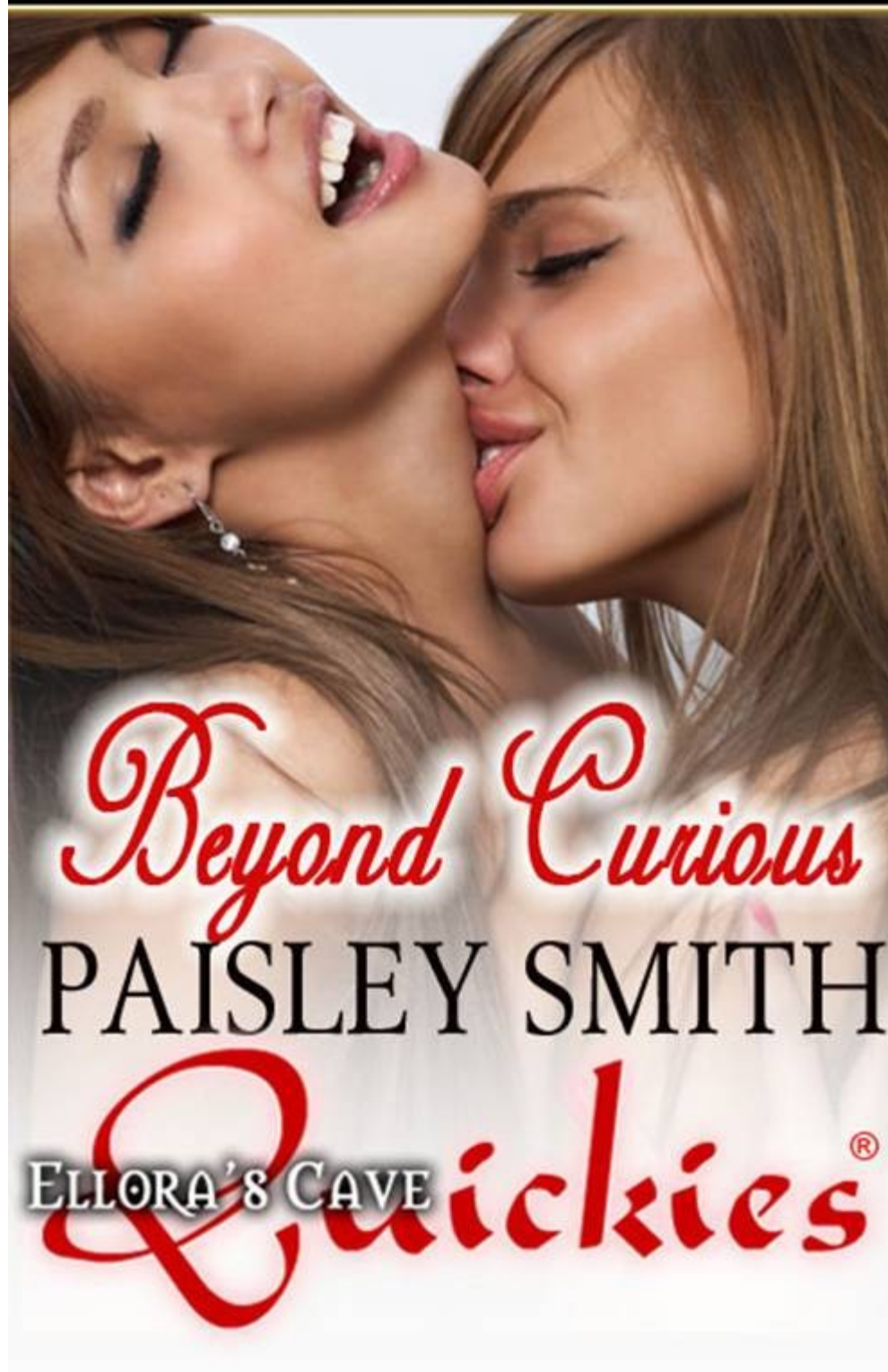


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



Beyond Curious
PAISLEY SMITH

ELLORA'S CAVE *Quickies*®

Beyond Curious

Paisley Smith

Annie's dreading the piano lessons that her grandmother's will demanded she take...until she meets her teacher, Emily. Far from the elderly cat lady Annie had envisioned, Emily is sexy, blonde and completely irresistible.

Emily has never been with a woman, but Annie attracts her in a way that no one else has. Despite Emily's initial misgivings, it doesn't take long for their relationship to move from teacher and student to something much more than either of them expected – something that might lead to the love of a lifetime.

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Beyond Curious

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BEYOND CURIOUS

Paisley Smith

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Chapter One

Annie looked down at her *Teaching Little Fingers to Play* piano book. She scowled.

It was bad enough she had promised her dying grandmother she would finally learn to play the piano—especially since Gram had left her the shiny black baby grand piano Annie had always admired—and even worse because of the juvenile piano book boasting a ridiculous cartoon owl on the front. But then again, Annie would have promised Gram anything.

The raw pain she had managed to tamp down for the seven months, one week and three days since Gram's last breath reemerged and twisted her heart into a hard knot.

Why she had always put off learning to play was beyond Annie. She should have taken piano as a child—not as a twenty-nine-year-old woman.

After parking her car against the curb, she looked up the hill at the imposing Tudor-style house that sat right smack-dab in between two fraternity houses. A fluffy calico cat perched on the concrete balustrade, ominously staring down at her like some sort of gargoyle.

Dread sank straight to Annie's work boots. She could already envision the interior of the house. Cats everywhere, slip-covered, threadbare furniture, plastic floor runners and worst of all, the stench of moth balls mingled with one too many litter boxes. She shuddered.

God forbid any of her friends see her traipsing into the Widow Granger's house for a piano lesson. She'd grown up the consummate tomboy, opting to play sports instead of piano. She'd preferred jeans to skirts and had secretly loved it when store clerks and well-meaning old ladies mistook her for a boy.

It hadn't been until her junior year in high school that she realized there was a name for what she was. Gay. Discovering that about herself had liberated her in ways she had never imagined.

Coming out to her family had been a different story.

But Gram...

Annie swallowed and blinked away a threatening tear. Gram had accepted her from the beginning and when Annie confessed that she was gay to Gram, Gram had told her, "I'm glad you finally figured that out, sweetie."

Still...piano lessons? Surely Gram, of all people, would have known better.

Angst struck like a thundering bass chord as Annie stared up at the imposing house.

The Widow Granger.

Annie did not know much about her other than she had once been on the faculty at the university and her husband, prior to his death a few months ago, had been an English professor.

A quick glance at her watch prompted Annie to get out of the car and climb the steep driveway toward the front door. Even in late September, the midday Alabama sun baked her back through her chambray shirt.

But as she neared the house and heard the tinkling of piano music—very beautiful piano music—her trepidation melted away with the humid heat. *So much like Gram*, she thought. Only better.

She had not heard music like this since Gram had still been able to make her arthritic fingers dance across the keyboard.

Consternation giving way to curiosity, Annie climbed the concrete stairs onto the brown brick porch and peered through the window at the narrow back of a blonde woman, playing the piano and swaying in time to the steady rhythm.

Mesmerized by the sound, Annie could only gape as the woman—who she assumed was the Widow Granger—continued.

Annie's piano repertoire included the bass part of "Heart and Soul" and a by-ear version of "Chopsticks". But this...

This was real music.

If only she could learn to play like *that*! Gram would be so proud of her.

Although the pianist's left hand was obscured by the drapery, Annie could see Mrs. Granger's right hand lithely gliding up and down the keyboard.

Just as her consciousness submerged completely into the music, the musician abruptly stopped and stood, turning to discover her spying like some sort of peeping tom.

But no quicker than Annie had glimpsed her teacher, she vanished and Annie heard the doorknob turning. The screen door creaked as the widow pushed it open.

Annie gaped.

This was hardly the old cat woman in worn-out house shoes she had imagined.

Mrs. Granger was beautiful. Her blonde hair fell in an ethereal mass of waves just below her shoulders. Minimal makeup highlighted her fresh-faced appearance. Her white blouse and black skirt were stylish, yet professional. Annie had expected an old crone of seventy to greet her wearing a floral print muumuu. This woman had to be in her thirties—if that. The only thing that gave away her age was the wisdom that emanated from her eyes, even through a pair of bright blue reading glasses.

Everything about her seemed feminine and soft and the way her gaze traveled down Annie's body and back up again made Annie wish she'd worn something besides the baggy men's jeans and boots she wore to her job at the humane shelter every morning. A smile claimed Mrs. Granger's pink glossed lips. "You must be Annie."

Annie patted the embroidered patch bearing her name on her shirt pocket. "Yep. That's me. How'd you ever guess?" She suddenly wanted to kick herself. Hard. Jeez, she sounded like a star-struck moron.

"Won't you come in?" The widow opened the screen door wider and stood back to admit Annie whose elbow brushed her arm as she walked past. Annie muttered an apology but Mrs. Granger only smiled sweetly.

The cool dimness of her living room was like a shrine to both Shakespeare and Bach. Books lined the built in shelving around the fireplace. A charcoal rubbing of the Bard's epitaph hung over the doorway to her dining room. Music books stretched helter skelter on the closed lid of the black grand piano, on the floor and on a tufted ottoman, all bearing the names of famous composers. Mozart. Beethoven. Chopin. Debussy.

Could Mrs. Granger play all this music?

"I'm Emily," Mrs. Granger said, offering her hand.

