



Lust Bites
SOPHIE'S PLEASURE
Patricia Pellicane

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Sophie's Pleasure

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

SOPHIE'S PLEASURE

Patricia Pellicane

Dedication

To numbers 13, 14 and 15, Emelia, Juliette and Sophia, welcome to the clan

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Toyota: Toyota Jidosha Kabushiki Kaisha (Toyota Motor Corporation)

Chapter One

A narrow, three-storied, Queen Anne style Victorian, beautifully appointed in earthen tones of muddy brown and hunter green with a splash of sienna red sat between two huge modern homes. One block north of Babylon's Main Street, the tiny Victorian was characterised by gables with yards of gingerbread trim, a turret and spire, plus a bewildering excess of banisters, spindles and a covered porch accented with still more gingerbread trim.

Inside, Sophie waited at her kitchen table. Sparkling clean, the room boasted of every modern appliance yet it somehow managed to instil an old world charm, with an oversized, scarred and much-scrubbed oak table and high-backed chairs. Red-plaid cushions and curtains as well as a matching, upholstered window seat added a delicate pink hue to the room as the sun tried to penetrate the fabric. The delicious aroma of fresh coffee and cinnamon buns infused the senses. The entire house, with its shining wood floors dotted with colourful rugs and softly polished wood walls put any who entered immediately at ease.

Her brother-in-law, Jake, made himself comfortable at her left. To her right sat Joe Palermo, Jake's newest partner. Jake's last partner had retired two months ago. Both were detectives with the Suffolk County Police. Andy Roscoe, a uniformed officer, stood near the door. Jake was married to her sister, and she'd known Joe and Andy for most of her life. She had gone to school with them and had, for a short time, dated Joe while still in high school.

Her mother busied herself at the counter, filling huge, colourful mugs with coffee and a plate with hot sticky buns. "Smells delicious, Mom," Jake said as Marie Russo brought the snack and coffee to the table.

A moment later, Jake placed a manila envelope on the table near Sophie. Inside was an article of clothing belonging to a missing girl. Sophie looked at the envelope as if it were a snake. She didn't want to touch it. She didn't want to know for sure. But the truth of it was she didn't have to touch it. She already knew.

This wasn't the first time she'd worked with the police. The last time was six months ago when a young girl had gone missing at the mall. Sophie had given Jake a location to

search. Partly due to her efforts, the girl was found that night, abused but thank God alive and wandering the desolate sand dunes near Southampton, miles from her home.

"Sophie," Joe said in greeting then glanced towards the package that lay between them. "Jake thinks you might be able to help."

She smiled at the obvious doubt in his voice. "But you don't think so."

Joe shrugged. "I've known you since we were kids. It's a little hard to believe you've suddenly gained magical powers."

"Not magic."

"All right, psychic then. Since when? And how come I've never heard of it?"

"You never heard about it because we were young, and I never mentioned it. Kids don't want to be different."

Joe nodded his understanding even as Andy approached the table and sat at the farthest end. He snorted a sound of disbelief and muttered "Psychic," in outright ridicule.

Sophie turned her attention to the smallest of the three men and smiled in return. "And how have you been, Andy?" She didn't wait for a response but went on with, "Here's an idea. Heidi wants to visit her mother's place this fall, right? But you promised the guys the use of your father-in-law's shack for hunting." She shook her head. "You really should have gotten his okay on that first, especially since the guys think the cabin belongs to you." She shrugged aside his lack of honesty, knowing everyone of his acquaintance believed he owned the shack and continued on with, "So, why not drop her off on the way. This way everybody's happy, except for Stephanie, of course. She's been nagging you for that trip to Bermuda. And Trudy...sometimes it's hard to imagine how you fit them all in. Lately, you've been wondering how to break it off with her. Careful of that one. She's got a nasty temper. Watch the mail. She'll send your wife some incriminating souvenirs. Oh and one more thing. Stephanie's pregnant again, only this time she won't have an abortion."

Sophie leant back in her chair and played with the teaspoon her mother had placed beside her cup. When she brought her gaze from the table to Andy again, his face was redder than the ruby silk blouse she wore.

"You know Babylon is a pretty big town, but it's not that big. You might think about being a bit more careful. If Heidi found out..." She left the sentence unfinished, for everyone knew what would happen should his wife find out about Stephanie or Trudy. Heidi's family

had more than a bit of money – money Andy found it necessary to borrow on a regular basis in order to keep his mistresses happy. And Sophie hadn't a doubt his wife was about to find out, despite the man's excellent ability to lie. His good times on his wife's money were almost over.

Joe smiled and leant back comfortably in his chair. "That was good," he said as if she'd just performed an extraordinary parlour trick. "But anyone who knows Andy could have told you as much."

Sophie grinned. "Supposing I was interested in knowing Andy, you mean, and anyone except for Stephanie, Heidi and Trudy, of course."

Sophie lost her smile as she glanced again at the object in question. She sighed as she leant forward, took a deep fortifying breath and reached for the small package. The moment her hand touched the paper dozens of emotions, sounds and pictures careened through her almost at once. The shock of it nearly took her breath away. She couldn't hold back a low groan as they jumbled one upon another until nothing showed itself clearly. She breathed deeply, pushing aside her fear. It was impossible to make out anything as emotion rushed through her mind like a hurricane of sounds, sights and feelings. It took a long moment before the sounds, screams, laughter, terror and cries of pain separated.

Sophie kept her gaze on the small brown envelope and smiled as a scene, like a clear picture centred in a frame of fog, played out before her. She saw the mother laughing and the little girl jumping with excitement on the day she'd gotten the pink tights. She saw the girl twirling around the living room, showing them to her daddy. "She's dancing telling her father, 'Watch me dance, Daddy'. She's laughing."

Her voice broke with emotion as suddenly something like a fist tightened around her throat. Sophie placed her own hand there as if to ease the pressure. "A man is watching. I see a baseball cap. He's in the shadows. People are rushing. Some are late. They're in a big building. Lots of windows. Lots of lights." She shook her head. "A school maybe."

"Noise. Kids yelling. Little kids are everywhere. They're laughing, calling out for one another. Mothers are putting last minute touches to makeup. Someone, a teacher I think, is trying to get them into lines. Her mother kissed her for good luck and promised to meet her right there after the play was over.

"And then her mother was gone, and he was there. He stood by the door wearing his cap. He touched her arm. She looked up.

"‘I lost my puppy’, he said. Oh my God." Sophie shuddered, knowing the coming pain and helpless but to allow it. "‘Did you see him’ he asked?"

Sophie closed her eyes against the darkness, the cold and fear. A thin scream came then tearing pain. She was afraid. She wanted her mommy. *Please don't hurt me anymore.* Sophie shuddered again. God, she didn't want to see him hurt her. She didn't want to know this.

Sophie's entire body vibrated. She couldn't stop it. "Pink leotards, they're torn, stained with mud and blood." She took a deep breath trying to dispel the worst of the horror. "You found them near the railroad yard by John Street." She sighed unhappily. "He threw them from his truck as he went by. You've checked the DNA. You know they're hers."

She closed her eyes and took a deep steadying breath as she listened to the sounds of bubbling water and said all too softly, "She's not hurting anymore."

Jake cursed.

"He left her near water. It moves softly...like a stream maybe. She's in woods, thick woods, but it's a tiny area. Tracks on one side, cars on the other. They're close by. A sign says twenty miles per hour. I hear children laughing."

Sophie sighed again. Her voice broke as tears threatened. She leant back, exhausted. "That's all I see."

Jake leant forward. "The man, can you describe him?"

