazy online dating to end up dissatisfied with the choices she had made. None of the men had even been close to satisfying. In fact, one or two of them had shared traits with her ideal man, but the relationships hadn't worked out. So, was she allowing an imaginary man to truly blind her? She wasn't sure. If Eli was *the man*, then what? Neither one of them had even begun to talk about a relationship. They'd obviously fallen into a pattern of near nightly sex, but they were also spending their days together. Did that constitute a relationship?

The ringing of the phone ended her thoughts, and she hurried to answer. She had no idea who would be calling since Jack was with her. Pathetic really that she had one lone person who she talked to consistently.

"Hello."

"Hey baby girl, what are you doing?"

Lisa felt her stomach clench at the sound of Eli's voice. She loved hearing his low, sexy timbre. Shit, she did have it bad. "Jack and I are packing up stuff deemed too personal by the realtor."

"Just make sure you leave the vibrators where they are." His voice dropped to an impossibly deep level. "I have plans for them."

Lisa caught her breath. "Really? What kind of plans?"

"That would spoil the surprise, baby, I wouldn't want to do that."

"Yeah, but what if I want to know before I agree."

"Defiant? Well then, I guess I'll have to spank you. Would you like that? I know you loved it the first time."

Lisa slid into the bathroom to make sure she was out of Jack's sight. She could feel the flush spread up her neck as her pussy began to ooze wetness. How did he do this to her?

"Maybe," she finally answered. She sounded breathy even to her own ears.

"Damn, baby, I wish I was there right now."

"Me too," she answered truthfully.

"I'm sure Caleb will call Jacqueline, but we aren't going to make it back tonight. The job is taking longer than anticipated."

"That sucks. When do you think you'll leave?"

"I'm not sure. I'm hoping tomorrow, but it could be the day after."

Disappointment crawled up and took hold. It was crazy, but in the short time they had been together, she had gotten used to having him around. He'd only been gone a day, but it felt like a whole lot longer. Now he was saying possibly another two days, and the idea was putting a huge knot in her stomach.

"What's wrong, baby girl?"

What to say? Should she tell him the truth? Hell, he'd made it more than clear he didn't want a relationship with her, but weren't they in a relationship? He was with her

almost every day and night, so he wasn't seeing anyone else. Lisa decided to just jump in and tell him how she felt. Because, right now, she was sinking fast and if he didn't feel that way about her, she needed to end it now.

"I miss you," she finally said. "I wanted you to come home today."

He paused and Lisa figured this was it. The big kiss off or something similar. He'd never promised her anything. Now she was admitting feelings and he'd realise what a huge mistake sleeping with her had been.

"I miss you too." Eli's voice softened. "I wanted to be home today. I had plans for us this evening."

"Really?" Lisa felt her heart leap. He missed her. He missed her just as she missed him. The thought was a little dizzying. Who'd have thought it? "What kind of plans?"

"That would ruin the surprise. What are you doing tonight?"

"Well since the man I usually spend the evening with is out of town, I think I'll just stay in."

"Good. I'll call you once I get to the hotel."

"Okay."

"Have you ever had phone sex?"

Lisa paused, smiling. "No, I don't think I have."

"I'll have to make up for the lack of it in your life."

"You are so giving," she teased.

He laughed. "Yeah, that description fits me. It's a sacrifice, but I think I can manage. I'll call you later, baby girl."

She disconnected and stepped out of the bathroom to find Jack waiting. "That was Eli."

"I know, Caleb just called. He's totally pissed that the job isn't as simple as it was supposed to be. Apparently, the client keeps changing his mind."

"I hope he charges the dude double for all the extra work."

Jack laughed. "Oh you know he will. He hates indecisiveness. Besides, he had to reschedule another job to stay the extra day so the client will definitely be charged." She paused, eyeing Lisa. "So, how's Eli?"

"Pissed. He wanted to come home." Lisa hesitated turning the phone receiver in her hands. "I told him I missed him."

"And, what did he say?"

"He said he missed me too."

Jack put an arm around her shoulders as they walked back to the living room. "How do you feel?"

"Scared, uncertain...this is new territory for me. I'm not quite sure what I should do. I mean I've never been here before with a man."

Jack nodded. "Look, just take it one step at a time. Don't rush it, but be open. You don't want to miss something that may turn out to be amazing."

* * * *

Lisa lay in bed thumbing through a magazine. She glanced at the clock for what seemed like the millionth time. She couldn't believe she was this jacked up over a guy calling her. It was only ten, but it felt like it could have been later for as long as she waited. She should have gone out and found something to do. Waiting around for Eli to call was stupid and all it did, obviously, was set her up for disappointment. When did men ever do anything they promised? And, more than that, when did she actually start believing them? She was done. She wouldn't do this to herself. When...if he called, she would tell him she didn't want to see him anymore. Simple as that, she was done with whatever this thing was they had. Who was she kidding? It was sex, plain and simple, nothing more.

The phone rang and Lisa stared at it as if it was a snake ready to strike. Answer it? Not? It was probably a telemarketer so she should ignore it. The phone rang again and against her better judgement, she picked it up. "Hello."

"Hey baby girl, how are you?"

Lisa clutched the phone, unsure of what to say. He had called, just like he said he would.

"Lisa, baby, are you there?"

She could hear the concern in his voice. "Yeah, I'm here. I wasn't sure you would call."

"I'm sorry, we just got to the hotel. Some idiot ran a light and hit us. We had to wait for the police."

"Are you okay?" Lisa sat up, a small shiver of fear running through her.

"We both got a little banged up, but nothing serious. The kid who hit us, was going to leave the scene, but Caleb and I convinced him that wouldn't be a good idea. Turns out, he didn't have insurance, and tried to argue with the cops. It was fucked up."

Lisa could easily hear the frustration in his voice. Damn, they had only been vaguely dating for a few weeks and she already knew him. Shit, that probably wasn't something she wanted to think about.

"So, neither of you got hurt?" Lisa prompted, wondering what 'banged up' meant in Eli-speak.

"Nothing worth mentioning."

"Yeah, mention it so I don't imagine worse. Besides, Jack will tell me when I ask her."

"Airbags deployed, we're bruised from the restraints, and we ended up with some stitches. No big deal."

"Stitches?"

"The kid hit us in the side and jerked us around pretty good. Caleb cut his hand, he's not sure on what, and I have a few in my forehead. We're both pissed and achy, but nothing serious."