Annie took it in hers and was surprised by the strength of the widow's grip contrasting the softness of her palm and fingers.

"Annie...um...Annie Prescott," she muttered, reluctantly releasing her teacher's hand. Annie could not stop staring. And she couldn't get over how sexy this woman was. Maybe piano lessons with the widow weren't going to be so bad after all.

"Shall we?" Mrs. Granger asked, slipping the *Teaching Little Fingers to Play* primer from Annie's hand and sliding onto the bench. Mrs. Granger patted the spot beside her.

Annie stared.

"Annie?"

She swallowed thickly. "Yes...uh...ma'am," she stammered as she sat beside her. It was not lost on Annie how different they seemed. Side by side, Mrs. Granger's delectable femininity was in sharp contrast to Annie's mannish style. Where Mrs. Granger sat displaying perfect posture, with her delicate ankles crossed and her skirt smoothed over her shapely thighs, Annie sat casually, legs sprawled and back hunched.

Her hands shook as she surveyed the never-ending row of black and white keys. Mrs. Granger placed a hand on Annie's bare wrist. "There's nothing to be nervous about," she said softly.

Oh hell yes, there is. It was no longer the prospect of learning the piano that intimidated Annie but rather, the warmth that radiated from her piano teacher's touch. Annie took a deep breath. Warmth—and perfume.

Mrs. Granger smelled like a spring day, light and fresh. Good. So utterly feminine that all Annie could think about was nuzzling her face in the woman's neck and breathing in her essence.

A warm blush crept into Annie's cheeks. She had never before experienced such a sudden attraction to another woman but there was nothing she could do to derail her rampant thoughts.

"I understand you've never had a lesson before," Mrs. Granger said, leaning across her to place the book on the music stand. She smoothed it open to the first page.

"No, ma'am."

A little chuckle emanated from Mrs. Granger's throat. "You don't have to call me ma'am. Emily will suffice."

Annie nodded but somehow, calling her by her first name seemed far too intimate. Sitting with her thigh only inches from Emily's on this piano bench seemed far too intimate as well.

Evidently, Emily was aware of their proximity too. With a shift of her hips, she put a few inches distance between them, took an ink pen from the grooves in the music stand and used it to point to the page in the book.

By the end of her first lesson, Annie had mastered half the songs in the book. Emily had also taught her a few mnemonics to help her remember the notes. F-A-C-E. Every Good Boy Does Fine. She had even managed to recall which ones were left-hand and which ones were right-hand notes.

Learning the piano had proved easier and more rewarding than Annie had thought.

"Annie, I have to apologize for using this book with you but the foundation techniques are unsurpassed. I suppose it's why this particular method book has been in use for over fifty years. This was my first book too. You'll discover I'm quite nostalgic."

"No, it's totally cool." Annie's initial dismay at using a child's book had disappeared. Now she was excited about the possibility of being able to put the book on Gram's piano and being able to read the notes to produce a tune.

Emily slid her glasses off and smiled. Annie noticed her eyes were the color of a summer sky. Pale blue yet tinged with the slightest gray threat of a storm.

Did the color match her personality? Stormy and wild, undressed and unleashed. Annie's insides fluttered. And when Emily's gaze dropped to her mouth, lingered there a moment and then transferred back to the piano keys, Annie realized she must have stared a little too long.

"Is...is that it?" she asked, taking a look at her watch. Her hour-long lesson had flown by.

"For today," Emily said as she brushed imaginary dust from between the black keys.

Reluctantly, Annie collected her book and stood. Part of her did not want to leave. There was something about this woman. Perhaps it was her excitement at learning something new and useful. Perhaps it was Emily's talent—or the quiet fury Annie sensed underneath her teacher's poised exterior. Everything about this woman made Annie want to know her better and at that moment, Annie would have said—done—anything to remain in her presence for just a little while longer. "What was that you were playing when I arrived?"

Emily's gaze shifted to the left as she thought then her lush lips parted. Annie caught the hint of the tip of her pink tongue pressed to her teeth. "Oh! Chopin. It was one of the Nocturnes."

"Would you – would you play it for me again?" Annie wanted to punch herself for asking such a stupid question.

"Of course." Emily shifted to the center of the bench, placed her nimble fingers on the keys and began to play.

This was far different from eavesdropping on the porch.

Inside the house, the music reverberated from the piano and thrummed in Annie's chest. She had never dreamed an instrument could sound so full and rich and yet so whisper-soft. The piece was haunting, almost Spanish sounding, with lilting trills and runs, but it wasn't the music that mesmerized her.

It was the alluring woman producing the music.

Unlike the brash, sometimes militant, college girls Annie had dated in the past, Emily possessed an intrinsic sense of confidence. Any man – *or woman* – would have found her attractive and Annie couldn't help but think she was downright sexy.

This was no giggling schoolgirl whose chief aim in life was scoring a doobie and a six-pack on the weekend while planning a civil rights march on the town square. This was a woman – a talented, well-spoken woman who exuded her own brand of sexuality that Annie found impossible to resist.

Emily's left hand crossed over her right and Annie caught a glimpse of pink lace peeping from under the opening of her blouse. What would it be like to peel the lace away and latch on to that taut nipple? Annie's channel tightened as the fantasies played out in her head. She had not expected to find her teacher so damn attractive.

As Emily continued to play, Annie imagined sliding back onto that bench with her, sweeping those loose curls away from Emily's neck and tongue-tracing the shell of her ear. Annie wondered if she reached beneath her skirt, if she would find Emily was wearing no panties – or better still, something lacey and feminine. What would Emily do if Annie wriggled her fingers between Emily's legs and pushed a finger into her pussy? Would she spread for her? Would she beg her to lick her right here in front of the window for everyone to see?

The last strains of the music died away and Emily lifted her fingers from the keys. "You look flushed, Annie. Are you all right?"

Her voice startled Annie out her reverie. "Yes. Yes, I'm fine." Her gaze flicked to the piano and then guiltily back to Emily. "That was beautiful! Thank you."

"Thank you," she said. "It has always been one of my favorites." She rose and Annie followed her to the door.

"I think I'm going to enjoy this," Annie blurted.

"Good," Emily said. "Adults tend to learn fast. You'll be playing like an old pro by the end of the summer."

"Really?" Annie asked but it was the prospect of getting to know Emily that was most alluring.

Emily opened the door. "I'll see you next week. Call me if you have any questions."

Annie nodded and reluctantly left.

Emily closed the door behind her new student but then moved to where she could watch Annie walk down the drive. More than once, Emily had caught Annie looking with obvious interest in her eyes.

Emily gnawed her bottom lip. She'd never been looked at like that by a woman before. The thought that Annie might find her attractive excited Emily in a surprising way. It made her wonder what it would be like to kiss another woman—to make love to a woman.

Now that Allen had been dead for six months and she was a widow, Emily had been forced to think about a lot of things. When Allen had been riddled with cancer, Emily had not had time to do anything but take care of him and the responsibilities of managing the book he'd published only months before getting the news he had an incurable brain tumor.

Even before the cancer, life with Allen had been anything but dull. Emily had respected his intellect. She'd loved learning from him but the ugly truth was that she married him because he made her feel needed.

Without him, she had been left with little choice but to discover who *she* was. And in the six short months since she'd buried Allen, she had learned quite a few things about herself.

She watched Annie open her car door and then slide into the driver's seat.

Emily inhaled. What would it feel like to have Annie's hands on her skin? What would it be like to be undressed by a woman, to feel a woman's kisses raining across her collarbone, her abdomen...lower?

Her pulse accelerated. Heat spiraled around her spine and rushed downward to where her channel tightened and she gasped. A warm blush infused her cheeks.

As Annie pulled away from the curb and drove off, Emily blinked and forced her thoughts back to reality. One fact, however, remained. Emily knew she now had the desire to satisfy her curiosity with a woman and thus far that was, astonishingly, the most pleasant fact she'd uncovered about herself.

Chapter Two

Emily could hardly wait for Annie to return for her next piano lesson. It felt like Emily was on the verge of something exciting and new that she wanted to explore. She hadn't felt an attraction to anyone like this since she'd met Allen and she couldn't sort out whether the allure was because being with a woman had taboo connotations, because she felt Annie was attracted to her or because she wanted to explore that aspect of her sexuality.

Despite all her fantasies, when Annie's car appeared at the curb, panic surged. Emily's breath caught. This was ridiculous. She couldn't act on these feelings. She wouldn't.

Annie stepped out of her car, wearing the same clothes she'd had on the previous week.

Butterflies fluttered in Emily's tummy at the sight of her student. Annie, for all practical purposes, looked like a young man in her jeans, work boots and chambray shirt. Carrying her piano book casually at her side, she walked like a man, with long purposeful strides.

The idea that Annie's masculine clothes concealed the soft femininity beneath only served to make Emily more curious.

Her mouth went dry. Awareness of her body trickled down like rain on her skin, tightening her nipples, her stomach and seeping lower, causing her clit to swell. Cream gathered in her channel and by the time Annie got to the door, Emily's heart was pounding.

Even though she expected it, when the doorbell rang, she jumped. Steeling herself, Emily drew in a deep breath and blew it out before she opened the door for Annie.

"Good afternoon," she said. Perspiration beaded on the back of her neck.

"Hey," Annie said, flashing her a bright smile.

When Annie made eye contact with her, Emily's cheeks flushed. She wondered if her thoughts were emblazoned across her forehead like the scarlet letter. She cleared her throat. "Did...did you have any trouble with your pieces?"

