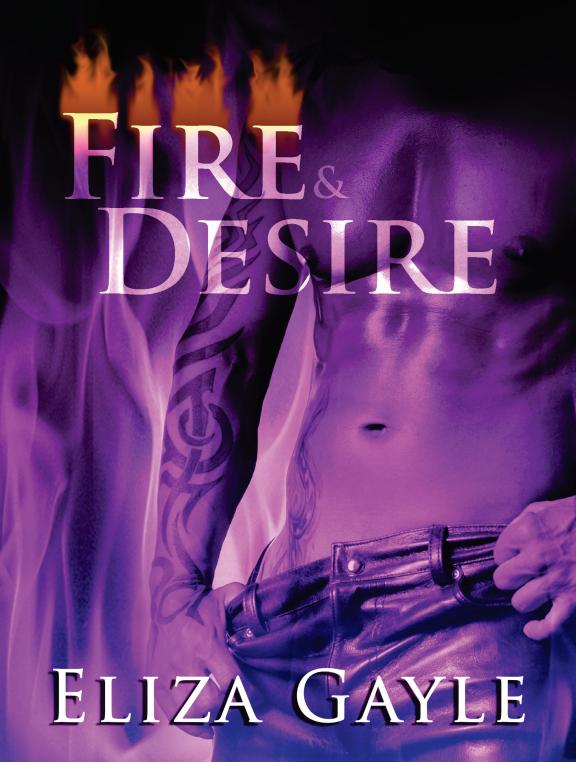
— PURGATORY —



Fire and Desire

An erotic short by

ELIZA GAYLE

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Chapter One

"Hey, Ruby, how's it going?"

She glanced up at Lance just long enough to give him a dark look before she threw her purse behind the bar and shoved onto a barstool.

"That bad, huh?"

"You have no idea." It had been the kind of day that made her want to go back home and crawl under the covers, and instead she was here in Purgatory preparing for a long night.

"You see the schedule for tonight yet?"

"Yeah, I saw it a few days ago on my last shift."

Lance shook his head and slid a sheet of paper in her direction down the smooth wood top of the bar. "There's been a few changes in the entertainment since then."

"Whatever. I still have a busy night ahead of me and I'm not here for the entertainment. As long as the tips are good I'll be happy."

"You might want to take a look."

She stilled at the warning tone of his voice. "Why do I have a sudden feeling you're trying to tell me something I'm not going to like?"

Lance shrugged and walked away from the bar. "Let me know when you've cooled off and I'll come back."

Ruby rolled her eyes and plucked the paper from the bar. How bad could it be? She'd been working here for over a year now and this wasn't exactly her first charity event. These nights always included everything but the kitchen sink. Gabe had explained more than once that by offering so many options he'd draw twice the number of people than a regular night, and so far he'd not disappointed her.

His predictions were always spot on.

She skimmed the schedule, not seeing anything out of the ordinary until she got to the bottom. There, in bold red pencil, someone had scribbled the name *Zane*.

She felt the blood drain from her face and her head spun. She couldn't tear herself from the word and her brain repeated his name over and over. Unbidden images of dark hair and knowing eyes filled her head. Lips made for pleasuring and a too confident smile every time he looked at her, as if he saw deep inside her. Of all the damn people in this town, why him? No, there had to be a mistake.

Gabe had told her personally Zane would not be attending tonight's event when she'd agreed to take the head bartending position.

"What kind of bullshit is this?" She spun on the stool and found an empty room. The cowards had dropped a bomb on her and ran. Neither Lance nor Gabe were anywhere in sight.

"I'm leaving, you hear me? You promised and I trusted you," she shouted to the empty room.

"Aren't you being a little melodramatic?" Gabe's voice boomed over the sound system. "He's just a man, after all, and since you refuse to tell me what happened to cause this hatred, what am I supposed to do? We had two acts cancel at the last minute and his group was the only replacement I could find that was worth a damn."

"He's the most arrogant bastard in this town. God's gift to Domhood, my ass."

"Careful, Ruby, I'm beginning to think getting the two of you together might not be such a bad idea," Gabe mocked.

She clenched her jaw and ground her teeth. The sudden urge to break something flooded through her. Why did the mere mention of his name set her off? Because his cocksure attitude grated on her nerves, but the voice and body got her panties wet every damn time he was near.

She sighed. "It would serve you right if I left now."

"You won't leave me in the lurch. It's not in your nature."

Ruby propped her elbows on the bar and dropped her head into her hands. She didn't know whether to tug her hair in frustration or run from the building. She'd have to find a way to avoid him, that's all. As long as he kept his distance she'd be fine. She'd get through the night with her self-respect still intact and her skirt firmly in place.

She could do this. She stood and turned to face the DJ booth above the stage. "You keep him away from me, you hear? If you don't then I won't be responsible for what happens."

"Sure thing, Ruby, whatever you want. Consider it done." Gabe laughed.

Instead of reassuring, the sound seemed sinister, even foreboding. She scooted around the end of the bar and began rummaging through supplies. She needed to have everything in place before the night started. If Gabe's predictions were correct, they'd have a record-breaking crowd tonight. Maybe keeping busy would keep her mind off the man she'd hoped to never lay eyes on again.

Her boss had asked her more than once what her issue with Zane was all about, but how could she explain something she didn't understand herself? Every time she felt his voice stroke her skin her insides melted. The hard lines of his face coupled with the aura surrounding him scared the shit out of her. No, the fact she wanted to obey when he spoke frightened her more.

He thought he was a gift to submissives everywhere, and on some level he wasn't wrong. Women flocked to him, eager to be his next conquest. His

reputation preceded him, and no one questioned anything he did. Self-confidence was one thing, but what Zane possessed spoke volumes. To her it flashed like a neon sign warning her to stay the hell away.

She didn't consider herself submissive, nor did domination appeal to her. Most of the activities here in Purgatory did little to excite her...except one. From as far back as she could remember she'd been hyper focused on heat and fire. She'd even volunteered as a fireman way back when, but her propensity to want to play and explore kind of conflicted with the primary goals of a firefighter. She sat back on her haunches and let the memories take her away.

The blistering heat and flames taller than herself should have sent her scurrying from the building, or at the very least served as a warning that the fire was out of control. Instead she stood her ground and watched it burned. Wanted to reach out and touch it, understand it. The danger meant nothing, only the desire to be close and feel its heat penetrating her suit.

When her partner and boyfriend at the time had drug her from the burning building she'd discovered the eroticism of it all. He'd fucked her that night while memories of searing heat and bright orange and yellow flames flitted through her mind. She'd fractured into a release that both frightened and entranced her. The boyfriend had dumped her and insisted she needed therapy, and she'd agreed. How could this fascination be normal?

She'd sought a counselor with an open mind who directed her onto a path that turned into a remarkable transformation. First she'd urged Ruby to consider fire investigation instead of trying to fight a fire. Definitely not her forte. Second, she'd recommended a fetish club where she could meet other fire fetishists and learn to use the attraction in positive and safe sexual ways instead of feeling guilty for an attraction—that while outside the "norm" as defined by some, it wasn't all that unusual.

Now in her second year as a fire investigator, she loved her day job immensely. She had a knack for science as well as an intuition for understanding the aftermath of a fire scene. She'd only taken the gig as a part-time bartender at Purgatory so she could hang out here without feeling like an outsider. She'd never had an interest in BDSM despite her mother's role as a full-time slave to her father. Quite the opposite.

The shelf where empty and ready glasses should sit caught her eye. She'd have to go to the kitchen and retrieve them herself. Whoever had closed last night had done a piss poor job of setup. Ruby pushed to her feet and swiveled to face the room, her gaze traveling to her favorite booth. She'd requested to work the second floor bar so she could keep an eye on the fetish stations. For a charity event Doc would pull out all the stops, and on her break she'd hit him up for some fire play.

