

*Signature
Rose*

EMMA
JAY

Scarlet Rose



SHOWOFF

Show Off
by Emma Jay

The Wild Rose Press

www.thewildrosepress.com

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CONTENTS

[Dedication](#)

[Reviews](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[About the author...](#)

[Also available](#)

[Chapter One](#)

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Cover Art by *Angela Anderson*

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Adams Basin, NY 14410-0708

Visit us at www.thewilderroses.com

Publishing History

First Scarlet Rose Edition, June 2009

Published in the United States of America

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Dedication

To Linda and JP—I couldn't have done
this without you!

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

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Reviews

"A steamy read that melts your fingertips and your heartstrings!"

~Bestselling author, Cerise DeLand

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter One

Her thirty-fifth birthday and all of her friends were too busy to celebrate. Veronica Butler stood in her closet, eyeing the slip dress she still couldn't believe she had the nerve to buy. In the fluorescent lights of the store, the fabric had appeared peach, which set off her skin tone, but once she got out into real light, the dress turned flesh colored.

Her best friend, Cindi, called it her naked dress, and not just because of the color. The spaghetti straps and low cut armholes made a bra impossible, and the silk clung to every detail of her body. The hem hit the tops of her thighs, which made sitting a challenge, which was why Veronica hadn't worn it yet.

This was a dress a woman wore when she wanted to send a message, loud and clear. This was a dress that a woman wore when she hadn't been laid since her boyfriend, Steve the asshole, dumped her ten months ago.

This was a sex dress.

And Veronica was going to wear it tonight.

* * * *

Vicente Salazar turned his wine glass on the scarred wooden table, his attention drifting from the conversation of his companions. He hadn't wanted to come out tonight, but his best friend, William, had just received a promotion and wanted to celebrate. The gathering of friends had swelled in the small bar and Vicente knew he wouldn't be missed, but

even after two hours of drinks and food—if you could call the nachos and artichoke dip food—he would be the first to leave. And he couldn't do that since he was the first person William called.

The door opened, and a woman walked in, blonde hair billowing, a shiny trench coat floating open over ... Well, at first glance, what looked like nothing. When she stopped at the hostess stand, he could very barely see the outline of a dress, the same color as her skin. She motioned to the bar, the hostess nodded, then the woman stepped back to let her trench coat slide down her arms.

The bar silenced—at least the men did—as all attention turned to this goddess in the flimsy dress that clung to her nipples, hinted at a glimpse of her secrets with every step she took in her high heels. Amazing legs, too—long, with graceful curves. She hesitated only a moment when she reached a barstool, then bared just a bit of black panties as she sat and crossed those legs, body turned halfway toward the room.

Vicente's mouth went dry as she arched her throat, a clear invitation, and ordered a drink. Before the bartender could deliver it, she was surrounded by at least four men, each willing to take her up on her invitation. His view of her was slightly impaired, so he shifted, heard William laugh behind him just as the woman turned her profile and—

He knew that profile. Had seen it every day for the past four months, outside his office. But how could this be Veronica Butler, the woman who wore her hair in a bun and blouses buttoned to her collarbone, skirts nearly to her

ankles? Did she have a secret life? Because she certainly kept that body a secret.

One of the men, young, blond, handsome, stood before her with a lime and a shot of tequila. She obligingly let her head fall back and allowed him to trace the slice of fruit down her delicate skin. The man grinned and leaned forward to lick it from her skin just as Vicente stepped onto the raised platform of the bar.

"Veronica?" he asked, stepping through her admirers.
"Veronica Butler? I almost didn't recognize you."

Veronica snapped her head up at the sound of her name in that familiar Spanish accent, the "r" rolling, the "o" and "i" long. She'd let the pronunciation roll over her skin for months now, heard it in her sleep, in her fantasies. Her gaze collided with that of her very handsome, very hot supervisor, the man she'd lusted after since he had arrived from Spain to lead the team designing a new downtown, Gaudi-influenced hotel three months, two weeks and three days ago. The man whose eyes hinted at dark, sexy secrets, whose stubble-shadowed mouth promised untold pleasures.

The man whom she'd pictured when she bought this dress, never thinking he'd actually see her in it.

He definitely saw her in it now, his gaze drifting to her breasts, though he made an effort to look into her eyes. His already arched eyebrows lifted, and his dimples deepened in appreciation.

Her first instinct was to cover up, but she'd left her trench coat on the coat rack by the door, and her little shiny purse didn't offer much protection. She tucked her hair behind her

ear. All the confidence she'd felt when she walked into the bar evaporated in the face of the one man she didn't expect to see, no matter how she'd hoped.

"Vicente. Um, I didn't know you lived around here."

"I don't. Do you?"

"Yes, I—"

"Excuse me, buddy, but I was here first." One of her admirers, the one with the lime, poked Vicente in the shoulder, hard.

Veronica wanted to slide through the floor. She'd come here for a hook-up, clearly Vicente would see that. What would he think of her for that? He'd never fall for her now.

He didn't take his eyes from her. "She's here with me."

The other admirers slipped away, but this one was persistent. He turned to Veronica. "That so?"

Her heart slammed against her ribs at the thought of what Vicente's words might mean, at the possessiveness of his tone. "Yes," she managed through dry lips and reached for her martini to moisten them.

Lime Boy grumbled and stomped off.

Vicente moved closer. Since the bar stools near her were occupied, he slid between her bar stool and the next, propping his elbow on the bar, the rough fabric of his slacks brushing her bare thigh. She didn't think she'd ever been this close to him. If she had, there had definitely been more clothing between them. He smelled delicious, of wine and just the slightest hint of rain-scented masculine cologne. She had a bottle of that cologne at home, just to fuel her fantasies. Not that they needed fuel.

"That's a very dangerous dress," he remarked, signaling the waiter for a glass of wine.

"It's meant to be." She couldn't believe the words came out.

His dark eyebrows shot up, and a smile curved his sensuous lips as he eased closer. "Is it?"

His body heat filled the small space between them. When he reached for his wine, the soft fabric of his cuffed sleeve brushed her arm. She drew in a breath and he cut a glance toward her, humor lighting his eyes. God, he knew she wanted him. That knowledge made her feel more vulnerable than the dress.

"You know, I believe some things are fate." He turned to face her, closer, only inches away. "I've never been here before, and here you are." His gaze flicked to her throat, then the curve of her breasts.

The glance was like a caress, and she arched her neck. He leaned closer so his breath warmed her skin. Her thighs clenched against her arousal.

"You smell good." The words floated out.

He tilted his head to smile. "You do, too." He skimmed his palm up the outside of her thigh. Her knees parted as her lips did. "You didn't come here to stay. So why don't we go?"

This was a bad idea in so many ways. "You're my boss."

"Supervisor only." His breath stirred her hair, pebbled her nipples as he circled his thumb high on her thigh.

"I want..." *His hands everywhere, his mouth everywhere, his ...* "This can't make work weird." Idiot. Of course it would make work weird. He was standing between her legs, his

hand under the hem of her dress, and he'd practically seen her naked anyway. Rationalizing. Not hard to do with a Spanish hunk breathing down the front of her dress, his mouth so close to her skin that, well, how could it not be a kiss? "Yes. Let's go."

He straightened slowly, not in a hurry as she expected. He lifted his wine to his lips, barely sipped, and leaned forward to cover her mouth with his.

His lips were soft, parted and tasted of wine. He trailed his tongue lightly over her lower lip, his fingers tightening on her shoulders, and then he drew back, slowly, leaving her swaying on the barstool. He trailed his fingertips from her elbows, along the sensitized inside of her wrist to her palm. She curled her fingers around his hand and allowed him to help her to her feet. Her breasts brushed the front of his shirt, and his nostrils flared before he backed up and led the way to the door, pausing only long enough to retrieve her coat from the hostess. He folded it over his arm and led her onto the street.

"I don't live far." She trotted up beside him when he slowed, scanning the street. "We could walk." Though, God, she didn't want to. That would give her too much time to second-guess herself.

"I have a car."

A car, good. Only parking would take forever and give her more time to think. She stepped in front of him, curved her hands over his jaw. His stubble rasped her palms as she kissed him, sliding her body along his, her nipples tightening at the friction, her cunt throbbing as his erect cock bumped

her belly. She glided her tongue along his, nipping the tip with her teeth before she pulled back, her gaze flicking to his tented slacks.

That should hold the second thoughts at bay, long enough to get back to her apartment.

He watched her for a moment, expression unreadable, then he took her hand again and led her to the street, one arm raised.

"I thought—" But her thoughts were put on hold when a sleek black car pulled to the curb and a driver stepped out, touching a finger to his forehead in Vicente's direction. "When you said you had a car..."

Vicente's dimples deepened in an almost-smile. "I do not drive, and I do not like cabs." The driver swept the door open for her and Vicente handed her in.

As gracefully as she could, she backed across the seat, aware he watched her legs, rewarding him with a flash of panties. That action propelled him forward, head and shoulders first, his hands braced on the back of the seat and the door, on either side of her. She was barely aware of the door closing behind him as he nudged her thighs apart with his knee. Her head fell back, her hair tumbling behind her, her bared throat an invitation he was ready to take. He lowered his mouth to her jaw, brushing lightly back and forth, just below her ear, his breath hot, making her nipples strain.

He murmured something she couldn't hear above the pounding of her pulse.

"What?" she asked, her own voice breathy.

"Tell Arthur your address."

"Oh, um." She reached past the fog in her brain to find the information, relayed it. "Just up the street," she added needlessly, able to think of nothing but the need for Vicente's mouth on her skin. She reached up and threaded her fingers through his hair, silky soft, and urged his head down.

His mouth was hot now, mobile, hungry as he angled his head, his tongue delving deep, a sleek, sexual rhythm that sent desire unfurling through her blood, throbbing between her legs so that she dragged the inside of her thigh along the outside of his, along the fabric of his pants. She lifted her hips, wanting to feel the nudge of his hard cock against her pussy.

He smiled against her mouth as he moved over her, fucking her through their clothes, the ridge of his penis rubbing against her cleft. He cupped her breast through the dress, his thumb brushing back and forth over her long nipple. She wanted his mouth, wanted the suction of it, the heat of it. She tore her mouth from his to urge him down her body.

Instead he sat up, keeping his hand on her breast, drawing her onto his lap, her back to his chest so his hands were free to stroke the length of her body. He lowered his mouth to the curve of her throat as he dragged the fingertips of his free hand from her knee up the inside of her thigh, parting them so she straddled his lap, so that she was open for his touch.

He brushed his fingers over the outside of her damp panties and then slipped them beneath the elastic, over her wet cleft. He murmured something in Spanish, something

that sounded reverent, and she dropped her head back against his shoulder.

And then saw his driver, Arthur, watching in the rearview mirror. She tensed and tried to squeeze her legs together, but Vicente's hand was in the way. She shifted, wanting to cover herself. Vicente made a soft, soothing noise against her skin.

"He likes to watch. Let him see your pussy, Veronica."

"I—can't," she whimpered, torn between the exquisite pleasure he offered and shame.

"He won't touch you. You're only for me. But this gives him pleasure, too."

He stroked his fingers over her outer lips, so wet, pushing her panties to the side. The cool air of the car left her feeling exposed, but he kept her legs open with his knees, open for Arthur's gaze. She should be creeped out to be exposing herself to a stranger, but felt safe in Vicente's arms, secure. She had known him for three and a half months, hadn't she?

"Don't be shy," Vicente said. "You're just like an actress in a movie. Show him your pussy while I touch you. Show him your pleasure."

Embarrassment heated her skin, but excitement raced through her at his words, excitement that had her pushing against his hand.

"So wet," Vicente murmured, tracing the petals of her flesh, making her swell, flicking the rise of her clitoris. "So pretty. Doesn't she have a pretty pussy?"

Arthur made a sound of assent and Vicente dipped a finger inside her. She lifted her hips toward his touch, wanting him

to press his palm against her clit, wanting him to make her come. She didn't care who was watching.

"What color do you think her nipples are?" Vicente released her breast to lower the slender strap of her dress, letting the fabric hang on the distended tip.

"Pink," Arthur said, his voice rough.

"I think so, too." Vicente coursed his palm over her shoulder, down her arm. "All this smooth creamy skin. Pretty blonde hair. Has to be pink." He hooked one finger in the fabric, urged it down. "Mm, rose. Darker than I thought. Beautiful, though." He curved his hand around her breast, rubbing the full flesh lightly. "I can't wait to taste you."

"Now," she whispered, bumping her ass against his cock.

"I'm trying to decide," he said, his fingers toying at her opening, two sliding in knuckle-deep, then out again. "Should I lick you or fuck you?"

"Fuck her," Arthur suggested hopefully from the front seat.

Vicente lifted his fingers, slick with her juices, to his lips, drew them into his mouth. She turned her head to watch his pleasure as he licked them, then rubbed his thumb over her bottom lip. "I don't know. You taste so good. I want to taste all of you."

Desire thrummed through her, so that every nerve in her body seemed concentrated between her legs, where she could so easily picture his dark head, his stubble rubbing her inner thighs, his tongue lapping, driving her out of her mind.

"Yes, please," she managed.

"But I want to be inside you," he murmured, rubbing his lips over her earlobe. "I want to feel you squeeze around me. I want to feel you move under me."

The picture popped into her head in even more detail. "Yes. Please." The second word dragged from her throat in a moan as he slid two fingers into her body, thrusting gently, his thumb resting lightly against her clitoris so that desire shot through her like electric shocks. She shifted so that her ass caressed the length of his cock. Why didn't he unzip and slide into her?

"Is this the place?"

Arthur's voice invaded the haze of passion that enveloped her, the crazy need that sapped the will from her. Vicente removed his touch and tugged her underwear back in place.

"I could drive around the block a few times," Arthur offered.

For a moment she pictured it, Vicente driving into her from behind as they circled the neighborhood, and the thought made her hotter than it should. No, she wanted him over her in bed, filling her, his weight on her. She wanted to take her time exploring his body, and allowing Vicente to explore hers.

"No, thanks." She climbed off Vicente's lap, edging toward the door, clutching her purse.

She didn't hear Vicente move behind her and glanced back. Did he want to stay in the car, drive around the block and fuck her? Had she blown it by wanting him in bed with her?

But then he shifted, leaned forward to say something to Arthur, and followed her out of the car.