Lisa relaxed back against her pillows. "You two are damn lucky, you know that? It could have been a lot worse. I'm just glad you're okay."

"So you didn't think I'd call? I told you I would." His tone was even, but she could detect a hint of anger...hurt? No matter, she didn't want the phone call to go to shit. She had already told him she missed him, so she may as well jump in with both feet.

"I'm not used to guys keeping their word. They say they'll call, but get busy or find something better to do." She tried to keep her voice light, but instead she could clearly hear the sting of past disappointments.

He didn't answer for a long moment and she held her breath waiting. Finally, he spoke, his voice softer than she had ever heard it. "Baby girl, if I tell you I'm going to do something, you can take it to the bank. I won't lie to you. Besides, they must have been idiot boys. I can't imagine there's anything better to do in the world than you."

She burst out laughing. "You think?"

"Baby, I know."

"You sound like Caleb. He says I date pussy boys."

"Not this time," he paused. "Lisa, I know we got off to a rocky start. Shit, I said some really stupid things. Things I regret. But I think we're good together. Really good together. I want you to know that I'm not seeing anyone else. I wouldn't since we're having sex, but wanted you to hear it. I want it to be the two of us."

Hell, she was neck deep already, may as well swim and see what happened. "I agree, about the rocky start and being good together. I want to just see you. I like how you make me feel."

"Good, because I don't want you dating anyone but me. And I have plans to make you feel so much better." He laughed softly. "So, I guess this is the part of the conversation I ask you what you're wearing."

"Truth? I'm wearing one of your t-shirts." Lisa snuggled down in the covers, fingering the oversized tee. She felt stupid, but it smelled like Eli, clean and masculine.

"Damn, I wish I was there to see that. Hell, I wish I were there with you, period, no matter what you had on. If I hadn't promised Caleb I'd help him, I'd leave right now."

"If I didn't know Caleb, I'd say to hell with him and ask you to come home. But without you there, it'll take him longer to finish the job. Besides, with both of you injured a good night's sleep is the best thing you can do for yourself."

"No, the best thing I could do for myself would be you."

She laughed. "You're bad."

"Yeah, but you like me anyway."

"I certainly do," Lisa said, without hesitation.

"Damn, I wanted to be your first phone sex, but I actually have a pounding headache."

"Elijah, please get some sleep. If I know Caleb, he's going to want to get up and moving as early as possible."

"He said something about that. I agree. The faster we can get this clusterfuck over with the faster we can get home. I'll call you tomorrow, baby."

"I'll be waiting," Lisa said, believing him. "Take care."

After a few more minutes, she hung up the phone stunned with the turn of events. She and Eli were in a relationship. She finally had to admit it. What they had wasn't just sex. She wasn't quite sure where it was going, but decided to not worry about it. She would think of it like the vacations she and Jack always took. She wouldn't make plans or try to figure shit out, but just enjoy each day to the fullest. The thought was almost scary, since this was a totally new approach. However, she decided since Eli was unlike any man she'd ever dated before, she would actually give up the steel control she always held onto. Lisa turned out the lights and snuggled down under the sheet, satisfied with her new outlook.

* * * *

Lisa slogged through the rain, cursing her current home's lack of a garage. She'd awoken that morning to the sound of a heavy downpour. Briefly, she'd considered pulling the sheet over her head and going back to sleep, but knew she couldn't. The realtor wanted to begin showing the house the following week and Lisa still had a lot of stuff to clean out. She wondered how one person could accumulate so much stuff in such a short time. It wasn't as if she was wildly extravagant and went on huge spending sprees. In fact, she really didn't like shopping. She and Jack only went when they had something particular in mind or they were desperate. Not that she could tell from all the stuff sitting around in boxes, though.

Before leaving town, Caleb had suggested she rent a portable storage unit so she could have it delivered right to her home. Lisa had thought it sounded like a great idea. The big truck would drop it off, she would fill it up, and the company would pick it up and store it somewhere safe. Of course, she had forgotten how much work the filling up part took. Especially, if the chosen workday also happened to be one filled with never-ending rain.

Lisa carried more boxes out the door as thunder rumbled across the sky. Fuck, the weather dude had sworn the rain would be brief and only consist of drizzles. She knew she shouldn't have trusted him, since the guy never predicted anything correctly. If she did her job with the accuracy that he performed his, she would have been fired a long time ago.

The sound of a car pulling into her driveway made her heart catch. She knew it wasn't Eli, couldn't be him, but her stupid heart was hoping. Damn, she was an idiot. No man had gotten to her as fast as this one had. She didn't want to think about the future, wouldn't think

about it, since making plans meant getting her hopes up. In the past, that had brought a lot of disappointment. She just couldn't do that to herself.

"Hey."

Lisa smiled at the sound of Jack's voice. She dumped her boxes in the storage unit and went out to meet her. "How're you doing? How's Caleb?"

"He's pissed," Jack said as Lisa led the way into the house. "I pretty much freaked out when he told me about the accident." She slumped into a chair at the tiny kitchen table. "I held it together until after we got off the phone then bawled like a dork. Caleb swears it's not that bad, but he's all tough guy and would say that if a bone was protruding from his leg."

Lisa laughed. "Eli said the same thing. I made him explain what his definition of 'not that bad' was. He said he got some stitches in his forehead and Caleb got them in his hand. To me, if there were stitches that means there was blood. That equates to bad in my teacher medical book."

Jacqueline nodded. "Yeah, that's how I see things. My stomach is in knots. I just want him home. This caring for someone is for the birds, man."

"So did you come over to help me pack?" Lisa gave a hopeful smile, not wanting to talk about caring. She was spending way too much time thinking about how she was feeling. Talking about it would make it more real than it already felt. She knew it was dumb, but that's the way she had decided to deal, by not dealing with it.

"Yes, but I also came to take you to lunch. We need major sustenance and drinks before we work in the rain. At least, that's what I'm thinking anyway."

Lisa smiled. "You're just so damn smart, it's scary."

"I know." Jack shrugged. "It's a burden I have to bear. Get your shit together so we can get out of here. We need major chips and salsa therapy."

* * * *

Lisa lay in the centre of her bed listening to the rain drum against the roof. She and Jacqueline had worked most of the day slogging back and forth in the pouring rain packing up the storage unit. She'd also spent the day tossing tons of junk she didn't understand why she'd ever kept. A lot of it was old work from students long gone. Why she ever thought a

five-year-old math test would be needed someday was anybody's guess. Jack had assured her she had done the same thing when she and Caleb had moved into their current home.