Despite her lack of interest in BDSM as a whole, they'd welcomed her into the Purgatory family and embraced her fire fetish. Doc had taught her some of the basics and frequently offered to teach her more, but she'd shrugged him off. She understood fire and, while she could probably wield it well, it wasn't where the desire lay. Gabe had tried to explain that she continued to display submissive tendencies but he couldn't be more wrong.

She wasn't her mother. She desired an equal partnership that gave her the freedom to explore the unusual. Was that too much to ask? Ruby shrugged and pushed her way into the kitchen and loaded three trays of freshly washed glasses for her bar.

The door swung open and John sauntered in. "Hey, Ruby, I didn't know you'd be here tonight."

She flashed him a quick smile and stacked the trays on top of each other. "Yep, Gabe asked me to head up the second floor so here I am."

"I'm surprised, I thought with Zane—" He clamped his mouth shut and turned beet red.

"Yes, I've heard that Zane will be here. Jeez, did everyone know but me?" *And does everyone know I have an issue with him?*

"Would you have agreed to work tonight if you did?"

They both knew the answer to that, and she wasn't about to satisfy it with an answer. "As long as he stays away from my bar we'll all be just fine."

"Uh huh...like last time?"

"I admit I might have acted a little out of character then, but that doesn't mean anything. The man just knows how to set me off."

"More like push your buttons, if you ask me."

"I didn't, so let's not talk about him anymore."

She hefted the trays into her arms.

"Hey, let me help you with those."

"Nope I've got it. Ex-firefighter, remember. You're in charge."

"Yeah, yeah, you never want any help, I've got it." He pushed and held the door open for her. "Good luck tonight. I have a feeling you're going to need it."

Ruby swept through the door, ignoring John's last comment. What the hell did he know anyway? She started for the stairs and detoured for the elevator at the last minute. No need to push her luck.

A quick glance at her watch showed it was already after eight. She'd have to hurry before the rest of the staff and some of the early birds started trickling in.

* * * *

She was the epitome of everything he desired. Strong and willful, beautiful and mysterious. Zane Michaels watched Ruby as she rushed to the bar and shoved the trays across the counter. Her hand swept a thick lock of hair from her eyes, and her lips puckered and blew air into her bangs. He imagined a trickle of sweat sliding down her flushed cheeks as she swiped across her jaw. His cock leapt in his pants at the sight. If he thought he'd been aroused on his way to the

club from the anticipation of seeing her again, it compared little to the raging burn in his body now that she stood across the room from him.

He'd been thrilled to accept the offered gig from Gabe with the one caveat that she had to be there. Their last encounter had been seared into his brain and she'd never been far from his mind since. She'd been entranced by his show and he recognized a fire fetishist when he saw one. Sure, plenty of the submissives allowed the fire play he desired, but none of them craved it. He knew how to get them off on command and many of the pain sluts cherished their time with him, but something had always been missing. He'd found it in Ruby's eyes that night and he'd not been able to forget it.

She'd danced with him and his fire, entwined together in heat that should have scared her but didn't. She was a daring and bold woman who'd instinctively trusted his guidance and experience, and the moment his hand slid under her skirt to find sopping wet panties their fate had been sealed forever. At least, in his mind. Ruby didn't seem to agree, and for that he'd done his best to honor her choice, but the memory of her exploding in orgasm on his table was forever seared into his thoughts.

Zane focused on her now as she worked to set up for the night. She bent over the bar to reach for something and her tiny skirt rode up the backs of her thighs until he swore he spotted a glimpse of red panties underneath. Her legs were thick with muscle but disappeared quickly into bright red fur covered boots.

"Damn," he cursed under his breath.

"If she catches you watching her like this she's likely to tears strips off your hide with that sharp tongue of hers." Gabe settled into the seat next to him, yet neither took their eyes off of her.

Fierce protectiveness rushed forward and Zane clenched and unclenched his fists in an effort to stay calm. There'd be a lot more men than Gabe eyeing her tonight, so it wouldn't do either of them any good for him to act like an ass. The white schoolgirl shirt she wore tied at the waist and unbuttoned to the swells of her tits made it more than obvious to anyone who looked that she wore no collar.

"Did you tell her?"

"Yeah, I made sure Lance delivered the news when she came to work tonight, but I've kept my distance ever since. She's not happy and I don't understand why. What happened between you two? I believed you when you told me you wouldn't hurt her, but she's so on edge at the news and I feel responsible."

"She's scared."

"Yeah, right. Our Ruby is scared of nothing. I've gotten the impression that she's one hell of a daredevil. Got herself let go from the firefighter training program a while back because she took crazy risks."

Interesting. "It's the fire. We both know how much she loves it, but she gets too close and loses control. She needs a Dominant to lead her."

"She's not a submissive and has no desire to get involved with a Dom. She's been clear about that since the beginning. Adamant in fact."

"Have you ever asked her why? I think the lady does protest too much..."

"Zane, I don't like that look in your eye. What are you up to and what can I do to stop it? She's a great bartender and I like her a lot. I don't want any trouble tonight."

He swiveled and glanced at his friend. "I already told you I wouldn't create a problem. Trust me."

"Uh huh. Famous last words." Gabe stood and lowered his voice. "She'll go for the fire tonight. She's too antsy not to."

He nodded. "Exactly what I'm counting on."

Gabe took one long last look at Ruby and shook his head. "I trust you, man, but if you hurt her..."

Zane ground his teeth at his friend's warning, holding back the urge to question him about his interests in her. It was obvious Gabe cared about her, but the odd look in his eyes he kept trying to hide made him wonder if there wasn't more. He and Gabe had shared enjoyed their fair share of women together, but he didn't want to share this one. Ruby would be his and his alone. It's what they both needed.

Chapter Two

She peered into the crowd amidst the haze of fake smoke and the neon lights coming from the stage, seeing nothing but a sea of faces she didn't recognize scattered among some of the regulars. The crowd had surpassed Gabe's expectations, and she'd been running ragged all night long. Every hour a new act came on stage and she held her breath, hoping not to see Zane.

Now the crowd at the bar had thinned to almost nothing, which meant only one thing. The main act was about to start, and she had an unobstructed view of the stage. *Just great*.

She busied herself with gathering the empties and either throwing the bottles in the recycling bin or stacking the glasses on the trays she'd arranged in the corner. With any luck she wouldn't even notice the show. Yet the moment the first streaks of fire lit up the darkened club Ruby turned, unable to stop, and stared.

The girls were first, and she reveled in the familiar glow and imagined the heat streaking across her arms every time one of them stroked her skin with a firestaff. Chills raced up and down her spine and her hands shook with rising need.

Who was she kidding? She couldn't not watch. She nodded at the other bartender, who waved her away as she moved towards the stairs. She didn't have to worry about the crowd—they'd all moved front and center of the stage as she made her way through the staff area to the side. She'd be able to watch unseen from here and would have plenty of time to get away before anyone spotted her.

Another woman had joined in, this one a spinner using two implements lit on the ends. Neither of the women wore more than pasties over her nipples and the skimpiest of panties that hid very little. Not only did it draw the crowd, but it cut down on accidents happening if your clothes caught fire. Annoyed, Ruby shook the thoughts of fire safety from her head and focused on the actual flames.

The heat only ran along arms and legs for a split second, but she moaned every time. How long had it been since she'd last played? Forget Doc, she'd definitely have to look up Gabe tonight and see if he was up to a nice long session later. She'd save the payback for setting her up for another night.

Zane walked onto the stage and yanked Ruby from her thoughts. His presence invaded her from head to toe. Her nipples tightened painfully and her sex squeezed sharply. She hadn't exactly forgotten how breathtaking he was, but time had allowed her some distance. No longer.