Her dress was twisted around her waist, so it rode high enough to expose her panties and she received some questioning looks and leers from passers-by on the sidewalk as she hurried toward the door of her building. Had they seen her in the car? By the state of her clothing, they had to know what she and Vicente had been doing, and the knowledge sent another pulse of heat through her. Behind her, Vicente closed the door of the car and followed, wrapping his arm about her waist and drawing her back against him as she struggled with the door. He smoothed one hand down her stomach and his other down her arm to guide the key into the lock. Even that felt like a sexual move.

"Do I make you nervous?" His lips brushed the shell of her ear.

She pushed the door open, surging into the building ahead of him, then turned to look at him, walking backwards down the hall, the strap of her dress falling down her arm as she held a hand out to him.

His eyes followed the movement of the fabric, barely clinging to her nipple, and he caught her waist, pressing her back against the wall of the hallway, pinning her with his weight, with the length of his body fitting against her better than she expected, lowering his mouth to the swell of her breast. Her head fell back against the wall and she curved her hand around the back of his head as he slid his tongue under her dress to tease her nipple, his hand under her hem to cup her ass, squeezing, parting her legs.

Footsteps in the hall made her jolt, and she slid her hand to his jaw to turn his head toward her.

"Upstairs," she whispered. "Elevator."

He eased back just enough for her to push him toward the elevator, kept his fingers linked with hers as she pressed the button. Then he curled his fingers in the hem of her dress, rubbing his chin along the line of her shoulder as they waited.

Every nerve in her body pulsed for his touch, and she was just about to grab his hand and press it to her breast when the elevator binged and the doors slid open.

Empty, thank God. Entwined, they stumbled inside and the doors had barely closed before Veronica reached for his cock, curling her fingers around it through his pants, measured how thick and long it was, She parted her legs to rub herself against him, feeling him pulse against her, her swollen lips cupping him even through their clothes. The elevator ride never felt so endless.

Vicente urged the strap of her dress down further, baring her breast to suck her nipple into his mouth. She arched her back to offer herself more fully and the thin strap busted. She twisted her fingers through his hair and caught sight of them in the mirrored wall, her dress pushed up and drooping down, his head bent over her, her leg lifted, rubbing against his hip as she opened herself to him. So sexy.

"Make me come," she moaned. It wouldn't take much, just a caress or two.

He chuckled against her throat, squeezing her ass. "Not yet."

The elevator bell rang and Vicente straightened slowly, drawing her dress into place. She watched his face, his hooded eyes dark with promise. Only a few more steps.

Show Off
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Reluctant to be apart from him for that long, she slid past him, led the way down the hall. She pivoted in front of her door, wrapped her arms around his waist, curving them up his back, pressing into him, rubbing gently, enticingly. He slipped his fingers under her hem and tucked them in her panties, began easing them down her hips, and her front door opened from the inside.

The chorus of "Surprise!" died down as Vicente lifted his head and backed away, allowing her twisted dress to fall back into place and her panties to return to her hips with a snap.

Veronica looked past her former best friend Cindi's face into the shocked faces of her parents.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Two

"Are you crazy?" Cindi chased Veronica down the hall to her bedroom after Veronica showed Vicente to the bathroom, so he could wash the scent of her from his skin. Cindi closed the bedroom door behind her and stared at Veronica. "That's not who I think it is, is it?"

"Yes, it is." Veronica whipped her ruined dress over her head and walked to the closet, flipped through, already knowing nothing in there matched the sexiness of the dress, unwilling to dress in anything plain, unwilling to let Vicente see her as anything other than a sex goddess tonight. Most of her wardrobe was career-wear that he'd already seen. She chose a silky white blouse and her favorite jeans, which did great things for her ass. But first...

She skimmed out of her panties, looped them around her wrist, then dragged on her jeans and tucked the panties in her pocket. Then she shrugged into the blouse and buttoned it.

Cindi reached over and opened Veronica's lingerie drawer. "Aren't you forgetting something? Seriously, you can't sleep with your boss. You should be thanking me instead of storming off."

"My parents, Cindi? Geez, I wouldn't have wanted them here anyway." She leaned close to the mirror and fluffed out her hair, afraid of leaving Vicente out there too long. What if he'd already left? She wouldn't blame him, but her heart dropped at the idea.

Her parents stood across the room when she emerged from her bedroom, but she didn't have the nerve to face them yet. She scanned the room and found Vicente leaning against the breakfast bar. Someone had supplied him with a drink, small compensation for what he'd—what they'd both missed out on by this impromptu surprise party. He watched her as she approached, his dark eyes hooded.

She tucked her hair behind her ear, suddenly hyper-aware of the difference between how he'd seen her moments ago and how he saw her now. "You don't have to stay."

"You didn't tell me it was your birthday." His gaze remained steady on hers.

He hadn't looked away from her since they came through the door. Maybe he was just afraid to make eye contact with her father. Or maybe he was fantasizing about her. Her face heated and her pulse thrummed as she imagined what he was seeing.

"Yeah, I didn't plan on celebrating. Not this way, anyway." She turned to stand beside him and survey the crowd. She took a sip of her own martini, nerves thrumming. Her body still hummed from the unfulfilled sexual charge and now she'd add embarrassment to that. What must he think of her? "I really had no idea," she added.

"I presumed."

She glanced over to see his dimple deepen as he sipped from his own tumbler. Scotch, from the smell.

He reached over and toyed with her collar. "This is more what I'm accustomed to seeing you in."

She arched her throat, wanting his knuckles to brush her skin, feeling the heat of his fingers, but then he released her and set the glass on the counter behind him. Did he notice she wasn't wearing a bra beneath the silky fabric? The blouse felt as good as the dress had, caressing her skin, pebbling her nipples. She wanted to lean into him now, feel the heat of him against her breasts, feel his hands on them. God, she was shameless.

"I think I will go," he murmured, and pressed a kiss to her forehead.

"Wait." She stepped in front of him and reached into her pocket, looking into his eyes. She slipped her panties from her pocket and tucked them into his, sliding deep, lingering, brushing her fingers along the side of his erection before depositing her gift and withdrawing.

He lifted his eyebrows, the dimple denting his cheek when he slid his hand into his own pocket. Understanding lit his eyes and he drew his balled-up fist to his nose, took a deep breath, and walked off with a grin.

She stared after his lethal grace until he walked out the door.

* * * *

Vicente was running late the following morning. Damn it, he'd wanted to be in his office, wanted to watch Veronica sway by, wanted to see how she'd react to him today after last night. His own hand hadn't satisfied him last night, not even thinking about her, and he wondered if he could convince her to go to dinner with him tonight. With the eyes

of the office around, though, he'd have to be discreet in his invitation.

After last night he didn't know if he had that kind of control.

Paper coffee cup in hand, he stepped out of the elevator and his heart dropped. She sat at her desk, head bent over her work, her hair clipped up in its normal style. Her blouse was buttoned to her collarbone and a structured jacket covered that. Was she planning to pretend nothing had happened between them last night? She'd given him her panties last night. He could still smell her on his hands.

She didn't look up as he passed, but stiffened in her seat, so she was aware. Anger heated him more quickly than the coffee. She was going to pretend nothing had changed. He walked into his office and slammed the door. Moments later it opened again and his secretary, Laurie, a round matronly type, very efficient, bustled in with his day's schedule, but he only heard the drone of her voice as he looked through the glass wall at Veronica. She glanced up once, reddened to see him watching her, and went straight back to work.

The mouse had returned. He growled, feeling very much the accused predator.

"Mr. Salazar?"

He flicked his gaze at Laurie, who held out his folder for the day. He took it and dismissed her with an uncharacteristic monosyllable. She considered him a moment, then turned to walk briskly away.

Would Veronica be acting the same way if their evening hadn't been interrupted? Would they have spent the night

together, come in to work together? Would she still be shy after everything he'd planned to do to her body?

Perhaps he was a predator after all.

He booted up his computer and tried to focus on work.

A knock on the door several minutes later drew his attention from the computer screen, and he looked up to see Veronica slip through the door, almost like she was sneaking in. He removed his wire-framed reading glasses to watch her as, with the flick of one hand, she closed the blinds of his office. He leaned back and watched her approach, a grin stretching his lips. He'd been wrong about her clothes. She'd discarded the blazer and wore the same silky blouse from last night, still without a bra. The sway of her magnificent breasts beneath the fabric mesmerized him, but not enough for him to miss that the ankle length skirt revealed a long stretch of leg with each step. It was no more than a piece of fabric wrapped around her slim hips and hooked only at the waist.

The easy accessibility sent blood rushing to his groin. When she reached up and released the clip from her hair, sending the piece of plastic sliding across the desk beside his glasses, his cock came to full attention as her hair tumbled around her shoulders.

"You were a very good sport last night," she said, circling his desk.

He pivoted his chair to face her and she stepped between his knees, bent at the waist, her hair falling forward, her blouse drooping enough to give him a view of her tantalizing cleavage. He thought about asking her if she locked the door,

but she placed a hand on his chest and he didn't want to break the contact, even to insure their privacy.

"I want to give you a small token of my appreciation."

She lowered her mouth to his, her lips soft, slick with lipstick, her tongue minty as it played over his lower lip, slid along his. He curled his hands at her waist, intending to pull her onto his lap, slide his hand up a silky thigh, make her come right here in his office. He wouldn't play around this time. What would she do then? She wouldn't be able to hide from him after that.

But she resisted, breaking the kiss, and frustration built when he thought she would walk out again. She tucked her hair behind her ear, still bent over, allowing him a glimpse of her rosy nipples, peaked against the fabric.

"Do you mind if I live out a little fantasy?"

He shook his head, aware he hadn't spoken since she'd walked in.

She still pressed one hand to his chest, trailed it down the line of buttons to his belt. She rubbed her finger back and forth for a minute and his cock bobbed hopefully.

"Veronica." His voice was strangled.

She flashed him a sideways smile and pulled the strap free of the buckle, found the hook of his slacks. He sucked in a breath to make it easier for her to undo, and found his head filled with the scent of her, flowery, female, sexy as hell. She trailed the backs of her fingers along his erection as she lowered his zipper, causing him to throb with need, and then, with another tuck of her hair behind her ear, she went down on her knees and freed him from his briefs.

"I thought about this all night," she murmured, curving her small white hand around his thick blood-darkened shaft.

He said her name again.

"Every time you say my name it's like a little orgasm." She smiled, then closed her lips around the head of him, her lips soft, gentle. He gripped the arms of his chair and willed himself not to go off at such a simple touch.

Her thumb stroked the base of him while she traced the rim of his cock with her tongue, darting, sliding, with no real rhythm so that he had to focus on the computer just for a moment to find his control.

She rose onto her knees and the heat of her mouth encompassed him, her tongue sliding down the underside of his cock as the head bumped the roof of her mouth, then the back of her throat. He eased back to watch her mouth slide over him, striving to reach the base of his shaft. He felt the pliant flesh at the back of her throat convulse before she glided her lips up his length to swirl around the head of him, the tip of her tongue flicking at the sensitive spot just below the head before she took him deep again. God, the sight of her full lips around him—would he ever be able to look at her mouth and not see that in his mind's eye every time? He fisted one hand on the arm of his chair, reached to stroke her cheek with the other, felt the muscles of her jaw working, watched the pleasure in her face as her eyes fluttered closed, as she gave herself to the task with an enjoyment he hadn't even imagined in his fantasies.

She cupped his balls, and he felt the hum of approval all down the length of his cock. When she traced her thumb over

the tender skin behind them, he quivered, fighting for control. He didn't want this to end yet, though, Jesus, had she locked the door?

As if summoned, a light rap sounded at the door.

"Laurie!" he rasped.

Veronica, on an upward sweep, released him, leaving him glistening from her mouth, bobbing, abandoned. "Veronica," she chided.

"The door!" He snatched her hair clip from his desk, dropped it to the floor beside him and nudged Veronica with his legs, into the knee well. He slid his chair as far under the desk as he could to hide his nakedness, as the handle turned.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Three

Vicente barely had time to recognize the understanding on Veronica's face before Laurie stepped into the room.

He hoped his secretary didn't have any important information to impart, because, while he watched her mouth move with more care than he usually took, he couldn't hear anything past the roaring in his ears, his mind on another pair of lips that-Jesus-just slid down the length of him again.

Laurie cocked her head at him. "Are you okay?"

"Great." His voice was a croak. "Tired." He dared not say more, afraid it would come out as a groan. Every ounce of will kept his eyes from fluttering when Veronica did that swirly thing again around the head of his cock. He fucking loved that swirly thing. She should patent it.

And then she took him deep again, her fingers circling the base of him, her other hand stroking his balls.

God, he wanted to touch her, feel her skin, her hair, but he kept his hands on the table and concentrated on keeping them from shaking.

"You look like you're going to be sick."

"I just—need a few minutes of peace. Do you think—could you lock the door and shut off the lights?"

The last came out higher pitched as Veronica nipped the head of him with her teeth. He was shaking all over now. He did not want to be looking at Laurie when he came in Veronica's mouth.

"The phone call?" Laurie asked, her gaze flicking to the phone.

"Later," was all he managed as his balls tightened with his impending orgasm.

Laurie frowned, but turned and flicked off the light switch and locked the door on her way out.

He barely dropped back in his chair, whispering, "Now!" She took him deep and he came and came and came, watching her watch him as she swallowed.

The shaking didn't subside as the pulses of pleasure did. Veronica sat back on her heels with a self-satisfied toss of her head. But when she licked her lips, as if to get every drop of him, he grabbed her arms, dragged her to her feet before laying her back on his desk, parting her skirt and pressing his flagging cock against her bare pussy.

He glanced down to see the skirt spread in a vee around her neat little mons. No panties. Jesus, wouldn't that drive him out of his mind the rest of the day?

"I think you are the devil."

He cupped his hand around the back of her head, threading his fingers through her hair and kissed her, soft, probing. He tasted his cum, but sought the taste of Veronica as the weight of his waning erection pressed against the slick folds of her. He'd give his fortune to be inside her right now, but she'd done a thorough job with her mouth. He smiled against that mouth. She probably wished she hadn't. He could make her come, though, here on his desk, rubbing against her, touching her. The door was locked, after all.