She shook her head. "He's not terribly clear. Like I said, he was wearing a baseball cap. New York Yankees. He was wearing a dark jacket. Green, I think. He drives a pick-up. Not American and not new. Dirty. He has light hair, wears it long, straggly or in a ponytail. He has pock-marked skin. I only got the slightest glance of the side of his face. His hands are dirty, his nails filthy. I saw them when he touched her shoulder."

"Grease? Oil?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. Something. You'll find some of it on her." She looked at the brown envelope. "And on her tights."

Sophie wished she could tell them more, and perhaps, she would. Sometimes, pictures came later. She had no control over where or when. Right now, she was ready to collapse.

Maria stood and motioned towards the men. It was time to leave. "She's tired. This always exhausts her."

All three men nodded and, moments later, silently left the house.

* * * *

Early the next day, before Sophie left to open her shop, Jake came with a stack of photos. They sat at her kitchen table again. She shook her head as he placed them before her. "Turn them over. I don't want to see the faces."

Jake did as she asked and spread them over her table. Then, slowly, she ran her finger tips over each photo. She shook her head. "He's not here. It's possible that he's never been in trouble before."

"Possible, but unlikely," Jake returned. "His sort usually has a record starting from juvenile for stealing underwear or being a peeping tom or maybe exposing himself."

"He might have done all of that, but I don't think he was ever caught. Maybe he's new around here. Maybe he just moved here."

Jake sighed and gathered the photos.

"Wait," she said as she touched one of the photos, taking it from his hand. "It's not him, but he has some kind of relationship with this one."

"What do you mean? What kind of relationship?"

"I don't know. Maybe he's related, maybe he's a neighbour or works for him or with him." She shook her head and shrugged. "I don't know."

"Does he look like this guy?"

She shook her head again. "No. He's about the same age, but no." She never looked at the pictures yet she said, "This man has dark hair. The one you want is blond." Jake glanced at the picture and grinned as he marked the back of it then slipped it into his pocket.

* * * *

"Do you read minds?"

It was three days since Sophie had last seen him. She was busy in her little shop, 'Sophie's Treasures', when the bell at her door jingled. She turned to find Joe Palermo

walking towards her counter. She had to admit, the man was sexy. Maybe the sexiest she'd ever seen. He wasn't only good looking, there was something more. Maybe it was an air of confidence, maybe experience, or something. She gave an almost imperceptible shrug. Whatever it was, it set him apart from most men. She'd been trying for three days to get him out of her mind and had almost managed just that. And now here he was strolling into her shop, about to cloud up her thinking again.

At the moment, she was busy wrapping an Irish linen tablecloth and matching napkins. She folded the beautiful linen into a large box, but the attached huge silver ribbon and bow caused her a bit of trouble. "Put your finger here, will you? Press down," she urged. "There we go," she remarked as the bow tied tightly. "Pretty, don't you think?"

"I don't know. I can't stop looking at you."

Sophie smiled in appreciation. "You're still very good, maybe even better than before."

"I'm older. I should be better."

She laughed. "You're funnier, at least." Her smile faded. "Have you heard anything?"

He shook his head. "Nothing yet. I thought you might like to take a ride. Maybe you'd feel something if —"

Sophie interrupted with a shake of her own head. She didn't want to spend any appreciable time in his company. Not if she didn't have to. The man was dangerous, and she definitely didn't want to get involved. "It doesn't work that way."

"It does on TV."

"Call someone from TV then," she snapped.

Joe grinned. "Wouldn't be afraid of me, would you, Soph?"

"Not afraid. Just careful."

Joe took a quick glance at the shelves surrounding the counter and the glass counter itself as well as the items in it. "What do you sell here?"

"Collectables, antiques, everything from door-stoppers to glass vases and Victorian hair pins. Do you want to buy something?"

"Maybe." He looked around again. "What about my question? Do you read minds?"

Sophie leaned against the counter and grinned. "I try not to. That would be impolite, don't you think?"

"And the other day with Andy?"

"Oh that," Sophie laughed. "Lord, the mess he's gotten himself into just about jumped off him. It was shouting so loud anyone who looked at him would have known. And I couldn't resist after his snotty remark."

Joe cleared his throat. "I was wondering."

"Yeah, I got that, too. You were wondering why we hadn't continued dating." And at his look of surprise, she said, "Sorry. It happens sometimes. Every so often, a fleeting thought..." she let the sentence dwindle down and offered a helpless shrug.

"We should talk about it."

Sophie's eyes widened along with her grin. "Should we? Why?"

"Because you're gorgeous, and I'd like to see you again."

"You want to know why we stopped dating? Remember when you told me you lost your grandfather's pen, and I told you where you could find it?"

Joe shook his head. "No, should I?"

"I told you to ask Candy. I believe her full name was Candy Cane." Sophie laughed at his pained look. "I was just a kid, Joe. I couldn't take that kind of information in stride. You were too old for me. That's why we stopped dating."

"Let me explain."

Sophie frowned. "You're about to lie. Don't."

He blinked twice before he returned, "I thought you said you don't read minds."

"I don't, but I know that tone of voice."

Joe grinned and Sophie's heart gave a strange and unexpected little squeeze. God, he was gorgeous. She couldn't help but wonder how much his mother had paid his orthodontist. The guy had done a magnificent job. "Think you're smart, don't you?"

"Smart enough to spot a player when I see one. Smart enough to keep my distance."

"Well," he shrugged, "there was a time, of course, but I've outgrown all that."

"What since yesterday?" Sophie nearly doubled over while clutching her middle in laughter. "The look on your face," was the best she could manage between gusts of laughter that dwindled at last into soft giggles.

"Wow, you're tough." He grinned. "For your information, we broke up yesterday. It's been coming on for a long time. We're both better off."

She shook her head gently. "You don't want to get involved with me, Joe."

"I don't? Why not?"

"I'm not your type."

"And what type is that?"

She grinned. "Does stripper ring a bell?"

He shook his head. "That was the old Joe."

"Oh. And now you're new, huh?"

"Come on, what's it going to hurt? We could have dinner and see where that takes us."

"You mean to bed, right?"

"Would that be so bad?"

"If that's all you want, why waste time on dinner?"

"I wouldn't be wasting... Look, you're getting the wrong impression here. I don't want to go to bed with you. I mean, that's not all I want."

Sophie's grin landed just over his shoulder. "Ah, Mrs. Cummings, have you made your decision?"

For the first time, Joe realised the shop wasn't as small as he'd first thought. It consisted of more than one room, and they weren't alone. The elderly lady, standing suddenly behind him, with the reddest cheeks he'd ever seen, had just come from the room to his right. Judging by the look in her eyes and the colour of her cheeks, Joe hadn't a doubt she'd heard every word he said.

The lady seemed temporarily at a loss for words then seemed to suddenly remember why she was here. "I have, dear," she said as she placed a silver-framed mirror on the counter. "I was wondering, have you any more of those pretty dried flower arrangements?" She smiled at Sophie as the younger woman came around the counter and took her hand. "I'm going to Dora's at the end of the week, and you know how my sister just loves your arrangements."

Sophie held to the woman's hand as she put her other arm around thin stooped shoulders. "Why don't we take a look in the next room? I think we have a few left. If there's nothing to your liking, I'd be happy to make something up for you."

"Oh that would be lovely, dear," Mrs. Cummings said as the two ignored Joe and walked into the shop's next room.

Joe sighed and walked silently out to his car.

He waited until the elderly lady left then re-entered the shop. "All right, suppose I buy something."

"Suppose you do. What are you talking about?"

"I'm trying to get you to like me."

Sophie turned her back on him and reached for her bottle of water. She took a drink and faced him again with a smile. "That would be a serious mistake, don't you think?"

"Why? I'm a nice guy."

Sophie only smiled for a response.

"Sophie, come on."

"All right," she shrugged as if her next words were no big deal. "I've always wondered what I missed. So why don't we go to bed?"