Firelight gleamed across his shaven head and lit up the multitude of tattoos that emphasized his bare torso. Muscles bunched and flexed in rhythm with the music so she almost missed the glint across his pecs. *Oh, wow, that was new*. He'd added nipple rings since the last time she'd seen him. As if he needed anything else to make him hotter. If she wasn't careful she'd be drooling long before his show ended.

Not that she'd come to see the man.

He moved with the staff closer to the women, maneuvering the flames over and around their writhing bodies. The fire from all the implements swirled and swayed until they blended and the eye could no longer tell where it started or where it ended. Before long her body thrummed and pulsed in sync with their movements as she stood mesmerized. When the girls switched out their tools for the short fire breathing sticks, Ruby focused on Zane and his performance. His movements seemed effortless, but his eyes studied the patterns of the fire at all times. He controlled it, dominated it.

As much as she didn't want to admit it, she'd never seen a fire performer with his natural abilities. He probably understood fire even better than she did. Yet he'd taken the time to learn to wield it. Gabe had proficiency for fire play like nobody's business, but his skill paled in comparison to the possessive style Zane exhibited. What would it be like to let him control both the fire and her pleasure? If only he didn't want to force her submission...

Distracted by her thoughts, she almost missed the two ladies getting on their hands and knees, heads to the floor and asses high in the air facing Zane. He'd switched from a staff to the fire whip. A tingling sensation raced through her body as he unfurled the flaming tail. A collective gasp rushed from the crowd, mirrored by Ruby. She found herself attracted to the seductive sway of his body almost as much as the promise of heat searing the bared backsides of the women.

Longing rose in her, sharp and swift. Liquid heat pooled between her thighs. She'd never experienced the fire whip since so few people willingly wielded it, but it had centered prominently in her dreams for quite some time. The one thing about Zane she was helpless to resist.

She glanced around quickly to ensure no one saw her, then slid her hand underneath her skirt. The whipping continued, each stroke fast and furious but enough to leave small red streaks behind. The more she watched, the more everything ached. The slightest movement brushed sensitive nipples across rough fabric, and her hand rubbing her panties wasn't enough.

She roughly pulled the silk strip out of her way and plunged two fingers inside her sex. *Not enough. Not enough.* Her head lolled from side to side but her gaze never left the flaming tail of the whip. She wanted to anticipate the next strike but couldn't focus. Her fingers pressed forward, deeper...she couldn't deny the storm brewing inside her.

Ruby's eyes narrowed, the scene in front of her eyes taking sole focus. The torches all around the stage, eager moans for more, and Zane's presence

dominated her vision. She didn't always understand how fire and desire went together, but she'd learned through experience to not deny it. To live in the moment

She allowed her own moans to slide from her lips when she quickened the pace of her hand. The fiery scene existed inside her, aching to get out. Blasts of heat pressed against her skin like a lover's caress, sending blistering need sweeping through her senses. Oh, God, she was going to orgasm standing less than thirty feet from the one man she wanted more than breath.

He looked at her then, his gaze boring into hers.

Oh shit, no. Her hand stilled but it was too late.

Come.

Shock rippled through her as he mouthed the word, tearing a scream from her throat. Fast and powerful, her release rippled through her, over her. Her hand fell free and she grabbed at the railing to stop from falling. She gasped for air as the crowd beyond her broke into thunderous applause. This couldn't be happening. What had she been thinking, coming near him?

Her body throbbed and pulsed as she tried to gather her wits. The need she'd created was far from sated, but staying here wasn't an option. She'd go to Gabe and ask for his help. Yes, he'd help her and then she could go home with her sanity still in place. Gabe she trusted. Zane only led to a path she couldn't afford to take

Ruby forced herself to stand and straighten her skirt. After a few slow, deep breaths, she gathered her wits and headed back to the bar. She still had a little time left on her shift and she'd have to wait on Gabe. Her hands and arms shook as she raced to the stairs. The crowd would be breaking up and she didn't want to get swept along.

Halfway up the stairs her legs quaked to the point she had to stop and grab the rail. Nausea rolled through as images of Zane and his fire whip crowded her thoughts. Ruby shook her head and trudged to the bar. Only a couple of customers stood nearby and the assistant bartender stood wiping down the bar.

She stopped and stared. For the life of her she couldn't remember his name. What the hell? Her heart thudded in her chest and sweat broke out on her forehead. Ruby spun around, searching for the source of her distress.

"Ruby, what's wrong? You're so pale."

She couldn't focus on the voice with the sound of blood roaring in her ears. She moved behind the bar and grabbed the low shelf to steady herself. Tears welled in her eyes, threatening to fall. She didn't understand what was happening to her. She understood the high she normally got from fire play, but this was far more intense and she'd not even come close to the flames.

"Ruby, seriously, you're freaking me out."

She needed to pull herself together and get back to work, but her heart beat too fast and her head felt like someone had stuffed cotton in it.

"I'm calling Gabe to let him know you're sick."

No. She thought to protest but couldn't form the words. She was helpless to do anything until she recovered. Her clit throbbed as strongly as her pulse, her skin tingled and everything ached for...she didn't even know anymore. Relief, it was all she could think of.

She was fucked.

"Yes, Sir, I will," the bartender responded to whatever order Gabe must have given him.

She'd tuned out the conversation so she had no idea what he'd told him, but if she knew Gabe, and she thought she did, he'd be up here in no time.

"Here." Her assistant pushed a glass of water into her hands. "Gabe said you need to drink this before he gets here. I doubt it will be long."

She glanced down at the small glass and shook her head. There wasn't much chance she could hold it without spilling it all over herself.

"Here, I'll set it right here in front of you so you can sip on it when you can. We've got some customers I have to take care of, but I'm right here if you need anything."

He left the water and moved away. Ruby focused her gaze on the clear water and took some deep, slow breaths. How had she gotten herself in so far over her head? She could push through this and everything would be fine. She picked up the glass with a trembling hand and brought it to her parched lips. Cool water trickled down her throat, relieving some of the anxiety.

She detested being weak. She was better than this, and the thought that somehow Zane had reduced her to this only proved she had no business being around him.

"Hey, babe, you doing okay?"

Gabe's hand gently touched her back and smoothed underneath her hair. Relief flooded through her at the simple caress as she tipped her head back into his hands.

"I saw you go toward the stage. What happened?" His breath brushed her

Emotion swelled and broke loose as everything she'd tried to hold in came flooding out. A single tear slid down her cheek and her shoulders slumped forward on a shudder.

Gabe grabbed her shoulders and turned her into his chest, his arms folding around her. The warmth and comfort of her friend surrounded her. Jesus, what a baby she was. Somehow she managed to hold back more tears, but Gabe must have sensed a serious problem.

"You and I are going to one of the private rooms until you feel better."

It was not a question, and she didn't bother to respond. For once she needed to let him do what he thought best. At least until she had herself under control. The heat of embarrassment still flooded her cheeks when he scooped her into his arms and carried her to the private elevator that would take them to the third

floor. She caught snatches of random conversation as Gabe ushered the crowd out of his way. God, she'd never live this down.

* * * *

"What the hell?" Zane glared at Gabe's back as he carried his woman off. And yeah, whether either of them knew it she was definitely his, and he'd come to convince her tonight. Not fifteen minutes before, she'd come at his command and then disappeared before he could get off the stage. He wanted to paddle her ass.

No way had what happened left her in the right frame of mind. She was as afraid of the truth as she was about letting anyone get too close. She hung close to Gabe because he was safe for her. He'd respect any boundary she provided whether she needed pushing or not.