He rose on his elbows, sweeping her hair back from her face, looking into those pretty blue eyes, glazed with passion. He stroked one hand up her leg, between them, over her slick lips, and watched her eyes flutter closed when he traced his finger over her clitoris.

"Christ, you're so wet. Did sucking me do that to you?"

She parted her legs wider for his fingers. "Mm, thinking about sucking you, sucking you, thinking about touching you, about you touching me. Thinking about fucking you. I've been thinking about it for months."

That revelation surprised him into stilling his touch.

"Months?"

She shifted her hips, encouraging him to continue his caress. "Months."

He lowered his mouth to hers, tender, seeking as he slid two fingers into her, his thumb circling the stiffened bud of her clitoris. She moaned into his mouth, pressed against his hand, riding it, fucking it, seeking her pleasure.

He broke the kiss and withdrew his fingers. Her eyes flew open, her mouth an "o" of protest as he brought his fingers to his mouth and licked them. She made a hum of pleasure and parted her legs wider in invitation. He began to harden as he looked at her pretty pink flesh. He rubbed a thumb over his bottom lip, then scooted her farther back on the desk and bent to slide his tongue over her slick wet cleft.

The sound of pleasure she made echoed off the walls and he lifted his head to shoot her a warning look before bending his head over her again, arms braced on either side of her hips as he lapped at her, drinking in her essence, dipping his

tongue into her channel, probing deeper, feeling her muscles contract in pleasure before darting to do a little swirly of his own around her engorged clitoris. He wanted to savor her, just as he had wanted to savor what she did to him, but she was squirming on his desk, making the sexiest little sounds. He sipped her into his mouth, flicking his tongue over her, sliding two fingers into her, then a third, and she came, in a long, slow shudder, her cunt squeezing his fingers, her thigh muscles quivering, her moan gentling into a sigh as she relaxed beneath him.

He withdrew his hand, slid one finger over her bottom lip, slicking her cum over it before lapping it off with his tongue. She blinked up at him with languid eyes and smiled.

"Lunch?" he murmured.

The eyes brightened. "Okay." She sat slowly, with his help, and he felt her press something into his breast pocket. He glanced down to see a bit of white lace emerging. He pulled it out. Her panties.

He closed his hand around them. "If we keep this up, you're going to run out."

"If we keep this up, I won't need them." She stretched up to kiss his mouth, her body not touching his, a shy gesture considering what they'd just done. "And I can always go shopping." She turned toward the door.

"Wait, your hair." He bent to collect the clip, watched as she swept the mass of blonde hair into a bundle, then clipped it. No longer did he find the style austere, but sexy as hell. He couldn't wait to get his mouth on the soft skin of her throat. How crazy would that make her?

Again she turned.

"Laurie," he remembered, and reached for the phone. It wouldn't do for Laurie to see Veronica come out of his office when he had been in there alone moments before. He sent Laurie on an errand, looked through the window until she was gone, then gave Veronica another soft kiss and sent her out.

Someone was bound to notice her smelling her hands as she sat at her desk, willing the hands of the clock to move. Never had a morning stretched so long. The orgasm he'd given her shouldn't have whetted her desire but all she could think about was his head bent between her legs. God, the sight had been so sexy, the way he had been so focused, those beautiful thick lashes lowered as his tongue stroked—

No. She had to stop. It was only ten twenty. Maybe he'd suggest an early lunch. He was the boss.

She glanced toward the window into his office and jolted to see him looking back at her. She hadn't realized he'd opened the blinds. He leaned back in his chair and she saw a flash of white in his fist as he lifted his hand to his mouth.

Her panties.

She blushed and glanced down, then looked back to see him smiling at her. Then he leaned forward and pressed a button on the phone and rolled his eyes. No chance of early lunch then.

Eleven o'clock came and went and he remained on the phone. Eleven thirty. Quarter to twelve. The scent of him was so ingrained in her that she no longer had to raise her hands to her face. He still watched her through the glass, and rubbed his finger over his lower lip, his tongue reaching out to

touch it. He was still tasting her. A shudder of lust nearly made her spill her bottle of water.

Eleven fifty-three. Eleven fifty-eight.

Twelve-oh-three. Twelve-twelve, and almost everyone had left the office. Two co-workers had stopped by her desk to ask if she wanted to join them and she'd been too distracted to come up with a good excuse. She'd muttered something about grabbing a bite and coming back to work and tried to look busy as she watched the seconds on her computer's clock click by.

And then the office door opened. Veronica jolted and looked up. Vicente glanced around the office, saw it was almost empty and offered her an apologetic lift of his eyebrows before inclining his head toward the exit. She reached into her drawer for her purse.

"You won't need that," he said.

As she rose to join him, she wondered if they'd go to the hotel down the street, what it would feel like to have him inside her, over her. She wanted his weight on her, his cock filling her, stroking her and she didn't want to wait.

She stumbled and he caught her arm, and didn't release it. Instead, he slid his hand up to grasp her upper arm so that his fingers brushed the side of her breast through her blouse as they walked down the hall to the elevator. She glanced up, but he kept his gaze straight ahead.

When the doors opened with a bing, Veronica's heart sank to see it nearly full with people from other offices also heading to lunch. She'd wanted to get her mouth on Vicente again, wanted to whisper all the thoughts she'd had while

waiting for him. She felt a new tension in him as he released her arm to motion her into the elevator ahead of him. Did he feel the same disappointment?

They rode side by side in silence, arms only brushing when someone else jostled them. The door opened into the lobby and she stepped out while he held the door for others. The sight of his thoughtfulness sent a different kind of warmth through her. She turned and scanned the street, to see if he'd called for Arthur and his car, but a fleet of black vehicles lined the street. She wouldn't recognize his car anyway.

Then he was beside her and holding the glass door open for her. She stopped on the sidewalk and waited for guidance.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

"I can't think about food right now."

His dimples deepened and he took her hand. "I thought we'd go to the park, but..." He gestured to the gray, drizzly sky. "I have an idea." And he turned in the opposite direction of the hotel, where her mind had already checked in and stripped him of his clothes.

"Not the hotel?" she asked a bit breathlessly as she hurried behind him.

"Laurie eats lunch at the restaurant next door every day. If she saw us..."

She finished his thought when he trailed off. Everyone in the office would find out, and one of them would have to go. She wasn't ready to risk that consequence yet. They'd already risked too much at the office. "So, where?"

"You'll see."

They dodged traffic and swarms of people on the sidewalk heading for lunch, and the next thing she knew, she was trotting up the stairs to the museum, along with hundreds of tourists and flocks of school kids.

Her expectations fell away and she pushed every thought of sex out of her head, because it didn't appear to be happening this afternoon. Vicente removed his wallet without releasing her hand, flashed a card to one of the ticket-takers, and led her toward the elevator. Thank God. Her thighs were still burning from the run up the stairs to the museum.

"Vicente, where—?"

Again, they were not alone in the elevator. Three elderly couples, obviously together, eyed the two of them suspiciously even as Vicente flashed a charming grin. As the doors closed, he pulled Veronica back against his chest, wrapped his arms around her waist and nuzzled her ear.

All those thoughts of sex zipped right back to the forefront as his hardening cock nudged her ass. But what was he thinking? The museum?

The couples exited on the next floor, and were replaced by a young mother with two babies in a stroller. Vicente splayed his hand over Veronica's stomach, tucking her more firmly against him as he greeted the young woman and pressed the button for the floor she requested. Veronica resisted the urge to rub up and down the length of him, though her pussy heated, ached to feel him inside her.

"We are never going to have this elevator alone, if that's what you're hoping for," she murmured when the woman

pushed the stroller off at the next floor. Several other people waited to get on.

He nudged her toward the door, his hands on her waist.
"Turn right."

She pressed through the people entering the elevator, losing his touch, then swiveled to see him exit, a slight smile quirking his lips when he turned, his eyes lighting when their gazes met. A woman could get used to a man looking at her like that.

He caught up to her, grabbed her hand and led the way down the hall, down a smaller one, and a smaller one still, until they were alone and the room was silent except for the buzz of the security system.

"Vicente."

He pivoted, crowding her into an alcove, until her back was against the wall and his arms framed her head. "All I could think about during that phone call was my dick in your mouth."

Her heart gave a hard thud and her pussy quivered. Did he mean for them to have sex here? In public? She'd never done anything like that, well, unless she counted letting the driver watch Vicente touch her last night and going down on Vicente in his office. She parted her lips as he nudged her legs apart, her pulse drowning out any objection her common sense might be whispering. She'd loved giving him head, and him repaying the favor, but now, "I want you inside me."

"Show me your nipples."

His breath brushed warm over the hollow of her throat as he bent close. She glanced over his shoulder at the open

room and raised shaking hands to the buttons of her blouse. "What if someone wants to look at," she twisted to read the wall plate beside the giant square painting behind her.

"Hampton Number Six?"

"Unlikely." He reached into her open blouse and plucked her nipple between his fingers, then reached down to unfasten his belt and his slacks. "Show me your pussy."

Her face heating, she parted her skirt and he leaned back to look, stroking his middle finger around the neat triangle before sliding between her slick, swollen lips, toying with her entrance, back to her ass before sliding forward to the hard bud of her clitoris. No doubt he could feel each throb of her heart as he pressed a finger against her clit. She arched toward him, wanting the pleasure he offered, wanting him to make her come, not caring who saw.

"So wet. Jesus, so wet." He removed his touch, licked the taste of her from his finger, holding her gaze as he did, then reached into his pocket. He pressed a foil packet into her palm, then freed his erection. "Put the condom on me. I want to fuck you."

"Here." Not quite a question. She just wanted to make sure.

He cupped her hips in his hands, edged her closer to a padded bench placed in the alcove so someone could no doubt admire the brilliance of Hampton Number Six. But now Vicente slid a hand down her thigh, bending her knee and lifting her leg to place her foot on the bench, opening her to him.

Oh. God. If anyone walked around the corner, they would be able to see right up her—

"Veronica." He held his cock in his hand expectantly, rubbing lightly, his pants drooping just below his hips. "The condom."

"Right." Shaking even more now, she ripped it open, pulled out the condom and rolled it down the length of him.

"Now bring me into you." His voice was a growl, his accent thicker. "I need to be inside you."

She didn't know who needed it more as she wrapped her hand around the base of his cock and guided him to her cunt, thanking God for high heels so that he only had to bend a little to nudge her entrance. Then he cupped her ass in both hands and plunged into her.

Her moan echoed off the walls as the blunt head stretched her, as his thick, long cock slid into her, a move so easy because she was so damned ready. He turned, his face so close, to smile. "Shh."

She nodded, but with his next thrust forgot again, and he pressed a hand to her mouth. God, he was so deep, even at this impossible angle, and it had been so long, and she'd been thinking about this all morning. He eased forward, angling her so his body pressed against her engorged clit, rubbed against it as the head of his cock stroked deep. She clutched the shoulders of his shirt and let her head fall back to the wall. He lowered his lips to the curve of her throat so that his body was folded around her. The scent of him filled her senses, the movement of his muscles beneath her hands, the rhythm of his strokes, his fingers squeezing her ass, molding her to him.

"I want to taste your pussy," he murmured against her skin.

"No, don't leave me."

"Let me taste you."

He watched her through hooded eyes and she understood his meaning. She released her death grip on his shoulder, slid her hand down the front of his shirt, feeling the pounding of his heart. His strokes stilled as she skimmed her hand down his stomach, curled briefly around his cock before dipping between her own legs. His gaze followed the movement as she circled her clit, slicking her fingers, advancing her own already out of control desire before lifting her hand to his lips. He slid to the hilt as he sucked her fingers into his mouth, curled his tongue around them, dragged them out as he pulled his cock from her body, only to push back into her channel, sending little sparklers of pleasure zinging through her blood, and she pushed against him, wanting the feeling to continue, to build. Her breath came in little pants as he deepened his strokes, pushed into her more quickly, his own breath sounding desperate, his pulse thudding in his throat, echoing in his chest, pounding in her cunt.

Then she heard footsteps.

"Vicente!" She pushed at his shoulders, trying to lower her leg, panic chasing those thrilling little fireworks from her blood.

But he didn't stop stroking into her, instead curved his fingers into the cleft of her ass, stroking over her—oh, God. The sensation of his touch circling her tight hole, the approaching sound of footsteps and the deep, measured

pounding of his cock inside her combined to send her rocketing, flying into pieces. He covered her mouth with his to quiet the whimpers that tore from her throat. His strokes quickened, deep, then shallow before she felt the pulse inside her, heard the sigh of pleasure that told her he'd come, too.

And the footsteps continued to approach.

"Vicente!" She tried to convey her urgency, difficult with his mouth still against hers, but after what felt like an eternity, he pulled out, dealt with the condom and his slacks as she buttoned her blouse.

When the security guard rounded the corner, she was tucked in the crook of Vicente's arm on the bench, his arm braced on the seat behind her, both of them staring at Hampton Number Six.

"Perhaps," Vicente murmured when the guard gave them a nod and moved on, "we can get a copy of the video?"

Horror bloomed in her chest when she followed his gaze to the camera positioned right at the painting.

* * * *

Veronica adjusted the neckline of her new black jersey dress as she looked in the mirror, nerves jittery as she waited for the buzzer that signaled her visitor. Vicente had called her into his office this afternoon and she'd walked in on shaky legs. She couldn't deal with another close encounter—not with Vicente, but with someone catching them in the act. She wasn't cut out for this. She'd adjusted her blouse and stepped into the office, heart pounding.

He leaned back in his chair, bouncing a pen on his desk as he watched her with those damned sexy eyes. Okay, so she would do whatever he wanted, if he'd make her turn into a puddle of pleasure again.

"I thought we could go dancing tonight."

"Dancing." Her body pressed to his, his hands on her, his attention on her, swaying to the music. "Yes. I'd like that."

And as soon as five thirty hit, she'd run off to buy this dress, and new panties.

This dress was a little more subtle than the dress she'd worn last night but still didn't hide much, with its plunging neckline, floaty skirt and clinging fabric. She could already feel Vicente's hands on her breasts through the thin knit.

God. She still couldn't believe what they'd done this afternoon, couldn't believe the risk, the pleasure. But tonight she'd bring him back here, make love to him in her bed, in any position he wanted, just so she could savor him.

He buzzed for her. She gathered her tiny purse, with her keys, phone, lipstick and condoms, in case he hadn't thought to get more, and hurried out the door and down to the car.