He blinked in surprise. "What do you mean? Just like that?"

"Why not? We're grown up. All right, let me rephrase. I'm grown up. I can decide to go to bed with someone, if I want to. I was only sixteen when we dated. And you were three years older, more experienced and ready to go off to college. You were a bit out of my league."

Joe, obviously dumfounded, was momentarily unable to respond. Idly he wondered how this woman had somehow gotten the upper hand. Had she just insulted him? "You don't think I'm grown up?"

Sophie shrugged. "I don't know you well enough to say." And that was the truth. She couldn't judge the man on the little she did know.

"All right, you want to go to bed with me. Didn't you just tell me it would be a mistake to like me?"

Sophie dismissed his remark with a light frown and a gentle shake of her head. "I don't have to like you to have sex." She took a deep breath. "You know, when I was a teenager, I heard about this woman. She was writing a book. In it she rated every man she ever slept with. All right, perhaps 'slept with' is the wrong terminology, but you get what I mean."

Joe swallowed. "And what, you're looking to rate me?"

She laughed at his bleak look, thoroughly enjoying this teasing conversation. "Well, I wouldn't mind seeing for myself what all the fuss was about."

"Jesus, nothing like putting a little pressure on guy," he said, his voice slightly strangled.

"Well, if it's only a little pressure, it shouldn't bother you any." She grinned at his sour look. "Being a kid, I thought she was disgusting, but reconsidering, she was quite brilliant, don't you think? Imagine how hard those guys worked once they realised what she was about?"

Finally, he managed a dour, "When?"

If he appeared a bit glum about the prospect, Sophie thought he'd get over it soon enough. She smiled. "I have plans for tonight and tomorrow. Are you busy Friday night?"

"What time?" he asked without the slightest bit of pleasure.

Sophie grinned. For someone who appeared to be unhappy with the thought, he surely was an amicable sort. "I close the shop at six. Is eight o'clock all right?"

"Fine, should I bring —"

Sophie interrupted with a shake of her head. "Nothing. This isn't a date. I'll make dinner." She laughed as she watched his brows rise, his gaze obviously confused.

"I thought this wasn't a date. I thought you only wanted sex."

"I have to eat, don't I? As long as I'm cooking, I might as well make enough for two." She laughed softly as she gave him a knowing look. "And you can be dessert."

Joe didn't like to admit to the truth of it, but if he thought of it at all, he would have said the woman was dessert. Sex had always been a simple if luxurious tasting after a good meal, leaving him content except for a vague itch to ride back to his place. He never stayed over. He made a point of it. He never wanted that much intimacy in any relationship. So what was bothering him? She was offering him exactly what he always wanted, what any man wanted. Sex. Pure and simple. No strings attached. Why then did he feel oddly used? It hadn't even happened yet, and he felt what? Vaguely annoyed? What the hell was the matter with him?

Joe gave a deep sigh as he tried to figure it out. He left the shop without another word or backward glance, wondering for the first time if this was how a woman felt when confronted with a man like himself. Jesus, he hoped not. He wouldn't want to make anyone feel like this. Sophie was a woman who would take some getting used to.

Chapter Two

Friday night, Joe rang her doorbell at eight sharp. He couldn't count the times he'd decided not to come and changed his mind, knowing, of course, short of coming down with the plague, there was no way in hell that he would miss out on this night.

She opened the door, and he was made instantly aware of something white and, thank you God, skimpy and her clean scent. It was immediately followed by the mouth-watering aroma of tomato sauce.

"Meat balls and sauce?" he asked in amazement. "Did I miss Friday and get here for Sunday dinner?"

Sophie laughed as she opened the door wider and allowed him to step into the small foyer. "Sundays I go to my mother's. And it's not meat balls. It's meat sauce and spaghetti, with garlic bread and salad. I hope you're hungry."

"Starved. I missed lunch today." He followed her down the hallway towards the kitchen, admiring the movement of her hips, admiring especially her long, bare legs and lush, rounded bottom encased in white shorts.

He forced his mind from her body. "Who painted your house?"

"Why? Don't you like the colours?"

"I think they're great. It's just that it must have taken forever."

"Just about," she agreed. "I had to use a tiny brush for big parts of it."

"You did it?"

She laughed at his look of amazement and nodded. "And I don't mind telling you, I'm not looking forward to doing it again."

"Too bad, I was thinking my apartment could use a coat of paint."

She shot him a saucy grin over her shoulder. "You can't afford me."

"I was thinking maybe we could work it out in trade."

Sophie laughed and teased in return, "It's always possible that you might end up owing me. Then what?"

"I'm open to all suggestions."

"I'll let you know later." Then seriously, she asked over her shoulder as she stirred the spaghetti, "Anything new?"

Joe shook his head. "No, you heard they found her."

Sophie nodded. "I know." And found herself asking, "Was it awful?" even knowing it was.

"As awful as it can get, I suppose. She was in that little strip of woods by the tracks, across from the lake."

Sophie nodded again. "Jake told me. Let's talk about something else, all right?"

Joe smiled. "I like what you're wearing."

Sophie looked down at her white halter top and matching shorts. She wore flip-flops and had painted her toenails a soft pink. Against the dusky hue of her skin he thought the pink looked especially delectable. "You look great."

"Thanks. This is my first one-night stand, and I figured this outfit would be something easy to take off."

Joe swallowed at the thought. He wasn't sure he was crazy about that one-night stand crack, but he sure liked the idea of taking off her top and shorts. "I've heard there's nothing like planning ahead."

She chuckled at his remark. "Of course, I could have just worn a robe, but I thought that would be a little too obvious."

He shook his head as if to disagree and leaned against the counter to her right. "Obvious would have been naked. And most men appreciate the obvious."

"Mmm...that's good to know. Maybe next time, although answering the door without clothes could pose a problem. And it's really hard to cook if you're naked." She laughed. "You know, there's always a little splashing, and the stove's apt to get awfully hot."

Joe's mind had gotten stuck on naked and the knowledge that she didn't overly object to the notion, except for answering the door. Of course, now, he couldn't get his mind off her answering the door naked. He didn't respond when she asked him to take two plates out of the cabinet. He hadn't even known she was still talking.

"It would be all right if the man stood directly in front of the door, sort of blocking off anyone's view, but his," he remarked.

Sophie laughed, understanding why Joe was still standing at her kitchen counter, looking slightly dazed and hadn't seemed to hear her request. "Joe, if I take off my clothes now, we won't get to eat, and I'm hungry."

A few minutes later, he sat before a huge plate of spaghetti and sauce. Sophie asked him to open a bottle of red wine as she put the salad and bread on the table.

"This is delicious," he said after his first bite. "You should have opened a restaurant instead of your shop. You'd have people lining up down the street waiting to get in."

She laughed. "You sound surprised. Didn't you think an Italian girl would know how to cook?"

"Not one who looks like you. Besides, being Italian is no guarantee. My mother can't cook."

"Be fair. Your mother had to support you and your sisters after your father died. She didn't have time to cook."

"This has got to be the best sauce I've ever tasted."

Sophie smiled and watched him eat. "You weren't kidding. You really were starving. Maybe I should keep you around. You're good for a girl's ego."

A few minutes later, he rubbed his stomach. "I ate too fast. I always do when I'm nervous."

"Are you nervous?" she asked clearly amazed. "Me, too."

"You don't act it."

Sophie put down her fork and emptied her wineglass in three long gulps. She pushed her half-eaten dinner aside. "That's because I'm trying not to think. And you're not helping at all."

Joe grinned as she took his empty plate and glass and pushed it with her own to the far side of the table. A moment later, she unsnapped her top and flung it over her chair. She was sitting there topless, her breasts swaying with her every movement. Joe was stunned speechless.