He moved quickly backstage, trying to get to the third floor before they did. A hard smile formed across his face. If she was in need he had to be the one to take care of her, not him. No offense to his friend, but he wasn't what she needed. He took the stairs two at a time and hurried toward the private playrooms. His attention to health and fitness was not only required for his work, but came in handy at times like this as well.

Ruby... The look on her face when he'd spotted her had nearly stopped him cold. Pure, dark pleasure was evident in the hooded eyes, the tip of her head and the tongue that kept licking at her lips. He knew where he wanted those lips. His cock hardened impossibly tight. Damn, he couldn't remember the last time a woman cranked him this high.

He liked nothing more than watching her reaction to his fire, but wanted to take things much farther than in the past. He needed to play with her, kiss her, even claim her. He'd waited long enough.

Zane rounded the corner in time to see Gabe unlocking the first playroom. He ducked inside and Zane sped up, his hand slapping against the door as he tried to close it behind him.

"What the—?"

"I want Ruby." He shoved the door open and pushed his way inside.

"She's in no condition to handle you, Zane, so back off."

The worry in Gabe's tone startled him. "Why? What's wrong with her?"

"I don't know, you tell me. She went to watch your show and then fifteen minutes later I get a call from her assistant saying she's sick and unable to talk."

Zane rushed to take her from Gabe. He lifted her in his arms and walked to the door, nodding at Gabe to follow. He'd take care of this his way, damn it.

She stirred restlessly in his arms. "Shhh. Just relax and give me this. Please, Ruby, I'll take care of you." She felt so small in his arms and he didn't miss the slight trembling of her arms and legs. "You shouldn't have run. I could have helped you."

"Run? What the hell happened, Zane?" Gabe interrupted.

"Not here and not yet. We can talk in the car. For now let me take care of Ruby."

He admired the soft lines of her face. The color in her cheeks looked good and the fluttering of her lashes had slowed. Even some of the tension he'd first felt had given way to his touch. Achingly beautiful. It was the only way he could think to describe her. Long, sable hair that grazed her ass when she stood, small breasts with nipples that stayed hard, and full hips that cradled him perfectly.

He took the back stairs so he wouldn't have to walk her through the crowd. It was nobody's fucking business what he was up to and he didn't need to deal with any other protectors. Besides, his car was right outside the door. He dug into the pocket of his leathers, pulled the keys to his car, and tossed them to his friend.

"You drive."

"Zane, I can't leave, I've got close up soon." He stopped and blocked Zane at the door.

"Jesus, Gabe, I don't live five minutes away. You can't spare that much time for her? I'd drive but I'm not letting her go at the moment."

Gabe glared at him skeptically, but he must have seen the desperation Zane couldn't hide. The woman in his arms drove him crazy. A combination of strength and tenderness grabbed him by the throat and didn't let go. There had to be a compromise that would work for them both, but not until she recovered and he taught her a lesson or two.

Gabe unlocked the doors and Zane opened the rear door to his SUV, slid onto the seat, and closed the door behind him.

He held her tight. The night air had chilled and neither of them had a lot of clothing on. She sighed contentedly and he relaxed into the cool leather seat. "You remember the way, don't you?" Sarcasm clung to every word, but Gabe had tried to thwart him one time too many.

"Yeah, I remember..."

With Gabe glaring at him in the rear view mirror, he returned his attentions solely on the woman in his arms. He sank into the soft, warm skin of her arms and legs. Needing to get close and wanting so much more.

He'd yet to fuck her, but they'd come damn close the last time they were together. Had it not been for Gabe interrupting, she would have been naked with him buried so deep she'd never get away from him. A rough sigh escaped his lips and she in turn squirmed in his lap. She'd settled enough she had to know what she rubbed against. Sweet fucking agony.

"Be still, Ruby. You're not ready for that and I'm only human."

He had to bite back a smile when she instantly froze. He moved his hand from her ass and lightly massaged her leg until once again she relaxed against him and her breathing returned to a soft and steady cadence.

He stared at Gabe, who sat stiff as he drove the car, and caught his gaze when he glanced quickly in the mirror. "Our girl here sure likes the fire, doesn't she?"

Gabe sighed and nodded his head.

"How long's it been since the last time?"

"You know this isn't about sex for her," Gabe whispered.

"Don't insult me. I know exactly what she needs and I also know she's been living on the fringe, just getting enough to maintain her secrets. She isn't satisfied." He raised his hand when Gabe started to speak. "I'm not trying to insult you. I'm sure you've done as much as she would let you. Which is the crux of the problem, isn't it?"

"She's not submissive. It makes a difference on how a session can go."

Zane snorted. "Is that what she keeps telling you? And you believe her?"

"Look, man, I know you've got a massive hard-on for her, but at Purgatory we have rules and we don't cross them, ever."

"Which is why I'm taking her home."

"I don't know if that's such a great idea. I don't think she's ready for a Dom like you. Probably never will be." Gabe raised his shoulders and titled his head to the side.

Tension filled the car and he didn't feel the need to deal with it, but if he didn't Gabe wouldn't be leaving her alone with him.

"You know it's a little freaky to be sitting here listening to the two of you argue about me as if I'm not even here."

Her voice startled him. She'd begun to recover a lot quicker than he expected. That she did so in his arms was a damn good sign.

"Just looking out for your safety is all," Gabe answered.

She pushed to a sitting position and opened her eyes. "If that were true then maybe you wouldn't have called me in to work tonight. You set me up and now you're feeling guilty about it."

Gabe started to deny it and stopped. Ruby was no pushover, that was for sure.

She pushed against his chest. "Let me up."

"No."

Her brow arched. "Excuse me. Did you just say no?"

"Yes." The fiery anger lit her eyes and he waited for the backlash. That she had gotten riled up over the conversation was a clear indication she was getting back to normal. "Don't you even understand what happened to you? You need to rehydrate and take it easy for a while."

"I'm not a child, and I hardly think a bout of low blood sugar is cause for all this." She waved her hand around the car and he bit back another smile. Jesus, he loved her spirit, her determination.

"No, you're definitely not a child, and I'd like to suggest again you stop squirming in my lap." His cock twitched against her bottom and she looked at him with sheer horror.

"What? I've got a beautiful woman sitting in my lap who, as I recall, masturbated in front of me and who knows who else just a short while ago."

"Ohhh—" She fought powerfully against his hold and pushed herself from his lap to the seat next to him with just her wrist manacled by his hand. "You son of a bitch. Let me go."

"I already said no. I'm going to make sure you are okay and then we're going to see about getting you satisfied."

Wild fear filled her gaze as she twisted her head to Gabe and back again. "What? Have you lost your mind? I need to get back to work and then when everything's all cleaned up I'm going home. Alone."

"You're not going back to work tonight. Everything's already being taken care of," Gabe broke in. "Zane's right. You may think you're fine, but twenty minutes ago you scared the hell out of several people."

Ruby sighed, some of the anger deflating. "I'm not sure what happened and I'm sorry if it freaked you out, but really, I think I'm fine now.

Zane tugged on her wrist and pulled her a little closer. "I'm not leaving you alone tonight, so you decide. We can either go back and spend the night in a playroom, or you can come home with me. My preference would be a warm bed at my place where you'll be comfortable, but it's your choice."

Silence stretched out between them while she thought about his offer. He'd known she wouldn't like her options.

"I don't like being manhandled." She leaned forward to the front seat. "And as for you, I don't even know what to say. How about we take door number three and you can take me to my place."

He pulled her back against the leather. "No, not an option. You didn't have a blood sugar issue back at the club, so clearly you either have no idea what you're doing when you get involved with fire play or you're in some major denial."