Vicente lounged against the car, arms folded, looking devastating in a maroon shirt and dark slacks. His gaze swept appreciatively down her body as she approached, and he pushed away from the car to open the door for her.

"Is all your evening wear so provocative?" he asked, sliding a hand around her waist, his breath teasing her lips.

She eased back enough to look into his eyes. "This is new. I bought this one just for you."

He brushed his thumb over her hip and his eyebrows went up when he encountered the elastic of her new thong. "Lucky me." He lowered his mouth another fraction of an inch and kissed her.

She could kiss him all night, the way he nuzzled her gently, his tongue teasing her lips, her tongue.

"We could just stay here," she said against his mouth when he eased away. "Go back upstairs and do more of that."

He stepped away then, bracing a hand on the top of the car door, that sexy smile quirking the corner of his mouth. "And waste your pretty new dress? I don't think so."

She slid into the car. "Hello, Arthur," she said to the driver, catching his glance in the rear view mirror as she smoothed her skirt.

"Good evening."

Vicente climbed in beside her and closed the door. He curved his arm around her shoulders and leaned into her. She waited for him to slide his hand under her hem or down the vee of her dress, or at least kiss her throat, but all he did was instruct Arthur to the club.

* * * *

Her fears that she'd done something wrong were soon assuaged. They passed the line to enter the club, pulsing with dance music, a thick Spanish beat, heavy on guitar and drums. She paused to look over the dance floor, where couples were moving together and apart, some treating the dance as no more than foreplay, moving into each other, rubbing against each other. Others seemed to take great

pride in stepping in time to the music, twirling, ducking, spinning with great skill. Which would Vicente expect? She could dance, but finding a rhythm with a man on a first date was tricky.

His hand on her waist, he guided her to the bar. "Martini?"

"Mm, a chocolate one." She leaned one arm against the bar as he ordered their drinks.

He cut her a sharp glance. "Did you eat?"

She frowned. Why did he ask? "I had a salad after I went shopping."

He trailed his fingertips along her jaw. "I've been remiss in feeding you. Perhaps later we can get something to eat."

"I'm fine," she assured him, turning into his touch and lifting her gaze. His smile sent a shiver of delight through her. She was happier than she could remember being, and the idea scared her, but she pushed the fear away. How often did a woman get a chance to feel this sexy, this desirable?

He dropped his touch to take their drinks from the bar. He passed her the martini glass and took her hand, leading her toward the tables circling the dance floor.

"Do you like to dance?" He held her chair.

"Mm." She sat and sipped of her drink. "I need a bit more of this before I try that." She motioned to a couple who whipped by.

He sat beside her, legs stretched out before him, and sighed. "I haven't danced in awhile. I've missed it."

"Are you good?" Wariness edged through her earlier anticipation. What if she couldn't keep up?

He stretched his hand to her, palm out. "This is a good song. Why don't you find out?"

His confidence intimidated her, but only until she stepped into his arms. He tucked their joined hands between their bodies so the back of his wrist brushed her breast and flattened his other palm at the small of her back, bringing her hips against his. Already she could feel the ridge of his erection and they hadn't started moving yet.

"Watch me, Veronica," he murmured, and rolled his hips against hers to the rhythm of the song.

God, did he have great rhythm. She stared into his dark eyes, saw his intent before the first step. She moved backward at his urging, still pressed to him, moved forward as he guided her with the barest pressure on her back until they moved together to the beat in their own little section of the floor. Vicente grinned as they twirled, and dropped his hand from her back to spin her away from him before curling his arm around her shoulders and tucking her against his side.

She gazed up as they circled side by side, backwards now, and he slid his hand along her arm to take her hand, catching her other as he turned her away from his body and guided her through a series of spins before bringing her back, breathless, against his chest. His smile was pure delight and she curled her hand around the back of his neck to bring her mouth to his as the song ended.

"You are amazing," he murmured against her lips.

And thirsty. And hot. And really regretting her choice not to wear a bra because dancing caused a lot more jiggling than she expected.

"Let's cool off for a minute," she murmured, backing away.

"Not yet."

He pulled her back against his chest, smoothing his hand down the length of her back and kissing her, his mouth slanted across hers, tongue stroking, leaving no doubt in her mind about his intent. He slipped his hand under her hair and she pulled away.

"I'm sweaty," she protested.

"So am I."

He kissed her again as other dancers moved around them and soon they were also moving to the music, her arms looped over his shoulders, his hands on her hips holding her against his growing arousal, his mouth hovering over hers. They were so close, they could have been the only people in the room; them, and the pulsing beat of the music.

The song ended and another began, then another, and Vicente held her close. Veronica forgot about her chocolate martini as she drowned in Vicente's chocolate eyes. Her breasts rubbed against his chest until her nipples ached for his mouth, and his hardening cock stroked her mons through the jersey fabric of her dress.

Oh, yeah, he knew just what he was doing. She could see it in his crooked smile.

"Here?" she asked weakly.

He brushed his lips over the shell of her ear. "Have you ever come on the dance floor?"

She swallowed, curling her hands in the fabric of his shirt.
"Have you?"

"I'm going to make you come."

She glanced around at the crowd. He couldn't have chosen a busier club. "Too many people."

"None of them paying attention to us. Can you come like this, rubbing against me?"

"I don't—"

But she didn't get the sentence out before he pivoted her on her heels, brought her back against his body and slid both hands over her breasts, down her stomach, his right hand not stopping until his long middle finger rested right over her mons, teasing her clit with its proximity. She concentrated on not arching her hips into his touch as he chuckled against her skin.

"You like this way, then?"

"Vicente, you can't—"

He pulled her tight against him with his left hand at her waist, so her ass rode the hard ridge of his cock, which, knowing him, he'd whip out and plunge inside her while she was mindless with the orgasm he seemed intent on giving her.

Right now.

She squeezed her thighs together, which only aroused her further, and he skimmed his hand up over her breast and back to her waist, circling his hips and pushing her swollen clit against his finger. She caught her breath and reached behind him to curve her hand around the back of his neck. He brushed his lips against the side of her neck and she closed

her eyes, letting her hips slide forward into his touch. The shock of pleasure weakened her knees, but he held her up, held her against him, his erection nestled in the cleft of her ass, rubbing along the line of her thong. All it would take was a flip of her skirt and he would be fucking her and she would fly apart in front of all these nice people.

"That woman over there," he said against her ear. "She knows what we're doing. I think she is jealous."

Veronica opened her eyes and immediately met the gaze of a woman near the tables. Knowing they were being watched amped up Veronica's pleasure. Then Vicente bumped her hips into his hand and the orgasm that swept through her was slow and languid, weakening her muscles so her head lolled back against his shoulder, her eyes drifting shut as pleasure pulsed through her with every beat of her heart.

As limp as she was, Vicente was tense with his own desire. He turned her in his arms and stroked her hair back from her face.

"Call Arthur, tell him to get the car," she murmured. She didn't care if the driver watched them. She wanted Vicente inside her and she wasn't above begging.

He covered her mouth with his and she dissolved into the sexuality of the kiss, dragging her tongue along his as he tangled his fingers in her hair. Then he broke the kiss and turned, catching her hand and leading her off the dance floor. She stumbled at first, her legs still rubbery from her orgasm. He glanced back and slowed, and she realized he wasn't leading her to the exit and the car after all. He was heading in

the opposite direction, and she already recognized the determination in his eyes.

"Not the bathroom," she managed when she caught up to his shoulder.

"No."

But he led her down a hallway and up a short flight of stairs. How did he know where to go? Had he done this before? With whom?

She didn't want to ask those questions now, but, "Do you scope these places out ahead of time?"

"I saw it when we came in." He opened a door and glanced around.

They were backstage—well, they would have been if a band had been playing tonight instead of a DJ. Veronica could see the dance floor through the heavy curtains surrounding the area. Vicente closed the door securely behind them, scanned the small dark space. He found a wooden speaker cabinet and released her hand to drag it over.

"Bend over," he said, his words brisk, tight.

She did, bracing her hands on the cabinet, anticipation and fear of discovery tensing her muscles when she heard him unzip, heard the rip of the condom package. He flipped up her skirt just as she'd imagine him doing on the dance floor, shoved aside the fabric of her thong and plunged into her, his hands on her hips, holding her still.

The angle was exquisite, his cock deep and high inside her pussy, different than before, his hips slapping against her ass as she rose on her toes to bring him deeper. He bent his knees to accommodate and her orgasm began to build,

tightening her cunt around him, her clit swelling again, aching for his touch, or her own. He leaned over her, lips brushing her ear.

"You can make all the noise you want this time. No one can hear you with the music."

So she unclenched her teeth and let his thrusts drive moans of pleasure from her throat. He slid his hand down to her knee, bent her leg to lift her knee onto the speaker cabinet as well, opening her wider for him, and he drove harder, deeper into her slick channel, coasting one hand up her body to free one breast from her dress, stroking, kneading, tugging. She didn't want to move her hips, didn't want to dislodge him, but God, she wanted to come. She wanted to come now.

"I want to touch myself," she said over her shoulder.

His groan vibrated down her body and the rhythm of his strokes stuttered for a moment. "Jesus. Yes. Make yourself come."

She slid her hand inside her panties. She was so wet she had trouble finding a rhythm to match his, finally gave up trying and created her own, her middle finger flicking her clitoris in quick strokes that made her thighs tense, her ass tighten. When Vicente changed his rhythm, rolling his hips against her ass, pressing deeper, she spasmed, this orgasm thundering through her. She threw her weight back against him again and again until he took charge, pounding into her until his hands clasped on her waist and he groaned his own climax and dropped his head to her back. She could feel him

struggle to catch his breath, and as good as he felt inside her, she wanted to turn, to take him into her arms.

She wanted him to hold her.

Instead he withdrew, dealt with the condom. She straightened, her back aching, and pulled her panties and dress back into place. Through the curtain, she met the eyes of the same woman who'd watched them earlier, and Veronica's heart gave a hard thump. Had she been watching the entire time? Had their actions turned her on? The woman merely saluted Veronica with her glass and turned away.

Vicente called for Arthur then and guided Veronica out of the club, only giving her a slight smile as he did. Once they were in the car, he kissed her, wonderful, deep, gentle kisses and nothing more, all the way back to her apartment. But when they parked and she asked him to stay, he said, "I can't," and once he saw her to her door, turned away.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Four

Over the next week, they managed to find all kinds of places to satisfy his need for public sex. Veronica drew the line at bathrooms and kitchens, but there were more opportunities than she would have expected. They fucked in the copy room of the company five floors up, in a booth at an Irish pub, in the back of a movie theater—not as easy as it sounded, with those chairs that flip up—and at an Indian restaurant, surrounded by colorful curtains. They fucked in the back of the car twice, the first time with Veronica's back to Vicente's chest, the second time face to face.

In between, they talked, got to know each other. She told him about Evil Steve and what he'd done to her self confidence, about why she'd moved to the city, wanting independence, and her dream of owning her own architectural firm. He told her about his childhood in Spain, his flamboyant mother, his own insecurities-how a man that gorgeous had any, she couldn't figure out-and how much he loved being in America.

Still he wouldn't come up to her apartment when she invited him, still they hadn't fucked in bed, still her fantasy of feeling his weight over her was unmet.

"I have a treat today," Vicente said, opening the car door with a flourish when he picked Veronica up Sunday afternoon.

She looked so pretty in the red and white polka dot sundress that hooked behind her neck, and he wanted to trace the heart-shaped outline of the fabric that framed her

lush breasts, press his mouth to the curve of her throat, breathe her in. He'd become addicted to the scent of her, her sweet shampoo, the soft powdery scent of her throat. He took in a deep breath when she bent to look in the car at the picnic basket on the seat.

She turned to him, eyes shining with the humor he'd come to know so well. "Is there actually food in there?"

He couldn't resist touching her, and tucked her hair behind her ear. "I've been feeding you."

She lifted her eyebrow. The mouse was gone. She'd come out of her shell around him, not just sexually, and he loved it. She was incredible, funny, smart, quick thinking.

Creative.

Okay, memories of how creative, combined with the glint in her eyes and the teasing curve of her mouth made his cock hard. But today, even though he had a plan, he wanted to take it slow. Their last few encounters had stretched out in conversations that had intrigued him, that had made him want to look deeper at her.

He took her hand to help her into the car, refusing to wonder—for long—if she wore panties. She'd stopped wearing them at work, though she occasionally wore a thong if they went out.

He loved her ass in a thong.

Pushing the image aside with no small effort, he climbed in after her, and when he simply reached for her hand and brought it to his lips, her eyebrows went up. He placed the picnic basket between them, resting his arm over it, and instructed Arthur to proceed. He caught the driver's

disappointed glance in the mirror, and a surge of protectiveness came over Vicente. He didn't want to share his intimacy with Veronica with the man. He'd done it once and hated himself afterwards. The next time they'd had sex in the car, Vicente had closed the partition between passenger and driver and kept her turned to him, for his eyes only.

What had changed?

Arthur let them off outside the park and Vicente swung her hand as they walked down the path. He'd already selected the spot and hoped no one else had claimed it, since it included a wonderful balance of privacy and scenery.

They were in luck. He led her over a rise and spread his hand in a flourish.

Only she wasn't paying attention. She'd stiffened and was looking down over a different area, where some young men were playing Frisbee, showing off in front of a group of young women.

"What is it?" He tugged her hand, eager to reveal what he had inside the picnic basket. He'd been looking forward to this since he'd come up with the plan two nights ago and didn't want to wait anymore.

"Steve."

He frowned at the word, then it processed. "Evil Steve?" A strange combination of surprise, jealousy and pride curled through him, and he turned toward the group, trying to pick out which of these men had attracted her attention, then broken her heart. Curiosity got the better of him when he couldn't detect the culprit from this distance. "Let's go say hi."

"What?" Her voice shrilled and she whipped around to face him.

"Why not?" He took a step toward the field, stretching her arm out between them as she stayed still. He hated seeing her uncertainty return, hated thinking that man had anything to do with making this stunning woman turn herself into a mouse. He hated thinking of any man having that power over her, even himself. "You look amazing. Wouldn't that just drive him insane, seeing you gorgeous and sexy and happy?" Moving toward her, he curved his hand around the back of her neck, stroking his thumb over her jaw until her eyelids fluttered in pleasure. "Come on. You know you want to."