Lisa rolled to her side and pulled her knees up to her chest. Eli had left a message on her cell phone sometime during the day telling her he and Caleb planned on working late that night. So there would be no phone call, since the men were going to leave for home first thing in the morning. Today had been the first day in weeks she hadn't actually spoken to him. She closed her eyes as tears welled and slid out from under her lashes. Fuck, what the hell was the matter? When did a man become so important that if she didn't talk to him she got teary? Lisa shook her head and brushed the tears away. That wasn't it and she knew it. The tears came from the fact that Elijah Sinclair was important and her mind was finally coming to accept the fact. Why him? Why now? He could hurt her badly and there wasn't anything she could do about it. He had somehow snuck in under her defences when she wasn't looking. Damn him. She couldn't even tell him she didn't want to see him anymore, since that would hurt too. She couldn't run, she couldn't hide. She'd just have to hope he was the man he said he was and not like the boys she had dated.

* * * *

A sound brought Lisa awake. She opened her eyes to realise she had fallen asleep across her bed with the light on. She rubbed her eyes and sat up to check the clock, it read four. The sound that originally woken her came again. It sounded like knocking. Someone was knocking on her door at four in the morning. She struggled from the bed and shuffled down the hall, hoping to hell whoever it was had a damn fine reason for bugging her this late. She flipped on the front porch light and peeked out the peephole. There, standing soaked on her porch, was the man she'd thought about all day.

She quickly opened the door. Eli stepped in and pulled her into his arms. Lisa wrapped herself around him, not caring one bit that her nightclothes got wet. She didn't know how he had gotten on the porch, but at the moment she couldn't care less.

"Hey, baby girl," he whispered. "Damn, it's good to see you."

"How did you get here?" She pulled back so she could see him. A black line of stitches ran down the right side of his forehead and onto his temple. Bruising was starting and his eye looked a little swollen, but to Lisa he was the best thing she had seen.

"I made Caleb drop me off." He carried her over the threshold and kicked the door shut. "We both decided that no matter what, we were making it home by today. So we just worked straight through and left about seven."

"I'm glad you're here. I missed you."

As a reply, he captured her lips in a soft kiss. Lisa opened her mouth as his tongue swept in to swirl around her own. He tasted hot and spicy and so familiar. Fuck, she'd missed him. She brought her legs up to wrap around his waist and pressed herself tighter to him. No man made her want the way Eli did, to need the feel of his body against hers.

Eli slid his hands up the back of her nightshirt to grip her ass. Lisa shivered at his touch and thrust back against his hands. She wanted him, right here, right now. Her pussy was wet and she ached to feel him deep in her body. He moved his hand until he could thrust two fingers into her vagina. She moaned and ground herself back against his hand.

"Baby girl, your pussy is hot and ready. Have you been playing with it while I've been gone? Touching yourself? Do I need to fuck you? Is that what you need? My cock in that hot pussy?"

"Yes." Lisa's cunt wept with the combination of Eli's touch and his words. Only he worked her up this fast, only he could satisfy what he'd started.

"Unzip my pants and pull my dick out," he ordered and, without thought, she reached between them to follow his instructions. He reached into his back pocket and pulled his wallet out. "Fuck, I don't have a condom. I hope to hell we have some left."

Lisa ran her hand up and down his hot length. "I'm on the pill, and I've never had unprotected sex."

He looked up and the two of them locked eyes. She couldn't even believe the words had come out of her mouth, but they had. She trusted him enough to let him into her body without anything between them. A part of her wanted to call the words back, but the huge slutty part just wanted him to thrust his cock into her and ride until they both came.

"I've never had unprotected sex, and I'm clean. I always get checked." Eli kissed her softly. "Are you sure?"

She nodded, not trusting her voice, but totally trusting him. Jacqueline would fall over in a dead faint to hear her admit she trusted a man. Hell, to hear her admit to trusting anyone was something to write home about.

"Damn, baby, I want to feel you hot and naked on my cock. I have never wanted that before. Ever."

Okay, so this was a huge deal to him too. Maybe once all the hormones had calmed down they could talk, but right now, she just wanted him take her. "Please, Eli. In me. Now." She gripped his cock and teased him between her vaginal lips. He felt hot, as if he were branding her, ruining her for any other man.

He turned them so her back was against the front door and thrust deep into her body. Both of them gasped at the feel of skin against skin. He looped his arms around her legs and pulled them wide as he began to power in and out of her sheath. The position gave her leverage to meet each of his thrusts and she could feel him bottom out against her cervix each time he slid home. Pain and pleasure swirled together and the only thought she had was she never wanted it to end.

"Your pussy is so sweet, so hot, baby." He murmured against her lips. "You're burning me up. Fuck, I love the way you grip me, like you don't want me to pull out. I'm gonna shoot my cum so deep inside of you. I'll fill you up. Who does this pussy belong to, baby? Tell me, who owns this pussy."

"You do." She ground herself against him and cried out as the orgasm came from out of nowhere. And still Eli continued to fuck her. Incredibly, she could feel another orgasm build and she struggled, unsure whether she was running towards it or away.

"Come on, baby, come for me again. You can do it. Come for me." Eli shifted positions so he hit her clit on every stroke and Lisa gripped his shoulders as tears poured from her eyes.

"I can't...I don't..." Lisa cried out.

"Come now," Eli ordered as he thrust his cock into her pussy and a finger deep into her anus.

Lisa cried out and shook as the orgasm finally broke. Moisture gushed from her vagina as Eli gave one last shove and began to pour semen deep into her body. She wrapped her arms around his neck and held him as he came. He was still dressed and his clothing stuck to his wet body. Lisa breathed him in, loving the heated masculine scent that was all Eli.

"Are you okay?" He nuzzled her neck.

"I'm great, how about you?"

"I don't have a headache anymore." He gave a small laugh. "Damn, baby, I hadn't meant to jump you as soon as I walked in the door. But you just looked so good, I couldn't help myself."

"You didn't hear me complaining."

Eli pulled himself from her body and she could feel their mingled fluids ease down her thighs. Lisa always thought it would have felt gross, now it made her feel sexy and wanted. Just one more thing to add to her arsenal of stuff she didn't want to think about. Pretty soon, there would only be the weather and what to have for dinner on the list. At a rumble of thunder, she amended the thought about the weather. If it didn't stop raining soon the weather would definitely be off her list since it was starting to seriously piss her off.