"I think it's time," she said. "Don't you? Unlike you, I can't eat at all when I'm nervous." She stood, and with a quick movement of her fingers at her waist, her shorts dropped to her ankles. She stepped out of them and stood before him naked.

He had to clear his throat twice before the words would come. "Do you always strip down when you're nervous?"

Sophie chuckled. "I've been known to. Ready?" she asked.

"Jesus, if I get any readier, I'll be finished before we start."

"Oh dear," she said sweetly as she moved to straddle his lap. "We can't have that now, can we?"

Joe didn't know how he managed it, what with one luscious nipple at just about mouth level, but a moment later, his pants were at his ankles, while his shirt had somehow disappeared. He never would remember throwing it on the floor behind him, nor removing the three small packets from his pocket before his pants, like his shirt, simply vanished.

There was no time for foreplay, no time for much of anything but an overwhelming, tremendous need to be deep inside her. In seconds, he'd slipped a condom over his erection.

Wet and ready for him, she eased herself down the length of his cock. "Mmm..." she moaned softly as her body accepted most of him, her legs trembling as she strove to hold herself above him. "Give me a minute, you're a little big."

"And you're a little tight."

She shot him a quick grin. "Yeah, it's been awhile."

His mouth reached for an enticingly, sweet, pink nipple and sucked all he could deep into a furnace of heat. There was no way that he could hold back his appreciative groan. "God, you taste delicious," he muttered as his mouth desperately searched out the other breast. His hands cupped her ass and played with the pliant, softness found there. "You feel so good."

She closed her eyes delighting in the pleasure. He was so thick, so hard, she couldn't stop her body's response to him. She'd been thinking about this all day. With his mouth biting her nipple and his cock thrusting deep into her pussy, she was helpless to hold back a nearly instant and thunderous climax. She gasped as her body helplessly squeezed him, sucking him deeper into blazing heat and she found herself drowning in lusciously aching sensation.

Sophie leaned heavily against him, her face cradled into the warmth of his neck as aftershocks racked her body, and she gasped, "Lord, I can't remember when anything like this...so fast..."

"Mmm..." he murmured in agreement. "Too fast. Way too fast. We haven't even kissed yet."

Sophie giggled as she realised he was right.

"Oh God," he groaned as her body tightened around his cock. "Don't laugh."

"A bit anxious, weren't we?"

"A little."

"Do you think it might be better if we kissed?"

"I don't know. Are you willing to chance it?"

She leant back, her arms resting on his shoulders, her hands playing with his hair and she allowed a most innocent smile. "I don't know. That was pretty amazing."

"And you think it couldn't get much better?"

She shot him a wicked grin. "I wouldn't want to spoil anything."

"I think we should try it."

"Let's have a little more wine first. I'm thirsty." She reached to her left and grabbed a glass. As she filled it, she asked, "You don't mind sharing, do you?"

"I don't mind sharing with you," he returned as his hands roamed over her, playing with her breasts, watching them shiver as he nudged them together then apart.

She offered him the glass, and he shook his head. "Hold it for me. I can't stop touching you."

"Mmm..." she murmured, as she brought the glass to his lips. "And doing a very nice job of it, I'd say." She put the empty glass on the table.

"So you like this, do you?"

"I suppose one might get that impression."

He laughed. "Has anyone ever told you that you're a brat?"

She grinned. "One or two have tried."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning, they usually went home with a bloody nose."

Joe laughed. "You know, of course, that it's against the law to threaten a police officer."

Sophie couldn't imagine anything better than sitting on an erection talking nonsense while a man played with her nipples. "I was nine."

"You're not nine now, thank God. Do you like this?" he asked as his fingers gently twisted her nipples.

She moaned her pleasure. "Is the Pope Catholic?"

He grinned at her response. "I think I like you Sophie Russo."

"That's good to know."

"You know, I was a little shocked when you took off your top."

"Were you? You didn't expect to have sex with our clothes on, did you?"

"No. I'm not sure what I expected."

"For one thing, you didn't expect a good spaghetti sauce."

He grinned. "Among other things."

"But you're happy I did?"

"I couldn't be happier."

"Me too. I love the way you're touching me."

"Especially where?"

"Especially when you play with my nipples."

He smiled as she ran her hands over his chest and paid some attention to his. She felt his shudder. "Don't touch me," he said. "I want to play a little before we start anything else."

Sophie leant back, her elbows on her table behind her as she allowed both of them this pleasure.

"You know what I'd like?" he asked.

"Dessert?" she returned, her grin purely wicked.

"I thought this was dessert."

She smiled, delighting in his touch, wishing he'd never stop. "What?"

"I'd love it if you sat on your table."

"Really? Now? Without clothes?"

"It's best without clothes."

She made a low sound deep in her throat. "That sounds interesting."

"I can promise you, you'll find it very interesting."

He helped her on to the table and guided her hips to the edge. "But we still haven't kissed."

"The problem with kissing is, once we start we probably won't be able to stop."

He scooted his chair closer. "Put your legs on my shoulders."

"Oh boy," she said in breathless anticipation.

He grinned. "What are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking I like the way *you* think."

He smiled. "Do you have any idea how beautiful your pussy is?"

"I'm glad you think so."

"Like the rest of you, it's perfect. Lean back just a little, so I can reach all of you."

Sophie did as he asked and groaned her pleasure as his tongue slipped between her lips and licked her until nothing but pleasure filled her world.

His tongue was so hot. She couldn't seem to stop moaning. Every touch of his tongue, his chin, his nose took her further into the ecstasy. She floated somewhere above the earth in a place where only pleasure existed.

There wasn't a doubt that she loved every thing he was doing. Still he needed to hear her say it. "What are you thinking about?" he asked, his words slightly muffled, for he never bothered to move away from her as he spoke.

"Oh God," she moaned again as his words dragged her back from the edge of delirium. And after a few seconds of silence, she said, "I'm thinking that you shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition."

He laughed. "Wow, English lessons and sex. It's almost more than a man can stand."

"You're not standing."

"I will be in a minute."

"Stop making me think. I don't want to think right now." Her stomach tightened to a tremendous ache. She was almost there. Lord, this felt so good. She never wanted him to stop.

"You taste delicious. I can't believe how much I love the way you taste."

"I'm going to come again," she managed, although she couldn't have said how, what with the crushing ache in her abdomen and the way her heart pounded, choking off her breathing.

He smiled as he tore open another condom and slipped it over his erection. He stood, replacing his tongue with an ever-moving finger then pushed his cock into her, deep, deep into her. It was more than she could bear, and she grunted and groaned in almost delirious

pleasure. "You're killing me," she moaned as she strained desperately towards him, lifting her hips, aching for everything he could give her.

She held the edge of the table as he thrust his body into hers. It was the best thing she'd ever known. It was better than anything ever.

Then came the pain, the tightness, the terrible ache that twisted at her stomach until it built to a roar of torment then suddenly broke free and sucked her deeper into the magic, spinning her out into space and she knew only diabolical, aching pleasure as wave upon crushing wave of ecstasy flowed over her, trembling her body, encompassing her being into mindless, wondrous madness.

The aching pleasure had barely begun to ease when she felt him come, felt every hot burst of cum, felt his cock helplessly spurt his juices. Even through the condom she felt the heat, the spasms bringing her pleasure beyond bearing and knew her muscles squeezed at his cock and helplessly sucked him deeper into her. She hadn't the power to do more than accept his every delicious thrust.

"And now," he gasped as his cock finally eased its endless aching shudders. "And now we kiss."

His mouth slashed across hers, and she moaned into the lusciousness of his taste, his texture. She hadn't thought it would be this good. Not after all she'd so far suffered. Not after all they'd done.

His mouth ate at hers, and she helplessly gave him all he wanted.