She tilted her head, her eyes brightening. "I do look good."

"So sexy." His breath stirred the hair brushing her cheek and her full pink lips parted. Unable to resist, he covered her mouth with his, dipping his tongue between those lips to taste her. He'd missed that taste, though only a matter of hours had passed since the last time. He wanted to drown in her kiss, to bury his hands in her hair, to hold her, to turn every day and see her beside him.

His heart slammed hard against his ribs, as if to jolt him back to reality, and he broke the kiss, his head reeling.

"Okay," she said when he lifted his head.

"Okay?" Had he asked her a question? Then he remembered. The ex-boyfriend. He'd been kissing her and she'd been thinking about another man, the one who'd devastated her. Yes, definitely jolted back to reality. Some of the pleasure of the day left him as she stepped around him toward the Frisbee game.

"Come with me."

The resentment that bubbled up surprised him. He wasn't accustomed to feeling resentment or jealousy and that, combined with his careful plans going awry, had him off balance. But he buried the annoyance that she was showing off her Spanish stud and followed her. This had been his idea after all.

He didn't know how she planned to draw Evil Steve's attention, but the man straightened, stilled, much as Veronica had. Veronica's confident stride faltered, and she gave a small wave. Evil Steve's gaze riveted to her and the jealous twinge in Vicente's chest swelled. He stopped himself from grabbing Veronica's waist and pulling her back against him, claiming her. She had to take charge here.

Evil Steve trotted over, a half smile twisting his handsome face. A bump of self-consciousness made Vicente step back and he looked at the two of them together, both blonde and beautiful. He could so easily see them, happy, in love, in lust. The last was made easier by the gleam in Evil Steve's eyes.

Vicente folded his hands into fists. Then Veronica tucked her hair behind her ear as she greeted the man who'd broken her heart. Oh, hell, no. She wasn't going to face him like that, her confidence evaporated. Vicente moved up behind her and brushed his hand across her shoulder. She glanced over and he hoped he didn't imagine the relief in her eyes.

"Steve, this is Vicente."

Vicente took that as an invitation to do what instinct told him, slide his hand around her waist and draw her back against him, feeling her quiver, and not the way he liked. He

lowered his lips to her shoulder. He met the other man's eyes as he rubbed his thumb beneath Veronica's breasts, sending the message that they were intimate. Evil Steve narrowed his eyes in acknowledgement and didn't offer his hand.

"It is good to meet you. I owe you a great deal." Vicente let his accent thicken, let his breath stir Veronica's hair. She did shiver this time, just the way he liked.

Steve didn't miss that and his gaze cut back to her. A young woman crossed the field toward them, her stride purposeful. Anger? Jealousy? Vicente couldn't tell. Against him, Veronica tensed as the woman wrapped her arms around Steve's arm and pressed against him.

"Hello, Serena," she said, her voice low.

"Hello, Veronica. You look nice for a walk in the park."

Veronica leaned back into Vicente. He wasn't even sure she was aware of it.

"We're on a date."

"Ah."

Serena flicked her gaze to Vicente and he gave her his most charming smile.

"Have you two been together long?"

"A week," she answered, sliding her hand over his forearm to link her fingers through his. "Since my birthday."

Vicente spread his hand over her belly. "Only a week? It feels I've known you all my life." He kept his gaze on Steve and turned his head to kiss her jaw. She tilted her head accommodately. "I cannot keep my hands off her. I think about making love to her all day and all night."

"Think about, or making love?" Steve asked, the lust in his eyes darkening to anger.

"Both," Vicente and Veronica said together, and Veronica laughed, though it was high, nervous.

"We have a picnic waiting," Veronica added, motioning back the way they came. "I just wanted to say hi." She turned to look into Vicente's eyes. "Shall we?"

Not releasing her, he guided her back to the picnic area. The moment they were in the small hollow, she twisted in his arms, glided her hands over his chest and around his neck, and dragged his head down to hers. Her mouth was hungry, frantic, bruising, her fingers tangling painfully in his hair.

"Veronica," he said against her mouth.

"You brought a blanket, right?"

"Veronica." He curved his hand around the back of her head, wanting to draw her attention, to look into her eyes, see what emotions roiled through her.

But she twisted out of his arms to find the basket, tug the blanket out of it.

"Help me. I'm shaking too bad."

He didn't ask why, didn't want to know the answer as he took the other end of the blanket and together they spread it over the ground. She pushed his chest until he sat down, then she fumbled with his slacks. He tried to still her hands but she shook him off.

"I know you want me. I felt how hard you were against me when you knew Steve was imagining the two of us fucking."

She didn't say make love, and why would she? When had they made love? He hadn't made it easy, refusing her

invitation every time she offered to bring him home, never inviting her to his home. He'd planned to seduce her today, to take it slow and easy.

But now—

He drew in a breath through his teeth when she closed her hand around his cock, rougher than he usually liked her touch.

"I want to suck you," she murmured, even as she lifted her skirt over his lap to hide him. "Later, I'm going to suck you and feel you all the way against the back of my throat. Do you want that?"

Before he could fully form the picture in his mind, she'd pushed his slacks down to the tops of his thighs, straddled his lap and brought his cock to her entrance before slamming her hips against his and bringing him all the way in, letting her head fall back, baring that long expanse of throat.

God, she was hot and tight, and so slick, her juices coating him like never before.

"Condom," he managed.

"Pill," she replied, pistoning her hips over his, too shallow to grip him where he wanted to feel her. "And clean, I swear, after I found out he'd been cheating on me."

His cock may be inside her, but she wasn't fucking him. The idea made him angry and he twisted his fingers in her hair, forcing her to look into his eyes.

"Don't think about him when I'm inside you."

Her eyes widened. "No. No, I'm not. It's just—he made me feel so small and you make me feel so free."

Her knees gripped his hips as she levered over him, each thrust taking him full tilt, but not quick enough for him. He wanted to turn her over, to pound into her from behind, but it was full daylight, and her skirt covered them now, should anyone happen upon them. And he wanted her looking at him, knowing whose cock was inside her.

"Give me your nipple," he said instead, and pushed aside the fabric of her dress as she lifted her breast for him. He closed his teeth around it, biting harder than he might have if they hadn't run into fucking Steve, if his own confidence in what was between them hadn't been shaken by that meeting.

Veronica moaned and arched her back, pressing her breast against his mouth, and he nipped again, then licked, circling the ruched flesh, blowing on it until she moaned again, driving her hips against his, tightening her cunt muscles around his cock.

"Make me come." She rubbed her cheek against his and bit his earlobe. "Make me come now."

"Veronica."

She eased back with a smile. "That won't be enough. Touch me. God, touch me, Vicente."

He slipped his palm up her thigh, and her whole body tightened in anticipation. "Look at me while I touch you."

"Yes." The word escaped on a gasp as he parted her labia, slipped his thumb between them, over the drenched swell of her clitoris. He wanted to tumble her onto her back, push up her skirt and suck on the little bud. Instead, he positioned his thumb so that her own frantic thrusts pressed his touch to her clit. He kept his gaze steady on hers as she rocked, slid,

pounded in search of her pleasure, her power. The quivering in the bundle of nerves under his finger, the squeeze of her pussy around his cock, signaled that she had found it, and she pursued it with single-mindedness, the slap of her body against his echoing in the small hollow, her pants and gasps washing over him.

"Look at me, Veronica. Look at me." And he gave her what she needed, a sweep of his touch over her clit that sent her quivers to quakes. He pumped into her the best he could with one hand occupied, and absorbed her climax even as he met his own, his cum pulsing into her.

She collapsed against his chest, her arms looped over his shoulders, her head tucked against his chin, and he drew up his knees to hold her against him. He was just about to tumble back onto the blanket with her in his arms when he caught sight of something shiny and opened his eyes fully.

A cop's badge. On the uniform of a very indignant young female cop.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter Five

Veronica rapped lightly on Vicente's office door Monday morning, then eased it open to see if she was welcome. He looked up over the tops of his glasses and turned his chair to face away from the computer, toward her, in silent invitation.

Silent. Not a good sign.

She slipped in the rest of the way, closed the door behind her, pressing her palms against it, her pulse pounding. Yesterday had been such a disaster and for the first time, she'd dreaded coming to work.

"I'm so sorry about yesterday."

He inclined his head. "It was only a ticket."

The blush started somewhere in the vicinity of her toes. They'd been taking risks all week, but to be caught and ticketed for lewd behavior yesterday of all days, when she'd already been feeling vulnerable, had ruined everything. After the officer left, Vicente had folded up the blanket and shoved it back into the otherwise untouched basket, called Arthur, and escorted her back to the car, barely speaking. She'd been too mortified to make any effort then, but had lain awake all night thinking about it.

"You had a plan and I ruined it."

He leaned both forearms on the desk. "What makes you think I had a plan?"

She spread her hands in front of her. "The basket, and the location, and I ruined everything by having to see Steve and then freaking out and jumping you in the park."

"Is that what you did?" He sat back, eyes crinkling. "You freaked out?"

She shoved at her hair, which she'd left down today, mostly to hide behind.

He exploded out of his chair and had her wrists pinned to the door behind her before she knew what was happening. Heart thundering, her gaze shot to his, and she saw a flash in his eyes that she'd never seen before, a twist to his lips she didn't recognize, didn't understand. He looked furious but she didn't understand why, and though he had her pinned to the door, he wasn't hurting her.

"Vicente?"

"Don't do that," he said, his voice a low rumble.

"Do what?"

"Play the little mouse."

She frowned. "What?"

He released her wrists, pushing himself away from the door with the same movement. "You do that thing with your hair and I hate seeing it, especially hate seeing it with me."

She shoved her hair back from her face with both hands now, clueless. "What are you talking about?"

"You push your hair back behind your ear when you're nervous and I hate that you're nervous with me."

"I'm not," she said, and it was only a little lie. "You've certainly seen me let loose."

"I'm not talking about sex!" The words rang in the office and he glanced past her to the open window. "I'm talking about me, why you can't be comfortable with me."

She moved toward him in an effort to encourage him to keep his voice down. "We've only known each other a few months, only really the past week. You're sex on legs. Of course I'm nervous around you. And, God, I feel like an idiot around you after yesterday." She lifted her hand to her hair, let it fall away before she touched it.

"What went wrong yesterday was not your fault." His voice was calmer now. "It was just-unfortunate." He turned to his chair, back again to face her. "Listen, let's go to lunch today. Just lunch."

Huh. Scared straight by a measly ticket. She smiled. "Just lunch? Can we do that?" she teased.

His smile quirked, deepening his dimple, and he brushed the backs of his fingers down her cheek. "Maybe we can see."

* * * *

Lunch was wonderful. Vicente sat beside her instead of across from her, and through most of the meal he touched her, her hand, her arm, her face. The sensations caused a pleasant buzz and she allowed herself, for only a moment, to imagine building the buzz to a hunger. Over the past few days, she'd forgotten how delicious that could be, the anticipation. She savored it now, the little touches of his hand on the back of hers, the way he tucked her hair behind her ear. The shivers of awareness caught her by surprise, after all the things they'd done to each other.

If she hadn't taken over yesterday at the park, was this what it would have been like, this seduction? If she'd allowed this to happen, would he have come home with her, spent the

night with her in her bed, where they could take it slow, explore each other's bodies? She'd realized a few days ago they'd never seen each other completely naked.

She reached up to tuck her hair behind her ear, out of her way so she could take a bite of her salad, then hesitated, not wanting him to misread the gesture. He lifted his hand to complete the gesture, smiling at her.

They talked about his family in Spain, his love for the art there that led him on his career path, his desire to stay longer once the hotel project was complete. She loved to hear him speak, to watch him speak, occasionally lapsing into a Spanish phrase or stumbling over an English word and then turning red, as if knowing two languages was something to be embarrassed about.

"I did not know I could talk that much," he chuckled, reaching for his glass of water. "You must be bored."

"Not at all."

"What about you? What do you like? What is fun for you?"

Those dimples deepened as he tilted his head, and his brown eyes gleamed with the playfulness she'd come to love. "I'd forgotten what fun was until a week ago."

The glimmer in his eyes vanished and he focused on the glass of water in front of him. "I'm not talking about having sex in crazy places."

"Neither am I. I'm talking about feeling my heart pound again, feeling a zing of excitement just from the thought of leaving the apartment."

Now he frowned. "He hurt you so bad? Steve?"

"I let him. I gave him that power. It's not something I'll do again. That's something I've learned lately. I have my own power."

The smile returned, and he trailed his fingertips down the side of her face to rub over her chin. "Yes, you do."

* * * *

The week before the presentation, they kicked into high gear. Vicente was a perfectionist, and required the same of his crew. The team worked so hard on the design of the hotel that Veronica and Vicente didn't have time to go to lunch or to talk about anything but the project. The Gaudi-influenced detail they'd included made the hotel perfect beyond her wildest dreams. Veronica looked across the conference room at Vicente, who squeezed Cathy's shoulder before he glanced up and smiled. Jealousy clenched her heart at the familiarity he showed the younger woman working with them, but the intimacy in his smile was just for her. He was a very physical man. He even clasped Mr. Forrester, the owner, on the shoulder when he came to check on the project. Veronica waited for their boss to show some enthusiasm about the gorgeous details Vicente had included, the absolute perfection of design, but the man said nothing. Vicente's expression betrayed no disappointment at the lack of praise, though Veronica narrowed her eyes at her boss's back when he left the room.

A soft chuckle sounded behind her, and a strong hand rested on her shoulder. "Don't concern yourself, Veronica. I

do not need him to believe it is beautiful. I know it is. That is what is important."

Every evening, Veronica found herself staying later to help after most of the rest of the team went home. Laurie stayed late as well, despite Vicente urging her to go home. When she declared she'd stay as long as he did, he merely cast an apologetic look in Veronica's direction and continued working.

He was a perfectionist, but she could understand that. He wanted his visa extended so he could stay in the United States. Because she had the same goal, she worked as hard as he did, and tried not to wonder why he didn't have time for her anymore outside work, why he wouldn't come to her apartment after they left the office. He knew where she lived, after all, and the attraction was still there. She could see it when he looked at her from across the room, when he smiled at her, when he let his touch linger on her arm or the small of her back. But he was so driven. The project was first now.