Eli locked the front door and swept her up in his arms. "Let's get cleaned up and go to bed. I haven't slept since I've been gone."

"Excellent idea." She laid her head on his shoulder. "I'm glad Caleb dropped you off."

"I'd hoped you'd feel that way." He carried her into the master bath and set her on the counter top, just as he had the second night they were together. Lisa watched as he grabbed towels and turned the water on in the shower. For a big man he moved with an economy of movement she found incredibly sexy. Who the hell was she kidding, he could stand and breathe and she'd find him sexy.

He pulled her into the shower and proceeded to wash her body. When he started on his own, she pulled the cloth from his hand and slowly began to run it over him. Eli closed his eyes and stood completely still as she bathed him. He looked like a war god with his rippling muscles and myriad scars. Instead of repelling, the scars were a turn on since they proved he was a survivor able to handle anything that life threw his way.

Once they were finished, Eli dried both of them off and tossed the towel in the hamper. She loved a man who could clean up after himself.

He pulled the covers down on the bed and turned out the lights as Lisa crawled in and settled down. She was still slightly damp and the small breeze from the ceiling fan caused a small shiver to run through her body. Instantly, Eli was there to snuggle up behind her and pull her into an embrace. His large body encircled her and she felt safe, warm, and very

much taken care of. Lisa shifted a bit until her back was perfectly moulded to his front and he had buried his face in her neck.

Eli kissed her on her shoulder. "Night, baby girl."

Lisa pulled his arm around her and kissed his palm. Damn, she loved that he was here with her. She felt content and whole as if all she needed was Elijah Sinclair in her life. The thought was scary. She had no idea where this thing was going between them. She didn't know how other people took the uncertainty. She was a person that always wanted to know where she was heading and how she was getting there. Lisa decided that tonight was not the time to worry about anything since he was here with her and it was late. Maybe later in the day she would worry, but for right now, her life was pretty good.

Chapter Six

“What do you think?”

Lisa stared through the rain-flecked windshield towards the house that Eli pointed out. They’d slept late into the afternoon only waking to make love before going back to sleep again. Lisa had never felt more lazy or decadent in her life. It seemed every time she opened her eyes, Eli was touching, kissing, or licking her. She could totally understand women who thought harems were a good idea. Laying and allowing another being to worship her body was pretty damn good for a girl’s self-esteem.

Due to the rain, they had taken Lisa’s car once they finally decided to roll out of bed and find something for dinner. Eli had asked to drive since he’d said he wanted to show her something. The something had turned out to be a house on a large tract of land. The driveway wound through a small copse of trees to stop in front of a small structure that looked as if it should be a garage, but was listing to one side as if being pushed by a strong breeze. The house itself was a two-storey stone structure with a large front porch that looked in serious need of TLC. However, Lisa could see the potential in the home, especially since the land around the house consisted of a deep growth of trees, which would afford absolute privacy.

“The house is beautiful, though it needs work. The garage needs to be torn down before it falls down, and the land is gorgeous.” After the assessment, she turned to look quizzically at her companion.

“I bought it.” Eli gave a small smile. “I wasn’t looking for a place, but I was out riding this way and found it. I closed on it right before Caleb and I left. You’re the only person who knows.”

Lisa turned back towards the house and could see why it would appeal to Eli. It was solid, like the man sitting next to her, and private, nestled among a dense setting of trees and bushes. “If you need help, let me know.” Lisa offered. “How much land is there?”

"A good couple acres. There's a stream and waterfall on the property too, but you can't see it from here, since everything is all grown up. The woman who lived here was elderly and just couldn't keep the place up. Do you want to see it?"

"I'd love to." She waited impatiently as he came around and opened the door for her. Even in the foul weather, Eli was still a gentleman, or perhaps she should say especially in the weather since he watched out for her to make sure she stayed dry and protected. After their talk on the phone and the unprotected sex Eli was different with her. He touched her more. Stroked her. Held her hand. The absolute fear Lisa expected to feel wasn't present. Oh, she still had worries, but nothing so overwhelming as to make her think about breaking up with him. In the past, the closer she and the man she was involved with got, the more stressed she felt. If he began making plans for them she could almost feel walls closing in around her. Now, with Eli, there was none of that. Everything felt right. Deep down, she knew she could still get hurt, but then she was sure everyone had those type of fears. She refused to allow the fears to choke her and really, it wasn't that much work. She trusted Eli and for Lisa, trust wasn't easily given. But this man had proved himself time and again. Even when they were naked and she was her most vulnerable Eli took care of her, always put her first. She didn't want to give that up, give him up.

Lisa followed Eli around the house as he showed her the living room with its stone fireplace and huge kitchen with a bay window that overlooked an area that had once been a garden. The upstairs boasted three bedrooms, a modest bathroom, and a master suite with windows that showcased a small pond. The place was desperately in need of updates, but overall it showed promise. Lisa hoped she found somewhere just as nice when she began her house hunt.

Throughout the tour, Eli talked about the improvements he wanted to make, such as expanding the master bathroom and adding a huge wall of windows and a deck to the bedroom to make the most of the view. Lisa tossed out suggestions as they went and soon she found herself sitting on the floor of the living room with Eli sketching out plans for the kitchen and living room. She loved the fact that he listened and weighed what she had to say as if her input was necessary to the home improvement projects.

Lisa found herself leaning against his side as he shuffled through the papers and made notes. Absently, he took one of her hands and kissed the palm. She shivered from his touch

and Eli dropped his pencil and turned to kiss her. She crawled into his lap, enjoying the feel of his large body surrounding her. Damn, the man could kiss. He turned his undivided attention to her and Lisa's panties instantly got damp.

"So are we staying here?" she asked between kisses.

He laughed. "Hell no, I'm feeding you. Then we'll go back to your place. It has a nice comfortable bed. Once I get this place cleaned up and get some furniture then we'll come here. It's nice and quiet and I have some really fun games we can play where we won't be disturbed."

Lisa sighed as she leaned in for one last kiss. "Now that sounds intriguing."

"You'll like them. I promise."

* * * *

Eli laid in bed that night watching Lisa sleep. She was curled up next to him in a boneless heap where she'd collapsed after their energetic lovemaking. He ran his fingers through her hair and she barely stirred, snuggling closer to him. Hell, he was in deep. He could feel it in his gut. This woman was important to him, more important than any woman had been before. He had been a fool to imagine this was some short-term affair that would be over in no time. But what to do?