Suddenly her elbow connected with his gut and his breath whooshed from his lungs. She'd caught him off guard just enough to again slide away from him. He'd tensed, readying himself for a fight when she turned her head to gaze out the window, not saying a word. They rode like that for a few minutes until Gabe pulled up to his building and killed the engine. For a few long minutes no one spoke as the tension in the car rose.

Yet Ruby didn't look mad anymore, she looked...sad.

"I know a lot about this kind of thing...first hand. I grew up with it."

"You discovered your fire fetish when you were young?"

"Yeah, but that's not what I'm talking about. I didn't understand the attraction to heat, and it took years before the craving for it started to twist me up inside." She ran her hand along the edge of the window, her movements slow and distant as if she were lost in thoughts or memories.

"Let's go inside and you can get comfortable. Then we can talk about what happened."

She looked at him then—a blank look in her eyes. "I can't be what you want," she whispered.

He banked down the surge of anger at her words. This was no time to push. There would be time for that later. "Don't judge me when you haven't even talked to me. Our only encounters have been in clubs where we both are in a different zone." He opened the door and held his hand out to her. "How about we not jump to conclusions about each other and just see where this goes?"

He counted the seconds in his head as she watched him carefully. It was clear how unsure she was but it had to be her choice and he wouldn't force her to comply. His stomach jumped when her hand reached for his and he closed his fingers around her and helped her from the car.

"Hey, Gabe, thanks for bringing us. I'll send someone for the car tomorrow."

"No problem—but, Zane, if you hurt—"

"Don't do it, man. Don't be a cliché here. You know me and you know she's safe." After a few seconds, Gabe nodded his head and he slammed the door shut.

"How are you going to get your car back?"

"No worries, beautiful. It's taken care of." He steered her toward the building entrance and she looked skyward.

"You know, I've wondered what the inside of this building looked like. I did the inspection on the original building after it burned down. It was damned good to hear they were going to rebuild it and keep many of the original specifications. It's always sad when the city loses a landmark to tragedy."

He let her chatter nervously on about his building, only half listening. His focus remained on her and the effect the change in topic affected her. Her color brightened and her eyes were alive again. Good, maybe now she would be able to relax with him, because this wouldn't be an easy night for either of them. He had a few lessons to teach and one way or another he'd find a way through her defenses until she agreed to give him a chance.

Chapter Three

Ruby wolfed down the last of the cookies Zane had given her. The man had no idea of the sweet tooth she possessed, but that he had her favorite peanut butter cookies in his cabinets had raised him a few levels in her eyes. As if the man needed to go any higher.

He paced the apartment, restlessly waiting for her to finish. Now that her sanity had returned she no longer wanted to talk about what happened. But they were alone, and she was certain a man like Zane would be prepared at all times. Her hunger for food had given way to an entirely different hunger. She needed to get laid, and she could admit that she'd wanted him the first time she'd laid eyes on him.

Sure, the fire had been her first attraction, but the man behind it was every bit as magnetic. Tall and muscular with broad shoulders that tapered down rock hard abs to narrow hips. The man wore leather like she didn't know what, but it made her want to touch him, no...rub all over him. Just watching him perform, observing the way he moved, had taken her obsession to a higher level than ever before

The pants were snug and cupped his cock just right as if saying *come and get it*. And, judging from the bulge she'd found herself sitting on in the car and the other times she'd pressed against him, she would not be disappointed. What was it about him that made her want to throw caution to the wind and give in to all her wicked ways?

"What?"

He'd turned and caught her staring. She liked the gruff expression on his face—cross between complete frustration and desire. Their chitchat had done little to distract him from his own erection and she couldn't be more excited. She slid from the stool in his kitchen and moved slowly toward him. He must have sensed she was up to something because he took a couple of steps backward.

"I'm feeling much better now."

"You look better." He touched her hair, then the side of her neck.

"I've tried to deny this for a long time now. I'm tired of resisting." She lifted her hands and unbuttoned her top.

"We need to talk about what happened earlier."

"Actually, for the first time I think we can wait on the talk." She removed her blouse and dropped it to the ground.

A distinct groan sounded from Zane. "You are a little minx who needs to learn a lesson or two."

"Maybe...maybe not." She reached for the button of her skirt and unfastened it. Her fingers grasped the zipper and ticked it down very slowly. She spied his hands clenching and unclenching in fists and the muscle at his jaw tic.

"You're a dangerous woman who needs to learn control." He took one step in her direction.

"I think I'm doing just what needs to be done. After all, we've been avoiding this for a while now." Her hands grasped the fabric and skimmed it down her hips and thighs until it pooled at her feet.

"Are you sure about this? Because once we start, I won't be stopping. And don't think for a second I'll forget about the talk we're going to have." Zane's fingers skimmed across the skin of her stomach, rough scarred hands that left a heated trail of pleasure everywhere they touched.

"I like watching you perform. It turns me on."

"You like me, or the fire?"

"Both. But right now there is no fire..."

"Damn, woman, you are making me crazy. One minute I want to turn you over my knee and the next I want to be buried inside you. You're not logical."

She leaned forward until her jaw brushed his neck and her lips grazed the curve of his ear. "Then take me. Please."

Something broke between them and he grabbed her around the waist and lifted her. Automatically she wrapped her legs around his waist and dug her fingers into his arms. God, his muscles, his warm skin, and the smell. The scent of burning fire covered him, filtering through her senses. She moaned helplessly in his arms as he carried her to his bedroom.

Together they fell to the bed, him landing on top of her with his cock pressing against her heated sex. His hips shoved forward and his length drug across her clit. Pleasure sizzled through her, her nipples tightening to aching points and moisture coating her labia.

"Oh, Zane. Clothes, please. I need to feel skin. Need to feel you."

He lifted enough to shove her thong to the side and his fingers graze across her lips. Whimpers tore from her throat as he fed first one finger inside her and then a second.

"Fucking hell. You are so hot." He pushed his fingers high and her eyes rolled back in her head.

She couldn't think, couldn't breathe.

"Yes," she cried out.

Without removing his fingers, Zane lifted from her and grasped her hip with one hand and pulled her forward. "Jesus, Ruby, you're so beautiful." His face lowered until his heavy pants pushed his breath across her dampened flesh.

She arced her hips and he smiled.

"I'm going to take my time, baby. You're going to come so many times you won't be able to think straight." Warm heat pressed against her clit and Ruby screamed. His tongue pushed and prodded until his teeth took over nibbling on her most sensitive flesh.

"Ohhh, ohhh." Fast and furious, her orgasm rushed over her. An explosion of pleasure grabbed a hold of her and flung her to the stars. Every continued flick and lick with his tongue pushed her farther than she thought possible.

Her hands wrapped around his smooth head and pressed him closer. In response he worked his fingers rougher inside her. Fast and slow, brushing the sides of her channel until she hovered again on a ledge, unable to move.

"I like watching you come. That moment of complete loss of control, when simply feeling takes over the brain and you can no longer fight. It's a place you need to be as often as possible."

It was hard to follow his words with his fingers fucking her, teasing and tempting her. He'd abandoned her clit for the area above his fingers.

"Jesus, you taste good. You've drenched my fingers and still it's not enough. Give me more, Ruby. Come for me again." He curved his movements until he touched just the right spot. Without warning or build up, she convulsed and came, her inner muscles clenching around him.

"Fuck yes, baby. More sweet wetness for me to enjoy."

His hot tongue delved alongside her fingers where he could catch every drop. Her head lolled to the side. How much more of this could she take? She'd thought taking the role as aggressor might change their dynamic, but lying helpless here as he ate at her pussy was too good.

She whimpered, her legs spreading farther. His free hand spread her lips wide as he licked a path to her clit. Slow. Agonizing. Zane fastened his mouth over her swollen bud for just a second and her upper body jackknifed off the bed. At this point her body was so sensitized they were riding the line between pain and pleasure, leaving her torn between asking him to stop and begging him for more

She needed him inside her now.