And then the project was done. Veronica could see the relief in the set of his shoulders as he thanked the team and dismissed them.

"Veronica, could you wait just a moment? I want to go over the finer points of tomorrow's presentation," he said without looking up from his papers as the others filed out of the conference room.

Laurie hung back. "I can help you with that."

He waved her along. "You have family waiting for you. You've sacrificed enough this week. This won't take us long."

She hesitated only a moment, for another reassurance that he didn't need her, and then Veronica was alone with Vicente for the first time in four days.

"The presentation?" she prompted when he didn't say anything, merely shuffled his papers.

"—is fine. I'm not worried about it." He glanced toward the elevators, then picked up the phone. "You can make the delivery now," he said into the receiver, then hung up.

"What delivery?"

He looked at her then. "We're going to have our picnic tonight, if that's okay with you."

Her heart gave a hard thump. She'd been pretty certain they'd have sex tonight, but hadn't counted on it. That had only led to disappointment the rest of the week. "Where?"

Again he glanced toward the elevators, then gripped her chair and turned her toward him. "All week long I've thought about making love to you on this table."

"The table." Not in bed. Disappointment paired with excitement and arousal for a moment but she pushed the disappointment away and sat back in her chair. "Why the table?"

"You want to know why the table? I will show you."

The elevator dinged and he glanced toward it, but not before she saw the promise in his eyes.

Arthur walked in with the picnic basket and Veronica's heart gave a bump of alarm. Vicente had been more, well, protective of her when making love to her after the first night in front of Arthur. And making love in front of Arthur in the car, when his back was to them, was one thing. Did Vicente

mean for him to watch them now? She didn't want that. She wanted tonight to be about her and Vicente Relief pulsed through her when Arthur merely handed the basket to Vicente, who tucked a bill in the other man's hand before sending him on his way.

And they were alone with the picnic basket.

Vicente gathered up his papers. "Will you unpack it? I want to put these away."

She rose to open the basket as he left the room. The blanket they'd had sex on in the park lay on top, clean now, and she spread it on the table, then pulled out a bottle of red wine, two glasses and a corkscrew. Also tucked in the basket were linen napkins, crackers, and a jar of artichoke dip, rotisserie chicken, and strawberries.

There, in the deep corner of the basket, was a rectangular package slightly longer than her palm wrapped in shiny red paper and a white ribbon. She lifted it just as Vicente returned to the room, closing the door behind him. She turned with the package in her hands.

"What's this?"

He crossed the room, picked up the wine and the corkscrew, one eyebrow lifted in amusement. "For you. To remember me if all doesn't go well in the morning."

"Don't think like that," she murmured, holding the package to her heart with one hand, stroking the other down his arm.

"You worked hard, you did a good job. Don't worry."

He shifted his arm out of her reach to open the bottle.

"Open your present, Veronica."

She looked at the size, measured the weight.

"Open it," he urged, removing the cork from the bottle.

She did, slipping the ribbon from around it, gently peeling the tape from one end and sliding the box free.

A box from a jeweler. "Oh, Vicente." She glanced at him, then back at the box to snap it open. Inside nestled a cloisonné cross on a gold chain. She stroked her finger over the fine detail, since the tears in her eyes prevented her from seeing it all that well.

"Do you like it?" he asked, a hint of nervousness in his voice.

She quickly blinked back the tears before she looked up at him. "I love it."

He stroked a finger across the line of her collarbone. "I notice you don't wear necklaces. I hope it is something you will enjoy."

"I'll treasure it." Unable to hold his gaze, to block the emotion there, she turned her attention back at the velvet lined box.

"I'll put it on for you?"

She handed him the box wordlessly, then turned her back and lifted her hair. "It's Spanish?" she asked.

"Yes." He draped the necklace around her throat and his fingers brushed the back of her neck as he hooked it, then let the weight of the cross fall against her chest. "Let me see." He turned her toward him and admired the pendant.

"Beautiful."

"Thank you."

She meant for the kiss to be soft, gentle, but it had been days since they kissed and she moved into him, angling her

head, deepening the caress, toying with the seam of his lips, teasing the tip of his tongue before drawing back. He stroked his fingers through her hair, smiling, then climbed up to sit cross-legged on the table, gesturing for her to do the same. She hesitated, then hiked her skirt up her thighs, kicked off her shoes and sat sideways at the edge of the blanket while Vicente poured the wine.

The meal was a seduction in itself. They drank wine and pulled chicken with their fingers and smeared dip on crackers for each other. He held a strawberry for her. She closed her lips around it, touching her tongue to the tips of his fingers, watching heat flare in his eyes before she bit into the fruit.

He leaned over to lick the juice from her mouth as she swallowed. She parted her lips for him and tilted his chin up with the heel of her hand to deepen the caress, her tongue playing in his mouth, savoring the flavors of him. He shifted, trailing his thumb along the chain of her necklace to the cross, then lower, between her breasts. He lifted her hand to his mouth, licked her fingers and then his own, tasting the combined chicken and strawberry juices. Fingers still damp, he reached for the buttons of her blouse, loosened them one by one, slowly, trailing his knuckles against the swell of her flesh. She'd forgotten how sweet seduction could be as he dragged his stubbled chin back and forth over her jaw, making her shiver against him.

She whispered his name as he slipped his fingertips inside her blouse, over the curve of her breast, tracing the lace of her new bra with the gentlest touch. She gasped as his fingers moved back and forth, her nipple tightening in

anticipation, her pussy heating. She squeezed her thighs together, as if that would help her wait.

It didn't, instead sending a wash of dreamlike unreality over her. The room became a haze of sensuality as he kissed her again, sliding his fingers inside the cup of her bra, tugging lightly, her nipple between his fingers, his mouth open on hers, tongue stroking along hers, teasing the inside of her lips as if he was licking her pussy. She moaned her approval, skimmed her palm over his stubble, down his throat to his chest as he eased her back on the blanket, tucking her against his side as he leaned over her.

"I want to see you naked," she murmured, working his buttons. "I want to feel you naked with me."

He drew away, smoothing his shirt against his chest. "I found something interesting in here." He rolled off the table and she whimpered. He flashed her a grin from near the door, then flipped a switch.

A screen flickered to life at the front of the room, showing her curled on her side on the table. She sat up, smoothing her skirt as she scanned the walls, pulse picking up.

"There's a camera in here? Why?"

He strolled back to the table, hands in his pockets. "To record presentations, I guess."

"So why is it angled toward the table?"

He pushed the remains of the dinner down to the end of the table before climbing back on all fours, stalking her. "I did that earlier."

The predatory look in his eyes made her pussy tighten, her skin heat in anticipation. "So we could watch ourselves?"

He skimmed his palm up her calf. "Do you like that idea?"

"You're not going to critique the performance afterwards, are you?"

"Not recording." He closed his hands around her ankles and parted her legs, sliding her across the table toward him.

"Wait." She sat up and gripped his wrists. "Naked."

He tilted his head and smiled. "Give me a chance."

"No. You. Naked. I want to undress you."

He released her and sat back on his heels, hands raised in surrender. "Your wish is my command."

She rose on her knees and reached for the buttons of his shirt. "How long is that offer good?"

He lifted an eyebrow. "Is there something you want?"

"Later."

She unbuttoned his shirt, spread the fabric, sliding her hands over his strong chest, scattered with dark hair. As he watched, she twirled her fingers through it. They'd had sex so many times but she'd never seen his chest or shoulders or arms. She leaned forward to kiss his collarbone, dragged her mouth across to the hollow of his throat, and flicked her tongue out to taste his skin as she pushed the shirt from his shoulders, down his arms. She slid her hands back up, tracing the defined muscles in his arms, and drew in a breath to see a tattoo of an intricate cross on his upper arm, almost identical to her necklace.

"I never thought you'd have a tattoo."

"No?" He covered her hand tracing the tattoo with his own hand, keeping his gaze on her. "Why not?"

"You're kind of ... serious."

"And tattoos are not?"

"Mm-mm." She brushed her mouth over the cap of his shoulder. Why did the sight of a tattoo on his skin make her want to lick his entire body?

Okay, to be fair, she wanted to do that before she saw the tattoo.

She glided her hands down his chest, following them with her mouth. He traced his fingers in circles on her thighs as she slipped his belt free from the buckle and unfastened his pants. His cock strained against his briefs, and she stroked a teasing caress down the length of him before peeling the fabric away. She couldn't resist another tease, blowing warmly over him, touching her tongue to the rigid head of him. He twitched under her attention, and she felt an answering throb in her cunt. She wanted him so much, but she'd waited so long to savor him, for him to savor her. She couldn't rush it now.

She urged his slacks over his hips, down his muscular legs, and could imagine the roughness of the hair of them between her thighs.

"You have me naked," he said, bracing his hands behind him on the table, his cock thrusting up, thick and dark, reflected in the screen on the wall. "Now what?"

"Now." She scooted up beside him, smelling her own musk, feeling the wetness between her legs thicken as she curved her hand around his heavy shaft. "Now I want you to undress me. And," the word stopped him when he reached for her hem, "I want you to speak Spanish."

"You don't understand Spanish." His fingers were under her hem now, high on the back of her thigh.

"I don't need to know what you're saying. I just—it would really be sexy."

"Yes, okay." He tugged her leg, urging her over him. "Just don't make me translate while we're making love. I can't switch like that."

Make love. He'd never used those words before and those turned her on more than anything. She straddled him, shoving her skirt up, the hair of his thighs brushing the tender flesh between her own. His hands caressed the outsides of her legs as she bumped her hips closer to his cock, brushing the damp fabric of her silk panties along it.

Her hair tumbled forward over her shoulder, caught in the hair of his chest, and he scooped it back over her shoulder, out of his way. Then he cupped her jaw and kissed her as he fumbled with her skirt fastener. He couldn't get it, so he dragged the garment up her body and over her head, with much wriggling that only settled her cunt closer to his erection. Her muscles clenched in longing as he slipped the blouse down her arms, unhooked her bra, letting her breasts spill free into his hands.

She curved her hand around the back of his neck and leaned close, brushing her breasts against his strong chest. He murmured Spanish words against her skin as he coursed his hands down her back, over her hips, before he flipped her onto her back and eased off of her.

"Spread your legs," he said in Spanish, then repeated in English, nudging her knees apart, then sliding his palm down her stomach to her cunt, spreading her labia with his fingers.

"Can you see? On the screen?" he asked, burying his lips in the hollow beneath her ear as his finger stroked along her cleft, dipping inside her, circling lightly, teasingly before sliding back up to her clit.

"Mm."

Watching him make the movements across the room while feeling them was disconcerting, but she'd never seen her pussy like this, larger than life, shiny with arousal, swollen and pink. Vicente's dark fingers were a sharp contrast and he slipped one, then two inside her, while his thumb rubbed her swollen clit. She was so occupied with watching him that she barely registered the sensation of his lips on her stomach, his head moving lower.

And then his head obscured her view of her cunt on the screen, his mouth replaced his fingers, his tongue darting into her pussy with short little strokes, exciting nerves she didn't know she had. Her juices coated his tongue and moans tore from her chest as his tongue slicked up over her slit to circle her throbbing clit before sipping it between his lips, sucking on it, dragging his tongue over it. She curled her fingers in the blanket at her sides and lifted her hips against his face until her orgasm blew her apart, the sensations shooting from her pussy through her blood, her clit pulsing in his mouth, her cunt clenching the fingers he slid inside her.

Then both his mouth and fingers were gone and her eyes flew open. She looked into his eyes as he rose onto his knees

and levered himself up her body, gliding his chest over her belly and breasts, just as she'd always fantasized.

"I want to come naked inside you," he murmured, his gaze on hers. "Let me come naked inside you."

"Yes!" She slid her hands down his sides to his hips, his ass. "God—"

He didn't need more encouragement. He was inside her, thick and hard, her cunt still spasming from her orgasm, squeezing him, and he lowered his head to the curve of her throat, Spanish spilling from his lips, reverent, punctuated with groans of pleasure. He shifted his weight on one arm so he could touch her, his hand in her hair, her cheek, her jaw, her breast.

"I love feeling you on top of me." She coursed her hands down the muscles of his back, curving over his flexing ass. "It makes me feel so sexy, so ... oh!" She moaned when he pushed deep, so deep it bordered on pain.

"Yes?"

"Oh, yes."

So he repeated it and their rhythm shifted, slowed. She trailed her fingers over his cheek, into his hair, as she looked into his dark eyes, an emotion slammed through her, stronger than her orgasm, shattering her worse than the sexual pleasure. She wanted to say the words that bubbled up in her, but instead turned her head to capture his mouth with hers, threading her fingers through his hair, holding him to her, and let the words echo in her head.

"Feels so good," he said against her mouth. "I love being able to touch you, to taste you. But I can't come this way."

Disappointment shifted her off the tracks but she fought her way back. "You want me on top?"

He parted her lips with his, dipped his tongue inside even as he pulled his cock out. "On your knees. Will you get on your knees?"

She sat up, kissed him long and deep, then knelt and turned her back to him, looking over her shoulder at him. He trailed his fingers down her spine, his lips trailing, and she shivered when he reached the small of her back before he framed her hips in his hands, pushed her forward so she was on all fours. He teased her entrance with the head of his cock, then thrust into her, filling her, stretching her, pushing her toward her next orgasm. He bent over her, covering her, and the Spanish became more sporadic, the phrases shorter as his thrusts came deeper, harder, faster, his hips slapping her ass, the sound of him sliding in and out of her making her crazy so that she drove back against him.

He eased back on his heels, bringing her over him, her back to his chest. She glanced up and saw they faced the camera, that her pussy was open to it, and on the screen she could watch Vicente's cock moving in and out of her cunt, his thighs holding hers open. He glided his hands over her breasts, plucking the nipples into hard peaks, down over her belly to part her labia with his fingers. She moaned and ground her hips to his as his middle finger hovered over her swollen clit. She slid her hand down his arm to cover his hand, press him against her. That was all she needed to tip her over the edge and she thrust back against him as she pulsed and clenched, pulling him deeper, needing him closer

as she came and came, barely registering the sensation of him stiffening, then coming inside her.

She dropped her head back to his shoulder, her hair sticking to his damp skin, the scent of sex and sweat enveloping her.

He murmured something in Spanish and kissed the side of her neck before pulling out.