He tucked his arm behind his head and stared up at the ceiling. The ever-present rain pattered against the window, creating an intimate setting he was more than comfortable with. In the past, if he even had an inkling a woman wanted more he was gone. His life wasn't suited for long-term anything. He could be deployed at a moment's notice without any promises of return. Now his life was his own, and he found that he wanted to spend it with the woman lying beside him. The idea that Lisa Karrington was his ideal woman would have been laughable a month ago. Now he wasn't laughing. He found her intelligent, funny, and incredibly sexy.

But what to do now? It wasn't as if he was experienced in serious relationships. Hell, he didn't think he had ever been in one, other than with his family and they certainly didn't count. He had to be close to them, it was some kind of rule. But Lisa was different and he wasn't sure how to proceed. Fuck, the feeling of ignorance didn't settle well on him. He was

the man always in control. He always knew what to do and when to do it. Now he was stopped dumb by a woman.

He eased from the bed and padded to the living room. Without a second thought, he picked up the phone and dialled Caleb. Hell, it was two in the morning, but he needed to talk and he'd had plenty of calls coming from the other direction. He figured Caleb owed him.

The phone rang only twice before his brother answered. "This had better be good, asshole."

"I love you too, bro." Eli paced the living room.

"What's going on? Are you okay?"

Now that he was on the phone Eli was unsure really what to say. "Yeah, I think so. Just a little bewildered. When did you know Jacqueline was the one?"

"What?" The confusion was evident in Caleb's voice. "Wait, let me catch up. How did I know Jack was my woman? You know, she and I knew each other for years. In fact, I was engaged to her friend Claire."

"I know, I remember when you got engaged. You called to tell me."

"Yeah well, her breaking up with me was the best thing that ever happened. I'd always liked Jack, she and I had a lot in common and could talk about anything. I also thought she was beautiful. I was engaged, not dead, but Claire and I were in a relationship. Once we broke up, Jack and I went through this awkward period where we tried to establish our own relationship separate from the one the three of us had set up. I don't know, I was at dinner with her one night and she was telling me something about her day and it just hit me. I knew she was meant for me. I just had to convince her."

"But how did you know?" Eli pressed.

"I'm not sure I can explain it." Caleb went quiet finally after a moment he spoke. "She made everything feel right. I feel calm with her, feel as if I can accomplish anything. I wanted to be more and do more because of her. The more I was with her the more I wanted her. Not just her body, that's a given, but her attention, her thoughts, her trust. I wanted to be the man she came to when things went wrong or when things were right. I wanted it all. Does it make sense?"

"Yeah, it does."

"What's going on?"

Eli ran a hand over his face. "This thing with Lisa hasn't turned out like I thought."

"What do you mean?"

"When we started out, I didn't want a relationship with her. Told her she wasn't my type. Then, we slept together and I figured she and I would have some fun, good sex, and I'd move on. It's not turning out like that. I want...more. Shit, I want what you and Jack have."

"With Lisa?"

"Yes, who the fuck else am I in a relationship with?"

Caleb laughed. "Dude, I'm just asking. Sometimes, Eli, your mind works in ways I don't quite get."

"I bought a house," he blurted.

"Really? Congrats. Does she know?"

"Yeah, I took her to see it. Caleb, I bought it thinking she would really like it. Fuck, is that twisted? I mean it's not like we've declared our undying love for each other."

"No, not twisted. Hopeful. That's what I would call it. So now what?"

"You tell me. You're the expert, this is all new to me."

"I took Jack to a bed and breakfast and fucked the hell out of her. So I don't think that will work for you, besides you and Lisa are already there. Just tell her how you feel. I don't understand all the games and shit people play. There would be less confusion if people talked."

"On that note, I've decided to come to work with you at the security company if the offer is still open."

"Are you kidding? Hell yeah, it's open. I talked to Jason today, and if you want in then you can be a third partner. You know the company is growing and I'd love to have somebody I can trust there with me. Does Lisa know?"

"No, not yet. But she will."

"Come by later in the morning and we can get the paperwork rolling. Damn, man, I am jazzed about this. It's good to have you on board, Eli."

"Thanks, Caleb. I'll see you later."

Eli hung up the phone. His life certainly wasn't going where he thought it would. He was in a relationship with a woman he'd said he didn't like, owned a home, and was going to work with his brother. Instead of feeling trapped or unsatisfied, a sense of contentment

settled in his chest. He decided after his meeting with Caleb, he and Lisa would sit and have a talk. Before making plans he wanted to be sure she was on the same page he was, heading towards something permanent.

* * * *

Lisa lounged in her living room pretending to read a teaching magazine. Eli, leaving for a meeting with Cal, had said they needed to talk when he got back. Now Lisa sat with her stomach in knots. What did he want to talk about? Breaking up? She couldn't imagine that was it, especially since their conversation over the phone. Also, Eli struck her as the type that if he was walking, he would just say it and do it, not drag it out. She flipped open her cell phone, only ten minutes had passed since the last time she checked.

She stared up at the ceiling as thunder rumbled and the damned rain pounded against the windows. She really should get up and pack more stuff or something, but she didn't feel like doing much. She was content to lay here and do nothing. Ever since Eli had come home, she hadn't gotten much sleep. The man seemed set on making love in every room of the house, but it wasn't like she was complaining. Was this the action of a man set to break up with her? To Lisa, it felt as if their relationship was more intense now that they weren't using a condom. She loved the feel of his naked cock deep inside her body. Yep, she had it bad.

She closed her eyes and began the deep breathing exercises she had read about. Some article somewhere had said something about reaching a meditative state, but usually all she did was fall asleep. Right now, though, sleep may be the best outcome since she wasn't getting much at night. She imagined her arms getting heavy as she continued to breathe steadily in and out. Her nose began to itch and Lisa forced herself to ignore it. She was really getting into the whole breathing deal when a huge clap of thunder shook the house. Lisa opened her eyes as an enormous flash of lightning lit up the living room. A cracking sound followed and her house shook, tossing her off the couch onto the floor.

The lights went out and the house listed to one side and shrieked as metal and wood ground together. Lisa covered her head with her arms and rolled under the coffee table as debris began to rain down around her. Frantically, she scrambled for her cell phone and

punched out the only number that came into her head. She huddled under the table as the house came apart around her.

The phone rang once, twice, then the voice she had been hoping for answered. "Miss me already, baby girl?"