"Not at all," Annie said before she sauntered across the room and slid onto the piano bench.

She scooted in, leaving room for Emily.

Gingerly, Emily sat too and as she taught the lesson, she was painfully aware of Annie's presence, her heat, the clean soap-and-water scent of her, the sound of her concentrated breathing, the movements of her uncertain fingers on the keyboard.

What if...

Emily inhaled. What if...

Annie could tell her teacher was tense. She'd noticed Emily avoiding eye contact with her when she'd first come in. Annie could not imagine why—unless Emily had found out she was gay.

Dismay weighed on her but it wouldn't be the first time someone had judged her for her lifestyle. She'd thought Emily Granger was more sophisticated than that. Oh well. Appearances weren't always what they seemed.

Emily very carefully and professionally marked the pieces Annie was to practice the coming week before she closed the piano book. As she handed Annie the book, she kept her head down, her lashes lowered.

This wasn't going to work if her teacher was prejudiced against lesbians. Annie took a deep breath. "Can I ask you something?"

Emily looked up with such expectation in her eyes, Annie wondered if she'd been too hasty to jump to conclusions.

"Of course. You may ask me anything."

Annie searched her eyes. No. That wasn't condemnation. Not at all. It was curiosity. Annie's lips parted. Was Mrs. Granger bi? Annie was shocked because her gaydar hadn't gone off at all.

"Are...you having a bad day?" Annie asked.

"No." Emily averted her gaze and Annie could not resist the temptation to slip her fingers underneath her teacher's chin to lift her face so she would look into her eyes again.

Oh yes. It was definitely curiosity. "Are you...okay...with my being gay?" Annie asked.

Emily stared like a frightened rabbit before she got up from the piano bench and began smoothing her skirt down. "You're gay?" Her voice had risen in pitch.

Annie chuckled. "It's sort of...obvious, isn't it?"

"No...I—" Emily stammered.

Annie stood. "It's okay. I just thought that maybe you had a problem with it. With me?"

Emily blew out a breath. "Not at all, Annie. In fact...I—"

"You what?" Annie inquired.

"I've been wondering..." Mrs. Granger's voice trailed off and Annie suddenly felt an upsurge of courage.

Emboldened, Annie seized her chance. "Hey...uh...would you like to go out for a drink sometime?"

Emily's lips parted and Annie saw the question in her teacher's eyes.

"I-I—" Emily sputtered.

Annie's heart plummeted to her feet. For a second, she'd been certain that Emily was attracted to her. How could she ever show her face here again after this?

But then Emily asked, "Are you asking me out? On a *date*?"

“Uh...well...yes. Yes,” Annie confessed. “I was asking you out. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have—”

Emily interrupted. “I’m not sure I’m ready to go out with anyone but I don’t see why you and I can’t have dinner and drinks *here* sometime.”

Annie felt her eyes widen with surprise. Her lips drew into a smile and she knew she had better get the hell out of here before she blew her chances. “I’d like that very much...Emily.”

Emily gnawed her bottom lip for a moment and then looked at her watch. “It’s nearly dinner time. Do you have plans tonight?”

Emily laughed at Annie’s joke and poured another glass of wine for her. At first, Emily thought asking Annie to dinner was stupid and impetuous of her. After all, Annie was obviously gay and obviously interested. But the company was a welcome distraction to the stresses of getting ready for the upcoming endowment play in honor of her deceased husband.

The endowment play had been arranged by the university to raise money for a scholarship in Allen’s name and, although it provided funds for a deserving student, her brother-in-law, Ken, had turned it into some sort of high-brow social event that Emily found tedious and time-consuming.

Yes, Annie’s company would be a very nice distraction—and there was the fact that Emily found herself inexplicably attracted to Annie’s classic, androgynous beauty.

Emily had never before been attracted to a woman before but just sitting next to Annie on the piano bench today had been difficult for her. The whole time Annie had struggled through the new pieces in the primer, Emily had been unable to concentrate on anything except the extraordinary length of Annie’s well-shaped fingers, wondering what it would be like to feel them inside her while she kissed Annie’s pillow-soft lips.

Warmth unfurled inside Emily and trickled downward.

She squeezed her thighs together to dispel the pulse throbbing in her clit. Her thoughts wandered and she couldn't help but wonder what Annie would look like naked. Lean.

Hard.

Coltish despite her curves.

Emily sucked in a breath at the thought of making love to a woman. The idea alone caused her pulse to skitter and her stomach to tighten.

Since her husband's death, Emily had known a few lovers but they had all been mature men—most of them too mature. They'd had thick, pasty bodies and flaccid cocks and had been more interested in her bank account than in her.

Annie seemed to have a genuine interest in music—and in her personally.

But right now, all Emily could think about was how Annie's smooth skin would feel as it slid over hers—as she fingered her and kissed her. Hard and then soft.

Emily swallowed thickly and tried to tamp down her lurid fantasies, but two glasses of wine had relaxed them both and now they talked as if they had known each other for years.

Annie was smart. She planned to study veterinary medicine and right now, she was earning money for her graduate degree by working at the humane shelter.

Emily wondered what her stuck-up brother-in-law would think if he knew she was sitting here drinking with a twenty-something lesbian and considering asking her to spend the night.

Emily had never done anything so reckless in her well-ordered life. But it was about time to start living than existing in her deceased husband's shadow.

The Shakespeare Festival was only three short months away with the endowment in Allen Granger's name. Then there was the scholarship and the hoard of stuffy board members at the university. The demands of Allen's publisher. All of it seemed as if it were closing in around Emily. She'd grieved for Allen and now she was ready to move

on with her life but her brother-in-law was determined to keep Allen's memory alive so he could live off the fat of Allen's successful book.

Emily shook off the oppressive memories and looked at the alluring woman sitting across from her. This suddenly seemed like the perfect leaf-turning moment to start over. Annie was interested. Emily knew it wasn't as if she were taking an embarrassing risk from which she would never recover. And what if she was?

She had absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain.

She sipped her wine. "So, Annie, do you...have a...girlfriend?"

Annie's cheerful expression altered into something Emily could only describe as... seductive.

Emily's breathing stopped. Annie's eyes darkened and the hint of a smile deepened a dimple at the corner of her mouth. "As a matter of fact, I don't," she said with all the charm of an experienced courtier. "What about you?"

Emily laughed to dispel the tension holding every nerve in her body as taut as the strings in her Steinway. "No. I'm afraid I don't have a girlfriend either."

Annie's eyes widened and she burst into laughter. "I asked for that one, didn't I?"

Emily nodded. She suddenly felt very serious—and very aroused. Her pulse rioted. There was no sense in wasting time. "I've *never* had a girlfriend."

Annie arched an eyebrow.

Emily continued. "I'm not even certain I want a...relationship...with anyone right now." Already, she was defining her terms.

Sex. Just sex.

With a woman.

Oh God. Cream gathered in Emily's channel.

"I know what you mean. I'm busy with work. I'll be moving to Auburn to go to med school. It'd be kind of pointless for me to get into anything serious," Annie said, averting her gaze.

Emily swallowed. Her gaze drifted down to where Annie's fingers caressed the stem of her wineglass. Emily wanted one, if not two of those fingers inside her. Sakes alive, what was happening to her? Perhaps it was because she had no doubt Annie was gay and available. Perhaps it was the unspoken interest Emily saw in Annie's vivid green eyes or Annie's decidedly androgynous allure.

Lifting her gaze to Annie's eyes once more, Emily inhaled. Her heart hammered. "I have always wondered what it would be like...with a woman."

Color flooded Annie's cheeks. She shifted in her chair and tugged at the collar of her shirt. "That's funny," she said, her eyes darkening even more. "'Cuz all I can think about right now is how good your pussy must taste."

A ripple of excitement thrummed through Emily's body, settling into a steady throb between her legs. She'd gone too far to turn back now. It was on.

Annie slid out of her chair and onto her knees between Emily's thighs. As Annie's hand snaked up one thigh, Emily parted her legs. Her mouth went dry as she watched and as she felt a woman's fingers creep higher and higher until —

Annie worked a finger under the narrow elastic band of her panties. Emily's breath caught. She knew she was drenched.

"Scoot forward," Annie said and as Emily did, the finger easily slid inside her creamy center.

Spasms fluttered through her channel. Her heart beat in her throat.

"You're wet," Annie said, pushing all the way in so that her fist rocked against Emily's clit and the sensitive flesh between her pussy and her anus.

Anticipation thrummed through her veins. She couldn't wait to have a woman's — this woman's — tongue between her legs.

Emily clenched around the finger when Annie reached between her own legs with her other hand and rubbed herself through her jeans.

Gently, and very reluctantly, Emily pushed Annie's hand away and stood, slipping her panties down as she did. As Emily unbuttoned her blouse, Annie gained her feet, her hands moving underneath Emily's blouse to touch, explore and reach around to unhook Emily's bra.

Her heart felt as if it were about to explode out of her chest. She could scarcely breathe as Annie's warm mouth latched onto her nipple. Threading her hands into Annie's short hair, Emily watched her lover lave each breast. So sensuous. So different from anything she had ever known. Her body hummed in a way it never had with a man.

Emily had enjoyed sex with men but this...this was something erotic and sexy and she was so aroused, she knew without a doubt that when Annie's mouth made contact with her clit, she would come immediately. Emily's head swam as she allowed herself to explore Annie's slender back, her shoulders and then her small, tight breasts where her nipples pebbled through the soft fabric of her shirt.