She tasted herself on his tongue and wondered if there was anything to compare. He breathed into her, and she moaned as the combined flavour of him, her pussy, their dinner and wine seemed to melt into a devastating assault to her senses. He couldn't have tasted better. Nothing could have tasted better than this.

Hot, feverishly hot his mouth never stopped moving, while his tongue, teeth and lips became one entity whose sole purpose was to bestow pleasure. And that he did. She moaned a weak, "Oh God," knowing there was no one who could have given more. "I love the way you kiss, the way you taste."

"Jesus," he breathed against her mouth even as he sucked all he could of her. "Have you any idea how warm you are, how delicious? I can't get enough."

He guided her from the table to his lap, and Sophie held on, dizzy from the movement, from the sensations instilled from the lack of oxygen.

It took only a second to rid himself of the condom. Like the first it was set into a paper napkin and dropped to the floor near his discarded clothes. He hugged her tightly against him and took deep, desperate breaths, as if trying to bring a moment of sanity to the madness that had engulfed them both. Only Sophie wasn't interested in sanity. Her mouth was pure magic and intoxicating heat as it moved over his jaw, his throat. She couldn't get enough of his taste. "Kiss me. Joe, don't stop now. Kiss me."

Her demands only coaxed a helpless groan from his throat, and she smiled knowing he was powerless but to accede to her wishes. At her table, each concentrated solely on the taste of the other, the texture, the feel and with each passing moment their kisses grew wilder and intensified a frantic longing for more. Each murmured again and again that they couldn't get enough and finally with her legs around his waist, his hands under her ass, he was carrying her. His mouth against hers, he asked, "Where's your bedroom?"

"Upstairs, on the right. God, I love the taste of your mouth," she repeated, mindlessly lost in the texture and taste of him then smiled as he came to a sudden surprising stop midway on the stairs.

Obviously under some strain, he shook his head and confessed, "I can't. Jesus, I have to have you again. Right now."

In an instant, he turned them and leaned his hips on one step. Quickly, he pulled another condom over his cock. His fingers shook in his urgency. "This is my last one."

"I have more upstairs."

"Good," he barely managed then invited, "Ride me, Sophie, ride me. Jesus, hurry!" he said and cried out as she took him deep into the blazing heat of her.

He gasped for his every breath when he next realised what had happened.

She grinned at his astonished expression. It was easy enough to see he wasn't a man who usually lost control. "So stairs do it for you, huh?"

He chuckled and pulled her tighter against him. "It appears they do. I didn't know it until now." He took a deep breath. "Don't go anywhere. I can't move yet."

"How's your back?"

"It's killing me."

"And you don't want to move?"

"It's not that I don't want to," he breathed then a few seconds later said, "All right, here we go." He pulled her tighter against him and brought the two of them up the last few steps to the second floor landing.

Her legs were still around his waist as he stumbled into her bedroom. He bypassed her bed upon noticing her shower.

He kissed her again. God, but this man knew what it was to kiss. Still joined with him, she felt only the slightest discomfort as he pushed her up against the cold tiles. A moment later, water splashed over them both. It took a minute, but he finally adjusted the temperature.

And all the while, she was only vaguely conscious of her surroundings because he never stopped kissing her.

He moved them out of the spray and threw the condom into her toilet. He soaped his hands. Together, they washed one another, leaving not an inch of sensitive skin unaffected.

"It's a good thing I don't have to work tomorrow."

"Why?" she asked only half listening, for his touch was enough to steal her mind.

"Because I'm going to smell like a French whore house."

She laughed. "Will you? Why?"

"Because men aren't supposed to smell like jasmine."

She smiled and suggested, "You could always take another shower when you get home."

"I could, I suppose, but I like the way you smell. Maybe I'll just enjoy it for a bit." He paid particular attention to her breasts and pussy, especially her clitoris. Standing beneath the warm spray, holding to the towel bar, she was helpless against the wonder of him, his mouth nibbling at her nipples, his finger at her clit. She cried out as the blinding, aching pleasure came again.

With fluffy towels, they dried one another then slid between her crisp sheets to snuggle. "Finally, a comfortable place to play," she murmured. "Why didn't we come up here first?"

"We could have, but it's not easy to think when a lady strips down in her kitchen."

"It's not easy to think in a lady's bed, either. I'll show you what I mean." And she did. Joe felt his body give a tremendous shudder and could only moan as she ran her lips and

tongue down the length of him. It took no insistence on her part to find him eagerly upon his back, trembling for the feel of her mouth, anxious that she should discover every inch of him. She was under the sheet causing him one gasp after another when she suddenly stopped and said, "Look what I found."

"What?" he asked as her hand examined the length and width of his cock.

"I was wondering where he was."

"Were you? I could have told you if you asked."

She pulled away the sheet and grinned. "Some things are more fun to do on your own. Wouldn't you say?"

"So what do you think of him?"

"I think he's a bold little guy."

"Do you?" he asked then immediately frowned. "What do you mean little? You said before he was too big."

She laughed. "I only mean little compared to you, of course."

He chuckled. "And what do you mean bold? I think he's very nice."

"I haven't a doubt you'd think as much, but it would take a bold one to poke at a lady, wouldn't you agree?"

"You might be right. He's done quite a bit of poking today."

She rested her head on one hand while the other never stopped its delicious examination of his cock and balls. "Do you think he'd like it if I kissed him hello?"

Joe groaned. "Jesus. You're going to give me a heart attack." And then answered her question with, "I think he'd love just about anything you do to him, especially he'd love it if you were to kiss him."

Sophie decided it was time to do just that. Her mouth hovered over him, her breath hot and moist teased his ever-hardening flesh. He groaned in anticipation and arched his hips slightly. After that he was helpless but to moan as her mouth began its delicious play. She kissed and licked and sucked at him, all the while allowing her kisses, every touch of her lips to grow hotter, wetter, wilder, dragging him deeper under her intoxicating spell. She left not a portion of flesh untouched, but licked him from base to tip then sucked him, hard and deep into her mouth. He cried out at the pleasure and breathed a low moan as her mouth eased its hold then sucked him again.

"You're killing me" he gasped. "God, this feels so good."

She squeezed gently at his balls and he groaned his appreciation. "Like that, do you?"

"I like everything you do."

"How about this?" she asked as she licked then smothered the sensitive tip of his cock with wet heat and gently scraped her teeth against it.

"Oh God, yes," he shivered even as he murmured drunkenly. "Everything."

And Sophie continued to treat him to luscious delights, all the while driving him ever closer to delirium.

"I hate to say this, but you have to stop. I'm going to come."

"I don't have to stop for that," she returned as she reached into her nightstand and pulled out a condom. Within seconds, she slid it over his throbbing erection and again took him deep into the heat of her mouth. As she worked over his sex he was helpless but to moan a feverish, "God, you're killing me."

His body hardened, his breathing grew desperate. "Sophie, God, Sophie, I can't..." His voice dwindled down to a low breathless moan as she felt the first spurt of cum, hot despite the condom. And then another. The spasms seemed endless. She moaned her pleasure at being able to bring this man such delight.

The next time, he had his senses about him, he found he'd come again, for what he thought was the fourth time. "Four times?" he asked in disbelief, while eyeing the last condom wrapper, the one taken from her draw and left on her night stand.

"I don't know. I lost count," she murmured sleepily into his chest.

He chuckled into her hair. "I've no doubt. After six times, I always lose count." He hadn't managed four times in one night since he was a kid. "How did we get upstairs?"

"We did it on the stairs. Don't you remember?"

"I remember the chair, the table, the stairs, the shower and this bed, but I don't remember moving."

Sophie chuckled. "You are funny."

"I'm serious. I think I went into a sexual coma, once your shorts hit the floor. I don't remember anything after that."

"Wow, that's complimentary."