"Eli," Lisa sobbed out, surprised that she was crying.

"What is it?"

"I don't know. The house sounds like it's coming apart." She went to say more when she realised all she could hear was dead air. He was gone. Another crash came, Lisa closed her eyes, and tried to make herself as small as possible, hoping the table was protection enough.

Eli slammed out of the office with Caleb on his heels. Fear pumped through his veins, fear like nothing he'd ever felt before. Not even during the missions that had gone to shit had he been as scared as he was now. The absolute terror in Lisa's voice, not to mention the tears, was enough to send him into a full flight and fight response. He had to get to her. Now.

Caleb gunned the engine on his truck and roared out of the parking lot as Eli cursed. He wanted to drive, but his brother had refused. Caleb said he could get them to the house quickly and in one piece. Eli didn't give a shit about the pieces—just they got there as fast as possible. He pressed his foot to the floor, willing Caleb to pour on more speed. He looked over and saw they were hitting speeds close to eighty, but he didn't care. The truck could go much faster.

They took a corner and skidded, but Caleb manoeuvred the vehicle until it had traction again. The two of them were dead silent. What was there to say? Eli could only think to order him to give it more gas and he knew that wouldn't help. So, he sat in silence and held on as his brother drove like a crazy man through the rain-slicked streets.

When they finally reached Lisa's place and slid to a stop, Eli froze. The tree from the neighbour's yard had fallen on her house. Most of the roof looked to be caved in and the entire building seemed to be sliding off the foundation. Caleb opening his door galvanised Eli into action. He thrust open his own door and followed his brother to the sagging front porch. His one thought, his only thought, was to find Lisa.

Eli turned the knob on the door, and though it was unlocked it didn't open. "Fuck! Lisa!" Eli yelled as he tried to kick in her front door. It shuddered but didn't give under the assault.

Eli threw his shoulder into it. Still nothing. Caleb joined him in the assault on the door. Both men, working together, battered at the front door until it finally gave and they could force their way in. Branches stabbed through the roof and littered the hallway. The back portion of the house, including the master bedroom, was gone, obliterated by the weight of the tree. Bile rose in his throat, and for a moment Eli was blind from the tears that welled up and distorted his vision.

"Lisa!" Eli yelled again.

"Eli! Caleb!"

Her voice, issuing from the living room, was the switch Eli needed to begin to function again. He kicked aside debris as he shoved his way into the room. Lisa crawled unsteadily from under the coffee table and he swept her into his arms. She wrapped her arms and legs around him, clinging to him as if he were the only stable thing in the world. He held her tight as they exited the house. Rain poured down, as Caleb opened the passenger door of the truck. Eli set Lisa in the seat and began to run his hands over her. "Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

"I don't know," she said through clenched teeth. "I can't stop shaking."

Caleb pulled a blanket from the back and handed it to Eli. He wrapped the blanket and his arms around Lisa. Fuck, he'd almost lost her. He stood holding her, uncaring of the rain and the gathering crowd. Sirens screamed down the street adding to the cacophony. He closed his eyes and breathed in the fresh scent of her hair, not sure which one of them shook more.

"Lisa!" Jacqueline screamed, as she jumped from a car and raced up the driveway.

Reluctantly, Eli stepped aside to allow Lisa out of the vehicle and the two women to hug. He hadn't wanted to, but knew Jack would have just shoved him aside. He turned and stared at the house they had pulled Lisa from. Damn, it looked like a bomb had hit it. Wearily, he rubbed his hand over his face as he watched the swarm of emergency personnel gather around the wreckage.

Lisa's voice pulled him from his thoughts. She was trying to explain to her friend what had happened. All Eli knew or cared about was that they had gotten her out safely. Anything else was just extra shit he couldn't care less about.

"Well, I don't think I need to worry about trying to sell it now," Lisa said and laughed shakily.

Jack wiped away tears and smiled. "You could advertise it as a fixer-upper and reduce the price."

Caleb returned from speaking to some of the responders and put his arms around his wife. "We need to get out of here. We're standing in the rain blocking the driveway and there's nothing we can do. The house isn't stable enough to even enter, but if and when it is, the cops said they'd call me."

Lisa looked at her house for one last minute and climbed into the passenger seat of the truck. Caleb took Jack's hand and hustled her to her car finally leaving Lisa and Eli alone. He closed Lisa's door and came around to the driver's side, climbed in and shut the door. The inside of the vehicle was quiet, but for Lisa's breathing and the muted sounds surrounding the vehicle. Eli wasn't sure what, if anything, he should say. Starting the truck, he backed slowly out of the driveway.

Lisa pulled the blanket tighter around her body and briefly wondered when the muzzy feeling would end and the true realisation of what happened would hit. She closed her eyes and hoped it wasn't too soon. She didn't really want to have to think about what to do now. Everything that hadn't been packed into her storage unit was, in effect, gone. If, when, the fire department called Caleb she may be able to enter and salvage something, but right now, she had nothing with her but the clothes on her back. She didn't even have her purse, which was currently crushed somewhere in her bedroom. The stuff in the storage unit was personal belongings, winter clothing, and a few pieces of furniture. Hell, she wished she would have packed more, but that just hadn't been possible.

Between one breath and the next, she began to shake as she realised just how close she'd come to dying. If she had been in her kitchen making lunch or her bedroom packing, more than likely, she'd be heading to the morgue now. The thought was so overwhelming

her heart began to beat as if she had run a race and her body broke into a sweat. She opened her eyes and began to pull deep breaths into her lungs.

The truck swerved to the side of the road, and Lisa found herself wrapped in Eli's embrace. She clung to him, burrowing her face into his neck as he unbuckled them both and pulled her into his lap.

"You're okay, baby girl, I have you," he murmured softly.

Lisa leaned back to smash her lips to his and thrust her tongue into his mouth. She needed him so much, his strength, his protection. Eli sucked aggressively on her tongue and fed her his own. He tasted like a hot male animal in his prime and Lisa shuddered with need. He shoved his hands up her wet shirt to fondle her breasts and pinch the sensitive nipples, as she squirmed and thrust against the erection that pressed between her spread thighs.

"Eli, fuck me." She quickly pulled off her shirt and tossed it in the backseat.

"Baby girl, let's wait till I can check you out to make sure you're not hurt."

"No," Lisa said as she shoved his shirt up and pressed her breasts against his muscled chest. "Fuck me."