Annie's hands skimmed Emily's thighs and she backed into the chair, pulling Emily so that she straddled her.

Emily's lashes fluttered shut as Annie's index and middle filled her simultaneously, exquisitely. Utterly full. Every inch of Annie's fingers moved up, up inside her, stretching her channel to capacity, making her feel physically whole and oh-so good.

It was the most sensual, erotic moment of Emily's life. She had never dreamed it would be this way with a woman.

Annie only gave her a second to enjoy the fullness before she gripped the soft flesh of Emily's breast with her free hand. Emily's toes barely brushed the floor and she had no control except for bracing her hands on Annie's shoulders.

Emily rocked, riding, clinging...coming.

It happened so suddenly, she was hardly prepared. Violent spasms radiated from her channel through her body, to the tips of her fingers, curling her toes and causing her to throw her head back to let out an animalistic moan.

“Oh God, Annie. I’m coming. I’m coming hard,” she mewled and with her eyes still closed, she undulated slowly back and forth. Her channel throbbed deep inside and all Emily could think was she wanted more.

When Emily finally opened her eyes, her heart skipped a beat. A woman had just easily made her come. Emily wondered if her quick orgasm was caused by the fact she was doing something taboo or because she was attracted to Annie. No man, not even her husband, had brought her to climax that quickly. A satisfied smile tugged at one corner of her mouth. “That was...amazing.”

Annie reached and tucked a lock of Emily’s hair behind her ear. The act was so astonishingly intimate, even after what they’d just done, Emily could not resist the urge to kiss her female lover.

With Annie’s fingers still embedded inside her, she leaned forward—slowly, hesitantly—and brushed her lips against Annie’s.

Emily threaded her fingers through the short hair at the nape of Annie’s neck and opened to the tongue that urged between her lips, tempting her to respond and then daring to go even deeper.

As she returned Annie’s passion-filled kiss, sharp desire welled. Emily could hardly believe she was doing this—with a woman! It was so unlike her. So reckless. So impulsive.

And yet the only thought in her mind was this beautiful, sexy young woman wanted her. Her!

Still, she felt she should apologize, request that Annie leave now, something to redeem to herself.

But that’s not what she wanted at all.

Obviously, neither did Annie.

With a swipe of her hand, Annie brushed their dishes to the side and then stood, lifting Emily to place her on the table.

Emily gasped as Annie pulled her bottom to the edge of the table and spread her thighs. Reclining on her elbows, she watched as Annie's gaze moved from her breasts down to where her hiked-up skirt exposed her pussy.

Annie stared for a moment and then bent so that her mouth was mere inches from Emily's pussy.

Emily held her breath, waiting, her thighs trembling. She whimpered when Annie guided her ankles over her shoulders. Emily shook. Her toes curled and when the softest kiss brushed her pussy, she inhaled. Splayed hands skimmed up and down her thighs.

Emily opened her legs, clinging to Annie's shoulders with her ankles. All coherent thought fled and when Annie's hot mouth latched onto her clit, she moaned and thought she would come on the spot. "Oh, there, yes," she mewled.

Annie's fingers dug into Emily's flesh and she flicked her tongue in and out, over and around, stopping only to suck Emily's clit.

The table creaked. The dishes rattled. Emily's empty wineglass toppled but she didn't care. She lay flat on her back now, pinching her own nipples, writhing in the perfect sensations thrumming through her body.

The sight of a woman between her legs was so beautiful. So sensual.

Little by little, everything else around her faded. The table. The wine. The dishes. Everything slipped away until there was only Annie's mouth working magic on her pussy. Her thighs tensed. Her body contorted and then it was upon her—a bone-shattering orgasm that coerced cries of release from her throat.

When Emily finally floated back to earth, she sat up, wresting her legs free and pushing Annie into the nearest chair. Emily had no clue when Annie had taken off her jeans and panties, but she had. The sight of her neatly trimmed pussy made Emily's mouth water with anticipation. Emily slid off the table and onto her knees on the floor, intent on one thing—giving Annie the pleasure she had just received.

This seemed right. Natural. She knew instinctively what to do. Her gaze grazed Annie's and then she parted Annie's thighs to blaze a trail from her knee all the way to her pussy with her tongue. She blew a hot breath on her lover's quivering flesh. The scent of her was warm, familiar. Feminine.

Emily shifted forward and spread Annie's thighs wider and then her tongue found home. "Oh God," Annie breathed. "Emily..."

A moan escaped Emily's mouth as she swirled her tongue around Annie's clit, teasing the little bud before licking her way back down to the opening. Giving was just as good as receiving and Emily didn't miss an inch of her. When she gently laved the sensitive skin between her channel and her anus, Annie's breath caught.

The delicious sounds Annie made boosted Emily's confidence. Some primal need consumed her and she buried her face in the fragrant folds. It was only a short time before Annie's breathing turned into harsh, quick gasps. Her fingers threaded into Emily's hair and she pulled.

Emily knew her lover was about to come. She maintained the steady flicker of her tongue while Annie's moans filled her senses. Emily held Annie's hips, drawing out the pleasure until Annie sagged against the chair.

She sucked in a breath and Emily knew ecstasy had unfurled through Annie's body.

"Damn," was all Annie could say.

Emily felt heat flood her cheeks as she rocked back on her heels and gazed up at her lover.

Annie stared, her eyes dark, her sensuous lips parted before she leaned forward, laced her fingers in Emily's hair. Their mouths met and Annie deepened the kiss, plundering Emily's mouth with her tongue until Emily was breathless and clinging.

When Annie finally released her, Emily struggled to catch her breath.

"I want to see you again, Emily."

Emily's heart soared. She knew she was acting impulsively. Crazy. Annie would be going away to veterinary school soon. She would have enough to do without trying to start up some sort of already star-crossed relationship. But didn't that make it safe? There were no strings attached. It was just sex. It wasn't as if she was a full-blown lesbian who was getting involved emotionally with a woman.

But hell, Emily knew one thing for sure. One taste of Annie Prescott had turned her into a full-fledged pussy *addict*.

Emily delicately cleared her throat. "Your next lesson is —"

"I'm not talking about damn piano lessons," Annie said boldly. "I want to *see* you. Take you out. Date you. Do more of...*this*."

Emily stared, debating but then reality crashed down around her. She could not be seen dating a...*woman*. "I—"

Annie's expression fell. "It's okay. I understand. I'll see you next lesson," she stammered. "I really did enjoy tonight."

"Me too, Annie," Emily whispered, feeling terrible inside. "Me too."

* * * * *

Annie stared at the ceiling. She glanced at the clock and groaned when she saw that it was after two. The alarm would go off at five and she would have hungry cats and dogs to attend at the shelter. It wouldn't do to be going on no sleep but every time she closed her eyes, her mind filled with thoughts of Emily.

Emily's kisses. Emily's touch. Her perfume. Her pussy.

Annie licked her lips, remembering the sweet taste.

God, not again!

She raked her hand through her hair and flopped onto her stomach. What was she thinking?

Right now, she needed to be concentrating on work and school. And it wasn't as if she was embarking on a relationship with Emily. They'd set the terms up front. Just sex.

Emily was just curious. She'd said the words herself.

As much as Annie tried to stop memories of her first encounter with a woman from intruding, she couldn't. Annie inhaled. Lily, like Emily, had been sophisticated, a little older—and married. To a man.

Annie had fallen hard and fast and when she'd made her feelings known, Lily had told her she was just in it for the sex and that she could never have a relationship with a woman. She'd even gone so far as to call Annie silly.

Lily never guessed how badly she'd broken Annie's heart or how she'd shattered Annie's self-confidence.

She slammed her fist into her pillow and twisted onto her back. She wasn't that uncertain girl any longer. She was an adult now. Soon, she'd be moving and enrolled in veterinary school. What would it hurt to enjoy another woman's company in the meantime?

But in the back of her mind, Annie knew how easily she could fall for a woman like Emily Granger.

* * * * *

Emily's heart raced as she awaited Annie's return for her next piano lesson. She'd promised herself she wouldn't encourage Annie. She'd told herself it wasn't fair to Annie.

Annie had *relationships* with women. Not just casual sex. At least, Emily had tried to tell herself all week that it had been casual sex but somehow, that theory did not ring true. She actually *liked* Annie.

Emily had thought long and hard about what she had allowed—encouraged—to happen the last time. Even now, her traitorous pussy pulsed at the thought of their out-of-control tryst in her kitchen.

In fact, she had thought about their little encounter so many times, she'd fed her little silver vibrator an entire six-pack of double-A batteries.

The rumble of an engine drifted up from the street and she watched as Annie's car drew up to the curb. Emily's pulse sped as Annie climbed out. It could not happen again. Emily was resolved. After all, she was the older, more experienced of the two. She should be able to keep her insatiable libido in check long enough to give Annie a piano lesson—even if Annie *had* eaten Emily's pussy last week.

This time, Annie wasn't wearing her work uniform. She was wearing a pair of form-fitting jeans and a pink polo shirt that outlined the perfect rise of her breasts and her taut stomach in such a way it made Emily's mouth water.

Her nipples tightened at just the sight of her lover.

"Control yourself," Emily scolded as she ogled Annie sprinting up the steep driveway and then up the stairs and onto the porch.

Inhaling a deep, calming breath, Emily walked to the door to let her in.

Their gazes clashed awkwardly.

"Come in, Annie," she said, aware her voice sounded far more seductive than she intended.