Ruby's legs trembled with weakness as he continued to love her with mouth and fingers. He alternated long deep strokes with short digging ones while he blew hot air across her aching flesh. Despite the cool temperature of the room, the familiar tickle of sweat trickled between her breasts. She thought of trying to pull herself together, but she loved the heat inside her too much. She spent so much time wound tight, afraid of her own inhibitions. If she could let go with Zane, maybe she'd find something she'd been looking for. And if tomorrow it was gone, she'd learn to live with it.

"Relax, Ruby, don't stiffen up now. I can tell you're thinking too much. Your job right now is to do nothing but feel. Can you do that for me, baby?"

She looked down at him, at those sharp eyes that never missed a thing, and nodded her head. A slight quirk of the lips turned his serious look into something

playful as she felt the distinct sensation of another finger sliding inside. Good God, how many was he using?

She moaned harder as he stretched her with slow, calculated movements.

"Judging by how tight you are, I'm probably quite a bit larger than you're used to, but sopping wet like this you should have no trouble at all."

Her eyes grew big at the thought of him splitting her in two with his cock. Yes, she wanted him, and the longer he delayed the more frantic she got.

His fingers eased from her channel and he tore at the button of his leathers. This was it...she was giving in to Zane, the one man she swore she could resist. Although, if she'd ever quit lying to herself, she would have known this day was inevitable. She glanced at his chest and shoulders, the muscles moving fluidly as he removed his pants. Naked, he took her breath away. Where he looked like an escaped chiseled god of perfection, she felt ordinary. Yet the hungry stare he turned on her flipped her stomach.

His erection was huge, bigger than she'd imagined. Long and heavily veined with a flared crown already damp with pre-cum. Her mouth watered, ached to taste him. She forced herself to take a breath and drug her gaze to his face. Her face flushed with heat at the satisfaction she recognized in his eyes. On a small moan her sex squeezed and more juices gathered at the top of her thighs.

In her peripheral vision she saw his arms moving and the tell tale sound of a condom wrapper ripping, but tearing her gaze away from his was out of the question.

"Damn, Ruby, don't look at me like that."

"Like what?"

"Like you need me." He pressed a kiss to her belly and butterflies erupted.

Did she need him? She wasn't supposed to, but it might be too late for that.

She twisted and turned and arched her back as he traveled up her body until the tip of his cock settled between her thighs. "Please, Zane. Don't tease me."

His hips rocked forward, pushing his dick a couple of inches inside her. "Oh, Ruby, you have no idea what teasing is if you think that's what I'm doing now." He surged forward, sinking inside her the rest of the way. The move stole her breath on a sudden gasp. He stilled long enough for her body to stretch and accommodate him before he withdrew partway.

Ruby grabbed his shoulders and wrapped her legs around his waist to keep him seated. "Not yet." She gasped again.

He froze above her and dipped his head for a kiss. Warm and soft lips pressed to her mouth, sending tingles into her limbs. "I knew you'd be tight, but damn, woman. How long's it been since you've been with a man?"

The heat of a blush crept up her neck at the memory of her last lover. She wasn't about to embarrass herself with the truth. "A while," she admitted.

"Do you need more time?"

"No. Please, now." Her heels dug into his ass and pressed him forward, impaling her once again.

"You really don't have much control, do you?"

"Who the hell needs control now?" she argued.

"Oh, babe, you have so much to learn. But we have plenty of time for that." He pulled from her until only the tip remained to tempt her. "Right now we need to fuck." He tunneled forward, his shaft rubbing against every nerve ending she possessed. Pleasure sparked inside her, hurtling her toward yet another mind-blowing release.

"Oh, Zane. Oh yes."

"Come, baby. Let me feel those muscles clamp around me. Come, Ruby, now!"

The urgent rumble of his voice built the crescendo higher until sparks exploded and her body spasmed in orgasm. Without thought she screamed in ecstasy as he slammed into her over and over again.

"Fuck yeah," he rumbled.

Ruby couldn't think. With her orgasm she'd relinquished control and rational thought was no longer possible. Her breath clogged in her throat when she tried to speak as another wave of sensation built inside her womb. Never had she experienced so many orgasms in one night.

"You are incredible, Ruby. When you masturbated next to the stage I'd never seen a more beautiful sight. I don't think you understand how much control it took not to yell in triumph when you came for me. It's a gift I won't soon forget."

He pumped harder. Sweat built between them, her hair plastered around her face. "You're making me crazy, Zane. Please. More." Her hips jerked to him on every thrust. She stared into his eyes, getting lost in the dark swirl of need residing there. Her nails bit into the flesh of his arms as ropes of muscles flexed underneath her hands.

Intense hunger burned between them as he drove his hips harder. Higher. Pleasure stormed inside her, swirling and building on every stroke. Screams of release ripped from her mouth, tightening her muscles around him.

Zane shouted above her, his cock pulsing with his own orgasm. She clawed at his shoulders, frantic with pleasure. Everything magnified: the weight of him above her, the last thrusts pushing even deeper inside her. Emotion rose, threatened. She'd wanted this for so long despite everything she'd done to avoid it. They shuddered together, moaning in unison on the final thrust.

Ruby leaned forward and buried her face in his shoulder. She couldn't let him see the impact he had on her. It was sex. Simple, sensational, sex. Something she shouldn't have to keep reminding herself of.

Chapter Four

Zane held Ruby close, burying his face in the warmth of her shoulder. He'd given her what she asked for and it wasn't nearly enough. Sex with her, even vanilla sex, was more explosive than what he'd expected. Now, with the aftershocks causing her muscles to tighten around his cock, he wanted her again...and again.

"Do you know how long I've wanted to do that?" he teased, his voice low and rough.

She nipped at his shoulder with her teeth. "Probably about as long as I have"

Reluctantly he withdrew from her body, her tight sheath dragging across his over-sensitized cock. If she'd driven him mad tonight, what would she do to him if there were no barriers between them? He padded across the room to the bathroom and quickly disposed of the condom. He wanted to keep her in his arms, away from anything that could hurt her. The need to possess her swept through him. No, not simply sex. He wanted more from her. Her surrender, for starters.

He collapsed beside her and pulled her into his arms. The craving he'd denied for months still burned inside him. She'd tried to deny him by hiding, but eventually she'd come to him. It was a gift he would never forget. Still, she harbored fear of him inside her and he aimed to get it out in the open so they could deal with it and move on.

"Tell me, Ruby," he demanded hoarsely.

"Hmm?" she mumbled sleepily. "Tell you what?"

"Tell me more of what you started in the car. What is it that makes you fear submission?"

She stiffened against him and he touched her arm in response, tracing the curves in a light, soothing pattern. He never wanted to stop touching her. "You're safe with me, Ruby—always. But you need to help me understand what it is that holds you back."

"My mother is a slave."

Wow, that he'd not seen coming.

Zane propped his head on his hand so he could look at her face as she spoke, his fingers still trailing up and down her arm. "And?"

"And, growing up in a Master/slave household gives me a unique perspective into the inner workings of the relationship. I know my parents love

each other very much, but there were times when their relationship scared me. I worried all the time about my mother being lost in my father. Her devotion never wavered no matter what he asked of her or did to her in the name of their relationship."

"What do you mean?" He modulated his voice, keeping the tone low and soft...encouraging.

"Her life revolves around nothing other than serving my father. If she does something outside his established boundaries she begs for punishment." Her eyes closed, as if lost in a memory while she spoke. "She does nothing for herself, only for him. It's all about him."

"How can you be so sure? One of the basic tenants in that deep of a relationship is a slave's need to please her master. It is how she derives her pleasure."