She didn't care if she was hurt or had lost everything. She just knew she wanted this man now. She wanted to feel his naked cock stuffed deep into her body as she rode him into a screaming orgasm. Was that too much to ask?

Cursing under his breath, Eli pulled off his shirt and began to work the buttons on her shorts. Lisa could have done a dance if there were more room. All she cared about was helping them both get naked as quickly as possible. Her shorts disappeared into the back to join the other articles of clothing as Eli shoved his jeans down to expose his erection. Lisa felt the saliva pool in her mouth, but before she could make any sort of move Eli ripped her underwear off. He shoved two fingers deep inside her cunt and Lisa threw her arms around his neck to steady herself.

"Oh yeah, you're wet aren't you?" Eli took her mouth in a punishing kiss, as he grasped her hips and thrust himself deep into her body.

Lisa gasped at the intrusion. He was so big that there was always that moment of almost pain when he first entered her. She loved riding the line with him since it made the pleasure that much more intense.

"Fuck, baby girl, pinch your nipples. Let me see you."

Lisa cradled her own breasts and began to pinch and pull at her nipples, which sent shock waves of pleasure through her body. Eli tightened his grip on her hips and Lisa knew she would have bruises, but couldn't care less. She wanted, needed, the intensity of the coupling. She had demanded he fuck her, and he had followed orders perfectly.

Lisa could feel the first teasing hints of an orgasm and she squirmed in his grasp to take control of their lovemaking. She wanted the blinding flash of pleasure that only Eli could give her. She needed it as surely as she needed to breathe.

Lisa gasped as he swatted her on the ass. "I'm fucking you." He thrust up hard as he spanked her again. "I'm in charge, baby. Do you understand?"

She nodded, unable to speak, only able to hold on for the ride that was Elijah Sinclair. He worked her on his cock for a few more thrusts then lightly pinched her clit between his fingers. "Come now," he ordered, and she could do nothing but obey. A moment later, she felt him stiffen and come deep within her body.

She slumped against him, loving the feel of his naked body pressed so tightly to her own. The only sounds in the truck were the rain drumming on the roof and their breathing. She closed her eyes and let herself relax against him. He was so big and strong and she felt safe as if right now nothing could touch her.

"Are you okay?"

She felt his hands run up and down her back in a soothing rhythm and all she could do was nod. After the events of the day and the sex, she was totally worn out. She knew she had to move so they could get back on the road, but it felt so good just to lay there and allow him to stroke her back and hair.

"Come on, baby, let's get you bundled up in the blanket and get back to Caleb and Jack's house."

Lisa felt him slide out of her and she shivered, not wanting the contact to end. Nevertheless, she knew he couldn't drive with her draped over him, especially since both of them were pretty much naked. Yeah, that would make for an interesting story if the police pulled them over.

She allowed him to fold the blanket around her naked body as he pulled his pants up and pulled on his shirt. He buckled them both in and pulled back on to the road. Good thing it wasn't heavily travelled since everyone in the universe would have known what they were

doing. Lisa mulled that over for a second and realised she really didn't give a crap. Her house and everything she owned was gone, so what if people saw her fucking a man on the side of the road. They could just look away if they didn't want to see too much.

She laid her head back against on the seat and closed her eyes, allowing the movement of the vehicle and the rain to lull her to sleep.

Eli carried Lisa up to his room and kicked the door shut. Jack had been waiting by the door for them, but as soon as she had seen them both she allowed him to take Lisa to his room with no argument. He laid her on the bed and unwrapped her from the blanket as if she were a present. Her naked body looked small and vulnerable in the centre of his king-sized bed. Eli began pulling his clothes off with shaking hands as he grasped just how close he had come to never seeing this woman again. He scrubbed his hands across his face in an attempt to calm his speeding heart, but it didn't work. He felt tears prick the back of his eyes and he tilted his head back and gritted his teeth to stop them. He hadn't cried since...he couldn't think, possibly when his and Caleb's parents had been killed. Now, here he stood, tears running down his face at the thought of never seeing one woman again. It was insane.

"Elijah."

He looked down to find Lisa watching him. The two of them looked at one another for long moments until she stood and launched herself at him. Eli caught her and held her close, burying his face in her hair. She wrapped her arms and legs tightly around him as if she would never let go.

"I almost lost you," he said unsteadily.

"I thought I was going to die. The house shook so hard, and it started to come apart around me. All I could do was call you. I knew you would come for me."

"I was so fucking scared. When I saw the house..." he trailed off, unwilling to say more. Instead, he moved them into the bathroom and turned on the shower. Eli needed to take care of her. Needed to run his hands over her entire body to convince himself she was really okay. He stepped in and reluctantly unwound her from around his body. "Let me take care of you."

Lisa blinked tears from her eyes and nodded. Eli leant down to take her mouth in a gentle kiss, loving the feel of her lips against his own. Why had he never stood and just

savoured her? He promised himself that he would take that time from now on. He poured a dollop of liquid soap into his hands and rubbed them together to create foam. Starting at her shoulders, he began to slowly caress her body. Lisa quivered under his hands and her breathing picked up, but he refused to rush his gentle exploration. He had to make sure she was fine, wanted to prove it to himself to still the lingering worries.

He carefully rinsed her off and rushed through his own shower. He carried her out and dried her off by patting her all over with a fluffy towel. He took a few swipes at his own body and wrapped the towel around his waist. Eli carried her out and placed her in the centre of the bed. Lisa sprawled across the crisp white sheets and watched him intently. He smiled and picked up the peach scented lotion he had purchased with her in mind and poured a generous helping in his hand. He rubbed his hands together to warm the lotion and proceeded to massage and caress her entire body. He deliberately skipped her breasts and between her legs, because he knew if he touched her it would be all over before he could get started. He wanted to show her with his body how much he cared for her since he couldn't even begin to think how to put what he was feeling into words.

"Eli," Lisa breathed softly. "Please." She grabbed his hands and placed them on her breasts. "I need you."

He leant down and pressed his lips to hers, enjoying the soft sounds she made as he gently pinched her nipples. This time though, he didn't want to rush things with her. He wanted to savour and worship her. But Lisa twisted in his grasp and took his cock in her small, perfect hand. She began a slow milking motion and Eli couldn't help moving his hips in rhythm with her pulls.

"No, baby girl, stop." Eli grabbed her hand. "I want to go slow. I want to make love to you."