Brazenly, Annie's eyes held hers as she stepped over the threshold and pushed the door closed behind her. "Take your panties off."

At first, Emily thought she had not heard her correctly. "Pardon me?"

"Take 'em off," Annie said, unsmiling.

Emily swallowed thickly. She gaped.

"I want you to teach my lesson without any panties on," Annie said, and blithely moved toward the piano.

Emily's heart hammered. She couldn't just shuck her panties at the request of—

Oh, what the hell?

Emily ignored the warning bells in her head and reached under her skirt. She hooked her thumbs under the elastic band of her pink lace panties and then slipped out of them.

A half-smile claimed Annie's lips when she saw the delicate undies. "I thought so. Lace. You were ready for me," she said, so cocksure Emily couldn't decide whether she wanted to slap or kiss the smirk off the woman's face.

Annie held out her hand expectantly. Emily tentatively took the few steps that closed the distance between them and dropped her panties in Annie's hand. Whimsy glimmered in her eyes as she breathed in the perfumed scent of the panties. Emily's pussy throbbed.

With a smile, Annie dropped the panties on the bench, opened her piano book, placed it on the music stand and played through her lessons like a pro.

Emily could hardly concentrate as she counted quarter, half and whole notes aloud. Her pussy was so wet and aching so badly for Annie's touch, she didn't dare sit on the bench next to her. Instead, Emily stood, pointing out the notes with the tip of an ink pen and forcing her attention to the page, rather than the sexy pianist.

The heat of Annie's body radiated outward. Her familiar scent drifted to Emily's nostrils and she breathed it in. Explicit images of straddling Annie's thighs, eating her, fingering her, all vied for prominence in Emily's thoughts.

After Annie finished her last assigned pieces, Emily flipped the page and began writing the date at the top but stopped cold when she felt the scorching heat of fingertips caress the back of her knee. Her breath left her body in a ragged rush.

She stilled as the fingers crept higher and higher still.

With no panties to impede their progress...

"Oh," Emily moaned as Annie wriggled a finger between her creamy folds from behind.

"Spread your legs, Emily." Her voice was velvety soft.

Shifting one foot, Emily granted her lover access, bracing her hands on the side of the piano as the talented fingers explored. It occurred to her that anyone outside the window could see inside—could see her getting finger-fucked by a woman.

Annie inhaled and slid closer, pushed her finger in farther.

Emily's lashes fluttered closed. She rocked her hips in rhythm with the finger.

"I've thought about this all week," Annie whispered. "About fucking you again."

Emily moaned.

"Have you thought about it?" Annie asked.

"Yes," Emily said.

"Did you touch yourself while you did it?" Annie implored. "I did."

The thought of Annie masturbating while thinking about fucking her made Emily melt onto her hand. Emily spread her legs a little wider.

"Pull your skirt up," Annie ordered, surprising Emily with her audacity.

Emily's eyes snapped open and she looked back.

"Pull it up."

Emily's gaze swept the front yard and the fraternity house next door. She'd be exposed to anyone who happened to look but the thought of it excited her and made her cream on Annie's finger.

Uncertainly, she gathered her khaki skirt up to just below the cheeks of her ass.

"All the way," Annie told her.

Emily trembled with excitement and did as she was told, drawing her skirt up to her waist, thrilling in this new facet of their relationship. No one had ever taken charge of her sexuality this way. It was almost as if Annie were giving her permission to enjoy this.

Cool air swept her backside and the insides of her thighs, reminding her of how bare she was.

"Your pussy's wet," Annie said and Emily thought she would die when the finger withdrew. She swallowed thickly when Annie sucked the digit into her mouth and voiced her delight in the taste.

Outside the window, one of the frat brothers skipped down the sidewalk toward his car. Emily jerked and started to yank down her skirt but a sound slap on her backside stopped her in her tracks. She suppressed a yelp at the sensuous heat of the sting radiating through her ass cheeks.

"Don't you dare pull that skirt down," Annie said. "Bend over."

"Here?"

Annie's direct gaze affirmed the statement.

Emily's pulse raced with expectation as she leaned over the piano.

"Spread your legs. Wider. Wider, Emily. Don't make me spank you again."

Her pussy pulsed at the thought of Annie heating up her bottom and then finger-fucking her right here in the window for anyone to see. Her breasts smushed against the fists that clenched her skirt and instinctively, she began squeezing her own nipples. And when Annie's finger pushed into her channel again, she cried out.

"Damn, you're so fucking wet," Annie murmured before she slid in behind Emily, parted her cheeks and ate her from behind.

Emily's knees trembled and she would have fallen had it not been for the fact she was bent over her Steinway.

Annie's expert mouth nibbled. Her lips gnawed at the opening between Emily's legs, her tongue squirming inside the hole and then sweeping up to tease another aperture. No one had ever done this! Emily thought she would die and propriety railed at her to beg Annie to stop—but she didn't. Instead, she bit her bottom lip. It felt so good she spread her legs wider apart to give Annie better access.

At that moment, Emily didn't give a damn who saw her thrown over her piano like a brazen hussy, getting her pussy eaten by a woman.

One of her hands slid down and pounded the keys. Dissonant sound reverberated through the room, mingling in harmony with her moans.

Annie's finger found its way back into her pussy. Pushing, pulling, tongue-thrusting. It was too much.

Emily shattered from the inside out. With a cry, she came. Perfect bliss crashed over her in spasmodic waves. She wilted but Annie pulled her down to the bench, drawing Emily's back against her chest. She nuzzled her face into the hair at Emily's nape to pepper her with sultry kisses that sent shivers coursing up and down her spine.

Emily hadn't intended for this to happen. She had tried to be strong.

That had proved impossible.

Annie held her tightly for a moment and then stood, slipping past Emily as she got off the piano bench.

Drunk with her orgasm, Emily glanced up as Annie snatched her copy of *Teaching Little Fingers to Play* off the music stand and sauntered out the door.

"See you next week," Annie called cheerfully as the screen door slammed behind her.

Chapter Three

Emily's next few weeks were spent anticipating Annie's piano lessons. As soon as her lesson was over, they would make love. Most often, it was right on the piano bench. Sometimes, they lolled on the living room floor. Once, they made it as far as the sofa.

Somehow, they never made love in the bed, as if both of them knew that one act would cement their relationship in a way for which neither of them was ready. As Emily made her bed though, she wondered what it would be like to spend the night with Annie, to sleep in her arms and then awaken to a pretty smile.

Emily placed her pillows at the head of her bed. Even given her reluctance in getting involved with a woman, when Emily wasn't teaching Annie or fucking her, she was thinking about her—remembering how Annie's slender body felt hovering over hers. Remembering how Annie had fingered her and teased her with that warm, soft tongue.

As Emily straightened her bedroom, images of Annie raced in her mind's eye. Vivid green eyes. Wavy brown hair. Those long fingers...

Sex with her was amazing but Emily wondered if they could have more than just a physical relationship. Her mind wandered with the possibility. Annie was, after all, an adult with whom she *could* have a meaningful relationship. What did it matter that they were both women? They were most definitely sexually compatible.

Emily had never dreamed she might be interested in having a relationship with a woman. At first, she'd merely been curious in what sex with a woman was like. Now she was curious about a whole lot more.

With Annie, Emily felt safe. It was as if Annie understood her on an unspoken level. Annie anticipated her needs, her desires—almost as if she could read Emily's mind. She knew just what to do, just what to say.

Emily bit her bottom lip.

Lesbian.

She shuddered. The word had such a finite connotation to it. Was she gay because she enjoyed Annie's company? Because she enjoyed sex with Annie?

Emily wasn't sure what it meant. Over the past few months, she'd had ample time to reflect on her sexual relationship with Allen. Their relationship had been based on friendship and mutual respect. Not sex. Sex had not even been a major part of their life together and sex had not been a part of it at all after his cancer diagnosis. But even before that, Emily had rarely experienced orgasm without a vibrator being involved. Annie, on the other hand, brought her easily to the edge and beyond.

Merely looking at her or sitting next to her sent zings of desire through Emily. What did it mean?

She glanced at her reflection in the mirror. *Am I gay?* Had she ever really been sexually attracted to men or had she gone along with what society expected of her?

The answer loomed just out of her reach and before she could consider the possibility further, the doorbell rang. Startled, Emily gasped.

It wasn't time for a student. She padded cautiously to the front door and found the postman holding a package for her.

"This wouldn't fit in your box, Mrs. Granger."

"Thank you," she said, bewildered at who might be sending her a package. She wasn't expecting anything.

After she took the box and the rest of her mail, she closed the door and sank into a nearby chair to open her surprise.

Inside, still encased in clear plastic packaging, was a hot pink butt plug along with a note that read, "Wear this to my next lesson."

Emily squeezed her thighs together with luscious anticipation.

* * * * *

Emily's heart pounded as she stared at the freshly washed butt plug. Somehow, it looked bigger than when she'd first opened the package. How was she ever going to insert this big thing in the tiny aperture for which it was made? The largest part was as big around as most cocks.

She could hardly swallow as she coated it with slippery lubricant. Although the idea of fitting it up her anus wildly excited her, Emily hesitated. She had never done anything like this before. Annie would certainly check to see if she was...*wearing*...her gift. But how would it feel inside her snug hole? How could she stand it for the course of Annie's lesson?

The well-designed shape of it indicated it would definitely stay put. A little ring just big enough for a finger ensured it would not...get lost.

Emily's clit throbbed. The rim of her anus pulsed.