"What?" She rested her hip on the blanket, her thigh muscles more sore than she expected, and she winced.

He stretched out on his back on the blanket, looped his arm around her shoulders and drew her down to him. "We are very good at this."

"Mm." She slid her hand over his chest, toyed with the flat disc of his nipple. "Perhaps one of these days we can try it in a real bed."

Apparently, that was the wrong thing to say. His breath caught and he went stiff beside her, then eased from beneath her. He stood beside the table and started dressing.

She sat up, her weight braced on her hand. "What? You said I could have what I want. I want you in bed with me. Why is that wrong?"

"Veronica, we don't even know how tomorrow is going to go. If it doesn't go well, I'll be gone next week. Do you really want to bring me into your bed?"

She blinked. "As opposed to bringing you into my body? Risking my job, my reputation? You see my bed as more intimate? What, because I'd like to hold you afterwards, wake up beside you? What is your deal?"

"You've already had your heart broken."

"I'm a big girl, Vicente. I know how to handle that. Yes, if you leave I'll be sad. I will." She looked away because she didn't want him to see her true feelings in her eyes. If sleeping with her freaked him out, what would happen if he knew she loved him? "But I think we've already risked so much. Why can't we risk what it might be like to wake up together? That's all I'm asking."

He tugged on his shirt and leaned against the table to cup her face in his hand. "Let us see what happens tomorrow, all right? But tomorrow's a big day and we both need to be fresh for it. Get dressed and I'll drive you home."

* * * *

Of all the days to be running late. Vicente pounded the elevator button, powerless to do more. He paced the marble hallway. He'd run through the list of everything that needed to be done before their clients arrived and there was no way he'd get it done now.

He'd been up too late, unable to sleep, unable to get Veronica and her request out of his mind. If he brought her home, if he went home with her, allowed another level of intimacy, how much harder would it be for both of them when he left? And even if today's presentation was perfect, he would be leaving at some point. She claimed she was a grown woman and could handle it, but he'd seen her reaction to her ex-lover. He wouldn't be the cause of that pain to a woman ever again.

The elevator doors slid open and he slipped inside, bouncing on his toes as the elevator ascended. He had to

push thoughts of Veronica out of his mind until this morning was over.

He exited on the floor, pushed into the office to see the rest of his team there. The conference room was set up with coffee, serving ware, platters of fruits and pastries, everything arranged beautifully, including large bouquets of flowers. The folder that held his work was at the end of the table, as well as the remotes for the laptop and the screen. The easels that lined the wall were covered with blue fabric. Everything that had been on his mental list was ticked off. When he turned, Laurie stood at his elbow with a cup of coffee.

"Did you do this?" he asked, taking the cup and sweeping his hand around the room.

"When I got here, Veronica was already here with the caterers. She did it all."

"Veronica?"

He hadn't seen her, hadn't even thought to look, he'd been so surprised. He sought her, saw her standing at the end of the serving table in a red dress. How the hell had he missed her, because she was all he saw now. She had her attention on him. He set the coffee mug on the end of the table by his folder and crossed the room.

"You did this? Why?"

She tossed her hair back over her shoulder, a gesture of confidence that hit him straight in the heart. He wanted to touch her, so bad. But with the rest of the team in here, and Laurie's watchful gaze, he could not allow himself the luxury.

"I want it to go well."

He wouldn't read more into that other than her best wishes, at least not until later. "Thank you. I'm sorry I was late."

The flash in her eyes made him wonder if she was thinking that, if he'd spent the night with her, he would have been on time. Because the thought had certainly crossed his mind.

"Everything is ready to go. Are you ready?"

"As soon as I have some coffee."

She smiled. "I have a few more things to finish up. You'll do great." She reached over to squeeze his hand then turned away.

He took his place at the head of the table, and called the meeting to order.

"I'd like to thank you all for being here this morning," he said when everyone was seated. "I know it is early, and many of you made it here before I did. I am very excited with the results we've come up with for the Hotel Barcelona. To be my most modest, I find her stunning."

His audience chuckled.

"Before I begin my presentation I have a few people to thank. My team worked very hard these past months. I want to thank Cathy for her tireless work on the visual aids we'll see, Thomas for his ability to crunch numbers, Laurie for being the right hand of me, whenever I needed her, and Veronica," he turned toward the door to acknowledge her, aware that others in the room may be able to read the signs of their true relationship in the look, unable to suppress the pride he felt in her, "who saw flaws and solved problems before they could become issues. I thank you all."

The smile she gave him just before he turned back held something that warmed him, a smile he wanted to hold onto. He was still smiling when he began his presentation.

He was rolling along, maintaining everyone's attention and interest. His numbers were spot on, his words well chosen. Mr. Forrester, the partner in the firm who had recruited him, joined them. Veronica moved aside to accommodate him, and Vicente only lost his train of thought for a moment. He picked up the remote and clicked the button to begin his visual representation, and gasps filled the room, and an "Oh, my God," echoed off the walls.

He pivoted to see what caused such distress. There, on the screen, was Veronica, her naked body stretched upright, her stomach muscles taut as she hooked her hands around his neck as he bent to kiss her shoulder. One hand was on her stomach and the other covered her pussy as he fucked her on the conference table.

Christ. He jabbed the button on the remote a couple of times, pausing the video, rewinding, before finally shutting it off, his entire body hot, the sips of coffee in his stomach roiling as he whipped toward Veronica.

Her face was the same color as her dress, her eyes huge as she stared at him.

"Did you do that?" He barked the words.

She took a step back, all the color rushing from her face now. "What? No!"

Forrester swung the door open, fury etched on his face. "My office. Both of you. Now."

Vicente motioned for Thomas to take his place at the head of the table. Too much work had been done to let the presentation slide, though he doubted Thomas could get their clients back on track after that distraction. He fought the coffee-flavored bile that rose in his throat. He'd destroyed his chance of keeping this job. He would be going home on the next plane.

Veronica walked out the door with her head down, arms wrapped tightly around herself, and she didn't look at him as they walked into Forrester's office behind the man.

"What the hell was that?" Each word was bitten out.

Vicente struggled for calmness, for reason. The battle was more difficult than he expected. "I do not know how the picture ended up there."

"You said you weren't recording," she accused, her gaze on the floor.

He pivoted toward her. "I didn't! You think I would sabotage my presentation that way?"

"No, I—"

"Excuse me." Forrester's voice was low and lethal. "You had sex in the office, you filmed yourselves and exposed it to some very important clients. I don't think firing you will undo the damage you've done here."

"Fired? No, don't," Veronica said, her head snapping up. "I did it. I wanted to sabotage his presentation, so I put the picture up there."

"What? Why?" Forrester demanded.

Vicente stared. She hadn't—No, she wouldn't. She had as much riding on this presentation as he did. So she was lying

for him. Why was she sacrificing herself for him? He took two steps forward, between her and her boss. "No. She didn't. She wouldn't have done that."

"I did." She moved up beside him, gripped his sleeve to look into his eyes. "The only thing Vicente did wrong was make love to me in the conference room, and I paid him back because I wanted to lead this team. I deserved it."

Vicente cocked his eyebrow, letting her know he knew differently, and he wasn't going to allow her to throw herself on her sword.

"Then why are you protecting him now?"

Thank God, she wasn't fooling her boss. Well, former boss.

Now she met Forrester's eyes. "It was the wrong thing to do, and Vicente has already risked so much to be here. His design is divine. You know. You've seen it. He deserves to see the project through. I don't know how to make this right, but if firing me is a step in that direction—"

"It is." He pressed a button on his phone. "Send security."

Tears shimmered in Veronica's eyes, but she lifted her chin. "You don't need to do that. I'll leave on my own."

"Sir, she has worked here since college," Vicente pleaded. "I'll go. Please do not fire her for my mistake. We were working late and you see how beautiful she is. I wanted her, and I let that take over my judgment. I will leave. I will surrender my design," all that hard work, the crowning achievement of his career, "and I will go back to Spain."

"This isn't an either-or proposition," Mr. Forrester said. "You caused this company a great deal of embarrassment."

You're both out. I can forego the security if you can be out of here in fifteen minutes."

Again Vicente looked at Veronica, whose lower lip trembled. She'd been here fifteen years and she had to be out in fifteen minutes. He moved toward her, but she pivoted and left the room.

He waited for her once his things were packed in a box; not much after four months. She was having a bit more trouble, and her hands shook as she packed.

"Let me help you," he murmured, easing her aside and loading everything that looked personal into the paper box she'd been provided.

But she wouldn't look at him. Why was that a surprise? He'd ruined her life.

When they were done packing, they had to walk past the conference room, where the rest of their team and a few of the clients remained to watch their walk of shame. Vicente positioned himself between them and Veronica, who kept her head high as she walked past.

She would not cry. She would not cry. But Veronica had never been so embarrassed in her life. She determined not to look at her co-workers, but a snicker from Cathy drew her glance, and she saw the smug smile on the other woman's face. Fury rolled through her and she veered in front of Vicente to confront the other woman.

"You did this. You put that picture up there. Were you jealous because I'm smarter than you or because of Vicente?"

"Please," Cathy replied with a wave of her hand. "Do you think you're the only one he fucked?"

Betrayal slammed through her, almost as painful as the betrayal of seeing herself on the screen, and the tears that had been threatening shimmered again.

"You have what you want," she said in a shaky voice. "I hope you enjoy it."

Aware that Vicente reached for her arm, she dodged his touch and moved toward the elevators. When the door slid open, she stepped inside, but held a hand up to stop him, meeting his gaze for the first time since Forrester's office.

"You take the next one."

Arthur was waiting for her when she got to the lobby. "Vicente said I am to take you home."

She didn't want to accept, didn't want anything from him right now, but God, she wanted to be home, to be alone to break down. She allowed Arthur to take her box and escort her to the car.

* * * *

Veronica arrived home from another fruitless interview to hear the phone ringing. Her heart pounded, but she pushed back the hope that it could be Vicente. He hadn't called in the days since she'd been fired. Hell, he hadn't called when they were seeing each other. And he was probably back in Spain anyway. She'd thought, after the last time they made love, something had changed. If she hadn't thought so, she wouldn't have been willing to take the fall for the presentation fiasco.

But he hadn't called. She'd be smarter to hope a prospective employer was calling.

Still, she was breathless when she picked up the handset, and her heart dropped like a rock when a woman's voice said, "Veronica Butler?"

"Yes?"

"Did I catch you at a bad time?"

Was this a telemarketer? Figured she would have rushed for that. "I was just coming in. Who is this?"

"I'm sorry. I'm Jordan Milburn from Milburn Hotels. I understand you worked on the Hotel Barcelona."

Dread pounded through her. Milburn Hotels owned the hotel, had paid the fee for Vicente's services. Had seen her shame. "I did. Is there a problem?"

"We have tried to work with who remained on your team after the ... incident, but we are not finding them to be the least knowledgeable. We need you on board."

Shoving her hair back from her face, she paced before the window. "What about Vicente? He would suit your needs better."

"You were the one who pulled everything together, from my sources. You were the go-between with Vicente, Forrester and the team. That's what we need from you. We're willing to match any offer you've already received."

How would it look to admit she hadn't received any offers? "I would be delighted to meet with you, to work with you."

"You're not contracted with anyone else?"

"No, I'm free to work on this with you."

"I'm pleased to hear it. Can you be here first thing Monday morning?"

Veronica did a little dance of excitement, but the feeling was short-lived. If she had this job, it meant Vicente had gone back to Barcelona.

* * * *

"You are no fun," Cindi chided, spinning her martini on the tiny table in front of them.

The last time Veronica had come here, she'd left with Vicente. She couldn't stop herself from glancing hopefully at the door.

Cindi drew her attention back. "We're supposed to be celebrating and every time a dark-haired man walks in, you get all tense."

Veronica opened her mouth to deny it but didn't have the energy to lie. "He could have had this job for himself. He wanted to stay in the U.S. Why did he arrange for me to have it?"

"Because he ruined your life?"

"He didn't do anything I didn't want him to do."

Cindi shook her head. "I thought Evil Steve taught you a lesson about giving a man too much power."

"Vicente doesn't have power over me, other than the memories. He reminded me how to take power for myself, how to take what I want. But honestly, Cindi, if you're going to fall in love, shouldn't you give him some power while you take some for yourself?"

Cindi set her glass down hard. "Are you in love with him?"

Veronica pushed her hair back. "I think I might be."

"But he's back in Spain, right? I mean, it's hopeless."

Veronica didn't voice the idea she'd nurtured all day long, of the money she had sitting in her savings that she no longer needed to horde until she got a job, of the long weekend ahead of her, and how long it would take to fly to Madrid. She just needed a little more information.

"Not hopeless," she said, hopping to her feet. "Not hopeless at all. I'm going to go. Thanks, Cindi. I'll talk to you later." And she ran out of the bar as quickly as her heels could carry her.

* * * *

He hadn't left America. Veronica stood in the lobby of his hotel at almost two in the morning after getting his address from Laurie, who hadn't appreciated the late phone call. For a moment, Veronica reconsidered charging up to his room, waking him, to find out if he could love her.

Of course, it made more sense than spending her savings and flying to Spain, but still, maybe she should wait until morning. After all, what if he had a woman up there? Arthur had sworn when he'd dropped Vicente off earlier in the evening that he'd been alone, but the idea continued to niggle.

If Vicente had taught her anything, it was to take risks. She leaned forward and pressed the elevator button.

Moments later she had the same conversation with herself outside his door. He'd been in town for weeks and hadn't called her. What other clues did she need that he wasn't in love with her, that he'd moved on? Okay, if only for closure, she'd go through with this. She rang the bell.

Vicente opened the door after an agonizing minute, bare-chested, hair rumpled from bed, eyebrows lifted. Sexier than ever. All thoughts of telling him about the job offer from Milburn Hotels fled. She had to seize this moment or she might not find the nerve.

"Veronica," he said, surprise lacing his sleep-roughened voice.

"I thought you'd gone home."

"The rent was paid, so I thought I'd stay. What are you doing here?"

For a moment she thought she'd have to make her declaration in the hall, but he reached for her arm, slid his touch down to clasp her hand and drew her into the room, closing the door behind her. He motioned her to a lush couch in the center of the suite and excused himself. She was too anxious to sit, so instead she merely held her tiny purse in both hands, let it bounce against her knees as she listened to him brush his teeth.