Lisa released his cock and stared up into his face. She searched his face intently as Eli stared down at her. She wrinkled her brow and ran her fingers lightly over his cheeks and lips. He closed his eyes at the feel of her light touches. If he could, they would lie together like this for the next week and just explore one another.

"Would you make love to me?"

Eli knew there was so much more behind the question than just sex and he wanted her to know just where they stood. "I want to make love to you every day for the rest of our

lives." He stared at her face and watched her eyes widen in understanding. "You are so fucking important to me, and I want you to know that. Will you let me do that? Take care of you for the rest of our lives?"

Lisa nodded slowly. "Yes, I want that too. Eli, I love you." Tears leaked from the sides of her eyes and slid down into her hair. "I want forever with you."

Eli leaned over to press their lips together. "I love you too. I never thought I would say that to anyone, but here you are. I promise to take care and love you forever."

Lisa wrapped her arms around him and pulled him close so that he could hear the beating of her heart. He knew with certainty this woman was made expressly for him and he was made for her. And he vowed to prove that to her.

Epilogue

Lisa stepped in the door and breathed deeply. She was home. She wheeled her teaching stuff into the living room and tucked it into a corner, promising herself she would get to it before she went back to school on Monday. But right now, school was the farthest thing from her mind. Eli was home. She shivered with anticipation. He and Caleb had been out of town for the past three days, and she'd counted the hours until his return. Her heart beat hard as she kicked off her shoes and made her way to the kitchen. The two of them had worked hard to create a home out of the house Eli had purchased, and she loved it. She never regretted her decision to move in with him. He'd kept his promise to love and take care of her every day. Damn, she loved him more than she thought it was possible.

She drank a glass of water at the sink and looked out over the profusion of flowers and the small pond at the back of the house. Placing the cup in the sink, she slowly made her way through the house, searching for where he could be hiding. His office was empty as was the small gym they'd set up. She came back around to the staircase and slowly started up, heat building and curling through her body. Could he be waiting for her in the bedroom? God she hoped so. She'd missed him so much.

She pushed open their bedroom door and entered, crossing her fingers hoping she'd find him. He sat in the darkened room. Lisa slowly took off her clothes, allowing the tension to increase between them.

"Come here, baby."

His rough voice caused a rush of moisture to wet her entrance, readying her for his cock. Lisa blinked slowly and brushed her hair from her eyes. He slumped low in a chair; his naked body nothing but shadows in the poorly lit room. But even in the low light, she knew he was magnificent. His body was long and lean, moulded satin over taut muscle. His cock rose between his spread legs and he absently stroked himself as he watched her. A glistening bead of precum eased slowly down as he handled himself roughly. She felt her mouth water, longing for a taste of what he had to offer.

He crooked a finger at her, and she slowly moved towards him. He motioned her to kneel before him and she dropped to her knees between his spread thighs. With his free hand, he reached out and wrapped a hand in her shoulder length hair, giving it a tug. The slight pain caused a fresh wave of need to pulse through her body.

"Suck my cock, baby girl, and make it good." He moved his hand from her hair to caress her lips. "If you do a good job I'll fuck you hard. If you don't then I'll have to give you a spanking. Do you understand?"

She licked her lips and nodded, unable to speak. Damn, he turned her on. He knew just what to say, just what to do to heighten all her senses. She pressed her legs together, but stopped when he grabbed her hair and gave a tug. She knew the rules and she knew what would happen if she broke them. The thought sent a fresh gush of moisture down her thighs.

Resting her hands on his thighs, she leant forward and engulfed the head of his cock with her lips. He was almost too big and that made the act even more of a turn on. He moved both of his hands to her head and began to run his fingers through her hair as she slowly began to swallow his length. He spread his legs wider to give her more room and began to pump his hips up, fucking her mouth.

"Damn, baby, that feels so good. Your mouth feels like heaven on my cock."

His cock felt like heaven in her mouth as she swirled her tongue around the head. She sucked the length into her mouth until it hit the back of her throat and she swallowed. His moan pleased her since it would heighten her own enjoyment that much more. He pulled her mouth from him with a tug on her hair and he slipped from between her lips. Tucking his hands under her arms, he pulled her up to straddle his hips. She could feel his length caress her vaginal lips and she strained towards it in anticipation.

He lightly slapped her ass. "Only when I tell you, not before." He pulled her until she lay draped across his chest as he claimed her lips. His kiss was hot and punishing as he thrust his tongue into her mouth at the same time he thrust his cock up into her pussy. Lisa ground down onto him, feeling his dick touch the opening of her cervix. The pleasure-pain crashed through her system as she rose up to bring herself down on him again, harder this time. She knew she would be bruised and sore once the ride was over, but until then, she enjoyed every bit of it.

"Yeah, baby girl, that's it, ride my cock. I've missed you so much."

"I've missed you too." She pulled his lips down for an open mouthed kiss. "I hate when you leave."

"Yeah, but I love when I come home." He picked her up, cock still in her and dropped them both to the bed. The jolt forced him deeper into her body and Lisa gasped, thrusting up to make it happen again. Eli shoved his arms under her legs, pulled them up and open to give him more room to work harder and deeper into her body. "Fuck, baby girl, so good. Your pussy is so perfect, you were made just to fit me. So tight, so hot." He gritted his teeth and ground himself against her as the first orgasm slashed through Lisa. She cried out and gripped him tight as she felt him shudder against her. Anytime he was out of town, she knew he never masturbated preferring to wait until they could be together. He could usually only last through one of her orgasms before he came himself and Lisa loved the fact that she could cause him to lose control.

Eli cried out and came as another orgasm overtook her body. Lisa gasped, loving the feel of him sheltered within her body. Life was perfect when they were locked in their home loving one another.

"Damn, baby girl, I love you." He kissed her deeply and Lisa knew she'd found her man, the one made just for her and she found him where she'd least expected.

About the Author

Gwendolyn Cease has been writing ever since she was old enough to pick up a pen. From the very beginning, her stories involved handsome heroes, tough heroines, and happily ever after. Even as she slogged through her undergraduate and finally master's in education, writing remained a top priority. Though she now teaches elementary school, she still makes time for her characters and their never-ending adventures.

Currently, Gwendolyn lives in Kentucky with her three incredibly spoiled cats: Fiona (the queen), Max (he's a lover not a fighter) and Warlock (way too fat for his own good). If you'd like to contact her she'd love to hear from you. She loves to hear from anyone who enjoys a good book, especially the ones she's written.

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