Annie would arrive for her lesson at any moment and Emily did not want to disappoint her.

Inhaling sharply, she leaned over her dresser and reached behind with both hands. She pulled a cheek aside with one hand and pressed the pointed tip of the butt plug to her anus with the other. Every muscle in her body contracted as she gave it a little push.

The first inch slid in easier than she had imagined. Pulse pounding, Emily moved it in and out, readying herself for the remaining four inches of the plug.

Cream gathered in her pussy.

It felt so good she knew she couldn't wait until Annie's lesson was over for her to eat her pussy while the plug was shoved up inside her ass. Even now, she wanted to rub her clit while she inserted her new toy. But she forced herself to wait. She wanted to come on Annie's tongue instead.

Emboldened by her desire, Emily pushed the plug farther, wincing as her rim stretched to admit it.

Doubt surged. She couldn't take it. The plug was too big.

But then, the thought of Annie taking her lesson, knowing—knowing—she was wearing the plug gave her the courage to bend and squat and force the rest of the well-lubed silicone up her hole.

As soon as she had gotten the thickest part past the rim, her greedy anus gobbled up the remainder of the plug.

Once it was all the way inside, she let out a breath, terrified to move from her hunkered position against the dresser.

Slowly, she straightened. Sensation emanated from the channel of her anus. Clenching around it, she felt so full. Complete.

Good.

Very fucking good.

She squeezed her muscles, resisting the urge to writhe, enjoying the new sensation of being stretched and filled *there*.

Her gaze caught her reflection and she thought of how wanton she looked with her floral printed skirt hiked up around her waist to expose her naked lower half, how flushed with desire her face appeared. Turning around, she bent just far enough to view the little pink ring protruding from her backside.

Her ass couldn't stop throbbing around the intruding plug.

And then, just to tease Annie, she took out a pair of lacy white panties—the tightest ones she owned—and stepped into them. When she pulled them up, the close fit pulled at the ring on the plug, shifting it inside her, sending delicious sensations crawling through her body. It excited her that Annie would do something as sexy as sending her a toy in the mail to wear for her. During sex, Annie took her time to explore not only Emily's body but Emily's mind, to find out what turned her on both mentally and physically. And Emily loved it.

Her pussy ached to be tasted.

The doorbell rang.

"Thank God," she muttered as she wriggled her skirt down and then walked from her bedroom to the front door.

The plug squirmed with each step, accentuated by the tight panties.

Emily's pulse rioted in her throat as she swung the door open.

Annie flashed her a knowing, sexy smile and moved to the piano bench. She opened her book and placed it on the music stand. "I really love what you're wearing today, Mrs. Granger."

Emily giggled. "Yes. So do I."

Annie scooted a few inches down the bench. "Sit next to me," she said and patted the needlepoint bench cover.

Emily didn't know if she could...*sit*.

"Come on," she coaxed. "Sit down."

Carefully, Emily sank onto the bench. The plug pushed up pleasingly inside her. She wanted to rock back and forth, to assuage this maddening desire. To hell with Annie's lesson! She couldn't stand this for an hour.

She whimpered.

Annie chuckled and began playing her lessons.

Emily's gaze dropped to where Annie's long fingers moved across the keyboard. She wanted them inside her. She wanted to drop down on her knees and beg Annie to slide those fingers up her pussy while she toyed with the ring on the plug stuffed up her ass. She knew she'd come as soon as Annie touched her.

"This is a half rest. This is a whole rest," Emily instructed with difficulty. She gritted her teeth and growled her frustration. Her gaze found Annie's. "I can't think about anything except you eating my pussy right now."

"Get on your knees," Annie commanded.

Instantly, Emily moved off the bench. The three steps that carried her away from the piano to where she got on her hands and knees on the carpeted floor were excruciatingly wonderful.

Annie followed, sinking behind Emily to pepper the nape of Emily's neck with kisses. One of Annie's hands slipped around Emily to cup her breast, while the other hand snaked between their bodies to where the little ring protruded from Emily's ass. Annie gave it a little tug. Delicious shivers swept up and down Emily's body.

Emily dissolved, dropping her head to the floor as Annie toyed with the ring through her clothes.

"It's been driving me crazy knowing you have that big damn plug up your ass," Annie drawled. "How does it feel?"

"Good," Emily managed.

"You like that?" Annie asked.

Emily moaned. "Yes."

Annie's hands moved languidly over Emily's ass and thighs and then Annie asked, "Would you like my tongue on your pussy?"

"Oh yes..."

Annie settled behind Emily and rocked against her ass, grinding her pubis on the ring as her hands skimmed down Emily's thighs to pull her skirt up.

"Panties!" Annie exclaimed as her palms found the rough lace against Emily's soft, soft skin.

Drawing in a ragged breath, Annie dragged the panties down. Emily kicked out of her heels and underwear at the same time. She was ready. Damn, she was ready.

Annie could see her gift peeping from between Emily's cheeks. "Shit," she muttered. She hadn't actually thought Emily would do it.

And the idea she'd greased it up and put it up her own ass before Annie got here made cream ooze in her channel.

"Eat me," Emily groaned. "I want your tongue in me. Now."

Annie stretched out on the floor and pulled Emily's pussy down onto her hungry mouth.

Warm.

Wet.

So damn wet.

Annie growled and gripped Emily's hips, holding her as she pumped her tongue wildly into her, fingering the little ring jutting from Emily's ass.

Emily's moans grew louder and she bowed her back, opening for Annie's tongue. Annie clung as Emily trembled and emitted sounds more animalistic than human. Emily's cream was all over her face, all over her tongue and all Annie could do was eat her, drawing Emily's pleasure out until she collapsed sobbing on the carpet.

Gently, Annie removed the plug and laid it aside before she gathered Emily into her arms and held her, turning her in her arms so they could kiss. After the hard orgasm Emily had experienced, Annie wanted to devour her. Instead, Emily's kisses were soft and tender. She seemed so small, so vulnerable that Annie was overwhelmed with the desire to make her feel safe and loved.

Loved.

The realization hit Annie without warning.

She was in love with Emily.

Oh no! She couldn't be in love with her. This was supposed to be just sex. Wasn't it? Emily had made it clear she wasn't ready for a relationship and Annie had promised herself she wouldn't get emotionally involved.

Emily twisted and when Annie gazed into her lover's eyes, she knew she was lost.

Their gazes collided as Emily cupped her cheek.

And then, Emily smiled as she sat and began unbuttoning Annie's jeans.

* * * * *

Emily poured a second glass of wine for Annie. They'd made love on the living room floor all afternoon and Emily couldn't stop thinking about unbuttoning Annie's shirt and starting all over again. But her fantasies screeched to a halt when the front door swung open and her brother-in-law, Ken, blustered into her living room.

Emily gasped.

"I didn't know you were entertaining," Ken said, barely glancing at Annie as he strode toward the kitchen. "I need to talk to you about the endowment play."

Emily gaped, finding it very difficult to think. "Yes?" she asked, forcing herself to look into Ken's watery blue eyes. It occurred to her he was very much like his deceased brother. He'd no doubt had more than a couple of drinks before coming over.

"In private," Ken demanded.

"That's okay," Annie said. "Should I go?"

"No," Emily blurted. She got up, smoothed her skirt and followed Ken into the formal dining room.

And oh God, how could she have an intelligent conversation with the man when all she could think about was Annie's present, which lay under an end table in the living room?

Ken cleared his throat and prattled about the upcoming play in Allen's name. "You *have* contacted the newspapers, I assume?"

"Yes."

"You're certain they plan to publish Al's credentials? I want everyone to know about the book."

"I can't be certain...what they will publish," Emily stammered.

"Well, you need to stay on top of it."

Emily shifted her weight from one leg to the other.

"This endowment play is all most of the people will ever know of Al. If we don't keep his memory alive, we'll all be nothing."

This close she could smell the stench of bourbon on his breath. "Yes, of course, Ken. I'll call the writer at the paper and make certain they are putting in what *you* wrote."

"You do that. I can't do everything. I have a *real* job selling advertising for the television station, as you well know."

Emily drew in a sharp breath. "I have a real job too," she snapped. "If you'll excuse me..."

Annie had come to her feet in the kitchen and Emily feared she might intervene.

"I'll call you," Emily said, urging Ken toward the door.

"When?"

"Later."

"Don't waste time on this," he said, his critical gaze flickering to Annie. "You need to remember what's really at stake here. What's really important."

"Goodbye, Ken."

He was out the door before he could say another word. Emily closed it behind him and twisted the lock. She did not breathe a sigh of relief until she heard his footsteps going down the porch steps.

"Who was that man?" Annie asked, joining her in the living room.

Emily swallowed. "He's...*was*...my brother-in-law."

"He's a jerk."

Emily suppressed a chuckle. "That's the understatement of the year."

"Why does he talk to you like that?"

"My husband wrote a book that's being lauded by all the critics and Ken wants to live off Allen's laurels."

Annie asked disbelievingly, "Why doesn't he write his own book then?"

Emily laughed outright at that. "Seriously."

"This play he was talking about," Annie began and Emily felt her stomach tightening into a knot. "Are you planning on attending *with* anyone?"

Emily searched Annie's eyes. She seemed so sincere. How could Emily tell her that they couldn't attend the play together? All Allen's family would be there hovering like vultures.

Sharing stolen moments with Annie was one thing but an actual *date*? With a woman who was very obviously gay? The Grangers would never let her live it down.