"I mean moving. I only remember touching you, feeling you. I've never seen a more beautiful naked lady." As he spoke, his hand moved down her body and slid between her legs. "Shall we make it an even seven?"

"Mmm, I always thought seven was a perfectly even number." Her body curved helplessly into his hard, rapid thrusts as he brought her once more to a quick, mindless, breathless climax. A moment later, she breathed weakly, "Mmm, that felt good. Thank you."

"Yes, it did," he agreed. "And thank you," he returned as he breathed in the lemony scent of her damp hair.

"I need a nap."

"Yeah," he said, completely forgetting the fact that he never, absolutely never slept with a woman, "me too."

He pulled her tight against him and before either realised it they were both asleep.

* * * *

Out of the dark, a deep voice whispered low and near her ear. "Have you another condom?"

"In my drawer. Take one. Just don't wake me up."

His chuckle was tender, the sound almost as delicious as the movement of his lips against her pussy seconds later. Sophie moaned unhappily at being dragged from sleep but thought a better means of awakening didn't exist.

"Oh lovely," she murmured as his tongue slid from her clit to her hole and back again. In the dark, there was nothing but the soft sounds of their breathing and the deliciousness of his touch. His tongue was so hot. Sophie thought there was magic in this man's touch, in his kisses, in his taste and scent and knew he was dangerous beyond belief. Should they continue this pleasure she hadn't a doubt she'd soon lose her heart to the man. Sophie shrugged aside the notion knowing this couldn't and wouldn't happen again.

* * * *

When he woke up again, he was alone. A note on her pillow read, "Sorry, I had to open the store. You looked so tired, I let you sleep. There's coffee. Lock the door behind you when you leave."

* * * *

Three nights later, Sophie had a dream.

He was close. So close she could feel his breath. She tried to see, only she couldn't. It was so dark. Her heart pounded in her thin chest. It was so hard to breathe. Hot. It was so hot, and he was so heavy. She whimpered her fear. She wouldn't call out or cry. He hit her when she made too much noise. And when he hit her, it took a long time before he stopped. He hurt her bad. Every time, he climbed on her he hurt her again. Mommy was going to be so mad at him.

Sophie jumped, her mind wide awake, her body gasping for every breath. God, but she hated these dreams. Hated them more than she could say. There was more. She knew there was more, only she couldn't at the moment remember every nuance, every sound and wasn't happy about remembering the things she did. Sophie came from the bed and sat in her bedroom chair. Her heart was pounding. She had to calm down. She had to think. Before the worst of it faded, she had to write down all she could. With a paper and pen in hand, she wrote. Every feeling, every sound, every smell. She couldn't imagine where she'd been. Where could it be? It was so dark and it smelled so bad.

Sophie closed her eyes and allowed the memory to come. The weight of him, the smell. He was abusing a child. Where were they?

The sound of a not too distant train. It came closer. Closer. The vibration of it rattled the floor. They were on the floor. She could feel it tremble under her back, all around her. He shut the door. Tight. It was so tight, so hot in here. So dark. Sophie touched the floor at her side and felt a shoe, a sneaker she thought. A smelly sneaker. She reached above her head. Something hung there. Clothes. She was in a closet. God, how would Sophie help this little girl? She was locked in a closet, and Sophie didn't know where.

She reached for the phone beside her bed and dialled. "Jake," she said, after two rings. "Is another girl missing? Someone around five or maybe six years old?"

"Shit," he muttered in disgust.

"No, she's not dead."

Jake sighed his relief. "Where is she?"

"I don't know. He has her in a closet. It's dark and hot. I don't know where it is."

"I talked to the guy you picked out from the pictures. I described the one we're looking for. Says he knows him by sight, but doesn't know his name. He came in to look at mug shots but no luck. Said he used to see this guy at O'Grady's over on 6th."

Sophie knew the place. Knew it was a hang out for bikers. She frowned. He didn't look like a biker. No leather, no chains. She hadn't seen a bike. Still she asked, "Is he a biker?"

"He doesn't think so. Just likes to hang with them, maybe works on bikes. I canvassed the local shops but found nothing." Jake took a deep drag on a cigarette. She could hear him blow the smoke out as he added, "The biker hasn't seen him for awhile. Doesn't know if he's still in town."

"I think he is," she said. "I can't tell you why, I just do. I heard a train. He's close to tracks. I'll keep trying."

"Me too," he returned and broke the connection.

Sophie was afraid to go back to sleep. Instead, she showered and dressed for work.

It was another four days before the picture came. This wasn't a dream. This time she was emptying a box of scented candles into an arrangement near the front of her shop when she suddenly saw a man pull his pickup to a stop in a dirt drive. This time she got a clear look at the house. Moments later, she was on the phone, waiting for Jake to pick up.

"You might take a look on Railroad Avenue," she said when he answered. "There's a grey house. I don't know the number, but the front steps are concrete and broken and some of the siding is missing on the right-hand side. They rent out rooms there. I'd check out the top floor. Maybe one of the closets."

"Thanks," Jake said and hung up. He didn't need more than her say so, for she had helped him on more than one occasion, and he trusted her completely. He didn't wait for a search warrant, probably couldn't get one since they had no concrete information and figured for now they'd just talk to the guy. He slid his arms into his suit jacket and signalled for Joe to follow him. "Let's go."

Two hours later, they found the place. While interviewing the landlady, both men saw him leave the building by the back door and slip behind the wheel of a rusting Toyota pickup. He wore a Yankee baseball cap. His hair was blond. He wore it in a ponytail, his face was pock-marked and his jacket was dark green.

When they tried to stop him to ask a few questions, he panicked at the sight of their badges and raced his truck out of the yard. They let him go for now. Having probable cause thanks to his odd behaviour, they entered his third floor apartment. Behind a locked closet door, a little girl sat among filthy clothes and a few shoes. Both men felt nearly weak with relief to find her alive. She was dirty, sported a black eye and cut lip and was sluggish as if dehydrated. Uniforms were called, along with the crime scene people, as an ambulance rushed the girl to Good Sam Hospital where she met her ecstatic mother.

It took another hour before they found the truck abandoned in Babylon's town parking. It was too close to the railroad station for their liking. If he made a run for the city, it might take months before they found him. They called the precinct and asked for an officer with a dog. Later that afternoon, they found him hiding among the car wrecks at Mike's Towing.

Sophie knew only relief when Jake called with the news.

Chapter Three

"Sorry, I'm busy."

"What do you mean you're busy? I've been trying to talk to you for two weeks. You don't answer the phone anymore. What's going on?"

Joe and Sophie stood in her store, on opposite sides of the counter.

"Joe, I told you from the beginning I'm not someone you'd want to get involved with. I'm not your type. And you're not mine."

"What does that mean you're not my type? And what the hell are you talking about I'm not yours."

"I don't date players. I told you."

"Jesus," he said, running his fingers through his hair. "Who the fuck is playing? You're driving me out of my mind. I can't work. I can't think. I can't sleep and all you tell me is sorry...sorry."

"I'm sor —"

"Don't say it," he interrupted and then dared to order, "Lock this place up. We've got some talking to do."

It was five to six, only a few minutes before closing. Sophie thought it best not to argue with the man. He did look strung out. Most of Suffolk County's detectives had put in long hours this past month and she wasn't sorry to see things had begun to settle down to a more normal pace again. She thought she wouldn't push him more than necessary.

He didn't say another word until they were in his car. "You want to go to dinner?"

"No."

Joe pulled into the small park that bordered the town's lake. He sat there for a long moment, watching white water as it fell from the lake into a stream that flowed beneath Main Street to empty into a canal and the Long Island Sound. Finally, he asked in a deceptively calm voice, "Did we or didn't we have fantastic sex?"

"We did."