"I know, Zane, I've heard it from my mother many, many times. She is happy. Serving her master is all her heart desires. Yet..."

"You don't understand it. You constantly wonder how she could possibly be happy like that." He was definitely beginning to understand her wariness. He knew plenty of people who lived like that, but she was the first person he'd met who'd actually been born into it. Lived with it from a daughter's perspective. She clearly hadn't inherited the heart of a slave and for that she struggled with understanding.

"I believe her when she explains how happy she is, but I'm not sure I'll ever understand it one hundred percent. I'm not like that. I don't want to be submissive to a man, I like having control over my life."

"Haven't you learned yet that submission, and dominance for that matter, takes any number of forms? It sounds like your parents live one of the deepest forms of the life, or what some might refer to as an extreme case. But one size doesn't fit all when it comes to this lifestyle, and I would think you'd have learned that by now."

Ruby pulled away and rolled onto her back. The puzzled look on her face told him she was considering his words so he continued to touch her, focusing on the rounded flesh of her hip, giving her time to process what he'd said.

"I can't be like her."

"No one said you should."

"But you're a Dom in need of a submissive." She choked back a cry. "I can't be your submissive."

Zane turned his head and took possession of her mouth. It was going to take more than words to get his point across. His tongue swept inside her mouth, melding them together until he stole the breath from her lungs. He wasn't letting her go that easy. He couldn't. He kissed his way down her throat and licked at the sheen of sweat between her breasts while his fingers rolled and tugged at the nipples until she shuddered in response. Against her hip his cock began to swell again as arousal fired between them.

"There's a big difference between what I need and what your parents share. I'm not looking for a slave. Yes, I'm possessive and controlling, but that doesn't mean I want to control a woman's every move. That's a lot of work and responsibility, and not many Doms truly want to take on that deep of a role."

His teeth bit slowly down on her nipple until she gasped and arched. Streaks of heat whipped through him, lighting him up for more.

"What are you saying, Zane?"

"I'm saying open your mind to the varying degrees of submissiveness and I think you'll find the place you need to fit."

"But—"

Zane covered her mouth. "You don't listen very well." He framed her face and stared into her eyes. Stubborn, that's what she was. And irresistible. "Maybe I should demonstrate."

He pushed off the bed and held out his hand. She hesitated for a brief moment, but it spoke volumes. "Ruby, do you trust me that I won't hurt you?"

"Of course I do, otherwise we wouldn't be here." She placed her hand in his and allowed him to draw her from the bed.

"Then trust me to understand how you feel and still stay open to new possibilities."

He led her to the end of the hall to a closed door and reached atop the ledge to retrieve the key. While he lived alone, one could never be too cautious when it came to privacy. The door unlocked, he pushed inside and pulled her with him. "My playroom." It wasn't a fancy room by any means, nor was it a cold and unfriendly room. It was large and well ventilated, which were the important things when it came to his brand of play.

There was a cushioned table that dominated the room and although it did come with straps and cuffs at the ends, he rarely used them. The carpeting had been ripped out and the concrete underneath painted black and sealed. Safety first.

"What do you think?"

She glanced around the space. "There's not much here, although I do like the collection of implements on that wall." She pointed to the where he kept everything hung or neatly.

"This room is only used for my interests in fire, and is not meant for anything else. Does that surprise you?"

She nodded.

He pulled her hand and led her to the table. "Face down, sweetheart. I have much to show you."

Her eyes searched his face and he held his tongue. She wanted him to push, but not this time. He'd let her set the pace and he'd honor as much of her comfort zone as he could. Nothing was more important tonight than her achieving an understanding that she was more than woman enough for him.

When she climbed on the table he bit back a smile of satisfaction. She didn't have any idea for sure what he'd planned, but she wanted it. "Good girl." He picked up a lighter and a candle and placed them on the small stand next to the table and then went to adjust the lighting. "I think tonight should be about learning for both of us. I love watching you react to the fire and tonight I want to delve a little deeper into what's behind it. Are you okay with that?"

"Yes, Zane. It's fine." Her voice trembled.

He stood at the head of the table, looking down at her nude form, his gaze drawn to the swell of her ass. He loved a round, full ass on a woman. Sure, he had a fire fetish, but if anyone paid close enough attention they might call his fetish something else. His erection began to swell as he leaned over to grab a handful. He'd like nothing more than to spread her cheeks wide and shove his dick in the tiny hole. His finger grazed the sensitive spot and he felt her shudder underneath him. Fuck, he wanted to take her again.

He forced himself to let go and turn back to the plan he'd intended. He placed the candle in his palm and lit it, watching the wick flicker and light the room with a soft glow. "Look at me, Ruby. Look at my fire and tell me what you feel."

Her gaze lifted to the candle and her eyes focused and flared wide. Ruby's lips parted for air and her breath made the flame sway before growing steady once again. "The color. I always notice the color first because it's so beautiful, not quite yellow but definitely not orange and always the blue to frame the edge."

Her description brought the fire to life, breathing air into the room.

"I like the potential danger of it. The knowledge that not everyone can master the fire. It's mine to wield, to shape and mold for your pleasure or pain at my will."

He gave her a few minutes to stare at the fire, to build the desire just a little more. When her eyes dilated and he recognized that faraway look she always got, he removed the candle from her sight and placed it on the table. Tonight I want to try something a little different. I need you to hear what I'm saying as well as feel the fire. So, in order to do that I need to take away one of your senses.

"I don't-"

"Shh." He placed a finger across her lips. "Flip onto your back for me. Trust me to take care of you, Ruby. I want nothing more than your attention and your pleasure. Do you think you can give that to me?"

She nodded and did as he asked. The exquisite site of her flushed breasts and naked pussy distracted Zane for a minute and hardened his cock more. By the time the scene was over he suspected he'd be in some pretty serious pain.

"Now lie back and close your eyes. I'm sure you'd want to obey me and keep your eyes closed, but let's make this easier." He grabbed a black cloth from the bin under the table. "I'm going to blindfold you." He placed the cloth over her eyes. "You have nothing to fear. You are perfectly safe," he murmured while tying a knot at the back of her head."

He wanted to take this nice and slow despite the urgent arousal growing in his belly. What he needed to get across was far more important than just two people getting off in a scene. Although, he had every intention of making sure his Ruby left in the morning the most satisfied woman he'd ever seen.

He paced to the cabinet behind him and grabbed the supplies he would need and arranged them next to her. He spied a slight tremble in her arms. "Are you cold?"

"No," she uttered.

"Don't be nervous. I'm going to talk you through every step. Right now I'm getting everything I need together. Nothing to worry about." He poured some alcohol into the dish and grabbed the smallest fire stick. He dipped it thoroughly, making sure the cotton fibers soaked a good amount of the alcohol.

"I love the way you look at the fire, babe. The joy on your face is immeasurable. It's a rare thing, but I understand it well. It's a trait I've waited a long time for. Someone who could understand how I feel about the flame, the color, the heat. You have it in spades." He dipped the tip of his stick into the flame and sighed on the fast flare of heat and light he created.

"I've waited for the right submissive who understood it wasn't just about the pain. No, the pain only enhances the love of the rest."

"But I'm not submissive."

"Aren't you? How do you feel when you see the fire? No, not the arousal or the excitement. Tell me, when it's just you and the fire, the need coursing uncontrollably through your body. Who's in control? You or the fire?" He tapped one of her pointed nipples with the flaming end of the fire stick before she could answer. Her back arched and she gasped, her mouth opening and her tongue peeking out. "No, Ruby. Don't tell me what you think I want to hear, or your off the cuff answer. Think about it before you tell me because I want the truth, damn it.

She shook her head a few times before she finally spoke. "The fire."