She swallowed. "I...I wasn't planning to go with anyone."

Annie inhaled. Emily knew she could read the consternation in her eyes. Her heart broke for Annie—and for herself. She longed to beg her to accompany her to the play. She wanted to proudly be seen with her beautiful lover.

Over the past few days, Emily had come to realize that her relationship with Annie was more than just sex, that she was beyond curiosity. She could see herself committed to Annie and the thought terrified her. She wanted so much more from Annie than just...sex.

Emily suddenly no longer wanted a part of the Granger ruse. She wanted to be her own person in her own right. She didn't give a damn what they or anyone else thought of her. It was high time she grabbed hold of the happiness that had eluded her all her life.

"Annie—" she began, intent on asking her to escort her to the play but Annie cut her off.

"Don't make any excuses," she said. "I understand what's going on here. Implicitly."

She was out the door before Emily could protest.

Chapter Four

Emily's heart beat in her throat as she watched Annie climb the steep hill toward her house.

Annie's eyes were narrowed. Her mouth was set in a firm line and she could see a muscle in her jaw twitching angrily.

It had been a week. Annie had not answered or returned any of her phone calls. In fact, Emily was surprised to see that she was coming to her lesson at all.

Emily knew she had been wrong to doubt what was between Annie and her. This was the relationship for which she had waited all her life. But instead of a Lancelot, she'd gotten a Joan of Arc.

She knew that now and she was prepared to do or say anything to keep Annie in her life. Her in-laws be damned.

Smoothing her skirt, Emily stood near the piano and waited as she heard the familiar creak of the screen. Her thoughts raced. How could she tell Annie now that she wanted to go to the play with her and make her believe it? Would she refuse? Would she think Emily was trying to patronize her just because they'd had sex?

Emily knew it was far from the truth but how could she ever explain it?

She bit her bottom lip as Annie came through the front door.

Annie stopped and stared. The screen banged shut behind her.

Emily's stomach knotted.

"Goddammit," Annie said and tossed her rolled-up piano book to the floor. She stalked across the carpet, hauled Emily against her and before Emily could utter a sound, Annie's mouth claimed hers.

Emily melted, running her hands down Annie's back and then under her shirt so she could feel her smooth skin against her palms. Their tongues sparred and Emily opened for her lover. Joy and desire burst through her veins with every beat of her heart.

This infatuation was more than she had ever imagined. This was...love.

The thought both terrified and exhilarated Emily at the same time.

Annie's incredible kiss deepened even more as her hands crept down to possessively squeeze Emily's backside and pull her closer. Emily whimpered into her mouth as desire heated and pooled inside her. Her clit pulsed over and over and she ached for Annie's fingers. Annie's mouth. Annie's hand moved between their bodies. Cream gathered in Emily's pussy when Annie cupped her there. Emily shook. She'd never wanted – needed – anyone this much before.

Annie tore her mouth from Emily's. "I can't think about anything but you," she whispered as she smoothed her hair back with her hands. "To hell with your damn in-laws."

"I—" Emily began breathlessly.

"Don't talk," Annie said before her mouth descended on Emily's again. A groan rumbled in Annie's throat before she dragged her lips away again. "I want more than banging you on a piano bench. I want this out in the open. I want this to be...real."

Emily searched her eyes and found a sincerity that made her heart turn over. Hard. "Me too." The words sprang to her lips that she was in love with her but she couldn't utter them, not with Annie's mouth on hers, sweet and hot – wonderfully insistent.

The muscles in the back of Emily's neck strained as Annie devoured her, kissing her as if she could become a part of her. And then, all at once, Annie laced her fingers with Emily's and dragged her into her bedroom.

"I want you in a bed. In *your* bed." As Annie set her on the thick comforter, Emily's cat bounded off the foot of the bed in a surly whirl of fur, displaced from his spot.

Our bed.

"I want you *naked* in your bed," Annie said as she began shedding her own clothes.

Heat thrummed through Emily's limbs. Her whole body tingled in anticipation. As soon as she kicked off her sandals, stripped off her skirt and wriggled out of her top and bra, Annie climbed onto the bed with her.

Emily's heart soared as Annie's kisses rained over her body, her neck, her collarbone, her breasts, down her abdomen and then...

"Oh yes!" Emily cried as Annie's lips locked around her clit.

Annie licked and sucked and nuzzled until Emily was crazy with pleasure but when her lover dragged her mouth away, Emily moaned a protest.

"Do you have a dildo?" Annie asked huskily.

Emily stared and then her lips drew into a smile. She twisted, scrambling to retrieve her dildo and a bottle of lube from the drawer of her bedside table.

Emily's heart raced. The corner of Annie's mouth turned up in a mischievous smile as she coated the pink dildo with silky lubricant. And then without any preliminaries, it was inside Emily, filling her, stretching her.

Annie moved over her, working the dildo as if it were a part of her own body.

Emily sighed and clung to her shoulders as she thrust the thick dildo into her pussy with the intent of quickly satisfying this mutual, maddening lust.

Sinking into the softness of the mattress, Emily entwined her legs around Annie's and writhed beneath her, lifting her hips to meet the driving thrusts. All the way in. All the way out. The pleasure was insidious. Emily was gloriously losing her mind.

Annie's bare breasts brushed hers. Silky legs tangled with Emily's. Being in bed with her was intimate and personal. The realization that she wanted to pursue a real relationship with Annie flooded her with such emotion, she wanted only to kiss her lesbian lover.

Emily's hand weaved into the wavy hair at Annie's nape and she pulled, drawing her down. Down.

Their mouths fused. Their tongues sparred.

Emily whimpered when Annie pulled away.

“Come for me, Emily,” Annie murmured as she pumped the dildo. Her lips nipped Emily’s again. “Come for me.”

Once more, their mouths fused. Emily opened her mouth to the intruding tongue and all at once, her channel clamped down on the dildo. Tremors oozed like molten lava throughout her body. The orgasm was intense and pure and she heard herself uttering passion-filled words of love to Annie that she returned against the shell of her ear.

“I love you.” The words sprang from Emily’s lips before she could stop them.

Annie stared for a moment before she smiled and uttered the words Emily longed to hear. “I love you too.”

Annie’s kisses peppered the curve of her neck. She withdrew the dildo but remained on top of Emily, kissing her way across Emily’s collarbone. One of her hands found and cupped Emily’s breast to squeeze gently. Emily lolled as her pulse raced and her body trembled.

She loved her! Annie loved her.

A sparkling sense of newness washed over her—a renewed hope in life—in herself.

“Good God, Emily!” a male voice boomed from the doorway to her bedroom.

Startled, Emily jolted and peered over Annie’s shoulder to find a red-faced Ken, arms akimbo, standing at the threshold of her room.

Annie looked back too. “Don’t just stand there and stare, asshole,” she snapped.

But Ken made no move to look away. Instead, he glared.

Emily gasped as Annie slid off her, threw the thick comforter over Emily’s bare body and whirled on Ken all in a quick second.

Ken roared with sarcastic laughter. “I never would have figured you for a dyke, Emily.”

"Get out!" Annie ordered as she shrugged on her shirt. She looked murderous.

Emily struggled to sit in the conundrum of covers. "Annie, no!"

"Annie?" Ken asked, cocking an eyebrow. His lurid gaze swiveled to Emily. "You'd better cut this...this...out. It's disgraceful. If anyone on the endowment board found out, we'd be the laughingstock of the town."

"From what I hear, you're already the laughingstock," Annie ground out. "And it's not from anything Emily's done."

Emily suppressed a grin. Annie wasn't about to back down to Ken's bullying and Emily loved her for it. Fresh courage surged. "Annie is my...date for the play."

The term "girlfriend" just sounded strange, even in her own mind.

Ken's spiteful amusement twisted immediately into red-faced anger. "You'd better not show up with this...this...*lesbo*...to the play in Allen's name!"

Emily lifted her chin. "Who's to stop me?"

He started into the room but Annie stepped between them, daring him to come any closer.

Ken's insipid gaze darted between them and defeat seeped into his mottled features. Emily watched triumphantly as he slunk from the room.

Annie stormed after him and closed and locked the front door behind him.

"That son of a bitch!" she railed as she came back to the bedroom.

But Emily had already let it go. She threw the covers off to expose her body and beckoned Annie with her finger.

Annie's frown slowly curved into a devastatingly dimpled smile.

This time, Emily urged Annie onto her back. Liquid desire pooled between Emily's legs as she tucked her hair behind her ears and bent to taste her lover's creamy pussy.

* * * * *

"Were you waiting outside for her to leave?" Emily demanded, crossing her arms over her chest.

She and Annie had spent the rest of the afternoon in bed together and no sooner than Annie had left, Ken had come ringing the doorbell.

"We need to discuss this," Ken said.

"There's nothing to discuss," Emily said, refusing to allow him into her house.

Ken's face reddened. "You are my brother's widow. I won't have his good name dragged through the mud."

"His name?" Emily could not believe she was having this conversation. Part of her wanted to smack Ken. The more rational part of her knew she should just shut the door in his face.

"Yes, his name," Ken said. "You're making a fool of yourself with that...*girl*."

"That *girl's* name is Annie and I love her."

He laughed as if the concept were utterly ridiculous. "So, you're a *lesbian*?"

Emily wanted to wrap her hands around his wiry neck and squeeze until his bland blue eyes popped out. Instead, she inhaled sharply. "You need to leave, Ken."

"What will our friends think when you show up with that...that deviant? It's not as if you and she can have a future," he argued. "It's obvious what's going on here."