"So? What's the problem?"

"Is that what you're looking to base a relationship on?"

"It's a beginning."

"It's not a beginning. It's a one-night stand. I told you."

"That's not fair, Sophie. You're not giving us a chance."

"What you mean is you're not finished with me yet. Isn't that right?"

"No, that's not right, damn it!" His voice was approaching a roar. "You know there's something more here, something more than sex."

"The loudest voice doesn't win, Joe. So knock it off," she yelled back.

"Sorry." He took a deep breath and tried a bit more reasonably. "Sophie, I know you think I'm not relationship material, but I swear, I've changed. I'm not the Joe you knew in high school."

"It doesn't matter. You're a cop. I'm not getting involved with a cop."

"Why the hell not?"

"Because cops are the worst. Look at Andy. I'd never put up with anything like that. And I'd know. Believe it, I would."

"All cops aren't—"

"Maybe, but too many are."

"Damn it, Sophie! Do you think that's fair? Look at Jake," he countered. "He's a decent guy."

She shook her head. "I'm not interested in a cop, Joe. And I'm not interested in you," she insisted.

"Right, you're not interested. Bullshit!"

She folded her arms over her chest. "Take me home, Joe."

"Give me a reading."

"What?" she asked with a frown, more than a little surprised at his odd request.

"You know, one of those psychic things. A reading."

"First of all, I'm not that kind of psychic. I don't give readings."

"Just because you never have, doesn't mean you can't. Do it."

"It's not that easy."

"It is," he insisted, even though he hadn't the vaguest notion of what was involved.

"Joe, it doesn't work that way. I can't predict the future for myself or anyone I care about."

"Good, the timing is perfect then. You don't care for me yet. Right?"

"And I'm not going to," she said with some fierce determination.

"So give me a reading."

She shook her head, obviously unhappy with the whole business. "Joe."

Frustrated, he raved, "Give me a freaking reading, and you'll know I'm serious about this, about us."

Sophie surprised herself with a soft laugh at his clear frustration and suddenly knew, despite some initial misgivings, she was going to give both of them a chance.

* * * *

They sat at her kitchen table, sipping coffee. Sophie giggled at his stern, dark look.

"Stop laughing. I'm serious here."

"I know. Give me your hand."

Joe did as she asked.

After a moment, Sophie gave a dramatic sigh and said in a sudden and terrible imitation of Boris Karloff, "I see a tall, dark man." She chuckled. "Oh no, wait that's you."

"Stop joking around," he said as he took hold of her hand and pulled her from her chair to sit in his lap.

Sophie grinned and remarked all too eagerly as she wiggled pretending to try to find a comfortable spot, while purposely causing Joe a helpless groan. "This is interesting. Perhaps I should start giving readings. If I give them while sitting on a man's lap, it might prove enlightening."

Joe groaned and pulled her tightly against him. "Don't try to drive me crazy. I'm already halfway there."

"Are you hungry? I could get on the table again."

"Oh God, Sophie," he said while nuzzling his mouth against her neck. "Don't make me refuse something like that. I said we're going to have a real relationship here. No more one-night stands."

"Then why am I on your lap?"

He allowed a wicked grin. "I thought you might think better over here."

"Mmm...too much distance between us before, right?" She bit his chin and with an appreciative groan licked the supposed injury. A second later, she was nuzzling his neck

"Be good," he said while giving a little tap to her backside. "I'm waiting for my reading."

She sighed and pulled back just enough to look into his warm gaze. "Okay, let's see." She backed up a little more and watched him for a long silent moment, before she exclaimed, "Wow, you really have a lot of sex in your life."

"Had," he corrected. "You're good enough to know I haven't had any at all in two weeks."

"Poor baby," she said to his obvious chagrin. A moment later, she reluctantly agreed and corrected with a small shrug, "All right, 'had'." She was silent again and smiled. "I like that you love your mother that much. Won't it be hard supporting the new house on your salary?"

Joe's eyes widened at her words. "My mother deserves it. Besides, I'm not doing it alone. My two sisters are helping." A moment later, he grinned. "You really are good. What else do you like?"

"I like the way you treat your nephew and niece." She frowned, "Tom and Sally?"

"Sadie," he corrected.

She nodded. "I like that you want a big family."

His eyebrows rose and fell in quick repetition as he gave her a suggestive grin. "Do I hear any offers?"

"With a smile like that, you should be fighting the women off with a stick."

He ignored her comment. Now wasn't the time to talk about other women. "What else?"

"You're thinking of trading in your car. Don't. The one you want to buy was in a serious accident."

Joe's eyes widened. "I know I keep saying this, but you really are good."

"Of course, I'm good. What did you think?"

"I think the point of this was to see if I'm sincere. Can you see it?"

Sophie smiled and nodded. "I see you nagged at Jake, asking questions about me," she said then blinked her surprise, realising what she'd just said. "Did you? What kind of questions?"

Joe laughed. "I drove him crazy. He threatened to ask for a new partner if I didn't shut the hell up. His words exactly."

"What kind of questions?" she repeated.

"Have you anyone serious in your life? Did he think you'd date me? Who have you dated recently? Should I ask you out now or wait a bit?" Joe shrugged. "Stuff like that."

"And he told you?" Sophie felt a twinge of annoyance.

"It wasn't easy, I promise you, but my begging was pathetic. At least, he said it was."

Sophie laughed in disbelief. "Yeah, that's the word I'd use referring to you. Pathetic."

"So what do you think? Are you ready to give us a try then?" he asked hopefully.

Sophie allowed a low wicked laugh. "If I wasn't you wouldn't be sitting here."

Joe felt his heart give a giant thump as happiness tightened his chest. "I wouldn't?"

"Nope."

He grinned. "When did you decide?"

"When you roared, 'Give me a freaking reading'."

He laughed, pulled her tighter against him and nuzzled his face into the side of her neck. "How are we going to start this?"

"You mean you've forgotten how to do it? In only two weeks?"

"We're not going to do that. I want a real relationship here."

"And sex means it's not real?"

"Damn," he groaned unhappily. "I'm probably out of my mind, but the truth is, I'm almost positive that a real relationship doesn't start with sex. You work your way into something like that. Slow and easy."

"Oh, lucky me," she said, her voice dripping sarcasm. "We're having a real relationship so I have to do without."

"Do you think we should have sex?" he asked with some obvious surprise.

"I think the horse is already out of the barn. It's a little late to lock the door now, wouldn't you say?"

Joe shook his head, obviously having a problem with her way of thinking. "I'm not sure..."

"The trouble here is you've only dated strippers and the like, and, poor thing, you haven't had all that much experience with the rest of womankind." She nodded knowingly and with a sly touch of false sympathy. "You know regular people, people who, for instance, own a small business," her eyes twinkled with laughter, "or who work in offices or stores, people who cook or serve you your food at restaurants, others who teach, drive cars, or deliver mail." She lowered her voice to a husky whisper and moved to whisper near his ear. "They also have sex."

Joe grinned. "Do they? One wouldn't suspect it by looking at them."

She allowed a wicked snicker. "I know they do an excellent job of hiding it."

He laughed and hugged her tighter. "You are a brat."

"A brat who likes sex," she shrugged, "so if you're not going to," she shook her head, "I'm afraid..."

"I'm going to," he stated quickly. "I never said I wasn't going to. I just thought you'd like to wait a bit so we could maybe get to know one another first."

She grinned. "We know the important things, Joe."

"Yeah?" he asked as he began to work the buttons of her blouse, revealing a delicious strip of smooth, golden skin and an enticing wisp of lacy, black bra. "What do I know about you?"

"You know I make a great sauce." She loosened his tie and began to slowly part his button-down shirt. As each opened button revealed another length of skin, she nuzzled it with her lips and tongue.