He walked out of the bathroom, wiping his hands on a towel before tossing it back into the sink.

"You didn't call," she said, and hoped it didn't sound accusing.

"You were angry with me," he reminded her.

"Angry, but more hurt."

"Because I'd slept with Cathy?"

She had been, but rationalized it had been before his involvement with her. God knew he couldn't have had the time or energy to screw them both. She waved away his

sentence. "I felt vulnerable. I lost everything I knew, and then you didn't call."

He walked toward her and she was enveloped with the familiar scent of his musk, overlaid with his toothpaste. "I didn't think I'd be welcome."

She lifted her chin to meet his eyes. "Then you should have taken the risk. You're so good at risks, Vicente. It makes you good at your job, your designs. It makes you an amazing lover. What I want to know is if you'll risk your heart to me."

For the first time since he'd reentered the room, he looked away. "I don't know how to do that. I don't know if I can do that."

She stepped forward and cupped his cheek in her hands, drawing his gaze back to her. "I promise, if you think you can try, if you want to try, I'll make it easy on you."

He covered her hand with his. His breath feathered her lips when he said, "I want to try."

Her heart pounded so loud, she was certain she's misheard him. "Are you sure?"

He dipped, tucked his arm under her knees and swept her into his arms. "As long as you don't make it too easy on me."

She curved her hand around the back of his neck, pulled his face to hers, kissed him slow and deep as he cradled her to his warm bare chest. "That can be arranged."

He pivoted toward the bedroom and lowered her onto the bed, following her down, the hair of his chest and legs rasping along her skin. She lifted her chin to deepen the kiss, bringing his tongue in deeper until he retreated, stroking his tongue over her bottom lip, nipped it so that she arched toward him,

pressing her breasts to his chest. He coursed his hands under her dress, over her belly, making her skin twitch, her breasts peak in anticipation of his touch. She parted her legs so the fabric of his Jockeys rubbed the insides of her thighs before his weight settled over her hips, his cock hard against her wet cleft, rubbing, the head of him teasing her opening through their underwear before sliding up to nudge her clit with short, teasing strokes that sent sparks firing through her blood. She whimpered in longing, wanting it now, wanting to savor every moment. Wanting, just wanting.

And so happy to have what she wanted in her arms.

She slid her hands down his back, feeling his muscles bunching and stretching beneath his skin, so strong, so sexy. She reached beneath the knit fabric to squeeze his ass, then glided her hands up his spine, over his shoulders, down his arms to guide his hands to her breasts. He dragged his thumbs over her tender nipples as his teeth scraped over her jaw.

"Missed you. God, missed you," he said against her skin, pushing the fabric of her dress up and lowering his mouth to her stomach, up between her breasts.

His stubbled chin was rough against her tender skin and she curled her fingers through his hair, holding him to her. He shoved the dress the rest of the way up, peeling it over her head, following the movement to cover her mouth again with long, deep kisses as he skimmed his hand down her belly, between her legs, parting her slit, driving two fingers inside. She bowed against his hand with a moan, pressing down,

bringing his fingers deeper as his tongue lapped at her mouth.

She coursed her hands over his throat, shoulders, chest before she reached past the waistband of his shorts and closed her fingers around his cock, sliding her curved hand up and down until he took over the rhythm, thrusting into her hand. He murmured something in Spanish as he slid his fingers from her, dragged his hand along her belly to cup her breast.

"What?"

"I want to savor you, but I can't, not this time. I need to be inside you. Now, *mi amor*."

She lifted her hips to skim the panties he'd pushed aside down her legs, and he shed his own briefs, then knelt before her, dark eyes heavy lidded as he curved his hand around his cock to guide it.

"Do I need a condom?"

She watched his thumb move rhythmically over the reddened head of his erection. "No. I want you naked."

With a fluid move, he was over her, bracing his weight on one elbow, and parted her with his blunt cock. She sighed in pleasure and moved into him, bringing him deeper, bringing his weight over her, his hips angled right over her swollen clit, brushing it with every stroke. He eased from her slowly, drove in deeply. She tightened her muscles around him to feel every inch of him, every facet of him, and the tendons in his neck stood out as he fought for control. He repeated the strokes, each one following more rapidly until he drove into her, his hands on her hips to still her, the length of him filling

her, stretching her, driving her out of her mind with each thrust.

"*Venga!*" he murmured in her ear, "*Venga a mi*, Veronica."

She wanted to do as he asked. She wanted to come more than anything. Every stroke felt so good, and she loved the masculine weight of him over her, pressing her to the mattress. She loved the way he rubbed his stubble over her throat, the way he kissed her as if he was starving for the taste of her. But...

"I want to be on top."

He stilled for a moment, bracing his weight on his arms as he looked at her. Then he tucked his hands under her hips and rolled, his cock still deep inside her, bringing her over him.

She knew what it cost him. He'd been close to orgasm and now she was taking over the rhythm, controlling how deep he went, but he was willing to hold off for her pleasure. She brought his hand to her lips, kissed it, then rose on her knees.

The angle was exquisite, so deep, and she moved against the pleasure his depth offered her, sliding her hands up her own body, cupping her breasts, showing off for an audience of one. And by the hooded look in his eyes, he enjoyed every bit of it, his hips pushing up into hers when she pushed down, his cock so deep, so hard. Her slick channel clutched and glided and squeezed until just having his cock inside her was no longer enough. She pumped her hips against his, slid her hand down her belly to part her labia. Vicente's eyes widened, and he pushed her hand away to stroke her himself, matching

the rhythm of his hips to the rhythm of his fingers, stroking and circling the bundle of nerves until the pleasure came over her in a rush, the slow pulses seeming in slow motion. She tossed her head back and moaned, long and low, as he came inside her with a groan of his own, then cradled her against him when she dropped to the bed beside him.

"*Te amo*," he murmured against her temple.

Her heart lurched. "I love you, too."

* * * *

Veronica woke up in the soft sheets, Vicente curved around her, arm looped over her waist. Sunlight streamed in through the barred window onto the bedside table where, underneath her discarded panties, sat a contract with the letterhead "Milburn Hotels." With a shaking hand, she reached for it and saw his signature at the bottom. Surprise glued her tongue to the roof of her mouth.

Behind her, he stirred, pressed a kiss to her shoulder, cupped her naked breast casually. "*Buenas días*."

"When were you going to tell me?" She shifted onto her back to look at him as she held up the contract.

He chuckled and smoothed her hair back from her face to kiss her temple. "Monday morning was the plan, before you showed up. And last night you kept me pretty busy." He rubbed his chin over the line of her shoulder.

She blinked up at him, unable to believe it. They'd be working together again. "So you weren't leaving." Joy swelled in her chest.

Show Off
by Emma Jay

He lifted his head, his eyes holding that playfulness she'd always loved, now tinged with the deeper warmth of love. "I made sure Jordan knew we were a package deal. I just wanted to make sure it was a fait accompli before I said anything."

"So we'll be working together again."

"With one stipulation." He took the contract from her hand to drop it on the table and tumbled her onto the bed, leaning over her. "Jordan insists we do not have sex in the office."

She curled her fingers around the back of his head and smiled. "We'll just need to find another way to show off, then."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

About the author...

Emma Jay has been writing longer than she'd care to admit, using her endless string of celebrity crushes as inspiration for her heroes. She discovered her husband has way more tolerance for screensavers and hunk-decorated blog posts when she calls them her "heroes." Emma, married 22 years (wed at the age of 8, of course) believes writing romance is like falling in love, over and over again. Creating characters and love stories is an addiction she has no intention of breaking.

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by

Julia Devlin

When Serena Adams collided with a gorgeous young stranger on a crowded subway, nothing could have prepared her for the hottest ride of her life...

Serena gets more than she bargained for when her ordinary morning commute turns into an erotic encounter with a much younger man able to excite her with the merest touch. Later that morning, Serena's prospective new client turns out to be her El train stranger and she can't believe her misfortune. If she can't ride the rails without wanting to devour him, how will she manage to work with him professionally?

Julian St. Claire believed he would never see the beautiful woman from the El again. However, this turns out to be his lucky day when she falls into his lap hours later. Never one to back down from a challenge, he pursues the sexy siren, despite her protests about their age difference. The way Julian sees it, age is no match for undeniable chemistry.

Can the two sort out their differences to enjoy the physical attraction they discovered ... riding the rail?

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter One

The El train jerked to a stop in front of Serena Adams and the doors slid open to reveal wall-to-wall people. Late for her morning meeting, she straightened to her full five-feet-two inches, squared her shoulders, and readied herself to fight her way inside. Early morning Chicago commuters were an aggressive bunch and she battled her way into the car, pushing and throwing elbows in the race to claim non-existent space.

Just as she found six inches of ground to call her own, someone shoved her from behind. Thrown off balance, she teetered on her black stilettos, and collided with a solid male chest encased in a slate gray business suit.

"Sorry," she mumbled while trying to regain firm footing. To her left a beacon gleamed in the florescent light and she made a desperate grab for the metal handrail and stepped on the suit's foot with the heel of her shoe.

He let out a small oomph, and she glanced up to offer another apology and all the air left her lungs on a whoosh.

Holy shit!

Amused dark gray eyes peered down at her. With his high-sculpted cheekbones, and the deliberately messy hair of today's young men, he looked like he'd stepped out of an Abercrombie and Fitch catalog. The slow wicked smile on his full lips told her he knew every ounce of his appeal.

Serena realized her mouth hung open and promptly shut it. Her stomach fluttered and her cheeks filled with heat.

Embarrassed by her response, she shifted her gaze down to the dingy floor. She didn't normally gape at men like a sixteen-year-old, especially men at least ten years younger than her, however gorgeous they may be.

The train jerked forward, and she stumbled, falling against the man's broad chest. His hand shot to her waist to steady her. In a low rumble, he asked, "First time on the EI?"

His voice made shivers run down her spine. She felt herself turn six shades of pink and cursed her fair complexion. With her attention glued to the floor, she shook her head. His hand slipped from her waist, leaving behind the heated imprint of his palm. Where he'd touched tingled and warmed her all over.

She was a grown woman, not a teenager. This was the EI for God's sake. Rule number one—when taking public transportation, no lusting after fellow passengers.

To gain some distance, she shifted her hip to make room, but the asshole behind her ate up the vacated space with his large girth. She gritted her teeth in frustration. Why did her car have to be in the shop? In her cute little Beamer she'd be safe. This morning had been a disaster from the second she'd opened her eyes. To make matters worse, with the torrential downpour, she hadn't been able to hail a cab, and running late, the EI had been her only option. Now, here she was, packed into the damn train like a sardine, having impure thoughts about a stranger.

Stare straight ahead. She repeated over and over in her head, fighting the urge to gape at the man's gorgeous face. Instead, she fixed her attention on the light blue paisley tie

knotted at his neck and tried to think about the board reports she'd read last night for one of her clients. It didn't work. The rich, musky scent of his cologne combined with his heat created a pheromone designed to drive her mad with lust.

You're a grown woman. You're a grown woman. You're a grown woman. Not, I repeat, not, a hormonal teenager.

While the train vibrated and rolled through the Chicago tunnels, the man's sex appeal poured off him like a powerful aphrodisiac. Pinpoints of sweat pricked along her back and her nipples puckered, responding to him despite her best intentions. Serena clenched her teeth, taking slow even breaths, while remaining ramrod straight.

The train stopped at its first destination. Despite the full car, more people pushed on, pressing her closer to the man. Their chests collided, sending a jolt of pure electricity through her. She bit her lower lip to stifle a groan.

What was wrong with her? She'd been married and divorced, dated good men, had great sex, but she couldn't remember ever having such a visceral response to a man. Ever. Her panties were already damp, as if she'd experienced hours of foreplay.

The train began moving again, and the vibrations created a friction between them. His hard-muscle chest rubbed lightly against her breasts, causing them to grow heavy.

Snap out of it, you do not get turned on by strangers on public transportation. Her body had other plans and paid no attention.

Her senses heightened, making her hyper-aware of him. It felt like the air thickened between them. *So this is white hot*

chemistry? Too bad it was all one-sided. Serena was positive if she glimpsed at the man's face, she'd find amusement, or worse, sympathy.

He shifted, his arm sliding along the side rail so his hand hovered at her waist, pressing them closer together. The gesture seemed deliberate. Her gaze flew up and locked on his.

His expression held unmistakable heat. Transfixed, she wanted to break the contact, but his intense stare forced hers in place. The rattle and noise from the subway dimmed. Her mouth parted on an intake of breath. Her tongue darted out to moisten dry lips and his slate gray eyes followed the movement.

His hand moved again, brushing her hip with his thumb. The contact sent a jolt straight to her clit. Well didn't this just take the cake? One touch and she was ready to jump him.

He cocked a brow at her.

She smiled pleasantly, hoping to appear unaffected. In an effort to gain some distance, she reached for the pole overhead so she could lean away from him. He followed the movement, his eyes drifting to her breasts. Clearly outlined, her nipples abraded the fabric of her dress, driving her crazy.

The man released a slow long breath and hissed, "Jesus."

She let out a small gasp. His hand slid onto the small of her lower back, his palm burned through her clothes and heated her skin. His fingers splayed, moving over the curve of her ass, applying pressure so they rocked together. A low moan escaped her lips as his huge, hard cock pushed against her pelvis.

She blinked in surprise and a small, "Oh," escaped her lips. Rationally, she should be appalled at a stranger groping her on the train. Logically, she should pull away, but some demon possessed her and she pressed back.

He bent his head low next to her ear. "Damn, I'm glad I took the El this morning."

The sound of his deep velvet voice traveled down her spine, making her shiver. She squeaked out, "This is crazy."

"Instant lust." His mouth brushed her neck as he spoke, and he ran his hand along her back. She bit her lip to keep silent. She'd never wanted to fuck a man more. He'd barely touched her and she trembled, struggling to maintain composure.

"This is Clark and Lake," the conductor said through the intercom system, startling Serena out of her lust-filled haze. The train jerked to a standstill, and the press of people eased as passengers began to exit.

"This is my stop." She pulled away. Thankful for the distance, she welcomed the arrival of sanity. She turned and scurried through the open doors.

"Wait," he called after her.

Serena ignored him, moving as fast as her high heels would carry her, disappearing among the crowd.

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