"That's right. Isn't that why you're a fire inspector instead of a fire fighter?"

"I love the puzzle of a fire. I need to figure out the why of it."

He touched the flame to the other nipple, making sure to wipe the flame away quickly. "That's not an answer. Yes or no, Ruby. Nothing else."

"Yes."

"Good girl. You and fire love each other, that's evident to anyone who watches. But it's your loss of control that we're talking about. Your inability to know when to say when."

"I know enough not to hurt myself."

"You think so? You think if I touched this flame to your aching pussy, you could make yourself get away when you needed to?"

"No, of course not. I'm not the administrator, you are."

"So if I was lying on this table and our roles were reversed, could you control it?"

"Yes. I know how to handle fire."

"Again, not what I asked. Let's try this another way." He swabbed her belly in an S pattern with the alcohol and touched the fire to it, igniting a streak from belly to breast. His free hand quickly followed, extinguishing it. Her hips rose and she writhed in the pleasure of it. The heat had left the first of many red streaks to come. They were just getting started.

"When you're standing here entranced by the fire, watching it burn, are you going to have enough control to not go too far?"

She hesitated. "I think so. I would never hurt you."

"No, I don't believe you would. Not on purpose, anyways. But fire is magnetic and you, babe, are drawn to it uncontrollably. I see it in your eyes every time, not to mention the way you move. What I'm trying to say is that what works for you and what will bring you the greatest pleasure each and every time is for you to submit. Submit to the fire. And in order to do so, you have to submit to the one wielding it."

He dipped the swab stick into the pot again and drew a line down the side of her hip. Close enough to her pussy for her to feel the heat all the way to her clit, yet far enough away she wouldn't be able to come.

Flame lit up the streak in an instant and he put it out almost as quick, but the effect was done. A loud moan fell from her mouth and her hand reached for her pussy, which he pushed away.

"Mine," he growled. "Only I will be doing the touching tonight. Your only job is to listen and feel. Got it?"

She nodded, her breath coming in soft pants.

"Spread your legs."

That she complied immediately burned through his gut, making his cock ache for more. The moist flesh between her thighs beckoned to him. Fuck, he wanted nothing more than to shove his cock inside her. The need clawed at him like a wild beast until his head spun. Not yet. She needed a little more time and way more heat.

"So beautiful, Ruby. Do you have any idea what seeing you like this does to me?

He stroked her leg, loosening the tight muscles she'd clenched in anticipation of his next move. "I don't even have to touch your pussy to know how wet you are, I can see it."

"Yes, Zane," she breathed.

He lowered the swab across her untouched leg and followed quickly with the lighted stick. The area burst into flame, burning the alcohol vapors that hovered above her leg. Most people had the mistaken misperception that the flame actually came in contact with the skin, but it wasn't. Only the heat of the burning alcohol did unless, of course, someone was stupid enough to leave it there too long. He wiped out the flame as Ruby writhed and arched around the table

"Zane. Please. More. I ache."

"I know you do, babe, but you can go higher." He rubbed his warm finger over her clit until she gasped, and the fresh scent of her arousal filled his head. She was ready to go off like a firecracker.

"You will listen to me, Ruby, and wait until you are commanded." He leaned forward to press the crown of his cock against her slick folds. "Otherwise you'll wait longer." He hoped she didn't push him to prove that, he wanted inside her too bad.

He tossed the extra swabber onto the tray and moved from between her legs. He tapped the fire stick onto random patches of skin as he walked all the way around the table. Belly, arms, tits and nipples, until he focused the circle around her wanting pussy. He pressed his finger above the hood that did little to hide her swollen bud. "You want my fire right here, don't you?"

"Oh, God, yes. Zane, please."

"That's why you keep it clean shaven, isn't it? So you can take the added heat where you need it the most."

She nodded frantically.

"Whose fire is this?"

"Your fire."

"And how bad do you want it right now?" He lowered the flame inches above her flesh until he knew the heat built painfully.

"So bad, please, Zane, you're killing me."

"Good, then you're almost ready."

"Almost?" She choked on the word.

He withdrew the fire and extinguished it. He needed one more thing from her. He pulled the drawer open at the end of the table and withdrew the leg restraints. He'd not planned to use them, but it was yet one more step towards her total submission. To her understanding that he knew best what she needed right now, not her.

"I know your legs have to be uncomfortable dangling like that. Lift your feet and bend them until they are close to your ass." He grabbed one and demonstrated. She visibly stiffened and gasped when he wrapped the cuff around both her legs and locked them in place.

"Zane, what-?"

Her head thrashed and her body shook, she had so little control of herself, even her words.

"Making sure your legs don't cramp. Be still and relax, no one is here to hurt you." He bent and blew a puff of air across her swollen folds.

"Oh, God, Zane, I can't—"

"Yes, you can." He lifted the other leg for her and strapped that one as well. In this position it would be easier to penetrate her deeply without her needing to do a thing. Which was a damn good thing, because the final heated blow would send her rocketing.

He grabbed the implement and dipped it into the lit candle. Fire flamed, the sound rippling around them. Her head perked up and he knew she'd heard it. He popped it on one nipple, then the other. Fuck, he couldn't wait another second to be inside her.

His fingers toyed with the red-hot flesh between her thighs until he couldn't resist another second. He'd teased and tormented them both enough for one night. He removed his fingers and nudged the opening with the crown of his cock. Moisture coated him, easing his entry slightly into the snug passage. Her breath caught in her throat as he forged inside, the clenching muscles gripping him and his control until he slammed the last few inches forward. Fuck, she was so hot.

"You're mine, damn it. You need this. Fuck, I need this. I need you and your submission. Submit to me...now." Sweat beaded on his brow as he struggled to hold still, holding the fire above her clit once again.

He leaned forward and yanked the cloth from her eyes. "Look at me. See who's in control. Submit, Ruby."

Her eyes stared down at him. "I submit, Zane, I submit."

Filled with satisfaction, he touched the flame to her pulsing clit for a split second. Her scream of ecstasy was the sweetest fucking sound as she tipped into orgasm. He tossed the stick into the safety pan and grabbed her hips. Muscles clenched and tightened around his dick as he began to shaft her. Her tight grip on him made it impossible to achieve long strokes so he angled his hips upward and continued with short, forceful digs. Cum boiled in his balls as his release gained momentum. Ruby screamed each time she squeezed around him until he couldn't hold back any longer.

"Fuck, Ruby, too much. Too good." Agonizing pulses of pleasure ripped through him as his release broke free. Hips bucked wildly on each jerk of his cock. "Come harder, Ruby." His thumb attacked her clit and she screamed his name. The sheer force of her muscles clenched on his dick milked him dry, leaving them both a shuddering heap.

"Jesus, woman. You trying to kill me?"

A small smile teased her lips as he moved to kiss her belly.

"I didn't know."

"I know you didn't, but I did. You may not need to be a full-time submissive, but in here, yeah, you need this as much as I do."

"So what does it mean?" Her fingers threaded through his hair, teasing the short hairs.

"It means that I'm going to fuck you six ways to Sunday every chance I get, and then you're going to beg me to do it again."

"And the fire?"

He pressed his lips to the soft, rounded flesh of a breast. "Oh, trust me, when it comes to you and me, we all three go together...It's meant to be."

About the Author

From the moment Eliza read her first erotic romance novel several years ago, she knew she had found her niche and realized that her dream was passing her by. So after years of thinking about it she finally grabbed her laptop and wrote. These days she likes her stories hot and spicy whether they be contemporary, fantasy or paranormal and will write in whatever genre her imagination has conjured that day.

Eliza lives in beautiful North Carolina and spends her days dividing her time between writing erotic romance, her full-time job as a marketing manager and raising her two daughters.