He was trying to keep a clear head but was doing a miserable job of it.

"And you know I painted my house. Is there anything else worth knowing?"

"What?" he asked, while wondering exactly what she was talking about.

Her fingers slipped inside his shirt, her nails skimming lightly over his nipples. "Jesus," he groaned as his entire body jerked and shivered. "I can't think..."

She tried to help him with her blouse, but he stayed her hand. "Wait," he said. "I need to do this slowly. Don't help me. I've been thinking about taking your clothes off for days."

She smiled. "Have you?" She loosened his tie to a wide loop and pulled it over his head, pushed her head into the circle and tightened it around her neck. "I've been thinking that I'd like to wear your tie."

He swallowed hardly able to breathe at the thought. "Just my tie?"

She grinned. "That's all right, isn't it?"

His smile turned purely wicked. "I was hoping if we did it again, we could take it slow this time."

She chuckled. "You have my permission to go as slow as you like."

"Thank you," he said as he pushed her blouse off her shoulders and down her arms. "But I'm not sure how slow I can go if you're wearing my tie."

She laughed. "You're not going to make me take it off, are you? I'd be naked if I took it off."

"Oh God, Sophie," was the best he could do for an answer. He tried to take his mind off her standing before him naked but for his tie, lest things grow instantly out of control. "It's better when it's slow."

"Not better than the first time," she countered.

He shook his head. "Nothing could be better than that. Only this time I want to look more, touch more. This time I want to remember all the particulars."

"Like how we got upstairs?"

"Among other things." He leant forward and ran his tongue over her collarbone. "I love the way you taste."

"It's my shower soap."

He shook his head. "No, it's you. You're a beautiful woman, Sofia Russo."

"Thank you," she said on a sigh as he nuzzled his face over the soft mounds of flesh above her bra.

"I'm cursing myself as every kind of fool. I could have been doing this for years."

She shook her head. "You couldn't have. I wasn't ready for you years ago."

He looked up from watching his finger follow the soft, generous, womanly curves. "Are you ready now?"

She grinned. "You might say I am."

"I need to see your hair." His fingers reached for the pins holding her hair back from her face. "It's gorgeous stuff."

"The first time I saw you in this kitchen, I couldn't stop thinking about your hair, how gorgeous it was and what it might feel like rubbing against my stomach."

Sophie grinned. "Wow. That's what you thought? Lucky, I didn't catch that one."

"I know that sounds bad, but let me tell you all of it."

"I thought, 'God, but this is a gorgeous woman and what the hell was wrong with me letting her get away?' Your hair looked like silk, curling to your shoulders. And your skin, Jesus, it looked as if you'd just come in from the sun with the most gentle, golden tan, along with soft pink cheeks, big brown eyes and luscious looking lips. I remembered how soft, how delicious they were."

He smiled at her soft moan as his hands delved deep into the silky softness of her hair, delighting in the feel and look of it as it fell around her face. "I like it best when you wear it down. Jesus, you're so beautiful."

She closed her eyes and leaned into his strong fingers. "I love having my scalp massaged."

"Do you? Probably not as much as I like massaging it."

She sighed and, with eyes still closed, murmured, "It makes me sleepy."

His fingers came to an instant stop. "We can't have that. I want you wide awake for the next hour or two."

She laughed as she watched his fingers return to her bra. "So you expect to last that long, do you?"

"You mean for the first time? Not a chance." He grinned but said no more.

"The first time? You mean we're going to do it more than once?"

He laughed at the question.

"We'll need to stop long enough to eat. It's almost dinner time."

"No problem, we'll just start again after we're done. Besides there are some things you can do even while you're eating."

She smiled, delighting in the wicked look in his eyes. "Am I making dinner again?"

"Would you rather we go out to eat?"

"I'd like that but I think I might shock the clientele if I wore only a tie."

Joe swallowed at the thought. "And of course, you'd be too tired to get dressed again?"

"The problem with getting dressed again is it might take a while before I get around to it and by then I might be too weak, what with the lack of food and all, to manage it."

Joe smiled and nodded in agreement. "You're probably right about that. We'll go out to eat tomorrow."

"If we're starting something here, you might like to know that I love Chinese food."

"We definitely are starting something here. There are no ifs. And that's good to know, since I like it myself. Could we order in tonight, and I'll take you out tomorrow?"

She murmured a low sound of approval as his hands moved over her partly covered breasts. "That sounds like a plan."

He smiled as he unhooked her bra and dropped it to the floor just before he croaked out, "Jesus." The sight of her naked breasts with his tie lying between them was amazing. He swallowed as his hands came to cup generous curves. He forced his voice to remain reasonably even. "You know what I want to do?"

"What?"

He couldn't take his gaze from her breasts, her beautiful pink nipples. He couldn't stop himself from leaning forward. "I want to take you on a picnic to the beach."

"Now?"

His tongue slid over a nipple then as if it were impossible to resist, his mouth suddenly sucked a good portion of her breast into a furnace of blazing heat. She couldn't hold back her moan of delight. And it took a few moments before she realised he was still talking about a picnic. "Night is the best time to go. If we sit in the dunes, we could eat naked and no one could see us."

"But the beaches are closed at night."

"Lady, you're talking to a cop. I know the best places. Stand up."

Sophie came to her feet and stood between his legs as he loosened her skirt and slid it down her legs. His heart slammed against the walls of his chest, and he was afraid it might come to a stop at the sight of her wearing only a lacy black thong. He uttered a low moan. "Jesus, a woman like you shouldn't ever wear a thong." His voice broke as he continued with, "I don't think I can make it."

She stepped out of her skirt, smiled and purposely turned her back to him as she bent at the waist, picked it up and dropped it on another chair. She almost laughed aloud at his moan of pain and asked with feigned innocence, "Is something wrong?"

He pulled her to him and smoothed his hands up her legs to cup her ass as his mouth nibbled over the edge of the black lace. "My God," he groaned. "This might have been a mistake."

"I could always put my clothes back on."

"You could if you want to see me die."

Sophie laughed. "You seemed to be suffering a bit right now."

"That's because you're wearing my tie. When a woman wears a man's tie, it's apt to take his breath away. I'll never be able to look at it again without thinking of it on you. Sit on the table."

She shook her head and made to pull away. "I haven't showered since this morning, Joe."

He nuzzled his face against the sweetness of her pussy and breathed deeply of her luscious scent. "I don't care. I have to do this. I love the way you taste, the way you smell." And he did. Sweet, clean, darkly mysterious, she threatened his sanity with the madness he knew for her taste and scent. It was only with super human effort that he managed to hold back the need she caused him.

He rolled her thong down her legs and thought he'd never seen anything more deliciously sexy than a woman wearing only a tie. He held her naked form against him for as long as he could stand the pain of not moving on to the next step. With his face pressed into her belly, his hands slid over her body, touching her everywhere. "I feel like I've never touched a woman before. I don't understand it, but no one has ever felt like this."

A moment later, he sat her on her kitchen table, and she groaned with the pleasure of his mouth between her legs, his burning tongue spreading the lips of her pussy and licking her moist sensitive flesh.

"You have the most beautiful pussy," he groaned as his mouth and tongue slid into her moist, lusciously musky sweetness. "God, I can't believe how much I love it."

Sophie was helpless but to moan her pleasure. Her heart pounded. He was telling her something, but she couldn't be sure what he said. And it didn't matter as long as he licked her, as long as he never stopped licking her.

About the Author

Patricia Pellicane lives on Long Island in New York with her husband and family. She enjoys reading, travelling in her motor home and especially enjoys her grandchildren. "Too bad we can't have grandchildren first. They're a kick." Most of all she loves to write.

Most of all she loves to write. "Life's tough we all need a bit of fantasy now and then. For myself, I love a happy ending."

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