"That's enough, Ken. I'm single. Annie's a grown woman." *God, was she ever!*

Emily started to push the door closed.

"You've thrown away your career – Allen's career – for an escapade," he blurted.

Emily resisted the childish urge to slam the door back into his face and instead, she closed it quietly and turned the lock.

She gnawed her bottom lip. Was there more truth in Ken's words than she wanted to admit? Loving Annie was one thing but what would people think? How would they react? Emily knew people could be cruel. How many piano students would she lose if it became common knowledge she was involved romantically with a woman?

She heaved a sigh. Had falling in love with Annie caused her to lose touch with reality?

* * * * *

Emily checked her reflection in the mirror. Little black dress. Red high heels. The hint of cleavage. Diamond earrings. She had to admit, even to herself, she looked stunning.

She had seriously thought about pretending to be sick so she wouldn't have to attend the play. Annie would know she was lying and Emily could never do that to her. No. It was time for her to cowgirl up and face her fears.

There was absolutely nothing in the world wrong with being gay. She and Annie were both consenting adults who...

Gay...

In her own thoughts, she'd just referred to herself as gay. Oh well. There it was. She'd admitted it. Emily stared at her reflection. She did not look like what she thought gay was supposed to be. She was anything but a tomboy. Girlie and feminine, she'd enjoyed spending her time curled up with a book or at the piano.

Still, admitting it to herself didn't make it any easier to admit it to the rest of the world.

The doorbell chimed. Emily's heart skidded sideways. She took one last look in the mirror. All eyes would be on her tonight and after tonight, everyone would know she was in a relationship with a woman.

But more importantly for Emily, her very public date with Annie signified their commitment.

With every step to the door, Emily's pulse accelerated. When she opened the door, her lips parted in awed surprise. Annie looked like a model dressed in a stylish dark suit and crisp white shirt. Her black tie was perfectly knotted and her short wavy hair was a tad more tamed than usual.

"You look...fabulous!" Emily exclaimed before Annie crushed her in her arms and planted a firm kiss on her mouth.

"So do you," Annie whispered.

Emily gave her hand a little squeeze and then took her arm and walked across the street to Norman Auditorium where the play was to be held.

The old guard gawked as she entered the brightly lit lobby on Annie's arm. Emily trembled inside. She wondered if any of them would have the audacity to say anything to her face. Worse, would they confront Annie? Emily could withstand the stares and gossip and while she knew Annie was a strong woman, Emily knew she would never tolerate anyone being mean to her.

Emily flashed the gawkers a dazzling smile. Heat blazed in her cheeks. "Good evening, Liz. June." She nodded at two acquaintances and tried not to show her unease at their bewildered expressions.

"Who are those two biddies?" Annie asked after they were out of earshot.

"Friends of my husband's family," she whispered.

"They look like they've been sucking lemons."

Emily sputtered a laugh. "They probably have."

Her humor was short-lived. Although the light in the auditorium was dim, Emily recognized the shocked expressions on the faces of Allen's colleagues. She hesitated in the doorway. Panic flooded her. This was a mistake. This was not the place to come out.

Annie took her elbow and ushered her to the side where they could speak in private.

On the verge of tears, Emily trembled. "I'm sorry...I—"

Annie's eyes filled with compassion. "Would it be easier if I...if I just left?"

Emily stared. Her first impulse was to agree but she didn't really want Annie to leave. And while it would make it easier for her to face her old friends, it would be a lie.

"I know how hard it is, Em," Annie began but Emily interrupted.

"No. I don't want you to leave."

"But these were your husband's friends. I shouldn't have pushed you into bringing me," Annie said.

Emily shook her head. "I've been lucky enough to find someone I care about again and if other people can't understand it, then that's just too bad. Allen would have wanted me to be happy."

"Are you sure you want me to go in with you?" Annie asked and when she brushed one of Emily's stray tears away, Emily had to fight the urge to kiss her.

Pride and love swelled in Emily's chest. "Yes. I'm sure."

Lifting her chin, Emily walked toward her seat, stopping to greet Allen's friends and to introduce Annie. Everyone welcomed her warmly and Emily's tension had melted completely by the time she and Annie reached their seats.

Ken sat glaring. Obviously, he wanted everyone to know that he did not approve. But what he thought no longer mattered to Emily.

When the house lights went down and the actors strolled onto the stage, Emily's mind drifted far from the lilting lines of Shakespeare and to her relationship with Annie.

She'd been worried about what the others would think—about what the Grangers would think.

But that concern was quickly fading. She was a woman who had realized her sexuality—her desires—and she wanted to act on them.

She was more like Annie than anyone knew. Since Allen's death, she, like Annie, was on the verge of life, ready to partake of all it had to offer—ready to live. Emily knew she wanted to pursue this to see where it led.

Her days were no longer a dull version of what and who she thought she should be. Now her days—and nights—were spent in the company of her delightful, beautiful, female companion who made her feel alive in a way she had never known.

Annie reached across the armrest and clasped Emily's hand in hers. Emily looked at her and smiled.

The play was a cleverly done version of *The Taming of the Shrew* set in the 1950s instead of Renaissance Italy, which Emily and Annie both thoroughly enjoyed.

When the house lights went up for intermission, Emily took Annie's hand and rushed through the crowd and through a set of double doors that led up a winding staircase.

"Where are we going?" Annie asked.

"No one will come up here," Emily said breathlessly, leading her to a darkened alcove that overlooked the interior of the theater. "And no one will see us behind this door."

Annie laughed.

"Hush," Emily whispered as she backed against the wall and dragged Annie to her by her tie. "Shut up and fuck me."

"Yes, ma'am," Annie joked as she dragged up Emily's skirt.

Annie's eyes widened and a wicked smile curved on her lips. "Damn. No panties."

Emily's knees went weak at the riot of sensation of Annie's probing fingers. In fact, Emily was already so aroused she knew it would only take seconds for Annie to bring her to orgasm.

"You're so wet," Annie's finger slipped easily inside her pussy as she dropped to her knees and pressed a kiss to Emily's throbbing clit. "I want to taste you."

Emily inhaled sharply. Holding her skirt up and leaning against the wall, she spread her thighs so Annie could eat her pussy.

Nothing had ever felt so hedonistically exquisite as the combination of Annie's finger prodding her pussy and the hot mouth sucking her clit. Heat swept up Emily's spine as Annie effortlessly lifted one of Emily's legs over her shoulder. She sagged,

tilting her hips to give Annie access to her clit, to her opening. Emily bit her lip as fingers penetrated her.

"Is that what you want?" Annie asked.

"Yessss..."

"I can taste your come on my tongue."

Emily's pussy clenched wildly. Her eyes fluttered shut as her body flooded with sensation. Her muscles grew taut as she tilted her hips toward Annie's mouth. The finger up her channel and the insistent lips tugging at her clit felt damn good.

Annie's androgynous cologne mingled with her own scent to form a mind-numbing fragrance that drove Emily crazy. And all the while, Annie told her how good she tasted and felt inside—how warm and wet.

The waves rolled in fast and hard and suddenly, Emily was spiraling, pressing her lips between her teeth to keep from crying out as intense pleasure flooded every inch of her body.

Afterward, Annie stood and pressed a tender kiss to Emily's forehead. "Kiss me," she murmured, winding her arms around Emily.

Emily's lips found Annie's, intense at first and then melting into something soft and feminine and filled with love.

Love.

She loved Annie.

She was in love with a woman. Her heart swelled.

Finally, Annie dragged her mouth away and Emily's heart turned a somersault when Annie's gaze penetrated hers. "I love you, Emily."

"I love you too." Emily threw her arms around Annie's shoulders and kissed her.

The house lights blinked letting everyone know it was nearly time for the curtain to rise.

"I think the Grangers are representing Allen well enough tonight. Do you want to catch the second act? Or do you want to go back home with me?"

A sexy smile spread across Annie's face. "I already know the ending. Home with you sounds perfect to me."

Epilogue

Four years later

Emily watched proudly as Annie was handed her diploma from veterinary school. She had excelled at her internship and had been offered a partnership in an animal hospital in nearby Mountain Brook, Alabama.

A year into their relationship, Emily had sold her house to the college and had moved into a small house in Birmingham with Annie.

Emily had also sold her Steinway and now she taught her lessons on the grand piano Annie had inherited from her gram. Annie had quickly realized playing the piano was not something she was ever going to be good at but she joked that perhaps Gram had known what she was doing when she'd left her the grand in her will.

The piano had definitely brought Annie happiness.

The Grangers had eventually given up trying to *reform* her and Emily was glad to be far from their clutches and happily living with Annie.

They had exchanged rings a few months earlier in a personal, private ceremony but were planning to board a plane to a resort in the Caribbean for their honeymoon as soon as the graduation was over.

Emily shifted in her seat.

Her only hope was that she didn't get stopped by airport security with her array of sex toys packed in her suitcase.

As if Annie knew what she was thinking, she turned and winked at Emily as she descended the stage. She gave a thumbs up and mouthed some words.

Emily read Annie's lips perfectly.

"Mile high club."

About the Author

Paisley Smith is a full time freelance writer and can usually be found in front of her computer writing, chatting, promoting or plotting.

A true southern belle, Paisley enjoys all things feminine, such as the perfect shade of lipstick, a pair of killer heels and a sexy, confident woman.

Sneak a peek at Paisley's site to see what she's up to.

The author welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at www.ellorascave.com.

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